



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Onley

**For reporting year
1 March 2024 to 28 February 2025**

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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 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 Onley is an adult male category C training and resettlement prison on the border of Northamptonshire and Warwickshire, between Daventry and Rugby. The prison is part of the East Midlands group. Previously, the population was predominantly from London (80%). However, through the reporting year, the population changed to include more men from the Midlands area (17%), London Area (53%) and from the rest of the country (30%)

The certified normal accommodation (the number of people a prison can hold without being overcrowded) is 714¹. During the reporting year, near capacity was reached. Prisoners are housed in 12 wings A-L, of which F wing is the care and separation unit (CSU). The wings radiate from a single corridor in the main block, which also includes the kitchen, gym, education unit, chaplaincy and the healthcare unit. J and K wings are in a separate block, as is L wing, which is the newest.

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

- continued high levels of availability of illicit substances
- increased drone activity
- increase in incidents of violence
- increase in prolific self-harmers

Fair and humane treatment

- poor condition of cell windows
- poor condition of the cells on the older wings.
- ongoing issues with kitchen equipment and wing washing machines
- sub-standard condition of wing exercise yards on the older block

Health and wellbeing

- long waiting times for general practitioner and dental appointments
- the dental chair, whilst somewhat operational, is in urgent need of replacement
- continued limited awareness among staff and officers of the HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) prison drugs strategy
- the impact of delays in gaining vetting clearance for new appointees

Progression and resettlement

- continued offender management system (OASys) completion and sentence planning backlogs
- lack of prisoner engagement in activities
- inadequate number of workspaces within the prison workshops

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- As the Board has stated in its previous annual reports, missing, mislaid and delayed prisoner property continues to be a problem, particularly on transfer between prisons.
- The windows and window frames across the establishment are in a poor condition and an entry point for drone packages and rats.
- Delays in the vetting process are impacting on non-operational appointees taking up employment.

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- What additional support can be provided to reduce drone activity at HMP Onley?

- The increase in prisoners with severe mental health issues puts considerable strain on the staff. What additional support can be provided for such prisoners or what alternative, more suitable accommodation can be found for them?
- The state of the floors, showers and cells on some wings and areas of the establishment is poor. What can be done to ensure that prisoners are living in a dignified environment?
- The Board's view is that one washing machine for wings housing 60-100 prisoners is inadequate. The Board is also of the view that the choice of domestic washing machines over commercial washing machines is adding to the problem of frequent washing machine breakdowns.

TO THE GOVERNOR

- What more can be done ensure the clothing exchange store (CES) is supported to receive and consistently maintain adequate stocks of issued clothing and personal protective equipment (PPE)?
- What more can be done to improve the condition of the external exercise yards so that they provide a safe, dignified and fit for purpose environment for prisoners?
- What more can be done to enhance prisoner engagement with activities? What more can be done to increase the availability of meaningful activities?
- The Board welcomed the Governor's attention to staff wellbeing and morale across the establishment by holding successful staff and family wellbeing events.
- What support can be provided to reduce the long waiting times for general practitioner and dental appointments?
- Essential kitchen equipment is frequently out of order. What can be done to ensure that repairs are carried out speedily?

3.3 Response to the last report

Issue raised	Response given	Progress
To the Minister 1. As the Board has stated in every annual report for many years, missing, mislaid and delayed prisoner property continues to be a problem, particularly on transfer between prisons. The aim of the Prisoners' Property Policy Framework is to improve the management of property, but this has not been met. The manual, paper-based system is error-prone and inefficient. It relies on the manual recording of tags on prisoner property.	1. Referred to the Prisoner Property Policy Framework Sept 2022. The Framework does place an emphasis on ensuring compliance with volumetric control limits; anything within these limits will be transferred with the prisoner. 4-week delays are within the Framework. Feedback commonly identifies the need to introduce digital systems to replace paper-based processes for recording prisoners' items. Digital proposals will be longer term due to the need to prioritise.	1. The Board has seen a small reduction in applications. However, many prisoners continue to wait longer for their property than stated in the framework policy.

<p>How does the Minister plan to use technology to drive a better outcome in this area for prison</p> <p>2. We would, again, ask the Minister to address the ongoing situation in relation to imprisonment for public protection (IPP) prisoners who are many years beyond their original minimum term and who face great uncertainty as to when they may be released or what they are required to do to become eligible for release.</p> <p>3. The windows and frames across the establishment are in a poor condition. When will the Minister arrange for the windows to be replaced, as they are no longer fit for purpose, are an easy target for drone drops and endanger the ongoing security and stability of the establishment.</p>	<p>2. In February 2024 the HMPPS Director General of Operations commissioned Area Executive Directors in England and Wales to develop operational IPP delivery plans. These directly target front-line delivery to support those serving IPP sentences to work on achieving the objectives within their sentence plans and move towards a future safe and sustainable release. IPP sentence was recently reformed in the Victims and Prisoners Act which gained Royal Assent on 24th May 2024 and on 5th September 2024 the Lord Chancellor.</p> <p>3. A programme of works to replace windows site-wide and install anti-barricade doors can now be developed and will be considered for funding once current costs are understood. The Governor has agreed to fund the installation of some new windows and window grills from the prisons budget which have been highlighted as a drone risk. Amey have been asked to cost this.</p>	<p>2. There was limited progress due in part to the level of vacancies within the resettlement team.</p> <p>3. The Governor advised that he is compiling a new business case.</p>
<p>To the Prison Service</p> <p>1. What additional support can be provided to reduce drone activity at HMP Onley?</p>	<p>1. HMPPS continues to work hard to deter, detect and disrupt the illegal use of drones targeting our prisons. The Risk and Capabilities Unit have provided support and guidance to HMP Onley through the completion of a drone vulnerability assessment to understand the local threats and identify appropriate mitigations. A 400-metre drone Restricted Fly Zone has been introduced around all closed prisons. HMP Onley have implemented a local process to take immediate action following the sighting of a drone.</p>	<p>1. Drones continued to be a significant area of concern as they bring in illicit items that impact on safety.</p>

<p>2. HMP Onley is a rehabilitation prison that should provide meaningful activity for all residents, but there are not enough workplace instructors. What additional support can be provided to recruit instructional staff?</p>	<p>2. HMP Onley funded a recruitment campaign for workshop instructors that worked to recruit directly from appropriate industries. New Futures Network have been working closely with HMP Onley to set up commercial contracts for workshops and finding additional work. A new call centre added 14 activity spaces. There has been significant progress in the workshop during 2024 with increased spaces from 132 to 220.</p>	<p>2. There was success with the Greene King contract, but still not enough workspaces were available for all the prisoners. The establishment achieved an attendance rate of 80% in employment on occasions. It was difficult, however, for this level of attendance to be maintained.</p>
<p>3. The Board has seen no significant evidence that the new Prisoners' Property Policy Framework has made a positive impact. Property can routinely take four weeks to be received after a prisoner has been transferred to HMP Onley. The Board views this unacceptable. How does the Prison Service plan to remedy this problem.</p>	<p>3. In addition to the Ministers response, the Framework is clear that Governors should ensure management checks are undertaken to ensure prisoners' property is being handled correctly and with care. The new national delivery system has improved HMP Onley's ability to track parcels and property, whether sending or receiving. Locally, HMP Onley has also improved its ability to issue property in a timely manner but recognises that there can on occasions still be issues with cell clearances and property.</p>	<p>3. There was a small reduction in the number of applications (prisoners' written representations) From the Board, but prisoners were still waiting unreasonable times for their property, especially on transfer.</p>
<p>4. The Board's view is that the population management unit (PMU) is ineffective. There were instances when prisoners transferred to HMP Onley could not be offered an appropriate intervention or course suited to their needs. This resulted in significant frustration for the prisoner. What steps will the Prison Service take to address this issue?</p>	<p>4. It remains the responsibility of the sending prisons and HMP Onley to ensure that prisoners allocated meet the guidance in the national offender flows model that relates to the receiving prison and to consider what interventions or courses are available to suit their needs. However, it is recognised that the remand population continues to grow to unprecedented levels because of the courts backlog and this impact is being felt in the training estate.</p>	<p>4. The Board received applications from prisoners not able to complete their sentence plan due to the availability of a certain intervention or course.</p>

<p>To the Governor</p> <p>1. Now that enhanced gate security (EGS) has been installed, when will this be staffed fully during the working day?</p> <p>2. As staffing levels have now significantly improved, when will there be an improvement in key work activity across the establishment?</p> <p>3. When will mandatory drug testing (MDT) be implemented on a routine and ongoing basis within the establishment? Will this be sufficient to fully understand the prevalence of drug taking within the population?</p> <p>4. What more can be done to improve the number of prisoners employed or attending education? What more can be done to ensure prisoners allocated to work attend?</p> <p>5. What can be done to improve the condition of the external exercise yards so that they provide a dignified, safe and fit-for-purpose area for prisoners?</p>	<p>1. Throughout most of the reporting year, the EGS has been operational with appropriate staffing levels. The Board have evidenced national training support.</p> <p>2. The establishment introduced individuals responsible for key work activity on each wing.</p> <p>3. During the reporting year, an increase of drug testing took place.</p> <p>4. The Board evidenced there was significant focus on this issue throughout the reporting year.</p> <p>5. Dedicated teams were employed to tidy up the yards.</p>	<p>1. The Board observed the occasional instance of untrained staff operating in the EGS.</p> <p>2. The Board evidenced an increase in key work activity.</p> <p>3. The Board evidenced an increase in drug testing.</p> <p>4. The attendance rate improved; however, approximately 300 prisoners did not have access to work/education.</p> <p>5. Some improvements were evidenced.</p>
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Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

From the Board's observations prisoners arriving at HMP Onley were treated with professionalism and care.

All the relevant checks, processes and assessments were in place. Assessments that were unable to be completed on arrival, due to staffing levels, were followed up on the induction wing.

There were some delays in inductions at the beginning of the reporting year; however, there was an improvement towards the end of the reporting year. The Board is aware that one third of transfers arrive on a Friday, which impacts the ability to hold inductions over a weekend.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

The Board was very concerned regarding the significant increase in self-harm incidents. There were 393 reported incidents compared to 258 the previous year (see annex C). The Board observed that there were several individuals who frequently self-harmed. Three individuals accounted for 139 incidents, with one individual self-harming 75 times. The number of individuals self-harming fell from 141 to 124. On further investigation, it was identified that incidents of self-harm were significantly reduced on a Friday afternoon and over the weekends during open regime, with almost all the self-harm incidents occurring during lock up times and in the Board's view were mostly due to frustration, mental health issues, bullying and debt.

The number of assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documents increased from 245 the previous year to 265. There were several factors observed by the Board:

- an increase in the number of men arriving at HMP Onley with mental health issues
- an increase in the number of drug users
- lack of meaningful activities

The establishment continued to conduct regular quality checks on the completion of ACCT documents and introduced supervisor checks, which by the end of December were not routinely being carried out. The average number of open ACCT's averaged 18 compared to eight in 2023. ACCTs were open for longer due to more complex individuals.

The number of Listeners (prisoners trained by the Samaritans to provide confidential emotional support to fellow prisoners) varied throughout the reporting year with six by the end of December. The call out reasons included: problems with other prisoners, mental health and problems with staff and regime. An active recruitment campaign was in place.

There were, unfortunately, three deaths in custody during the reporting year. One is currently under investigation by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO). The

initial finding was that the prisoner apparently died of a drugs overdose. The other two deaths were of apparent natural causes and the men were in hospital at the time of their deaths. The establishment dealt with these incidents with care and consideration to the families.

There was also a near miss in the Care and Separation Unit (CSU, for segregating prisoners) in October 2024. A death was avoided due to the exceptional actions of the staff.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

Recorded incidents of violence increased from 153 in the previous year to 186 (see annex B). Of the 186 incidents, 126 were prisoner on prisoner with 17 serious incidents. In the previous year, there were 103 prisoner on prisoner incidents. The Board believes the increase is due to higher levels of debt, which accounted for 21% of all incidents.

Recorded incidents of violence against staff also increased to 60 from 50 in the previous year. Eight incidents on staff were serious. August 2024 showed the highest number of monthly incidents, at nine, when staffing levels were at times stretched.

The Board believes the overall increase in violence incidents can in part be contributed to a change in the demographic of prisoners at HMP Onley with a higher number of drug users, an increase of men with mental health issues, an increase of men with neurodiversity and the lack of meaningful activities in which men could earn wages. Frustration regarding being so far from home may also be a factor. In addition, inexperienced staff without the skills and abilities to deescalate situations.

The number of prisoners who were self-isolating averaged approximately seven. The Board observed the wing management of self-isolators was appropriate and caring.

By the end of the reporting year, six violence reduction representatives were in place, which is a reduction of nine on the previous year. An active campaign was in place.

4.4 Use of force

There were 507 reported use of force (UoF) incidents compared to 370 in 2023 (see annex D). 257 incidents were due to non-compliance (50%). 447 incidents were captured on body worn video cameras (BWVCs) which represented 88.1% compared to 92.5% the previous year.

The Board was concerned over the increase of UoF and on investigation, it was identified that the use of handcuffs when escorting or moving prisoners around the establishment was used more than previously. This was observed to be due to new staff implementing training.

The establishment underwent extensive staff training in the use of PAVA incapacitant spray and spontaneous protection enabling accelerated response (SPEAR), which uses a person's reflex action in threatening situations as a basis for defence. There were four PAVA incapacitant sprays drawn and used twice during the reporting year. By the end of December 2024, 100% of staff were trained on PAVA, 14 were trained Tornado staff (prison officers trained in riot management),

two negotiators, control and restraint refreshers at 83.11% and control and restraint upskill at 83.56%.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

The Board continues to be concerned about the increased number of illicit items that entered the establishment:

- 17 drone incidents where packages were found
- two incidents where packages were thrown over the prison wall

There were frequent drone sightings and whilst the establishment was successful in preventing 17 drone packages entering the prison, there were far more drone sightings and drops than were found. The establishment introduced a yard lockdown and search process if a drone was spotted over the exercise yards.

The poor conditions of some wing windows, which have been reported in a many annual reports, continued to provide access to drone contents using fishing wire.

HMP Onley worked closely with the local police force to report and tackle drone issues when live incidents occurred or related finds from within the prison were identified. Prosecutions were achieved during the reporting year.

Intelligence-led searches were successful with 1,425 bags of evidence containing illicit items booked into security compared to 1,170 the previous year. The significant finds were: 209 phones and 472 related accessories, 442 drugs, 114 samples of hooch (illicit alcohol brewed in the prison) and 105 improvised weapons.

The enhanced security gate (ESG) was fully operational from March 2024 with staff and visitors screened. The Board evidenced training of staff from the national centre; however, there were occasions when untrained staff were on duty which resulted in bags not being x-rayed.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

The wings were monitored regularly by the Board. They were generally observed to be clean and tidy, but several wings reported they were short of trained wing cleaners. The older cells, as identified by the residential governors, were in a poor condition and lacked certain fixtures. Challenges existed in procuring replacement furniture.

The condition of the cell windows remained problematic as they were a means of entry for rats and for illicit items via drones.

Equipment on the wings was reviewed and funded within budget constraints on a rolling basis. An upgrade programme of pool and table tennis tables on the wings was a positive enhancement.

New toasters and microwaves were purchased as incentives for Juliet and Kilo wings via drug strategy funding. These items of equipment were also purchased for another wing identified as consistently clean with lower violence. The condition of the linoleum flooring on Lima wing was identified as a significant health and safety concern.

A new process was introduced on the wings during the reporting year for ordering basic personal hygiene and cleaning products and disposable gloves. An improvement was reported but shortages continue to be monitored closely by the Board.

Laundry equipment issues were prevalent across the wings. Washing machines were frequently broken and out of order for months. The Board believes there are too few washing machines on the wings for the number of prisoners.

We observed some improvement in the maintenance of several exercise yards. The poor condition of paving slabs and overflowing sewage from blocked drains onto the older exercise wing yards remained problematic.

There were issues with the provision of general prison clothing, PPE and white serverly clothing mainly due to low stock. Frequently the Board observed wing serverly workers at mealtimes not wearing their issued white serverly clothing. This continues to be closely monitored by the Board.

The Board commends the kitchen manager in accommodating the multiple and varied dietary requirements of the prisoners. Prisoners, however, consistently complained about the quality and quantity of food to Board members when they visited the wings. The number of applications to the Board concerning food, however, was 12 (section 8).

Ageing kitchen equipment with lengthy repair lead times continued to impact the kitchens' ability to provide full and varied menu options.

The kitchen manager continued to report ongoing issues with the IT menu management system and essential kitchen equipment such as ovens and food mixers. The blast chiller was reported to have been out of function for two years.

5.2 Segregation

The Board observed the care provided by the CSU to its residents throughout the reporting year was appropriate and supportive. CSU staff continued to deal with prisoners who had challenging complex mental health issues. The most common reasons for segregation were being under threat from the general population. This mostly related to debt or gang issues.

Reintegration plans that focused on supporting prisoners in the CSU to return to the main prison population predominately mitigated the need to request approval beyond 42 days. However, two prisoners were segregated for 59 days, one was due to a refusal to reintegrate (safety reasons due to offences) and the other because of transfer issues.

Good order or discipline (GOoD) reviews (where the prison determines if a prisoner should remain segregated) observed by the Board were conducted fairly.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

A programme of peer mentoring was introduced at HMP Onley to support and develop new officer recruits.

A new system of key working was introduced which involved one officer from each wing being allocated daily to focus on key work. Each key worker was allocated several prisoners who they were expected to follow to their location of residence or activity for a key worker session of 45 minutes.

The Board was pleased to note that in December 2024, 736 (99%) of the 45-minute monthly key work sessions were delivered, compared to an average of 35% in the previous reporting year.

5.4 Equality and diversity

Following the arrival of the new Governor in March 2024, the equalities action team (EAT) and race equalities action team (REAT) were amalgamated under the title of EAT. It met bi-monthly. The meetings scrutinised comprehensive, detailed data collated from all departments of the prison concerning the protected characteristics.

Where any disproportionality was noted, an investigation was conducted and, if necessary, appropriate action taken. This was documented and reported back at the next meeting. The Board did not observe any persistent or significant trends of disproportionality relating to any of the protected characteristics.

Due to the difficulty in recruiting prisoners into supportive roles as prisoner representatives aligned to designated areas, for example equality and diversity, a decision was made by safer custody that the role should broaden to cover all aspects of prisoner equality. By the end of 2024, 10 prisoner representatives had been allocated to six of the wings. Recruitment to the remaining wings aims to be completed early in 2025.

A total of 130 discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs) were submitted in the reporting year. This was a decrease of 16 compared to the previous year, with five either fully or partially upheld. Six submissions were classed as 'multiple' (citing more than one complaint or protected characteristic), the remaining submissions were allocated to a specific classification (see annex E).

The Board welcomed the introduction of young adults (21-24 years old) being allocated both a probation and an offender management manager. This was aimed at improving the support given to young adults at HMP Onley. Staff in the offender management unit (OMU) were also upskilled in using the Choices and Changes resource pack to support young adults identified as having low psychological maturity. Information about Choices and Changes was given to all young adults on arrival at HMP Onley.

The Board observed the needs of prisoners with a mobility issue, or a disability, were effectively and respectfully managed.

Events were scheduled throughout the year to mark and raise awareness of a wide variety of anniversaries and issues.

It was evidenced that the small neurodiversity team was proactive and visible at HMP Onley. Reading support was implemented on the wings rather than in the education classrooms, for prisoners with a disability or who were reluctant to engage in education. This followed the recruitment of a reading specialist.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The multifaith chaplaincy team continued to provide pastoral support and care to prisoners and staff. Weekly worship generally took place for the numerically larger faiths. There continued to be staffing shortfalls, specifically for Rastafarian, Buddhist, Pagan and Latter-Day Saints sessional chaplains.

The Sycamore Tree course, which addresses principles of restorative justice and victim awareness, continued throughout the reporting year, facilitated by volunteers from Prison Fellowship. Also provided were bible study and Islamic classes and the Alpha course, which offers an introduction to the Christian faith.

For the third consecutive year, Muslim prisoners continued to be provided with a heated food box for use in their cell during Ramadhan.

5.6 Incentives schemes

At the end of the reporting year, in the incentives scheme (a system of privileges that is used to incentivise prisoners to abide by the rules) 37% of prisoners were on enhanced incentives and earned privileges (the highest level), 57% were on standard and 5% were on basic (the lowest level). This compared to 47%, 19% and 4% respectively at the end of the reporting period 2023/2024.

Adjudications attended by the Board were observed to be facilitated in a fair, consistent and appropriate manner.

5.7 Complaints

The number of complaints during the reporting year fell by 8.66% from a total of 2229 in 2023 to 2036 in 2024.

Property issues remained the primary area of complaint, although they had decreased from 24% of all complaints in the previous reporting year to 16%. They mostly regarded the transfer of property into HMP Onley.

The Board had evidence that property transfers from other establishments could take several months. There were also instances where property was held for longer in

reception than stated in the Prisoners' Property Policy Framework. After property, the main areas of complaint were:

	2024	2023
• general conditions:	10%	9%
• staff:	8%	3%
• employment:	6%	6%
• the incentives scheme:	6%	6%

The complaints process was observed to be managed effectively, with an increase in the percentage of complaints responded to within five days from 95% (reporting year 2023/2024) to 97.93% (reporting year 2024/2025).

5.8 Property

The Board continued to receive complaints from prisoners regarding their property within the establishment and on transfer. This caused much frustration, as evidenced in prisoner applications to the Board.

The Board believes that despite the introduction of the Prisoners' Property Policy Framework and improved staffing in reception, progress at HMP Onley to ensure prisoners receive their property in a timely manner has been slow.

The Board was aware of issues regarding prisoners transferred into HMP Onley not being able to keep items of their property. This was because the prison's property rules relating to specific items sometimes differ to those in other establishments. This was a further source of prisoner frustration.

The manual system of recording items on property cards continues to be problematic.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

Healthcare at HMP Onley is provided by Practice Plus Group (PPG). The service includes general practitioner (GP) clinics, advanced nurse practitioner clinics, mental health, substance misuse support, dentistry, physiotherapy, optometry, podiatry, pharmacy, chronic disease management, health checks, screening and immunisations.

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HIMP) and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) carried out a focused inspection of healthcare services provided by PPG at HMP Onley in January 2025 following their last inspection in October 2023. At the assessment, HIMP and CQC reported the quality of services provided by PPG had improved and they were no longer in breach of regulation 12 relating to the safety of medicines management. Three safeguarding issues were reported by healthcare to PPG. One of these involved significant burns injuries from touching in cell hot water pipes.

The last bimonthly local delivery board meeting (LDB) was held in October 2024. The Board welcomes the scheduling of regular LDB meetings in 2025 (which are the responsibility of the custodial provider).

PPG continued to review its staff skill mix and vacancies to ensure the needs of the prison population were being met. At the end of the Board's reporting period there were vacancies for one registered nurse, two nursing associates, two health care assistants and two paramedics. PPG continued to be reliant on using regular agency nursing staff. Delays in vetting were reported by the prison management to be an ongoing issue. People appointed were not always getting to employment status as they took up positions elsewhere whilst awaiting vetting clearance.

The Board received fewer applications relating to healthcare compared to the number received in the previous reporting year (section 8). The prison survey conducted by the Board in August 2024, however, identified a 71.5% prisoner dissatisfaction with healthcare appointment waiting times (annex F). The number of complaints and concerns about waiting times received and recorded by healthcare was zero in September and October 2024.

The Board remains concerned about the length of time it was taking for prisoners to see a healthcare professional via the appointment system. The length of time to see a general practitioner is unacceptable and this is a concern of the Board. We will continue to monitor waiting times closely during the next reporting year. The Board continues to work with healthcare to ensure we receive regular monthly complaints and concerns data and information.

There remained no specific healthcare box on the wings for prisoners to post their healthcare applications. Instead, healthcare applications needed to be handed to an officer and placed for collection in the wing office. It was brought to the attention of the Board there were delays with some applications reaching healthcare.

Distribution to the wings of a monthly healthcare newsletter continued. This contained health promotion information covering various health issues, topics and events. Health care forums, providing prisoners' an opportunity to ask questions, voice concerns or provide feedback, were restarted.

6.2 Physical healthcare

The extra dental session on a Wednesday was removed. This impacted on the length of the appointment waiting list. In January 2025 there were 111 prisoners waiting for a routine dental examination appointment. This was a slight increase from 105 in October 2024. The average length of wait was six to nine months. The waiting time for a treatment appointment was approximately eight weeks. The Board will continue to monitor dental waiting times closely.

The dental chair within the dental suite was identified during a service to need replacement due to its age and a faulty air compressor. Funding was eventually agreed. By the end of February 2025, a replacement dental chair had not arrived.

There were issues in reception concerning healthcare being rushed to complete admission screenings before 5.30pm. This resulted in prisoners being taken from reception without being seen by healthcare. All healthcare admission screenings are now undertaken in reception until completed.

6.3 Mental health

Following the HMIP and CQC inspection in 2023 mental health triages were being allocated by a band 7 registered mental health nurse (RMN). Weekly meetings continued to be held within the mental health team to discuss referrals and current caseloads.

Staffing levels within the mental health team improved on the situation reported by the Board in its 2023/2024 annual report. At the end of February 2025, the team were short of one RMN. The vacancy was being covered by regular agency RMNs.

At the end of the reporting year, there was no psychologist or assistant psychologist in post although a locum psychiatrist was visiting one day a week. This situation was reported to have had an impact on multidisciplinary care planning and working following mental health triaging.

6.4 Time out of cell, regime

The Board was encouraged by the push at HMP Onley to motivate prisoners to engage in the prison regime and purposeful activity. The activities policy, published February 2025, provides an incentives-driven structured process that supports 'the gaining of qualifications, skills and experience through the allocation of activity, education and work placements' for all prisoners.

During induction, new arrivals choose one of the three pathways with the Induction, Advice and Guidance (IAG) team.

- construction pathway
- the community services pathway
- the hospitality pathway

A pathway action plan was created for each prisoner enabling activity placements to be made based on the chosen pathway and the outcome of a work area risk assessment.

The policy sets out processes for when a prisoner refuses to attend education or work, is absent due to sickness or an appointment, if they need to be removed from

education or place of work or if there are no vacancies in an activity specific to their pathway action plan. Prisoners who fail to attend work or education without a legitimate reason should be supported and managed according to the sanctions set out in the policy, for example, regarding incentive scheme warnings and review and pay. As the policy was published towards the end of the reporting period it was too soon for the Board to comment on its implementation. The Board, however, will monitor this closely during the next reporting year.

The Board observed periods where some men who were not working spent considerable time behind their doors.

6.5 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

Staff recruitment and retention was difficult. There was a shortage of five full-time equivalent staff at the end of February 2025. The slow vetting process was reported to have impacted on people appointed to a post taking up employment.

Psychosocial groups recommenced in June 2024, with six drug and alcohol group programmes on offer. Groups did not run at full capacity and often with only six or seven prisoners. The wait list was three to six weeks.

Workbooks were offered to prisoners who had previously attended a drug or alcohol programme but still needed to demonstrate they were managing their drug or alcohol use. Throughout the reporting year 40 workbooks were given out. The completion rate was 47.5%.

Drug strategy meetings were held monthly but it was reported to the Board, by the Substance Misuse Team, to lack the representation needed from all prison departments and areas to help embed the strategy across the prison. The administration via injection of Buvidal, an opioid dependence treatment (ODT), was rolled out.

Juliet wing (the recovery wing) and Kilo wing (the incentivised substance free living unit) still offered few incentives. Prisoners on Juliet wing were misusing substances but were moved to the wing because they wanted to focus on their recovery. Only approximately 40% of prisoners on Kilo wing were reported to have met the eligibility criteria to be located on the wing. The remaining 60%, approximately, were there due to capacity issues.

New initiatives for both Juliet and Kilo wings included the monthly newsletter, the drug and rehabilitation staff visiting all the other wings during free association on Friday afternoons and their attendance at the Making Positive Connections social visits (section 7.4).

Acupuncture and art sessions were discontinued. Alcoholics anonymous (AA) continued to run once a week in addition to the popular weekly peer group led AA session. Unstructured interventions included a three-day Christmas event and a For Men to Talk event.

Prison officer training in the administration of naloxone, a drug used in medical situations to reverse respiratory depression caused by opioid overdose, was rolled out by PPG.

6.6 Soft skills

A prison information document worker (PID) was available on each wing. Development of the PID worker role and the PID room on each wing is yet to be accomplished.

Leaflets and posters about health and wellbeing and support and services offered by the prison, were visibly displayed on the wings.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

There were 139 learners enrolled in education, on average, each month. Attendance against planned capacity was approximately 58%, ranging between 26% (April 2024) to 70% (October 2024). Between November 2024 and February 2025 average attendance was above 60%.

The quality of teaching by tutors was identified to be good or excellent for 88% during lesson visits (teacher observations) by the in-house senior education managers. This was above the key performance indicator of 80%.

95% of learners rated the tutors (January 2025) to have good subject knowledge and would recommend their course to another prisoner. Learners spoke positively about their learning experiences to a Board member during a monitoring visit. Typically, they acknowledged the importance of improving their work ready skills. The tutors were observed to be supportive, constructive and encouraging and to have a good relationship with the learners.

Peer mentors, as documented in lesson visits, were used effectively. They were being encouraged to keep a diary of their mentoring activities to enable them to evidence their role in the classroom or activity area.

The number of learners enrolled on, and had completed and achieved, an accredited course was 91% (April 2024 to March 2025). Accredited courses included functional skills in English and maths and essential digital skills. Accredited in-cell outreach courses included peer mentoring, budgeting, personal development, self-employment and understanding stress and emotions.

The library is an increasingly popular facility at HMP Onley. By the end of the reporting year, there were 544 members (73% of the prison population).

New initiatives included a monthly reading group and an arts and crafts group. The librarians also started to attend family visits. Learners continued to attend the library weekly with their tutors.

7.2 Vocational training, work

There was a total of 650 full and part-time spaces available at the end of February 2025 for a prison population capacity of 742. The number of available spaces allocated was approximately 88%. Attendance on average was between 50-60%. Prisoners were actively encouraged to attend their allocated place of work through an incentive process outlined in the prison activities policy (section 6.2).

Employment vacancies were forwarded on a weekly basis to the wings for display on the notice boards.

Workshops included carpentry, waste management, the cycle academy, barbering, rail track, industrial cleaning, painting and decorating, dry lining, and concrete in addition to three contract workshops. They were observed by the Board to be well managed and organised.

National vocational skills (NVQ) awards were offered in food preparation and cooking, food and beverages service, construction skills, food safety and catering,

barista skills, barbering, contact dermatitis prevention, dry lining and painting and decorating. Prisoners could also work towards an award in health and safety in a construction environment (CSCS) and in digital skills.

Recruiting instructor staff was difficult but was reported by prison management to have improved. There were 18 instructors in post at the end of February 2025 and five vacancies.

Specific trusted positions or 'red band' roles (trusted men who support new prisoners and provide peer support) continued to be created with positions in education, skills and work, reading, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, healthcare and neurodiversity. Posts were advertised and applied for via application.

7.3 Offender management, progression

There was a shortfall of 2.3 full time equivalent (FTE) probation officers at the end of reporting year. The Board commends the OMU in managing the introduction of the government sentencing schemes despite being understaffed.

Approximately 70% of prisoners did not have offender management and sentence planning in place, on the offender assessment system (OASys, is used to assess the risks and needs of prisoners), on arrival at HMP Onley. This led to consistent backlogs in OASys completion and sentence planning. The backlog at the end of February 2025 was 55. A remote agency worker was helping complete OASys assessments.

The home detention curfew (HDC) caseload was approximately 70 by the end of February 2025. Prisoners, however, were being quickly transferred to a category D establishment (an open prison) within one week, following the introduction of the temporary resumptive re-categorisation scheme (TPRS).

The OMU made slow progress towards implementing a more tailored and collaborative approach to addressing the needs of imprisonment for public protection (IPP) prisoners. They were supported by New Connections (an organisation supporting IPP prisoners). IPP prisoners were able to speak to their key worker or wing officers and raise any concerns via the prison council.

The Thinking Skills Programme (TSP, which aims to reduce reoffending by addressing the way prisoners think, and their behaviour associated with offending) ran two groups consecutively during the reporting year. Recruitment was difficult and each group consistently ran with fewer than 10 members. Interventions were unable therefore to meet their set targets for starters and completions (April 2025 to March 2025). There was a wait list of 16 to join a TSP group at the end of February 2025.

7.4 Family contact

A total of 2457 family visitor video calls were made between February 2024 and February 2025. The average monthly number of calls was 205.

The number of allocated weekly thirty-minute slots for these calls varied across the wings, depending on its population capacity and needs.

The Board was aware that on a weekly basis several booked calls did not take place. Staff availability, the call not starting on time and the absence of a wing laptop were

offered as reasons. The Board was assured that all missed calls were rebooked into the next available allocated wing session.

Family visits were held on the last Wednesday of each month and supported by the library staff (section 7.1). Making Positive Connections organised visit sessions for those prisoners who had not received a social visit in the previous three months. Forward Trust attended these visits but reported prisoner attendance was low (section 6.5). They believed greater staff attendance and involvement at the visits from across various departments and areas of the prison would be helpful.

7.5 Resettlement planning

The resettlement planning and employment teams were all brought together on golf wing. This gave greater access for the prisoners on the wing, during the last 12 weeks of their sentence, to receive resettlement and employment advice and support.

The employment advisory board (EAB) was reported to now be working effectively with HMP Onley following the appointment of a new Chair. There was representation on the board from the Chamber of Commerce and the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner.

Greene King (a pub retailer and brewer) launched an innovative academy in partnership with HMP Onley at the end of 2024. Since its launch, two graduates of the academy had gained positions with Greene King on release.

Between March 2024 and the end of the reporting year, 38 prisoners completed a training programme with rail track and were eligible on release, therefore, to be employed to lay and maintain rail track.

Employment events were held throughout the reporting year with Iceland, The Dusty Knuckle (Switchback), DHL courier, package and mail delivery service, RHF Construction, Bounce Back and Inside Job. A pre-release workshop was also held.

HMP Onley's main release area is London. Between February 2024 and January 2025, 48% prisoners were released to London. The percentage of men on probation who were successfully housed on their first night of release from custody was approximately 91%.

Throughout the reporting year staff shortages continued to impact on the opening of the departure lounge. As a result, it opened only on a few occasions.

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	13
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	5
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	5
Total number of visits to the establishment	378

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	7	7
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	3	3
C	Equality	0	1
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	18	18
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	9	6
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	7	12
F	Food and kitchens	12	12
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	41	35
H1	Property within the establishment	37	22
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	58	53
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	9	4
I	Sentence management, including home detention curfew (HDC), release on temporary licence (ROTL), parole, release dates, re-categorisation	38	46
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	68	44
K	Transfers	24	30
L	Miscellaneous	93	65
	Total number of applications	424	358

Annex A

Service providers

- Maintenance: Amey Estates
- Education: People Plus
- Library: People Plus
- Escort contractor: Amey
- Healthcare and pharmacy: Practice Plus Group
- Dentistry: Time for Teeth
- Opticians: Prison Optical Trust
- Substance misuse programme: Forward Trust
- Visitors' centre: Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT)
- Resettlement support: East of England

Annex B

Recorded violence

	2023	2024	Change	% change
Prisoner-on-prisoner assaults	103	126	+23	+ 22%
Prisoner-on-staff assaults	50	60	+10	+ 20%
Total	153	186	+33	+ 21.5%

Annex C

Self-harm

	2023	2024	% Change
Incidents	258	393	+52%
Individuals	141	124	-13%

Annex D

Use of force

	2023	2024	% Change
Incidents	370	507	+37%
Body worn cameras	342	447	+ 30%
	92.5%	88.17%	- 4.68%

Annex E

Discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs)

Category of DIRF	Submitted in 2023	Submitted in 2024
Ethnicity	54	65
Religion	16	23
Disability	9	27
Age	1	1
Sexual orientation	5	4
Gender re-assignment	0	4
Other	57	6
Total	142	130
Total number of DIRFs submitted	146	130
Upheld/partially upheld		5 (3.85%)

Annex F

Prisoner survey

The Board conducted a prisoner survey in August 2024. There were 123 responses, which was 16.7% of the prison population and therefore reflects a sample of the prisoners. The responses enabled the Board to focus on the key areas that were important to the prisoners.

Q1. How safe do you feel in the prison?					Combined % excl neutral	Change from 2023
11 Very safe 8.9%	33 Quite safe 26.9%	37 Neither safe nor unsafe 30%	23 Quite unsafe 18.7%	19 Very unsafe 15.5%	35.8% very or quite safe 34.2% quite or very unsafe	↓↑
Q2. What is the condition of your accommodation (cell, shared areas of your wing)?						
4 Very good 3.3%	30 Quite good 24.4%	28 either good or bad 22.8%	36 Quite bad 29.3%	25 Very bad 20.3%	27.7% very or quite good 49.6% quite or very bad	↓↑
Q3. What is the quality of the food?						
0 Very good 0%	18 Quite good 13%	28 Neither good nor bad 22.8%	30 Quite bad 24.4%	47 Very bad 38.2%	13% very or quite good 63.6% quite or very bad	↓↓
Q4. How often do you have the chance to speak to a staff member about how you are getting on?						
15 Very often 12.2%	21 Sometimes 17%	21 Once in a while 17%	45 Rarely 36.6%	21 Never 17%	29.2% very or sometimes 53.6% rarely or never	↑↓
Q5. How easy or difficult it is to speak to someone in healthcare when you need to?						
1 Very easy 0.8%	15 Quite easy 12.2%	19 Neither easy, nor difficult 15.4%	37 Quite difficult 30%	51 Very difficult 41.5%	13 % very or quite easy 71.5% quite or very difficult	↓↑
Q6. How often have you been able to have contact with family, friends?						
31 Very often 25.2%	29 Sometimes 23.6%	26 Once in a while 21.4%	25 Rarely 20.3%	12 Never 9.8%	48.8% very often or sometimes 30.5% rarely or never	↓↑
Q7. How do you feel about the way your complaints are addressed?						
2 Very satisfied 1.6%	10 Quite satisfied 8.1%	24 Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied 19.5%	33 Quite dissatisfied 26.8%	53 Very dissatisfied 43.9%	10.7 % very or quite satisfied 70.7% quite or very dissatisfied	↑↑
Q8. How easy or difficult it is to get to activities like education, vocational training, work?						
1 Very easy 0.8%	13 Quite easy 10.6%	23 Neither easy, nor difficult 18.7%	38 Quite difficult 30.9%	48 Very difficult 39%	11.4% very or quite easy 69.9% quite or very difficult	↓↑
Q9. How easy is it to get support for mental health and wellbeing?						
3 Very easy 2.4%	8 Quite easy 6.5%	29 Neither easy, nor difficult 23.5%	29 Quite difficult 23.6%	54 Very difficult 43.9%	8.9% very or quite easy 67.5% quite or very difficult	↓↑
Q10. Have you heard before of the IMB (Independent Monitoring Board) team of volunteers?						
87 Yes = 70.7%			36 No = 29.3%			↓↑

Q11. Please tell us the 3 most important things that could make your life better in prison.				
Staff	42	34.1%	Visits, wages, OMU, spends/prisoner fiancé, wing facilities, gym, in cell phones, drugs, keywork, canteen, incentives scheme, post, property, clothing parcels, shavers, facilities list all featured. See comments.	
Regime	37	30%		
Food	32	26%		
Work	25	20.3%		
Living conditions	23	18.7%		
Healthcare	24	19.5%		
Any other comments that you would like to share with us related to the above questions: See below.				
Q12. What is your current age?				
9 x 25 years old or under		88 x 26-49 years old		25 x 50 years old or over
Q13. What is your ethnic group?				
64 x White	24x Black	15 x Asian	9 x Mixed	7 x Other
Q14. Do you think that you have a health condition or disability that affects your day-to-day activity?				
63 Yes			57 No	

Top 3 – Comments Q11

Staff -They don't listen; 90% of staff don't treat us like humans; stop bullying; recruit staff that have passion in their jobs; prisoner communication; more key work.

Regime – Consistency; regime changes all the time; more time out of cell if no jobs; only 2 hours out of cell; more socialising; more sport, worse prison I've been to, regime more like a category B.

Food - Better food; more variety; more hot meals; better portion sizes; healthier choices; cooking facilities on the wing.

Work/Education - Fairness of job allocation; more courses such as gym instructor; better job choices that you can use outside; not enough jobs; accuracy in education; all prisoners should be given a chance to improve their lives on the outside.

Healthcare (physical/mental) - Nightmare to see a GP; impossible to get hospital appointments; must see a nurse for repeat prescriptions which are always delayed; there should be mental health counselling; hospital appts get cancelled.

Living Conditions - Better mattress/bedding; 1 washer dryer not enough; single cells; better choice of TV channels; fridge in cell; windows you can see out of; storage; hot in summer, cold in winter; loud music allowed from other cells; seasonal clothing; sometimes run out of toilet rolls; delays in clothes parcels/parcels not big enough.

Other (visits, phones, property, drugs) - Can't see family as too far away; been here 5 weeks haven't spoken to family; more visits; being able to wear own clothes on visits; visits never on time, miss 20 mins; more video call available.

Better access to phone credit; stop cutting phones off; staff say can use blue phones, not out of cell long enough; more phone credit.

Emails and letters to be handed out more than weekly.

Takes so long to get clothes parcels or orders; get property from reception quicker; 3-4 weeks to get orders from reception.

Have an enhanced only wing; having to practice faith with other religions; drug free wing for people who want to be drug -free; drugs are rife in this prison; less drug addicts please; take addicts off the wing; not everyone can afford electric razors.

Additional Comments

Healthcare - access to healthcare; healthcare in this prison is a shambles; been here 6 months still can't see healthcare

Food - not wholesome enough, kitchen hygiene no gloves; drug users employed, not 2,500 calories a day, unwilling to make positive changes; other prisons have more variety

Staff – no duty of care; incompetent and don't want to help; officers need to be better trained on how to address prisoners; false promises; ask staff to do something, never done; some officers are friendly; not willing to help which leads to frustration; told to fill in an app

Living conditions - this is the worse prison I've been to; often association goes under hour; showers are disgusting; this prison's not safe; only had one full washing cycle, not enough machines; this prison is a joke; so much to say, it's not a good prison

Other - I'm tired of being surrounded by drug addicts; no support on the out if you get out without a license; officer outed me to everyone on the wing; fully grown men not allowed razors; canteen prices; received Father's Day card and pics a month late; lack of consistency, left wondering.



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