



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Berwyn

**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 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

Berwyn is located on Wrexham Industrial Estate in north Wales. It was envisaged as a reception, category C resettlement and training prison for men, but now also accommodates remand and category B prisoners, plus two vulnerable prisoner (VP) communities. It is a modern prison, with an operating capacity of 2000¹. The prison consists of three main houses: Alwen, Bala and Ceiriog, plus Ogwen, a care and separation unit (CSU), which can hold 21 prisoners. Each house is divided into eight wings. On average, 30% of cells are single occupancy and 70% are double occupancy. The double occupancy cells were designed as such.

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

- In common with the rest of the prison estate, HMP Berwyn experiences ingress of drugs. While measures are being taken to counter this, even very small packages can contain enough drugs to last a prisoner weeks or months, so this is a constant battle.
- In-cell fires and vandalism have increased. These are often the result of men fearing violence, leading to demands to be relocated.
- Incidents of prisoners being found under the influence (UTI) of an illicit substance, as well as violence incidents, remain high. Fear of violence and boredom exacerbate this.
- Many prisoners are brought in from out of the area, which adds additional challenges, such as, for example, maintaining family contact. There can be 200 remand prisoners at any one time.

Fair and humane treatment

- Staff levels are higher than in 2023-2024 and more training has been completed, so staff appear to be more proficient at managing prisoners.
- The Board has observed that, generally, staff familiarise themselves with prisoners' details and treat them as individuals.
- There appears to be a concerted effort to improve the management of vulnerable prisoners.

Health and wellbeing

- There are large numbers of prisoners with mental health issues. As prisons are not designed for people with mental health challenges, officer training across the prison estate is not adequate for managing these prisoners.
- As there are not enough spaces in secure hospitals, many prisoners who have been assessed as suitable for transfer are waiting for longer than the 28 days set out in the policy. This means that prison staff, who are not mental health practitioners, have to care for people with complex needs.

Progression and resettlement

- The early release schemes (a government policy whereby eligible prisoners could be released after serving a third of sentence to tackle overcrowding in prisons) meant there was less time for prisoners to complete courses and get qualifications, and much less time for resettlement to be managed.
- As many prisoners are in HMP Berwyn for shorter lengths of time, they do not always have time to settle or complete rehabilitation work.
- The policy of Wrexham Borough Council means prisoners are not assessed for housing until the day of release, which can lead to homelessness.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- IPPs: can assistance with life after release be improved to reduce the level of recalls? Will the process of releasing these prisoners be speeded up?
- It was anticipated that there would be a reduction in short-term sentences, but this has not yet materialised and the number of incoming prisoners on short sentences is high. What steps will the Minister take to address this issue?
- There is a discrepancy between post-release arrangements for prisoners returning to Wales and for those returning to England. What will the Minister do to rectify this?
- The Board continues to be concerned about men with diagnosed, or obviously diagnosable, mental health issues not being transferred to a secure mental health facility within the timescale specified in the protocol. This is evidenced by 26 men transferred from HMP Berwyn in 2022-2023 and 36 in 2023-2024, but only 18 in 2024-2025. It is further exacerbated by prisoners waiting lengthy periods of time for a suitable location. Some of these men are held in the care and separation unit (CSU), awaiting the transfer. However, there are a further 190 men in Berwyn with these types of mental health conditions. Does the Minister consider prison and, in particular, the CSU, a suitable location for these men?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- As referenced above, we continue to be concerned about the number of men with mental health or personality disorders being held in the CSU. Men with these conditions are being held in CSU with limited mental stimulation. Are these appropriate conditions to hold men?
- Paint is peeling off the walls of some of the cells. A programme of refurbishment was started several years ago to close a unit at a time, reducing capacity by 88 beds. This was stopped due to pressure demands in the prison estate. Given the scale of the problem, and men living in substandard cells, is this acceptable and how can it be rectified?
- We have reported for several years that the heating system has not been fit for purpose. It is good to report that following extensive repairs, the system is working and the IMB has received no complaints regarding heating.
- If prisoners arrive late on Fridays, the pharmacist will not be available until the Monday. This is a major issue, as it means that medication cannot be dispensed over the weekend.

TO THE GOVERNOR

During our monitoring, we have noted and recorded problems in the areas listed below:

- A new set of digital food thermometers was purchased earlier in the year. Unfortunately, we continue to record that these units are not working, as the batteries have been stolen.
- We are still receiving reports from prisoners saying that they do not know who their key worker is.

- We have received many complaints from men who work all day. When they return to their units, they do not always get their allocated time in the open air.
- The CSU is often full. How will this problem be managed?

How will the Governor improve these situations?

3.3. Response to last report

Issue raised	Response given	Progress
Waiting times to be transferred to secure hospitals		No progress
Extra targeted mental health training, particularly for officers in segregation unit	Officers are not mental health practitioners, but awareness training is being delivered	Some training delivered, various initiatives to help with mental health issues.
Prisoners don't know who their keyworkers are	New initiative being planned	None yet in the reporting period.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

Overcrowding across the prison estate, and the continuing imposition of short sentences, bring a high number of arrivals to reception (frequently around 30 per day), often after 5pm. This means that prison and healthcare staff have to work very late so that everyone can be properly processed and assessed by healthcare. As numerous prisoners often arrive at the same time, they can become frustrated. Also, because they come from outside the local area, such as from Manchester and Liverpool, for example, there are problems with locating them away from other gang members. Although HMP Berwyn originally expected to receive remand prisoners from north Wales courts, in practice they are arriving from English courts as well. Berwyn's turnover in 2025 was 1.5 times (i.e. 3000) the operational capacity of 2000.

If prisoners arrive late on Fridays, the pharmacist will not be available until the Monday. This is a major issue, as it means that medication cannot be dispensed over the weekend. There is a Medi Well store of essential medication, but this is not always suitable.

The Board has observed arrivals on numerous occasions and notes that men are treated calmly and humanely by staff and orderlies (trusted prisoners who take on work to provide services that contribute to the running of the prison) and by staff. Hot food is available, with options for all diets and religions. There are sandwiches for later at night. Arrivals can request to speak to a Listener (a prisoner trained by the Samaritans to offer confidential emotional support to their peers). Property is recorded on arrival. Arrivals are usually given a kettle, a laptop and bedding; however, due to high numbers of new prisoners, these are not always available.

New arrivals are sent to the induction wing, where they remain up to three days before they are allocated to permanent cells. There are 85 induction spaces, but 100 are needed.

Registered nurses complete the first-night screening. GPs provide detoxification arrangements for prisoners who are assessed as needing drug or alcohol misuse treatment, while follow-ups are made by the integrated substance misuse service.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

Incidents of self-harm

Mar 24	Apr 24	May 24	Jun 24	Jul 24	Aug 24	Sep 24	Oct 24	Nov 24	Dec 24	Jan 24	Feb 24	Total
142	104	184	127	146	146	157	177	131	133	127	115	1689

The incidence of self-harm has been falling since October 2024, but remains high, particularly on the induction wing. Many incidents relate to frustration, fear and drug use. Over the reporting period, the Board witnessed increased efforts by staff to reduce self-harm. There is less staff turnover, so newer officers are better trained, particularly in assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documents (used

to support prisoners who are at risk of self-harm or suicide), which for some time have not always been completed correctly. As part of the nationwide initiative to reduce the risk of self-harm in the adult male estate, wet-shave razors are being replaced by electric razors, which are more difficult to dismantle.

A weekly staff meeting discusses in detail prisoners most at risk of self-harm, and a monthly safety intervention meeting is attended by healthcare representatives, Governors and Listeners. There is now greater emphasis on keeping prisoners occupied, as boredom can lead to depression and drug use. The Board was pleased to note the effort made in planning for the Christmas period, as staff are aware how difficult Christmas can be for prisoners. Prisoners were given festive-themed meals, in-cell distraction packs (also available in accessible formats for people with neurodivergent requirements) and, for prisoners with no money, credit to call home. As a result, the atmosphere over Christmas and new year was good, in the Board's view.

Listeners can be requested via in-cell phones, day and night, to support prisoners face to face, either on a wing or in a Listener room. There are at least five trained Listeners on each wing. The Board has spoken to several Listeners, who say the training has taught them how to manage their own feelings. They reported that they are glad to 'give something back'. Call-outs tend to be for anxieties about family, problems with officers or being in jail for the first time. The Listeners go back the following day to check up on the caller, and they keep a log.

A total of 313 prisoners received no social visits in 2024.

There were two deaths in custody in the reporting period. Neither is thought to be suspicious, but no official reports have yet been released.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

Assaults:

	Mar 24	Apr 24	May 24	Jun 24	Jul 24	Aug 24	Sep 24	Oct 24	Nov 24	Dec 24	Jan 24	Feb 24	Total
Prisoner on prisoner	52	46	38	46	24	43	53	50	46	45	46	36	525
Number that were serious	4	2	7	3	7	3	3	6	2	4	3	3	47
Prisoner on staff	19	19	19	17	20	19	32	22	18	13	4	10	212
Number that were serious	3	5	3	1	6	7	4	5	3	1	1	-	39
Unexplained injury	2	8	2	4	2	1	5	3	1	1	6	-	35
Total	80	80	69	71	59	73	97	86	70	64	60	49	858

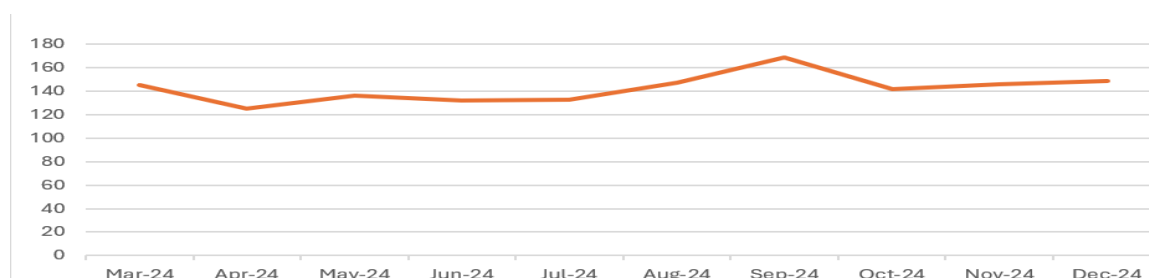
Violence in Berwyn increased in the reporting period, although it has been falling since September 2024. In January 2025, 35 prisoners were on challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs), which are used to help manage prisoners who pose an increased risk of violence, due to illicit drug use or increased violence.

Self-isolators are prioritised in the new key worker strategy (see section 5.3).

More officers have completed CSIP training. When prisoners report feeling unsafe, efforts are made to relocate them within the prison. This has been more difficult in the reporting year, as the prison is near capacity and new arrivals from Liverpool and Manchester often have gang connections, which limits the ability to relocate.

Prisoners who are at risk, often due to debt, are housed in the wing for vulnerable prisoners. The debt danger level was assessed every 12 months, but now is six-monthly. There are extra support staff for prisoners who are struggling to cope.

4.4 Use of force



The incidence of use of force (UoF) has remained steady, apart from a spike in September 2024. At a monthly meeting of the senior management team, all UoF incidents are analysed. A UoF co-ordinator has been appointed to train and monitor staff, and ensure documentation is correctly completed.

In the 150 incidents in December 2024, 149 prisoner debriefs (or 99.3%) were completed, and 65 staff debriefs (43.33%) had been received as of 14 January 2025.

The main reason for UoF incidents was a prisoner's refusal to return to their cell. The incidents observed by Board members were calmly and quickly carried out. Body worn video cameras (BWVCs) are not always used and the prison is working to address this. PAVA (incapacitant spray) was used seven times over the period. A Use of Force co-Ordinator has been appointed, and provided data.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

There were around five attempted drone deliveries per month and one recorded throwover (where people from outside the prison throw parcels over the walls containing illicit items, which are then picked up by prisoners).

All incoming prisoners and letters (which can be impregnated with drugs) are photocopied and/or tested for drugs. Officers have been trained in body scanner image interpretation, which is important for adjudications (disciplinary hearings held when a prisoner is alleged to have broken prison rules) to be carried out correctly. Sniffer dogs are present in the visits hall, where passes of illicit items have been intercepted and the police notified. Despite all of this, there are often incidents of prisoners being under the influence (UTI) of drugs and/or alcohol.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

HMP Berwyn reached capacity several times in 2024. There are single and dual occupancy cells, with no dual occupation of single cells.

The wings are clean, airy and maintained by Amey. The Board has to constantly monitor dishwashers and clothes washing machines on the wings. They are often broken and Amey is slow to respond. The problems with the heating, raised in previous reports, are now less frequent. Refurbishment of cells was paused, due to pressure on capacity, so some prisoners are living in below-standard accommodation, in the Board's view.

Generally, wings and cells are well equipped, with showers, toilets, televisions and laptops. Appliances are often broken, but this is mainly caused by the prisoners themselves. Prisoners can make phone calls from their cells, provided the number is authorised. They can make appointments on their laptops or order items such as clothing, snacks and toiletries from an approved list.

There is a range of food choices at the serveries, catering for all diets and religions. Board members sample the food in serveries to check taste, quantity and temperature, which are generally satisfactory. The Board monitors food thermometers, following complaints that the food was not hot. This was partly due to prisoners stealing the batteries in the thermometers. There are now new thermometers which, in theory, can't be broken into.

The prisoners who Board members spoke to appreciate the dinners provided over Christmas. Special meals are provided for various religious festivals, and there are halal workers on relevant serveries.

5.2 Segregation

The facilities on Ogwen, the care and separation unit (CSU), where prisoners are segregated, are clean and in good repair. All prisoners can use the exercise yard there once a day. Staff are experienced and, from what the Board has witnessed, are humane and aware of the details and difficulties of all the prisoners, many of whom have challenging behaviour. In the last quarter of the reporting year, Ogwen was often unsettled and full to its capacity of 16. Numerous prisoners were waiting for long periods for transfer to secure units. The files show that these men were seen by the Prison Group Director every 42 days (the limit allowed without external authorisation to remain in the CSU). By January 2025, the numbers of men with diagnosable mental illness finally fell, as space in secure units was made available. But senior staff told the Board that they felt there were not enough spaces in general, as HMP Berwyn was built as a category C prison and not for remand or category B prisoners.

Board members speak to all the men on Ogwen and attend adjudications and reviews at least once a week. We have observed that due process is followed in Rule 45 reviews (when staff evaluate whether a prisoner who has been segregated from other prisoners to maintain good order or discipline, or for their own protection, should remain in the CSU), with a member of staff from the healthcare unit in attendance. An issue in adjudications is poor completion of paperwork by wing staff, which results in cases having to be dismissed. Staff training on this has been

stepped up. There has been an increase in referrals to the police from adjudications, which means the adjudication has to be adjourned. If the victim asks for the case to be referred to the police, this must be done. This is also the situation in cases where protected characteristics (including age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion, sex and sexual orientation) are involved.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

From the Board's observation and analysis of data, key worker meetings have been unsatisfactory for some time, and various initiatives did not improve matters. In January 2025, 59.29% of prisoners had allocated key workers. There is now a new approach, targeting groups not employed or engaged in activities and encouraging them to participate in activities, such as, for example, the over 75s gym and carpet bowls, etc.

The Board believes there is not enough training for staff in neurodiversity and communication skills.

Staff shortages are now less of an issue and training continues for inexperienced staff. More officers have been allocated to improving performance, training and quality control.

The monthly prisoner elected council is attended by prisoner representatives, Listeners, healthcare unit staff, the senior management team and the Samaritans. From the Board's observations, there is mutual respect and courtesy, and all items raised are followed up in subsequent meetings.

5.4 Equality and diversity

From the Board's observations, there is good access to all facilities for wheelchair users, and there are several cells that are suitable for disabled prisoners. Buddies are allocated when appropriate. In July 2024, a prisoner representative carried out a survey of prisoners with disabilities. The biggest issue was lack of understanding from staff and prisoners, and that bank holiday activities are mainly physical. This will be addressed at Easter 2025. There is an LGBTQ+ staff representative.

On average, there were around 60 foreign national prisoners in HMP Berwyn.

There are specific activities for the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) community, such as confidence building, a GRT garden and traditional crafts, including candle-making. The group applied successfully to have one of the 80 candles to mark the 80th anniversary of the Holocaust.

In January 2025, no discrimination incident report forms (DIRFs) were outstanding, as all had been processed and reported back on. The greatest number of these related to race (mainly from one prisoner, who has now been transferred) and sexuality. There are not always DIRF forms on the wings.

The new mental health scheme also has courses for prisoners with neurodivergent requirements.

People convicted of sexual offences (PCoSOs) are housed in the vulnerable prisoners (VP) wing. However, as there are incidents of bullying of PCoSOs on the wing, they are kept separate from non-PCoSOs. Pressure on space in the VP wing makes this a challenge. There is more staff and prisoner interaction on this wing, as

well as an additional senior officer to help staff with the additional demands of managing this population. Workshops for vulnerable prisoners include sewing, welding, wheel refurbishment and business management: as PCoSOs are more likely to be rejected by employers, they often need to become self-employed.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The chaplaincy department in Berwyn has worship areas for all religions and is bright, clean and welcoming. There are chaplains for all main religions. Services are held throughout the week, with separate services for vulnerable prisoners. A big part of the chaplains' work concerns bereavement support and follow-up: they dealt with 370 bereavements in the reporting period. Bereavement counselling also involves considerable detective work as, with the breakdown of family structures, it can be difficult for prisoners to demonstrate that the deceased should be counted a close relative.

Holy days are marked with special services and meals from the prison kitchens. The chaplaincy liaises with the charity, Barnardo's (which provides family support services at the prison), the Samaritans and local faith groups. 'Chainbreakers', who are peer mentors, are managed by the chaplaincy team and deal with prisoners asking where to find forms and how to use the computer, as well as with queries about the regime and the incentives scheme. There is a chainbreaker and a trained Listener on every wing.

5.6 Incentives schemes

There has been poor communication regarding the prison's incentives scheme. Prisoners could not understand why their scheme status was downgraded (from, say, the top level, enhanced, to the middle level, standard, or the bottom level, basic) when a case was dismissed at adjudication. The head of safety and the head of residence were keen to stop officers automatically downgrading prisoners, which could involve removal of a prisoner's television, as it could lead to boredom, which might result in drug taking. There has been serious emphasis on this since November 2024, with better information for prisoners and more training for officers.

5.7 Complaints

By late January 2025, the complaints system had broken down, following staff reassignment. Prisoners frequently informed the IMB that complaints were not being addressed. The IMB has drawn this to the attention of the Governors. Prior to the breakdown, IMB reviews of the complaints system found:

- Generally speaking, complaints using Comp 1 forms (ordinary complaints) were generating replies that addressed the complaint and within the timeframe stated in the complaints policy.
- There is a breakdown in communication between the prison's system for managing complaints and that used by Amey for matters to be addressed by them. The consequence is that the prison has no meaningful information that it can use to respond to complaints about accommodation.
- The system for managing complaints and obtaining responses within the allotted timeframe works well. However, the system closes complaints referred to Amey, despite the absence of any meaningful response.

Numbers of applications to the Board reduced by more than half compared with the previous reporting period. The main issues remain the same – property, health, relations with staff and incentives (*for comments on incentives, see section 5.6*). About one fifth of applications come from the same individuals, so the number drops when that individual is transferred.

5.8 Property

Property is dealt with in reception, signed for by the prisoner and stored correctly, in the Board's view. Prisoners complain about missing property from transfers, which have to be redirected to the previous prison. Many complaints concern unauthorised items that are stored until the prisoner is released.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

Healthcare is provided by Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board. The healthcare centre is clean and well-equipped, but demand for its services is high. Given the demographics of the prison population and prisoners with often long-term substance misuse, the overall health of the men is poorer than average in the community. Older prisoners present with long-term or terminal illnesses, which require complex management and the increased presence of healthcare and prison staff.

6.2 Physical healthcare

There are monthly healthcare meetings attended by the senior management team, Listeners, representatives from healthcare and the Samaritans. Healthcare staff include sessional staff:

- 2 radiographers
- 1 podiatrist
- 2 audiologists
- 1 optician
- 2 sexual health advisers
- 1 palliative nurse

Full-time contracted staff[]:

- 4 GPs (subcontracted)
- 7 dentists
- 3 paramedics
- 1 health improvement practitioner
- 24 corporate services staff
- 19 primary care nurses
- 1 healthcare social workers
- 1 phlebotomist
- 5 substance misuse treatment nurses
- 10 psychosocial workers
- 6 psychosocial practitioners
- 9 therapists
- 4 pharmacists
- 13 pharmacy technicians
- 2 pharmacy assistants

The waiting time for a routine dental appointment was 29 weeks, as of December 2024. The rate for non-attendance at healthcare appointments, which includes DNAs (did not attend) and CNAs (could not attend), has been between 9% and 11% over the reporting period.

Healthcare administration staff deal with the majority of applications sent to the healthcare centre, and nursing staff deal with/triage 'requesting an appointment' applications.

6.3 Mental health

A large number of prisoners have mental health issues. These include schizophrenia, paranoia, personality disorders, autism, and inability to self-regulate. The mental health unit is understaffed. There are eight mental health practitioners, three psychologists, five psychiatrists, five mental health nurses and one occupational therapist. The programme is (an accredited offending behaviour programme for men convicted of general violence, intimate partner violence and/or sexual offences) is being phased out. From February 2025, Berwyn has been an early adopter of Building Choices. It involves various groups of eight prisoners - high and moderate intensity depending on the severity and is based on assessments for risk and need, and the prisoner's level of understanding - and programmes for people with learning difficulties. It focuses on 'future me', rather than the past. Prisoners learn life skills such as assertiveness, negotiation, mindfulness and deep breathing to calm down, and they don't just talk about this skill but practise them, too, with participants encouraged to describe how they have used these skills on the wings. Participating staff have been given additional training. Staff told us that some wing officers have reported on improved behaviour in prisoners attending these courses.

A priority is the national shortage of ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) medication. Listeners highlight areas to be addressed in training, such as, for example, when one of them reported that some staff don't realise that neurodivergent people understand things differently. If an officer says, 'I'll be back in two minutes', the prisoner expects them back in 120 seconds.

6.4 Social care

Prisoners are screened in reception for any pre-existing care arrangements. Prisoners with mobility needs are assigned buddies while in the establishment. Assessments are reviewed under legislation in a pattern of four weeks/six weeks/12 months. There are three prisoners with social care plans, which include multi-agency input where necessary. Prior to transfer or release, the receiving local authorities provide assessments.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

Time of out cell depends on officer availability. There are complaints that prisoners who are working are not given time in the open air. This has improved during the reporting period.

Berwyn has a sports hall, a gym and outdoor pitches. Activities include football, badminton, X-Fit training and a running programme. Around 55 prisoners attend each session. Prisoners who the Board spoke to had no complaints and particularly liked the gym facilities. There is also a gym area in the substance misuse treatment workshop. The men the Board spoke to there were very positive about their experience. Gym areas were clean and tidy whenever the Board visited.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

HMP Berwyn has a designated drug recovery wing and a workshop specifically for SMS (substance misuse) prisoners. Some staff and prisoners the Board spoke to said that SMS workshop is unfocused, which is a concern, as boredom leads to drug taking.

Staff told the Board that much substance misuse is due to boredom, so efforts are made to identify prisoners who do not engage in activities. The emphasis is on rehabilitation rather than punishment. As many prolific drug users have multiple issues, the prison has adopted a gradualist approach, celebrating small wins. There were 2245 incidents of prisoners under the influence (UTI) in 2024. Of the 564 prisoners involved, 326 were unemployed, sick or refused to work. There are two drug strategy peer representatives on each wing, who visit UTI prisoners the following day to discuss why they took drugs and why they are stressed, as well as to offer support. Staff are instructed not to automatically downgrade a prisoner's incentives scheme status. But if men are bored, they are given activities and referred to groups, such as, for example, a specialised gym group. Prolific users are put on CSIPs (challenge, support and intervention plans). The emphasis is not just on confiscation, but follow-up.

Prisoners from Wales are referred to the Kaleidoscope drug and alcohol treatment centres.

Data show that drug use increased less from October to December 2024 than would usually be the case, as concerted efforts were made to understand the challenges for prisoners over the festive period and to alleviate the issues.

6.7 Soft skills

The wellbeing hub has opened. It includes a fully equipped hairdressing salon, yoga, restaurant, rest areas and classrooms for mental health groups. It also houses the Street Soccer Academy charity, which runs eight six-week accredited courses each year. The courses are full time, both in a classroom and on the outside football pitch. Mirroring football-management structure, it teaches life skills and training in physical and mental health. One participant told the Board that it is 'the best course in the jail' and others said they had learned about safeguarding, nutrition, mental health, inclusivity and engagement. The charity has links with the Salvation Army, probation, housing and employment centres outside the prison, and there are connection centres that released prisoners can contact 24/7. On release, the main needs are physical and mental health and housing. The trainer told the Board that, due to the early release scheme, anxiety levels had increased, and that some participants had been released with 72 hours' notice, which is not enough time for probation to map out a plan.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

Education is provided by Coleg Cambria, in a modern, airy building. There are 37 full-time places: take-up is three on barbering, 14 kitchen trainees and 17 on Street Soccer Academy. A total of 232 part-time places are available, with a take up of 220.

Courses, some of which are to degree level, include:

- Art (some do NCFE qualification in art and design; others are there for pleasure/mental health support)
- Basic cookery
- Street Soccer Academy (see 6.7)
- Maths and English up to Level 3
- Digital media
- Music technology
- English for speakers of other languages
- Graphic design
- Independent living
- Peer mentoring

The classrooms are well-equipped. The music class has different guitars, keyboards, a drum kit, software and a soundproof booth for recording and producing, plus ten computers with top-of-the range software.

Most classes include business management and people skills, in addition to the basic academic curriculum. Participants on the business course were all enthusiastic. The lessons from the course can be applied to life in general, inside and outside the prison.

Sometimes, there is the feeling among staff that classes are just keeping prisoners occupied. The Governor would like to see the education department working alongside some of the workshops, e.g. scaffolding, so that the learning is relevant to work.

The Board spoke to prisoners on the peer mentoring course, who were enthusiastic and said they wanted to make a difference.

7.2 Vocational training, work

In December 2024:

- 25.7% of prisoners were in full-time purposeful activity
- 34.8% were in half-time purposeful activity
- 49.8% were in employment six months after release (this is near the top of the performance comparator group)

From the Board's observations, workshops and training have improved over the reporting period. There are numerous workshops, many of which provide prisoners with qualifications such as CSCS (construction skills certification scheme) cards (which prove that construction workers have the necessary training and qualifications for their jobs). The early release scheme has meant that some could not complete

their CSCS cards in time. Workshops include: recycling, material recycling, DHL distribution, industrial cleaning and warehousing.

The sewing workshop benefits from the HMPPS five-year contract with the Ministry of Defence (MoD) to produce sandbags. Training can take 1-30 days, and involves transferable skills such as time management and organising workspace and supplies. The prisoners there were delighted that their sandbags had been used to protect people from flooding.

Workshop attendance varies, due to officers not releasing prisoners for escort, or medical or other appointments, or simply the lack of will. The sewing workshop is bonus-led, so attendance is good. In peak periods, the DHL workshop is busy because the unit as a whole has challenging targets. The men like the fact that they are busy. They get a weekly bonus of £12 if they hit their individual targets. They start in the key academy at Tier 1 for induction and training and move on to Tier 2 when they are in the resettlement/category D (eligible for open prison) stage. At Tier 2, they receive advice on job applications, references, CVs and mock interviews for jobs on release.

A restaurant has opened in the wellbeing centre. It is clean and welcoming and produces excellent food, to eat in or take away. There is also afternoon tea, to be booked in advance. When a Board member asked about dietary requirements in January 2025, the kitchen supervisor said she would set the men the task of developing appropriate dishes.

7.3 Offender management and progression

Five new probation officers started during February 2025, who need mentoring and upskilling. There is a full complement of 16 prison offender managers (POMs), each with between 50-60 cases. Prisoners access information about their POM on the Unilink system and POMs appear to visit all the wings regularly to provide support and answer questions.

The early release schemes have placed intense and continuing pressure on the offender management unit (OMU). Each change led to significant recalculation of sentences. Licence conditions should arrive four weeks before release but sometimes come 72 hours before.

The POMs are resuming work with care-experienced men, with monthly forums from February 2025. These men are supported by officers on the wings, who are specific points of contact (SPOCs). Voices for Care Cymru has secured funding for a full-time post to work in Berwyn, to help with transitional work, especially around accommodation. In 2024, 220 (10%) prisoners were released without accommodation.

There are monthly employment fairs, of which construction and warehousing are the most popular. In 2024, Berwyn had the highest number of prisoners in employment on release in its comparator group.

7.4 Family contact

All prisoners, except for those who have been segregated in the care and separation unit (CSU), have laptops and phones in their cells and can contact approved friends and family members between 7am and 10pm or, for prisoners on restriction, 9am to

9pm (this time frame limit is to prevent harassment). Prisoners are encouraged to read bedtime stories to their children using Storybook Dads.

Social visits are arranged in advance. Because prisoners now come from a much wider area, if they are not brought into the visits hall on time, families can miss transport they have booked to go home.

Barnardo's family days (which bring together men and their families outside of their statutory entitlement to social visits, usually in more informal settings) continue to support family relationships. IMB members have witnessed sports days in the summer, Christmas Days and other specific themes.

Berwyn has introduced a breastfeeding pilot, to help make it easier for breastfeeding mothers to attend social visits and not feel exposed.

There have been 12 safeguarding referrals to social services, with three subjects to section 47 (immediate concerns) and seven subject to child in need plans.

The court caseload is up significantly from last year, with 136 cases managed by three Barnardo's staff. There is still a problem with late delivery of court papers, and difficulties with Cafcass (Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service): for example, Cafcass and children's services do not always have the correct information about men being able to see their children. School heads were invited to visit and one primary headteacher said that this had enabled him to reassure a child in school whose father was in HMP Berwyn.

7.5 Resettlement planning

In its February 2025 inspection, HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) noted an improvement in preparation for release, despite the population pressures, late arrival of licence conditions, increased churn and Berwyn's complex and diverse prisoner group. With more early releases, resettlement staff focus on prisoners completing qualifications.

A commissioned rehabilitative services (CRS) officer in the prison most days, as well as a remand CRS worker, who advises on retaining accommodation, homeless services, local contacts, etc. This applies to north Wales only. Other than Wrexham Borough Council, the north Wales authorities come into Berwyn six weeks before release to assess prisoners for housing. Wrexham cannot notify whether the criteria are met until the day of release, which means some men end up homeless. In early 2025, the prison hosted a learning day for senior probation officers in the community, focusing on alternatives to recall and other possible interventions.

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	18
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	6
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	9
Total number of visits to the establishment	474

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	38	20
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	21	15
C	Equality	9	7
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	20	8
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	41	17
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	17	9
F	Food and kitchens	16	4
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	44	26
H1	Property within the establishment	42	20
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	31	10
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	11	1
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence), parole, release dates, re-categorisation	44	21
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	58	20
K	Transfers	12	10
L	Miscellaneous	58	35
	Total number of applications	462	223



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