



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Erlestoke

**For reporting year
1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025**

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Contents

Introductory sections 1 – 3	Page
1. Statutory role of the IMB	3
2. Description of establishment	4
3. Key points	5
 Evidence sections 4 – 7	
4. Safety	11
5. Fair and humane treatment	15
6. Health and wellbeing	21
7. Progression and resettlement	27
 The work of the IMB	
Board statistics	35
Applications to the IMB	36
 Annex A	
Service providers	37
 Annex B	
IMB induction survey	38
 Annex C	
Achievements in English and maths	42
 Annex D	
Achievements in Vocational Qualifications	43

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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

HMP Erlestoke is a category C training and resettlement prison for adult and young adult male prisoners. It is the only prison in Wiltshire and is not far from Devizes.

The prison first opened in 1960, having been built in the grounds of the former Erlestoke Park House. There are nine residential wings, including a drug recovery wing (DRW), dedicated to reducing drug dependence in motivated individuals.

The operational capacity (the maximum number of prisoners that can be held without serious risk to safety, security, good order and the proper running of the planned regime) was 512¹ at the end of March 2025. The development of three new house blocks, providing an additional 180 spaces, is currently on hold.

Around 75% of the population are serving sentences of four years or more. A total of a third of prisoners are classified as indeterminate sentenced prisoners (ISPs), serving life and IPP (Imprisonment for Public Protection) sentences.

Younger prisoners in the 18 to 24 age group make up 13% of the prison population, while the over-55s make up a further 10%. During the year, 584 men were transferred into the establishment, while 316 were discharged.

Part of the prison's remit is to provide a national resource for offending behaviour programmes. It is one of four prisons delivering the progression regime (PR), the aim of which is to help ISP and IPP prisoners provide information and evidence to the Parole Board to support release.

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

An unannounced inspection of the prison was carried out by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons in June 2024² in which priority concerns were raised around the availability of illicit drugs; the availability and quality of education, skills and work; the amount of force used by staff and the clinical governance of healthcare.

3.1 Main findings

Safety

- **Induction:** The first night induction cells are of a poor standard and the induction programme has yet to offer clear and consistent guidance to newly arrived prisoners.
- **Use of force:** Scrutiny of the use of force has significantly improved with regular meetings involving senior management taking place each week.
- **Ingress of illicit substances:** Illicit substances continue to be readily available despite enhanced security measures.

Fair and humane treatment

- **Key working:** Some improvements in key working have been noted, but quality and consistency still falls short of good practice.
- **Staff/prisoner relationships:** The prison council has failed to run effectively (or even at all) for half the reporting period. This has led to dissatisfaction amongst prisoners, for whom the council is an important avenue through which to raise concerns.
- **Accommodation:** The healthcare building is no longer fit for purpose, through crumbling infrastructure and insufficient space to manage the increasingly complex prison population with decency and confidentiality.
- **Food:** The kitchens work hard to provide varied menus, but the very limited budget frequently results in small portion sizes and prisoners complaining of feeling hungry.
- **Equality and diversity:** Detailed data identifies areas of potential inequality or discrimination among cohorts of prisoners. However, not enough is done with this data to improve outcomes for these groups.

Health and Wellbeing

- **Healthcare:** Whilst there has been a significant improvement in healthcare attendance at first assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) reviews, 21% still remain without a healthcare presence.
- **Medication:** Prisoners transferring to HMP Erlestoke are too frequently left without essential medicines on arrival, sometimes for a significant period and sometimes with serious consequences.

² https://hmpirisons.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmpiris_reports/hmp-yoi-erlestoke/

- **Hospital appointments:** A failure to provide sufficient escorts to take prisoners to hospital appointments has resulted in a considerable number of appointments being lost each month.
- **Social care:** The prison is unable to provide a safe and humane environment for some frail and/or elderly prisoners.
- **Nicotine replacement therapy:** Issues of debt and bullying relating to vaping are frequent and yet prisoners have no access to nicotine replacement therapy through healthcare and only intermittent access through the canteen.

Progression and resettlement

- **Purposeful activities:** There has been a significant improvement over the last year in the number of work opportunities available. However, attendance in education remains too low and the problem with recruiting tutors in this rural environment remains.
- **Offender management:** The caseload of prison offender managers is too high, especially given the frequent and continuing changes to sentencing criteria.
- **Progression regime (PR):** The PR has had its most successful year to date in terms of releases and transfers to the open estate. However, only a third of those currently on the PR regime are IPP prisoners (against a target of 50%).

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- What long term solutions are being proposed to manage the increasing numbers of elderly and frail prisoners who cannot be managed fairly or humanely in the main prison estate?
- What solutions are being sought to provide more suitable accommodation and support for those with the most complex needs? Last year, the Board asked about long term plans to establish more appropriate mental health provision within the secure estate. This issue remains despite local improvements.
- What tangible outcomes have been delivered for IPP prisoners since publication of the revised IPP Action Plan³? Once again, the Board highlights the plight of IPP prisoners, many of whom continue to languish in prison with little hope of achieving release.
- What plans are in place to increase the budget for food which continues to be woefully insufficient when basic food costs have risen significantly?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- What action can be taken to improve the quality and safety of the constant watch cell, given that the three proposed new house blocks are on hold?

3

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6737331c12f25d7308127209/HMPPS_Annual_Report_on_the_IPP_Sentence_2023-24.pdf.pdf

- What plans are there to address the defective state of the healthcare building? It is increasingly not fit for purpose, both in terms of its crumbling structure and its ability to provide secure and confidential areas for managing the complex cohort of prisoners.
- What guarantees can be given that there will be sufficient funding for escorts to take prisoners to hospital appointments, to avoid the numerous cancellations that have taken place over the last year?

TO THE GOVERNOR

- What can be done to reduce the pressure on the Offender Management Unit (OMU), enabling offender managers to manage more consistently their caseload, particularly given the likelihood of further changes to sentence and release criteria?
- What processes and checks will be put in place to ensure improvements are made to the poor state of the induction cells?
- What further actions are being considered to reduce the ingress of illicit substances? While the Board recognises enhanced security measures which have been put in place, drugs remain readily available throughout the prison.
- What assurances can be given that the cell clearance process will be given a higher priority, in order that it is done effectively and securely with minimal loss of prisoner property?
- What process will be implemented to ensure both the quality and quantity of key working improves?
- What urgent action will be taken to establish the new format of the prison council, so that prisoners can have an appropriate outlet for their concerns?

TO THE GOVERNOR/OXLEAS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

- Is access to nicotine replacement therapy being considered, given the high incidence of issues relating to vapes (especially debt)?
- What plans are being considered to ensure that prisoners arriving at HMP Erlestoke will have access to their essential medicines without a period of delay?
- While there has been considerable improvement in the attendance of healthcare at first ACCT reviews; just over one fifth still lack this essential input. How is this to be addressed, especially when reviews occur over weekends?

3.3 Response to the last report

Issue raised in 2024	Response given	Progress
To the Minister What long-term plan exists to establish more appropriate mental health provision within the secure estate?	Minister's response Oxleas tasked with flexing provision. Neurodiversity pathway/trauma informed psychosocial groups being developed. Trying to fill mental health vacancy. Health Improvement Board (HIB) set up.	The mental health team is now fully staffed. The Health Improvement Board has met monthly.

Issue raised in 2024	Response given	Progress
<p>To the Minister What assurances can be given to IPP prisoners, some 11% of Erlestoke's population, that a clear strategy exists for progression to release, given that resentencing has been rejected and the IPP Action Plan⁴ has had limited effect?</p>	<p>Minister's response IPPs released on licence five or more years ago, licence terminated without need for Parole Board. Two new Risk Assessed Recall powers. IPP delivery plans responsibility of Area Exec Directors.</p>	<p>Two members of the senior OMU team have been appointed to take the lead on IPP issues, including holding IPP forums. 46 IPP prisoners remain at Erlestoke.</p>
<p>To the Minister What guarantees can be given that all ancillary facilities will match the needs of the increased prison population when the new small secure house blocks are occupied in 2025?</p>	<p>Minister's response The project has ensured necessary ancillaries will be in place.</p>	<p>The project is currently on hold. If the project is to proceed, the Board will look further at plans for ancillary facilities (for example, CSU capacity, healthcare, visitor centre and workshops).</p>
<p>To the Prison Service How will Gov Facility Services Limited's (GFSL) performance be addressed, given the impact this has had on decent living conditions for prisoners?</p>	<p>HMPPS's response: GFSL has a new manager. Erlestoke is one of the highest sites for vandalism. Backlog of works reducing. .</p>	<p>Backlog of works being addressed. Improved relationships with GFSL's management.</p>
<p>To the Prison Service What additional measures are in place to address the continual loss of property between establishments, as the re-issued Prisoners' Property Policy Framework has not offered a solution to this matter?</p>	<p>HMPPS's response Digital PER accurately records property. Prisoners must comply with volumetric control limits; any excess will not be transferred. The Prisoners' Property Policy Framework requires prisons to transfer excess items within four weeks. Erlestoke has a revised cell clearance policy.</p>	<p>Property loss between establishments has not improved. Losses frequently involve important legal documents and items of a sentimental and irreplaceable nature. The Board considers there has been insufficient progress.</p>

⁴ <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/39321/documents/192968/default/>

Issue raised in 2024	Response given	Progress
<p>To the Prison Service Eligibility for programmes is not assessed until prisoners are transferred to Erlestoke; this causes problems for those not accepted on to a programme after relocation. What is the solution to this issue?</p>	<p>HMPPS's response Eligibility via PNA (Personal Needs Assessment) for some programmes can be done before transfer.</p>	<p>A new online system means the process for PNAs is more effective.</p>
<p>To the Governor What actions will be taken to ensure welfare checks are delivered consistently?</p>	<p>Governor's response The Safer Custody team is completing assurance checks. Training is being given to staff. The local welfare checks policy will be reviewed and published.</p>	<p>The Board regularly monitors welfare checks and reports back findings. Some improvement has been noted.</p>
<p>To the Governor What steps will be taken to reduce the ingress and availability of illicit substances?</p>	<p>Governor's response Bids for additional CCTV to improve fence security have been unsuccessful. Processes have been improved to disrupt ingress through the gate, including additional staffing. All incoming mail is now photocopied. Improved collaborative working across the prison allows more interventions and better support for prisoners with substance misuse issues. There has been considerable focus to disrupt and minimise the flow of substances across the site.</p>	<p>Ingress and availability of illicit substances remains a significant problem, despite noting the efforts detailed by the Governor.</p>
<p>To the Governor How will effective key working be implemented to provide prisoners with the vital one to one support needed?</p>	<p>Governor's response A review has resulted in an improved tracker, communication and oversight of resource versus delivery. Delivery is now unit-based with sufficient resource to deliver the required number of sessions. Staff training and quality assurance is in place. A dedicated CM was appointed in early March.</p>	<p>Some improvement has been noted and it is hoped the recent drive for both quantity and quality of key working sessions will see further benefit. The Board will continue to monitor.</p>

Issue raised in 2024	Response given	Progress
<p>To the Governor What assurances can be given that meaningful activities and job opportunities will improve and be readily accessible?</p>	<p>Governor's response A review of workspaces has been conducted to ensure there is sufficient work for all men. The curriculum has been reviewed following the completion of a Learner Needs Assessment to ensure purposeful activity is meaningful and aspirational. A multi skills workshop is underway. Other instructors have received further training so that they can deliver further vocational training. The induction process is under review. The pay policy is being revised to incentivise attendance and progression.</p>	<p>The number of jobs has increased over the year, although some men still remain without purposeful activity.</p> <p>The multi skills workshop is due to open mid-summer 2025.</p> <p>Introduction of the revised pay policy has been delayed until June 2025.</p>
<p>To the Governor/Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust Just over 60% of first Assessment Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) reviews do not have the benefit of healthcare input. This negates the multidisciplinary ethos behind the intended strategy of the ACCT process and which impacts on the safety of prisoners – how will this important issue be addressed?</p>	<p>Governor's/Oxleas Trust's response Timings are now agreed at daily briefings. Any ACCT reviews during operational hours are attended by Healthcare. Issue discussed at LDQB meetings.</p>	<p>Over 79% of first ACCT reviews were attended by healthcare.</p>

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

4.1.1 Reception was particularly busy this year with 584 new arrivals to the prison and 316 releases. The facilities are fit for purpose although limited in space, which can be a challenge when several prisoners arrive at once.

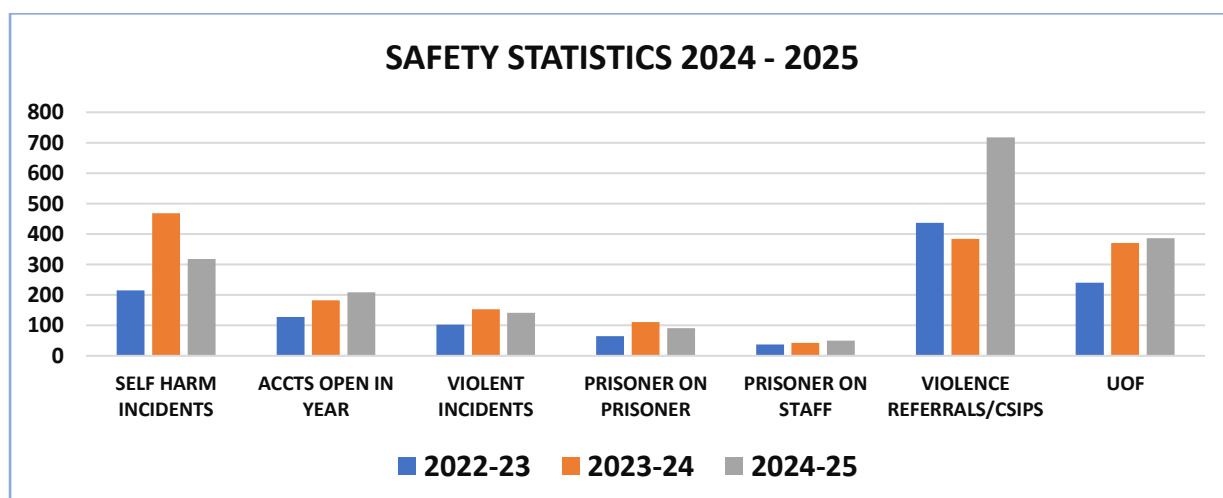
4.1.2 An induction survey of 20 prisoners was carried out by the Board in March 2025 (see annex B). All prisoners surveyed were positive about their experience in reception. They felt they had been treated well by staff and searches had been carried out respectfully. Healthcare had seen the majority of prisoners at the earliest opportunity. However, half the prisoners surveyed raised issues about delays in obtaining medication on arrival which proved very challenging for those concerned.

4.1.3 The induction programme went through several changes in the year. It has yet to settle and offer clear guidance to newly arrived prisoners. Face to face interaction with staff in the first few days is limited to an initial meeting with a prison officer on arrival and a group session led by the neurodiversity manager with input from careers advice/guidance staff. Much of the information is provided in digital form with communications being sent via emails to prisoners' laptops.

4.1.4 The first night cells continue to be poorly maintained despite being highlighted in HMIP's inspection in June 2024 and the Board's last annual report. While some minor improvements have been noted, 85% of prisoners surveyed said the cells were dirty. Furniture was broken, almost all cells had no shower curtains and the state of the sanitary facilities was poor.

4.1.5 Some 40% of the prisoners surveyed had issues with property from their sending prison, with vital legal documents going missing. This issue was raised in last year's annual report. Virtually all prisoners felt safe on their first night and positive comments were received regarding visits from the chaplaincy team.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody



4.2.1 Self-harm incidents decreased from 468 in 2023-2024 to 318 in 2024-2025, a decrease of 32%. While this decrease is acknowledged, it remains relatively high when compared to previous years.

4.2.2 The main method of self-harm was by cutting. Underlying causes ranged from reactions to unfavourable outcomes of events, lack of vapes and drug debt. The constant watch cell was far less frequently used than in previous years.

4.2.3 Welfare checks, during which staff must confirm the wellbeing of prisoners at unlock, are an on-going concern to the Board, although some improvement has been noted. The Governor has made this critical process a priority for operational staff, with focussed training being delivered. The Board continues to monitor the manner in which welfare checks are carried out.

4.2.4 The team of Listeners, a peer mentor scheme backed by the Samaritans, reduced to nine by the end of the year. The Listeners' work is valued by prisoners. They offer a 24 hour, seven days a week service and visit those who have an assessment, care in custody and teamwork document opened (ACCT, used to support prisoners who are at risk of self-harm and suicide), are in isolation, have been involved in violent incidents or who are in debt.

4.2.5 Neurodiversity support has become an essential function throughout the prison, providing much needed help for prisoners as well as giving staff a better understanding of how to interact with those who are neurodiverse.

4.2.6 A total of 209 ACCTs were opened, which is a 15% increase on the previous year, when 182 were initiated. Notably, 52 prisoners transferred in from other establishments on open ACCTs, which evidences the complexity and vulnerability of the population. ACCT documentation continues to vary in quality and although some improvement has been noted, some care maps lack meaningful actions and observations of prisoners were not always recorded in a timely manner.

4.2.7 Sadly, there were three deaths in custody during the year. Reports establishing the causes of these deaths are awaited from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO). The Board commends the Governor's empathetic and supportive approach to the bereaved families when all three deaths occurred. There was a further death within fourteen days of release from custody. This death occurred in 2023 but was not reported to the Board until November 2024.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

4.3.1 There were 141 violent incidents compared with 153 last year. The 141 incidents involved 359 individuals; 254 individuals were involved in prisoner on prisoner assaults and 105 individuals in assaults on staff. A large proportion of the incidents occurred on the induction wing. The main triggers for prisoner assaults were linked to debt and drugs, with non-compliance against processes being the highest reason for assaults on staff.

4.3.2 The main contributors involved in these acts of violence came from the 30-39 year old age group. However, young adults continue to be disproportionately involved in incidents, with 20% of the offences in March 2025 being committed by

those aged between 18 and 24, yet this group accounts for 13% of the prisoner population.

4.3.3 Challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs), used to support and manage prisoners who pose an increased risk of violence, rose significantly to just over 700 being initiated. While these plans are recognised as being a useful tool, a relaunch in year was needed as they were not being sufficiently effective. A tiered approach has been adopted in which the most serious incidents are prioritised.

4.3.4 There were 122 prisoners who self-isolated in the year with 10 prisoners self isolating recorded at the end of March 2025. The Board made regular checks on these prisoners and was satisfied that an adequate and a safe regime was being followed, although reintegration plans remain limited. The main and concerning reason for self-isolation continues to be debt and being under threat from others.

4.3.5 There were 11 serious incidents which the Board monitored. The majority of these involved prisoners going at height, (this can come in many forms including prisoners climbing over bars, up trees or onto the roof) a trend which is on the increase. While the incidents observed were well managed, these events divert staff resources and have an adverse effect on the regime for other prisoners.

4.4 Use of force

4.4.1 Use of force (UoF) governance and the amount of force used by staff on prisoners was highlighted as a concern in the HMIP Inspection in June 2024. The number of incidents where force was used is similar to last year (386 occasions compared to 371 last year). To ensure controlled use of force, 100% of incidents are now reviewed by senior management on a weekly basis and action taken where appropriate.

4.4.2 Most use of force involved the 30-39 year old age group, which correlates with the same age group being involved in the largest number of violent incidents. The main reason recorded for deploying use of force was non-compliance.

4.4.3 Batons were drawn once but not used, a marked decrease from last year. PAVA⁵, an incapacitant spray, was drawn seven times and used twice, which virtually replicates last year's figures. Activation of body worn video cameras increased marginally from 67% to 70%. Senior management acknowledge there is room for increased usage. A better overall picture of incidents has been achieved due to the implementation of the 30 second pre-record feature on the new cameras to capture any de-escalation prior to subsequent use of force.

4.4.4 The Board attends the monthly UoF meeting as an independent observer, where CCTV and body worn video camera footage is routinely reviewed. Overall, use of force incidents appear to be proportionate and controlled.

⁵ PAVA, or pelargonic acid vanillylamide, is a synthetic pepper spray.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

4.5.1 The security department saw an increase in staff which enabled more time to be dedicated to strengthening this function. Weekly disruption meetings were introduced to pull all the strands of physical security together to minimise the flow of substances across the site. However, illicit items, in particular the ingress and availability of illicit drugs, remains a significant challenge.

4.5.2 At the entrance to the prison, the enhanced gate security (EGS) appears to be carrying out more consistent levels of searches and scanning, with the use of hand held trace detectors being routinely used. Dog teams have been used effectively on a daily basis to carry out both active searches in operational areas and passive searches on personnel entering the prison. Photocopying of all mail started in August which resulted in some finds and hopefully closed a possible ingress route.

4.5.3 The Board has some concerns about unlocked gates and doors being identified on a regular basis. The number of such incidents will continue to be monitored.

4.5.4 The prison is rural, surrounded by farmland and public footpaths and has a very long perimeter fence. Internal and external perimeter checks are carried out three times a day. Unfortunately, bids for funding additional CCTV which would improve fence security have not been successful. Joint working with the police saw a number of arrests made. Throw overs (where people from outside the prison throw parcels containing illicit items over the walls, which are then picked up by prisoners), although an issue earlier in the year, appear to have reduced, as do the sighting and capturing of drones.

4.5.5 A programme of targeted cell searches, running at between 18 to 20 per month, took place. All searches follow intelligence. Positive results from random mandatory drug testing of prisoners have remained at just over 30%.

4.5.6 Despite these measures, illicit substances continue to be readily available on the wings. The main drugs of concern are Spice (a chemical compound that mimics the effects of the active ingredient in cannabis) or non-specific psychoactive substances, and cannabis. In the last six months of the year, there were over 400 emergency medical calls for prisoners suspected of being under the influence of a prohibited substance. During the year, the following were seized from prisoners: 117 mobile phones; 61 weapons; 147 finds of illegal drugs and 74 litres of illegally prison-brewed alcohol ("hooch").

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing and food

5.1.1 The prison estate still has many ageing, and in some cases, poor quality wings, with major investment required to upgrade some of the standard of accommodation. With the two new wings, Avebury and Kennet, now fully functional, the total prison capacity is 512. The three planned small secure house blocks are currently on hold.

5.1.2 Considerable internal decoration has been carried out to enhance some of the wings, improving the prison environment. However, the induction cells in Silbury B still need to be updated and maintained to a much higher and consistent standard of cleanliness.

5.1.3 The maintenance contractors, Gov Facility Services Limited (GFSL) have shown improvement under new management, with the backlog of works outstanding being reduced from 483 down to 135. A lack of labour hampers further progress. The Board has noted GFSL are beneficially working more closely with prison management.

5.1.4 Cleanliness of both the estate and wings has improved. More cleaners have been employed within the wings, although the Board continued to hear concerns about insufficient or inappropriate equipment and materials available to carry out the task. Externally, greater efforts have been made with the regular removal of litter from the grounds.

5.1.5 In-cell phones, together with laptops, continue to be greatly appreciated by the prison population, and this technology has enhanced their lives. Prisoners can order their own menus and are able to contact other services operating within the prison such as healthcare, canteen requests, the kitchen, probation and OMU. They are also able to keep in touch with family, which is so important to successful rehabilitation.

5.1.6 Food supplies were maintained during the year, although the kitchen did not always receive the items requested. The kitchen staff are to be congratulated on maintaining the many varied menus, while finding innovative ways to make funds go further. The daily allowance of approximately £3.00 per day per prisoner appears to have been met, notwithstanding spiralling food prices. There has also been a focus on farms and gardens supplying more produce to the kitchen in a move towards greater self-sufficiency as well as reducing costs. However, despite these measures, the prisoners are frequently dissatisfied with portion sizes.

5.1.7 Canteen prices have increased significantly, reflecting those in the community. However, this causes considerable difficulties for prisoners whose wages have remained static for several years.

5.2 Segregation

5.2.1 The care and separation unit (CSU) has eight segregation cells, a constant watch cell and a special accommodation cell.

5.2.2 The Board was pleased to note a considerable reduction of CSU use over the reporting year. During the year, 104 prisoners were accommodated in the CSU, a significant decrease from the previous year of 224. This reflects a drive by governors to support men on the wing, especially over drug related debt. However, occupancy levels were again on the increase by the end of the reporting year. In a number of cases this was due to prisoners engineering a move to segregation (for instance by carrying out a protest at height) in order to secure a transfer to another prison. A current lack of capacity within the prison system has meant that the opportunity to transfer through normal processes is considerably reduced. A total of 55 prisoners were transferred directly from the CSU to other establishments.

5.2.3 Eight prisoners were admitted to the CSU more than once, again a positive reduction of 84% on the previous year. Five men were held for over 42 days, under half that of the previous year.

5.2.4 22 prisoners arrived in the CSU with an open ACCT and a further 13 had one opened while there. There were 52 incidents of self-harm, affecting 31 different prisoners.

5.2.5 Staffing in the CSU remained broadly stable, with the majority of staff working hard with patience and empathy to support this vulnerable cohort. Two orderlies, appointed during the year, keep the unit spotless.

5.2.6 Prisoners were put on constant watch on 22 separate occasions. The majority of these lasted for five days or less, but one prisoner was on constant watch for 37 days and another for 16. When the constant watch cell was already occupied, constant watch was operated in a CSU cell with the door open; at one stage, there were two such open door cells in use. Each should have two officers on watch, but on occasions insufficient staff were available.

5.2.7 The suitability of the constant watch cell remains a considerable concern to the Board. Its location in the CSU is inappropriate and its structure produces a hidden corner and overall visibility into the cell for the attendant officer is poor. There were three incidents of self-harm in the cell during the year. Three constant watch cells were planned as part of the new house blocks. However, with this project on hold, the current situation seems set to continue.

5.2.8 The Board has experienced significant difficulties in attending segregation reviews, as these have not been held at a standardised time or day. The Governor shares this concern and is making efforts to improve the process to facilitate Board attendance.

5.3 Staff-prisoner/detainee relationships, keyworkers

5.3.1 Overall numbers of Band 3 officers have deliberately been reduced slightly over the last year, resulting in increased funding for Band 4 Supervising Officer (SO) positions and other priority roles across the establishment.

5.3.2 The Board was pleased to note that staff turnover has decreased across the year with resignation rates improving month on month, from a high of 20% at the start of the year to 9% at the end. This is reflected in a considerable improvement in the experience of Band 3 officers; only 3.5% now have less than a year's service (compared to 27% last year) and 17% have less than two years' service (compared to 43% last year).

5.3.3 The Board has observed numerous positive interactions between staff and men, including an officer greeting each prisoner by name at a gate; officers joining in with games of cards, table tennis and light-hearted informal conversations enjoyed by both parties. Negative comments from prisoners include the perception of cliques amongst some groups of officers and a concern about the management skills and attitudes of some of the younger and more inexperienced staff.

5.3.4 Key working remains a complex and still somewhat disappointing area. This function is now wing based, allowing key workers greater access to prisoners under their caseload. Despite this, against a target of approximately 540 sessions per month, actual delivery has remained at an average of 380 monthly sessions during the last nine months. Considerable energy has recently been put behind the process, with the appointment of a dedicated custodial manager; a focus on quality assurance, training for staff and a fortnightly oversight meeting. There is an ambition to increase sessions to two per month for all prisoners.

5.3.5 An ad hoc survey of a sample of prisoners shows a mixed picture: around a quarter say they do not know who their keyworker is, while a further 25% describe their key working interactions as being 'useful' or 'good'. The prison database details considerably more sessions than such a survey indicates; it is possible that some prisoners are not identifying key working sessions as such.

5.3.6 At the beginning of the reporting year, the prison council continued with the same format where a single meeting took place with prison council members, heads of departments and governors in attendance. In summary, the meetings covered the same topics month by month with very little progress and few problems resolved. A decision was made in August to introduce a new four-week structure which culminates in the final week of the month, when key issues are discussed and actioned where appropriate with the Governor and prison council chair.

5.3.7 The council was therefore put on hold to allow time for the various positions to be appointed, and the process to be communicated to all involved. The new process was launched in January and almost immediately it became clear that there was a lack of understanding from both staff and prisoners of what was expected. This resulted in meetings not taking place, minutes not being typed up or shared, and an overall lack of commitment to the new process. Three months into the process and many concerns from prison council members remain regarding the lack of communication and, more importantly, lack of progress and positive output from the final meeting in the cycle.

5.4 Equality and Diversity

5.4.1 As previously reported there is an excellent system in place which captures statistical information, identifying departures from the expected across a whole range of activities and circumstances. This information is used to identify areas of potential inequality or discrimination. Statistics gathered in relation to complaints, adjudications, numbers of enhanced prisoners, numbers of orderlies and the like can show whether one particular group based on age, ethnicity or any of the protected characteristics is potentially the subject of discrimination. This information is then discussed at monthly meetings which are well supported by relevant individuals and governors. However, there is little follow-up with any in-depth analysis of the reasons behind statistical anomalies, still less specific plans to deal with deficiencies. Efforts need to be made to achieve an outcome rather than just identifying a potential problem.

5.4.2 This year there were 70 discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs) lodged as opposed to 86 last year. Superficially this might be regarded as a positive sign. However, some prisoners have doubts about the effectiveness of the DIRF system and with only one complaint being upheld, one orderly was heard to say that he discourages applications on the basis that they are a waste of time. Nevertheless, the system is becoming more robust and an excellent initiative introduced in January has been the recruiting of a scrutiny panel. The panel consists of eight prisoners, a chair and vice chair. So far as is possible, members of the panel are appointed from minority groups. All completed DIRF investigations are sent for independent assessment by the Zahid Mubarek Trust. It is hoped that in the future prisoners will have greater confidence in the system.

5.4.3 A number of celebratory events have taken place including a Black History event which was well attended. Regular forums also take place concentrating on protected characteristics. In December the department organised a cultural awareness event for staff.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

5.5.1 The chaplaincy continued to deliver a broad range of essential services which are acknowledged by the establishment. Each week there have been 12 scheduled sessions which cover Bible and Islamic studies, morning worship, meditation, prayers and pastoral support. Also included are Changing Tunes sessions (a music rehabilitation programme) for both beginners and band members which are always well attended.

5.5.2 The continued visibility of the team across the prison offering support to all prisoners when experiencing personal or family issues, including family bereavement and terminal illness, is much appreciated. New prisoners continue to be seen within 24 hours of arrival, isolating prisoners are seen regularly and any prisoner over 50 and under 21 years of age are seen once a month.

5.5.3 The year has been challenging for the chaplaincy in terms of recruitment. However, the chapel is now close to being fully staffed with the Buddhist and Sikh

chaplaincy appointments filled, and the Anglican position currently at the interview stage. This leaves only the Rastafarian position still open.

5.5.4 Most importantly, the chapel continues to provide a quiet place of reflection and calmness for both staff and prisoners.

5.6 Incentive Schemes

5.6.1 Under the Incentives Policy Framework (IPF) used locally, which allows governors to incentivise good behaviour and address poor behaviour through a system of earned privileges, the current levels are basic (the lowest level of privileges), standard, enhanced and super enhanced. There were fewer enhanced/super enhanced prisoners than a year ago and consequently more on standard and basic. At the year end, enhanced/super enhanced prisoners numbered 224, a drop from 65% of the total to 45%; 243 were at standard level, an increase from 32% to 49% and 6% of prisoners were at basic level.

5.6.2 Prisoners widely believe that good behaviour is not adequately recognised. The IPF has been reviewed by staff and prisoners and an updated framework will be issued later this year. This work has been carried out in parallel to work on the prison's pay policy. The Board hopes that any changes will positively address prisoners' concerns.

5.7 Complaints

5.7.1 Over the reporting year, a total of 1,093 complaints were received, a marginal increase on last year (1,053 complaints). On average, there were 67 complainants each month, representing around 13% of the prison population. Just over a third of complaints were upheld each month.

5.7.2 In each month, complaints relating to residential issues were the most numerous. For much of last year, there was a consistent theme around missing or broken privacy keys for cells, which created frustration and anxiety about the safety of belongings. During the early months of this year, intermittent problems with the supply of hot water and heating (exacerbated on Silbury B by broken window closures) caused issues. Cell conditions in general, including lack of furnishings and storage, broken beds, mattress provision and bed bugs, all contributed to the high number of complaints.

5.7.3 The effectiveness of the complaints clerk means that an average of 98% of complaints are responded to within the appropriate timeframe. The Board commends the clerk on their dedication to pursuing property losses sustained during transfer from the sending prisons.

5.8 Property

5.8.1 Missing or lost property, either on transfer between establishments, or within the prison itself, continues to cause significant problems. The Board has been particularly concerned about the number of instances involving loss of essential

papers, often relating to vital legal processes, or containing personal details of the prisoner's family and friends. Sometimes these include irreplaceable family photographs or correspondence.

5.8.2 The situation remains where cell clearances are not being done effectively and cells are not being secured in a timely fashion, resulting in property loss. It remains the case that property is frequently lost when a cell clearance occurs. A cell may be subject to clearance, for instance, when a prisoner is sent to the CSU. Contrary to local policy, officers may fail to secure the cell of a prisoner who has been removed, prior to the cell being cleared of its contents. This leads to property being stolen from the insecure cell. Issues also arise when prisoners acquire goods in prison and do not follow the correct process to have them added to their property card, resulting in the items being liable for confiscation especially during transfer.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

6.1.1 In its last annual report the Board raised a number of concerns in relation to the provision of healthcare. Further concerns were raised by HMIP in its unannounced inspection in June 2024. Since that time there have been considerable improvements. A recruitment drive has led to full staffing with no vacancies, a situation that has not been seen at the prison for a very long time. As a result, management has been in a better position to quality control the delivery of healthcare.

6.1.2 There has been a dramatic improvement in respect of the attendance of healthcare at first ACCT reviews. Last year attendance fell below 40% but in the year ending March 2025, healthcare attended on 79% of first reviews. Of the remaining reviews, healthcare were not invited to 13% of reviews, with the remaining 8% of missed reviews occurring over weekends.

6.1.3 IT systems are functioning at full capacity with computers operating in both reception and the Silbury hub clinic room. However, there continue to be issues with external telephone lines in the healthcare building, which remain unresolved.

6.1.4 The condition of the healthcare building has further declined during the reporting year. There has still been no repair to the leaking roof and this has led to steadily degrading fabric. Flooring and furnishings are in need of replacement but improvements cannot be undertaken until the roof has been repaired and further damage averted. The condition of the waiting room is poor partly as a result of water damage and partly due to patient vandalism. Overall, as previously reported, the building is insufficient for current needs with inadequate facilities for clinics and consulting rooms. With the service now fully staffed the lack of space in the healthcare building has become a very real problem.

6.1.5 Anecdotally relationships between some prison officers and healthcare are poor. A number of officers perceive healthcare as being unresponsive and rule bound. Such attitudes, if shared with prisoners, are unhelpful because inevitably there is the potential for the undermining of the prisoners' perceptions of healthcare. Furthermore, the ability for officers and healthcare staff to work in partnership is put in peril. It is to be hoped that with better staffing healthcare may have the ability to help foster better relations.

6.2 Physical healthcare

6.2.1 There are ongoing problems with hospital outpatient appointments. The Board has found wait times for both routine and urgent appointments unacceptable. Average waiting times for routine appointments range from 16 to 25 weeks and urgent appointments range from eight to 12 weeks. This mirrors the community experience. However, there is a further confounding element in the prison and that is due to a lack of sufficient escorts. There is currently provision for two escorts a day, giving a total of 10 per week. Demand exceeds supply and on average 20

appointments are lost each month. A further six appointments are lost each month either because escorts arrive late or are diverted to other duties. The principle of equivalence demands that the provision of healthcare for prisoners should match that which is available for a patient in the community. This is clearly not happening in all cases so far as outpatient visits are concerned.

6.2.2 Wait times for routine GP appointments have improved considerably since the last reporting year.

6.2.3 There were 166 submissions/complaints lodged during the year. Of these, 146 were judged to be queries and 20 complaints. The key categories of complaint were medication issues, appointment requests, mattress accessibility and smoking cessation accessibility. During the year Board members have encountered a number of prisoners who have complained that nicotine replacement therapy is not available from healthcare. If prisoners are motivated to give up vaping it is disappointing that the means to help them do so is not available.

6.2.4 During the year the Board has encountered problems regarding the supply of a prisoner's medication on transfer. In one case a prisoner on transfer into the prison was without his psychiatric medication for six days and cited this as the reason for a subsequent serious act of self-harm.

6.2.5 A prisoner arriving at the prison is given a health screen at reception. If the prisoner is prescribed medication an in-possession risk assessment is completed to see whether it is safe for the prisoner to have possession of his medication. However, a prisoner arriving with medication is not permitted to retain this but must await a medication assessment by a GP and the issuing of a new prescription. If medication is essential this can be sourced from the healthcare pharmacy but only if it is in stock. NHS England has published advice entitled 'Advice for health and justice healthcare teams on medicines and pharmacy services continuity'⁶. That advice contains the following direction 'providers should continue to follow guidance and supply at least seven days (and a maximum of 28 days) supply of medicines when people are released or transferred'. It does not appear that there is liaison between HMP Erlestoke and the prison from which the prisoner is being transferred on the subject of continuity of medication supply.

6.2.6 Challenging behaviour from prisoners can be experienced in healthcare particularly in association with medication dispensing. To address this issue, two prison officers are assigned to healthcare during times of prisoner attendance. The adequacy of the supervision depends upon the diligence of the officers. Healthcare have raised concerns to risk register status, citing inadequate monitoring and supervision at the medication hatch and failure to deal with low level infractions such as vaping.

⁶ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/documents/advice-for-health-and-justice-healthcare-teams-on-medicines-and-pharmacy-services-continuity/#dispensing>

6.2.7 Previously the out of hours GP service was expressed as less than satisfactory. The service now provided is highly regarded with nurses reporting that when contacting the service, they receive direct communication from a clinician promptly.

6.2.8 Board members hear nothing but praise for the quality of the dental service from officers and patients alike. There are four dental sessions a week. The Board has no concerns over wait times.

6.2.9 The healthcare forum is now running again. It takes place monthly and is attended by wing representatives. A health promotion event is being planned to be led by the men themselves to encourage ownership and active participation.

6.3 Mental healthcare

6.3.1 An ever-present mental health demand puts an enormous strain on a service which has been understaffed during the reporting year. Even when the new nurse who has recently been recruited has passed through security checks and joins the team, pressures will remain.

6.3.2 In post is a registered mental health nurse and a learning disability nurse. The latter has taken responsibility for prisoners diagnosed with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). In addition, a social worker who has a specialist qualification as an approved mental health professional provides an in-house element of the team required to certify a patient under the Mental Health Act.

6.3.3 A psychiatrist visits once a week on a Tuesday. To avoid missed appointments, a problem experienced in the past, the psychiatrist visits patients on the wings. Previously, consultations then took place through locked cell doors, an unsatisfactory arrangement which prejudiced confidentiality. The practice has now ceased, with face-to-face consultations now the norm.

6.3.4 The lack of sufficient consultation rooms experienced by physical healthcare is felt even more acutely by mental health. For the future, cupboards at the back of the healthcare building are to be cleared with the intention of creating a consulting room. The problem of where to house the displaced contents of the existing cupboards is yet to be addressed.

6.4 Social care

6.4.1 There is a memorandum of understanding with Wiltshire County Council which is responsible for delivering social care. The Council responds to referrals for social care assessments within agreed time frames. However, despite this there are delays in respect of social care assessments. Not unreasonably, the Council require the prison to provide screening information in respect of prisoners to be referred to them for assessment. It typically takes up to two weeks for a wing to provide screening input. In practice during the year, the Board has observed delays in the assessment of prisoners requiring social care interventions.

6.4.2 During the year there have been occasions when there have been unacceptable delays in the provision of social care for those assessed as being in need. The problem arose as a result of care workers being excluded from the prison until they had received security clearance, which is a protracted exercise. The Governor has intervened by introducing a system of risk assessments to by-pass security check delays and this has resulted in a considerable improvement in the timely delivery of care. Security is maintained by the provision of escorts for carers attending the prison.

6.4.3 The prison is ill-equipped to cater for the needs of the elderly in declining health. During the year there was one particularly distressing case of a man who became incontinent of faeces. Although incontinence pads were provided by healthcare, there was no one available out of hours to change the pads. The elderly prisoner and staff were very upset at the situation that arose, the prisoner because of his discomfort and loss of dignity and staff through their inability to find a solution to the situation. The crisis continued until the prisoner was transferred to hospital.

6.4.4 The buddy system whereby fellow prisoners, assessed as suitable for the task, provide assistance to prisoners with disabilities, is working reasonably well. However, opportunities for buddies to undergo the training, which lasts a week, are very limited meaning that for the most part buddies receive only on the job training.

6.4.5 Wheelchair ramps have been constructed to allow disabled access to the education block and sports hall but have yet to be installed. The Board queries why a contract was entered into for the construction of a ramp which did not include installation.

6.4.6 Two new wheelchairs have been purchased to assist with the transportation of prisoners with mobility problems to facilities such as healthcare. The purchase contract provides for an annual service. There is now one wheelchair orderly.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

6.5.1 A new regime came into operation at the beginning of the reporting year and was amended again in January 2025, with a focus on providing one hour in the open air for all prisoners, and two hours out of cell daily for all prisoners, as required by the National Regime Model. This has meant a reduction in overall time in cell for unemployed prisoners from 22.5 hours reported last year to 21 hours. However, prisoners who are not engaged in purposeful activity are not unlocked until 11.15am, from 5.45pm the previous day. The number of prisoners in this position has reduced during the reporting year.

6.5.2 HMIP's Inspection report stated that 'accounting for the whereabouts of prisoners during the day was weak'⁷ (paragraph 3.36, page 19 of the report). This has been addressed by new procedures for escorting prisoners during moves to education and employment, coupled with an improved roll-reconciliation process.

⁷ <https://cloud-platform-e218f50a4812967ba1215eaecede923f.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/sites/19/2024/09/Erlestoke-web-2024.pdf>

The Board considers that the escort system still requires further work to ensure that all prisoners get to their place of work/education

6.5.3 Entitlement to physical exercise is met by a timetabled one-hour gym session during the week for all prisoners, plus an additional one-hour session for under-21s. A further one-hour session is offered to all prisoners at the weekend.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

6.6.1. The Drug Recovery Wing (DRW), with places for 66 men, has generally been a success during the last year and has shown several improvements.

6.6.2 Selection to the wing has been tightened to ensure that no prisoner attending Opiate Substitution Therapy (OST) can join the wing; all have to be vetted and prisoners can be deselected for dealing drugs or for failing a number of Mandatory Drugs Tests (MDTs). The training of officers on the wing has increased to ensure they are familiar with MDT testing and the issues for attendees. However, pressure on vacant spaces continues to apply, so some prisoners who are not suitable or are not committed to drug recovery still join the wing. This provides a disincentive to committed attendees.

6.6.3. Two courses run concurrently, and it appears that the course content is suitable and effective. Prisoners attending are generally positive about the courses and the atmosphere on the wing. Some relapse during or after completing a course but consider that they are helped through difficult periods by staff and other attendees.

6.6.4. Three substance misuse officers have now been in place for a year. They are ring fenced from other duties and are paid for at a national level. They have proved to be a great and enthusiastic asset to the wing and have introduced many supporting activities and programmes to help those attending courses to be kept busy while recovering. Examples include support from Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous and Cocaine Anonymous as well as support groups and other social activities.

6.6.5. The Incentivised Substance Free Living (ISFL) wing, Avebury, has had a more challenging year. While 40% of the wing is supposed to be allocated to those specifically progressing from drug recovery, in reality this proportion is far lower because of pressure on spaces elsewhere in the prison. This, allied with a lack of effectively trained staff on the wing, results in less support for those wishing to continue their drug-free journey.

6.7 Soft skills

6.7.1 The literary festival, 'Penned Up at Erlestoke', ran with 20 speakers addressing prisoner audiences. A writer in residence and a Creative Writing course was funded by the Friends of Erlestoke Prison. Additionally, 'Write Inside', a creative writing course aimed at dyslexic prisoners, was delivered.

6.7.2 The Friends of Erlestoke Prison ran weekly origami sessions and an art class. A Wiltshire School of Music initiative enabled prisoners to compose and record music. The Changing Tunes charity offered music sessions. The Koestler Awards for arts in criminal justice attracted 28 entries, of which 28% achieved an award, with two ceramics pieces being selected for exhibition.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

7.1.1 The Ofsted report which formed part of HMIP's Inspection⁸ (page 47 of the report) found the overall effectiveness of the education, skills and work provision to be inadequate. The quality of education was also found to be inadequate. The Ofsted report stated that not enough spaces were available in education, skills or work. The Board concurs with these findings, but notes that efforts are beginning to bear fruit and there are fewer prisoners not in education or employment at the end of this reporting year than last year.

7.1.2 The Ofsted report also found that 'leaders did not make sure that the spaces available were fully used and allocated to prisoners based on their needs and aspirations'. The prison has devoted significant effort during the reporting year to change the way that educational and employment opportunities are allocated. On arrival, prisoners are being consulted at induction on the employment pathway that they are interested in pursuing. Prisoners who are neurodivergent are now identified at induction and the neurodiversity manager contributes to the allocations process so that the needs of this cohort are taken into account. Progress is also being made in consulting with the existing prison population to record their selected pathways. New management and administrative processes have been required to record and draw on this information in order to inform and improve the allocation process, and these are still bedding in.

7.1.3 A roll-on roll-off approach has been introduced for all qualifications delivered by the education department, meaning that spaces becoming available due to post-enrolment withdrawals are being refilled straight away.

7.1.4 Attendance at classes by those allocated to study places and vocational employment opportunities has been disappointing, typically running at 75-80%, but the Board has perceived a strong management drive to improve this situation. Initiatives include the appointment of an activities' custodial manager and more follow-up/liaison between staff in education/employment locations and wing staff when prisoners do not attend. The new escort procedures have taken some time to become established and there is a lack of clarity as to the role of the wing staff in encouraging prisoners to attend education or employment, particularly when a prisoner has an appointment with OMU or healthcare which means that he cannot go to work/education during general moves.

7.1.5 The education department offered courses in English, maths, money management, art, art enrichment and ceramics. Achievements in English and maths are shown in annex C. In maths there were 75 enrolments on courses against a planned delivery of 88. In English, there were 83 enrolments on courses against a planned delivery of 120. Non-completion stood at 34% in maths and 24% in English, an improvement on last year. There was an overall success rate of 80% in maths

⁸ <https://cloud-platform-e218f50a4812967ba1215eaecede923f.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/sites/19/2024/09/Erlestoke-web-2024.pdf>

and 95% in English amongst those completing their courses. 25 learners passing English at Level 2 is worthy of note.

7.1.6 The prison has created a reading strategy action plan which includes specific initiatives to reach those with poor literacy. Good progress has been made in screening prisoners to identify those in need, but follow-up work has been affected by staff vacancies in the outreach department. The Shannon Trust charity funds a member of staff to work with mentors from within the prison population to assist in promoting reading and number skills amongst prisoners with very low literacy and numeracy. The prison also benefitted from a member of staff from Wiltshire Council's Multiply initiative, which aims to boost numeracy skills.

7.1.7 15 prisoners were enrolled on distance learning courses with the Open University and a further 10 were enrolled on courses offered by the Prison Education Trust. The prison continues to have its subscription with Way2Learn, enabling prisoners to self-study in their cells.

7.1.8 Seven prisoners participated in an Unlocking Criminology module, alongside students from Bath Spa University. There was a collaboration with Bristol University, in which four prisoners participated in elements of a Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) foundation course.

7.1.9 The contract for the library has been held by Wiltshire Council for many years though this is terminating in May 2025. All prisoners have the opportunity to visit the library on a weekly timetabled slot. The library runs a monthly reading group, an emergent readers' group and publishes topical monthly quizzes.

7.1.10 Storybook Dads is an initiative where a prisoner is recorded reading a story for his child. The prison has benefitted from a Friends of Erlestoke Prison volunteer, who has filmed 185 such sessions in the course of the reporting year, among the highest number recorded throughout the prison estate.

7.2 Vocational training, work

7.2.1 Accredited vocational training courses were delivered by Milton Keynes College in warehousing skills, creative craft, education and training, hospitality and food safety, carpentry and joinery and horticulture. Achievements are set out in annex D.

7.2.2 In last year's report the problems with tutor recruitment were highlighted and these have continued. The delivery of cleaning training was not possible due to the inability to recruit a tutor, and forklift courses were only offered for half of the reporting year for the same reason. The recruitment of a new tutor for Essential Digital Skills towards the end of the reporting year meant that this qualification has started to be delivered successfully.

7.2.3 The Clink charity delivered food safety training to prisoners working in the prison kitchen. Unfortunately, the charity has decided it can no longer offer this provision within the prison and no further courses will be delivered.

7.2.4 A new set of physical education instructor courses accredited by Active IQ was introduced during the year and Physical Education staff have qualified as assessors. 11 prisoners achieved the Gym Instructor Level 2 course.

7.2.5 Vocational work opportunities were offered in packaging retail goods, bicycle maintenance, recycling, farms and gardens, and textiles. There were 107 places available in these roles though they were not always recruited to capacity. Where prisoners were allocated to roles, the gap between the number allocated and the number attending was too high, typically running at about 75-80% attendance. The prison is developing initiatives to improve attendance, but this issue remains work in progress.

7.2.6 In addition to vocational employment, prisoners were engaged as orderlies (trusted prisoners who provide services that contribute to the running of the prison), peer mentors, cleaners, servery workers, laundry workers, wing painters, wing barbers, green champions and neurodiversity representatives. At the end of the reporting year, there were 38 prisoners who had not been allocated to any purposeful activity. This is a significant improvement on the previous reporting year.

7.3 Offender management, progression

7.3.1 The Offender Management Unit (OMU) was under resourced again during the year, with two on maternity leave and one offender manager working remotely, and thus unable to talk to prisoners directly. However, the unit was fully staffed by the end of the year.

7.3.2 The year has seen an unusually high number of changes to the criteria for release. The OMU has had, in several cases, to carry out full recalculations on every prisoner in the prison, to identify which prisoners were eligible for each change. This has resulted in considerable extra pressure prior to each of these changes being enacted. Sadly, the number of recalls for breaching licences has been at a high level; the short time frame for some of these releases does not always allow sufficient time to prepare a prisoner fully for release.

The main changes have been:

- TPRS (Temporary Presumptive Recategorisation Scheme, an urgent measure designed to facilitate the presumptive recategorisation of prisoners from category C to category D to make the best use of the prison estate) increased to a requirement of 24 months left to serve for a prisoner to be transferred.
- ECSL (End of Custody Supervised Licence) which allowed approximately 25 prisoners out early.
- HDC4+ (Home Detention Curfew) eligibility was extended to prisoners serving over four years.
- SDS 40 (Standard Determinate Sentence 40) provided early release for 12 prisoners in the first tranche in September, and 25 prisoners in the second tranche in October.
- Eligibility to transfer to category D to take place earlier in a sentence.

7.3.3 The backlog of updating OASys (offender assessment system which is an essential data tool used by prisons and probation services to assess the risks and needs of prisoners) has been maintained at the satisfactorily low number of 11 in total. Each offender manager has an average caseload of 60 prisoners to manage, often in conjunction with external Community Offender Managers. This is a high number with whom to maintain an acceptable level of contact, especially given the level of movements between prisons.

7.3.4 Prisoner cohort:

- There are seven prisoners over 70 and a further 21 over 60. Health and self-care issues among this cohort create challenges for both wing staff and healthcare. In some cases, there are inadequate facilities to meet their needs.
- Young offenders are screened to identify their level of maturity, which can result in specific packages of support. Of the 30 prisoners aged 21 or under, 27 have been identified as having a low level of maturity.
- There are 144 life or IPP sentenced prisoners as of late March, of which 53 are on indeterminate sentences or have been recalled as such. These prisoners in particular need targeted support, whether inside or outside a progression context.
- There are an increasing number of prisoners with very complex mental health needs. Despite the very welcome addition of a neurodiversity manager, this still puts additional pressures on the mental health and psychology departments, as well as on prisoners in their wings.

7.3.5 A higher number of eligible prisoners have been transferred to category D open conditions as there have been several vacancies especially in the North of England. Previous transport difficulties have been largely overcome by allowing the prison to use its own transport.

7.3.6 Parole boards are being held in some cases two or three times a week. Successful applicants appear less likely to be recalled for breaching licence conditions than other prisoners, who are released at the end of their tariff.

7.3.7 As a national resource providing high-intensity offending behaviour programmes for prisoners, the prison has continued to run the same three courses as at last reporting year, pending introduction of the new national courses in the autumn of this year: Thinking Skills Programme (TSP), Kaizen IPV (Inter Partner Violence) and Becoming New Me (BNM+, a cognitive-behavioural programme for adult males convicted of a sexual offence).

7.3.8 Staffing for these courses improved during the reporting year, but there does appear to be a high staff turnover in the programmes team, although the Board acknowledges this may be partly due to the role often being used as a stepping stone to forensic psychologist training.

7.3.9 There were less completions on the TSP course (moderate intensity) as it was not running from October 2024 to March 2025 due to there being insufficient

prisoners at the prison who matched the required risk scores. The initial target of 60 places was therefore reduced to 30.

7.3.10 The last cohort of Kaizen IPV and BNM+ (both high intensity courses) were running at the end of the reporting year and will finish in August 2025 prior to the first of the new course 'Building Choices' starting in September. Staff training for the new course starts in July. There will be four strands of Building Choices, including two for prisoners with learning difficulties.

7.3.11 The Board understands that Kaizen IPV was running on a one-to-one basis for part of the reporting year due to understaffing, so the targets set at the outset for this course could not be met:

Course	Target Starts	Actual starts	Target Completions	Actual completions
TSP	30 (approved from 60 due to low need)	30	27 (approved from 54)	23
Kaizen IPV	28	15	25	14
BNM+	8	8	7	5
Total	66	53	59	42

7.3.12 The new online selection process (PNI) seems to be working much more efficiently than the previous personal needs assessments (PNA), with the vast majority of prisoners now having their eligibility for courses assessed and approved before being transferred to the prison. This has been a marked improvement for prisoners and staff alike, although there is a very large waiting list for BNM+ as it is not available at many prisons and it is a six month course with only eight places per course.

7.3.13 As one of four prisons offering a Progression Regime (PR), prisoners can be transferred with the objective of joining PR as part of their sentence plan. Kennet and Imber units, collectively called The View, are designated PR wings, with a maximum capacity of 80 prisoners. Kennet was opened at the start of this reporting period. Prisoners have more association time and access to a kitchen, with plans for additional facilities such as a long awaited 'click and collect' style shop.

7.3.14 The number of prisoners on the PR has fluctuated due to release, transfers, de-selection and resignation. At the end of March 2025 there were 68 prisoners involved in the PR with four awaiting transfers from other establishments with the objective of joining the PR. Several prisoners explained that they had a six month plus wait for a transfer to HMP Erlestoke. Outcomes resulted in 17 prisoners being released (12 were IPPs) and nine being transferred to open conditions, the highest numbers since PR started at the prison.

7.3.15 About 50% of those on PR are intended to be IPP prisoners; at the end of March, this figure stood at just over 32%. Some IPP prisoners who have been recalled have found PR helpful in developing self-awareness and building evidence

on behaviours for a future parole board. Other IPP prisoners are not suited to the challenges of PR or do not find it helpful as part of their sentence plan.

7.3.16 The routine of regular meetings involving the prisoners has continued, with external speakers such as parole board members bringing useful insight for those on the regime. The PR staff have also worked to educate wing staff, inviting one representative to the weekly meetings, so that they can better understand the PR and the challenges involved. There are plans to appoint a prisoner community champion this year, to support the creation of a PR community.

7.4 Family Contact

7.4.1 Social visits to prisoners continued to run on four afternoons a week (including weekends) by PACT (Prison Advice and Care Trust) through the services of a part-time family engagement manager and a family support worker, who are sometimes also supported by volunteers. Feedback from families regarding the online booking process was mainly positive, although complaints persist regarding the length of time the telephone booking line keeps callers on hold. Complaints were voiced about the lack of shelter in adverse weather for those queuing to enter the prison, particularly for the elderly and those with young children and babies in buggies. The Board is pleased to note that a portacabin near the entrance gate has now been adapted to function as a visitors' waiting room with seating and a children's play area.

7.4.2 The Board observed that the searching of visitors was courteous and sensitively done, particularly with children. Visitors and prisoners spoken to were mostly positive about the food and drink items available for purchase in the visits hall, and particularly appreciated the home baked cakes.

7.4.3 The number of family days run by PACT increased to eight during the year, with two now being solely for adult visitors. The venue has been changed from the spacious sports hall to the much smaller visits hall, which can feel cramped as the number of spaces for each event remains at 15 prisoners. The timing has also been changed to an earlier 9am start (previously 10am), which may create difficulties for some families living at a distance from the prison. Over 50 applications were received by PACT for each family day, which were attended by 113 adult visitors and 89 children.

7.4.4 A further four family days were organised and funded by the PR team exclusively for those on the regime, who are not permitted to also apply for PACT family days.

7.4.5 The visits hall was unavailable for use for a short period during the year due to the discovery of RAAC in the building, but visits were able to continue in the chapel on an interim basis.

7.4.6 Contact with family and friends was also facilitated through in-cell telephones and the social video calls which were available on four evenings each week.

7.5 Resettlement Planning

7.5.1 The Employment Hub has continued to be pro-active in preparing prisoners for release, conducting interviews with them 12 weeks prior to release and providing practical support with issues such as CVs, job searches and interview preparation, and applying for ID documentation, bank accounts and benefits.

7.5.2 The weekly multi-disciplinary Release Boards introduced last year and led by the Prison Employment Lead (PEL) review each prisoner's case at 10-12 and four weeks pre-release. For the ECSL and SDS40 early release schemes these were increased to three release boards at 16, ten and four weeks to allow preparation for anyone who might be released earlier than anticipated. These boards provide an individualised approach to highlighting, discussing and actioning any requirements for successful release and resettlement as they are attended by the prisoner's prisoner offender manager, community offender manager and neurodiversity manager, as well as by representatives from healthcare, substance misuse, housing and several 'through the gate' support agencies.

7.5.3 This holistic approach is further demonstrated by the introduction of weekly group inductions by the Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) team and the neurodiversity manager to introduce new arrivals to the available employment pathways at the outset. This encourages the prisoners to focus on their interests and future employment aspirations and to follow the pathway to improve their employability for release and gain relevant qualifications. Prisoners spoken to at these inductions were mainly appreciative of the in-person explanations of the pathways prior to completing their Individual Learning Plans (ILPs), which have seen an increase from 69% to 88% over the past year. Prisoners were also appreciative of the presence of several neurodiversity peer representatives to provide additional support and encourage inclusivity.

7.5.4 New pathways during the year have included a highly individualised inclusion pathway for complex needs neurodiverse prisoners who are unable to access mainstream pathways but who work towards participating in courses such as art or origami as stepping stones towards a more vocational-based course. Another introduction for neurodiverse prisoners has been the introduction of the GOOP (Greener on the Outside in Prison) research project, which ties in with the new Inclusion pathway and facilitates working in green spaces to help the wellbeing of complex prisoners. A self-employment course has been another new offering.

7.5.5 The resettlement fairs have continued to be positively received by those prisoners closest to release, as well as some IPP and lifer prisoners approaching parole. Two fairs were held during the year and 50 prisoners were invited to each, with a high attendance rate of 45 and 46 respectively. Separate events were also held with Iceland, Thames Water, Greene King, Milestone Infrastructure, Five Rivers Construction and Suez Waste Management. During the Iceland event, four candidates were interviewed and four jobs were offered. Two job offers followed the Greene King event and one following the Milestone event.

7.5.6 As Erlestoke is a resettlement prison, additional focus on supporting prisoners into sustainable employment following release is provided by the Employment Advisory Board (EAB). It also provides challenge on the prison's training and employment opportunities and aims to connect the prison with local and national businesses to open up training and employment opportunities for prisoners and prison leavers. It meets quarterly and is chaired by a local business leader, who also acted on a prisoner's request to run an entrepreneur forum for a group of interested prisoners.

7.5.7 Employment outcomes are measured at both six weeks and six months post-release using data collected by probation staff. The prison's employment targets for both these measuring points are set annually by HMPPS. This year the prison's performance data showed 15.98% of those released were in employment six weeks later (the target was 24.8%) and 33.33% at six months post-release (the target was 30.97%). As the prison exceeded its six week post-release target last year, the Board noted that the early release schemes and the suspension of data collection for about seven months during the year are likely to have been contributing factors to the prison's failure to meet its target this year.

7.5.8 The total number of releases into the Community during the year was 243, of which over 90% had accommodation on the first night of release.

8. The work of the IMB

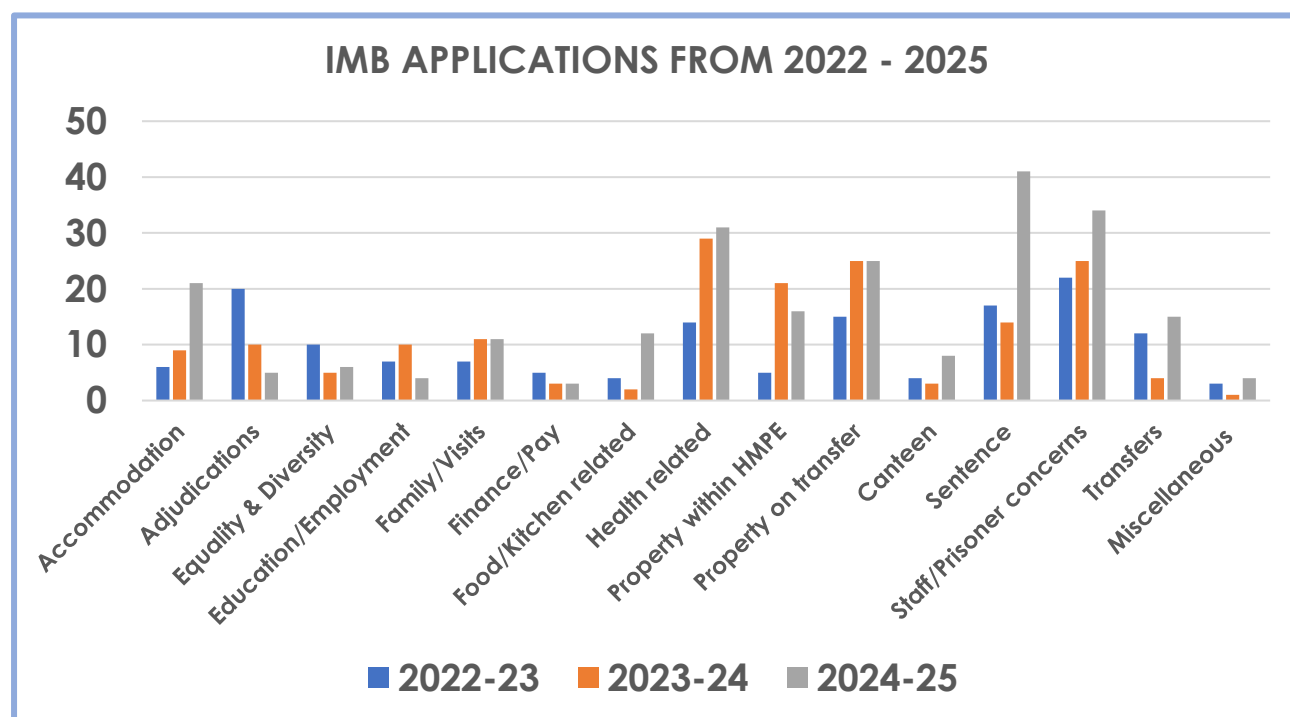
During the year, members of the Board visited the prison on at least three different occasions each week, carrying out monitoring visits to all areas, responding to applications and observing a range of prison meetings (such as health boards, education, security and safety meetings and the prison council).

Regular meetings with the Governor and her deputy provide useful updates on the prison status, and the Governor reports, in person, to board meetings each month. A total of 363 visits were carried out during the year.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	13
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	13
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	12
Total number of visits to the establishment	363

Applications to the IMB



Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	9	21
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	10	5
C	Equality	5	6
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	10	4
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	11	11
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	3	3
F	Food and kitchens	2	12
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	29	31
H1	Property within this establishment	21	16
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	25	25
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	3	8
I	Sentence management, including home detention curfew (HDC), release on temporary licence (ROTL), parole, release dates, re-categorisation	14	41
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	25	34
K	Transfers	4	15
L	Miscellaneous	1	4
	Total number of applications	172	236

Annex A

Service providers

- Maintenance: Gov Facility Services Limited (GFSL)
- Education: Milton Keynes College; Wiltshire Libraries
- Escort contractor: Serco
- Primary healthcare and mental Health: Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust (with support from other providers for the substance misuse programme (Change, Grow, Live), GP services (Dr PA), dentistry (Time for Teeth), podiatry and other services
- Social Care: Wiltshire County Council
- Visitors' centre: Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT)
- Resettlement support: Catch 22; Reconnect

Annex B

IMB HMP Erlestoke prisoner induction survey



SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESPONSES

(Survey 2024 responses in red; N/A = question not asked in 2024)

Q1	Were you prepared for your transfer to HMP Erlestoke by your previous prison?			
Yes	10 (50%)	N/A	
No	10 (50%)	N/A	
Don't remember	0 (0%)	N/A	

Q2	What was your experience of the journey to HMP Erlestoke?			
Good	11 (55%)	N/A	
Reasonable	6 (30%)	N/A	
Not good	3 (15%)	N/A	

Q3	Did you have any issues with your property on transfer?			
Yes	8 (40%)	N/A	
No	12 (60%)	N/A	

Q4	When you arrived at HMP Erlestoke, how long did you spend in Reception?			
Less than 2 hours	16 (80%)	(67%)	
More than 2 hours	4 (20%)	(33%)	
Don't remember	0 (0%)	(0%)	

Q5	When you were searched in Reception, was this done in a respectful way?			
Yes	19 (95%)	(67%)	
No	0 (0%)	(0%)	
Don't remember	0 (0%)	(0%)	
Was not searched	1 (5%)	(33%)	

Q6	Overall, how were you treated in Reception?			
Very well	11 (55%)	(78%)	
Quite well	9 (45%)	(22%)	
Quite badly	0 (0%)	(0%)	
Very badly	0 (0%)	(0%)	
Don't remember	0 (0%)	(0%)	

Q7	When you first arrived here, did you have any of these problems?			N/A
	Yes and staff helped	Yes but staff didn't help	Didn't have this problem	
Feeling depressed	4 (20%)	2 (10%)	14 (70%)	
Feeling suicidal	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	18 (90%)	
Needing protection from other prisoners	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	18 (90%)	

Q8	When you arrived here, were you able to talk to a member of staff in private about any problems?		
Yes	.....	5 (25%)	(55%)
No	.....	4 (20%)	(45%)
Didn't have any of these problems on arrival	.....	11 (55%)	(0%)

Q9	Did you see someone from healthcare in Reception?		
Yes	.....	14 (70%)	(89%)
No	.....	4 (20%)	(11%)
Don't remember	.....	2 (10%)	(0%)

Q10	Did you have problems in getting medication when you arrived?		
Yes	.....	10 (50%)	(33%)
No	.....	10 (50%)	(67%)
Don't remember	.....	0 (0%)	(0%)

Q11	Before you were locked up on your first night, were you offered any of these?		
	Yes	No	Don't remember
Vapes	19 (95%) (78%)	1 (5%) (22%)	0 (0%) (0%)
Toiletries	16 (80%) (45%)	4 (20%) (55%)	0 (0%) (0%)
A shower	18 (90%) N/A	2 (10%) N/A	0 (0%) N/A
A free phone call	11 (55%) N/A	8 (40%) N/A	1 (5%) N/A
Something to eat	19 (95%) (78%)	1 (5%) (22%)	0 (0%) (0%)
Talk to a Listener or the Samaritans	15 (75%) (67%)	4 (20%) (33%)	1 (5%) (0%)
Support from another prisoner (Rep)	15 (75%) (33%)	5 (25%) (67%)	0 (0%) (0%)

Q12	On your first night in this prison, how clean or dirty was your cell?		
Very clean	.....	0 (0%)	(0%)
Quite clean	.....	3 (15%)	(22%)
Quite dirty	.....	6 (30%)	(11%)
Very dirty	.....	11 (55%)	(67%)
Don't remember	.....	0 (0%)	(0%)

Q13	Did your cell have any of the following?		
	Yes	No	Don't remember
Shower curtain	1 (5%) (11%)	19 (95%) (89%)	0 (0%) (0%)
Toilet brush with holder	4 (20%) (0%)	16 (80%) (100%)	0 (0%) (0%)
Toilet seat and lid	1 (5%) (0%)	19 (95%) (100%)	0 (0%) (0%)
Curtains	0 (0%) (22%)	20 (100%) (78%)	0 (0%) (0%)
Window closures (could shut window)	4 (20%) (1%)	16 (80%) (99%)	0 (0%) (0%)

Q14	Did you sign a Cell Inventory Checklist?		
Yes	5 (25%) (0%)	
No	14 (75%) (100%)	
Don't remember	1 (5%) (0%)	

Q15	Did you sign an Induction Compact?		
Yes	10 (50%) N/A	
No	10 (50%) N/A	
Don't remember	0 (0%) N/A	

Q16	Did you feel safe on your first night?		
Yes	17 (85%) (100%)	
No	2 (10%) (0%)	
Don't remember	1 (5%) (0%)	

Q17	Did you have numbers put on your PIN phone within 24 hours?		
Yes	13 (65%) (89%)	
No	7 (35%) (11%)	
Don't remember	0 (0%) (0%)	

Q18	In your first few days here, did you get these things?		
	Yes	No	Don't remember
Items from the canteen	12 (60%) (78%)	8 (40%) (22%)	0 (0%) (0%)
Access to clean clothing that fitted you	13 (65%) N/A	7 (35%) N/A	0 (0%) N/A
PIN phone credit	12 (60%) N/A	8 (40%) N/A	0 (0%) N/A
Your personal property	13 (65%) N/A	7 (35%) N/A	0 (0%) N/A
Laptop and instruction in how to use it	14 (70%) (11%)	6 (30%) (89%)	0 (0%) (0%)

Q19	Did your induction cover everything you needed to know about HMPE?		
Yes	13 (65%) N/A	
No	6 (30%) N/A	
Don't remember	1 (5%) N/A	

Q20	Did you have visits to Education and the Gym within the first week?		
Yes	10 (50%)	N/A
No	10 (50%)	N/A
Don't remember	0 (0%)	N/A

Q21	Were your reading needs assessed effectively?		
Yes	10 (50%)	N/A
No	10 (50%)	N/A
Don't remember	0 (0%)	N/A

Q22	Were you given advice/guidance re Employment Pathways and jobs?		
Yes	17 (85%)	N/A
No	3 (15%)	N/A
Don't remember	0 (0%)	N/A

Q23	Were you told about the following during your Induction?		
	Yes	No	Don't remember
Education	13 (65%) (78%)	7 (35%) (22%)	0 (0%) (0%)
Employment	14 (70%) (67%)	6 (30%) (33%)	0 (0%) (0%)
OMU	18 (90%) (55%)	2 (10%) (45%)	0 (0%) (0%)
IMB	19 (95%) (67%)	1 (5%) (33%)	0 (0%) (0%)
Family Visits (PACT)	12 (60%) (33%)	8 (40%) (67%)	0 (0%) (0%)
Chaplaincy	20 (100%) (78%)	0 (0%) (22%)	0 (0%) (0%)
Employment Hub	14 (70%) N/A	6 (30%) N/A	0 (0%) N/A
Wellbeing and substance misuse	14 (70%) (45%)	6 (30%) (55%)	0 (0%) (0%)
Regime	9 (45%) (11%)	11 (55%) (89%)	0 (0%) (0%)
Shannon Trust	12 (60%) (67%)	8 (40%) (33%)	0 (0%) (0%)
Key working	12 (60%) (55%)	8 (40%) (45%)	0 (0%) (0%)
Gym	12 (60%) (55%)	8 (40%) (45%)	0 (0%) (0%)
Debt Management	8 (40%) (33%)	12 (60%) (67%)	0 (0%) (0%)
Library	16 (80%) (55%)	4 (20%) (45%)	0 (0%) (0%)

Q24	Were you asked for feedback about your Induction at HMPE?		
Yes	3 (15%)	N/A
No	17 (85%)	N/A
Don't remember	0 (0%)	N/A

Annex C

Achievements in English and Maths

Qualification	Planned delivery number	Actual enrolments	Completions	Achievements
English Entry Level	56	21	15	15
English Level 1	48	31	23	21 (includes two awaiting results)
English Level 2	16	32	26	25
Maths Entry Level	24	18	13	13
Maths Level 1	40	37	25	20 (includes one awaiting results)
Maths Level 2	24	22	13	8

Annex D

Achievements in Vocational Training

Sector	Awarding body	Achievements/awaiting results
Carpentry	City & Guilds	29 Level 1 Certificates 6 Level 2 Diplomas
Fork-lift truck/ Warehousing	AITT	14 individual modules
Horticulture	City & Guilds	27 Level 1 Certificates (includes one awaiting results) Seven Level 2 Certificates (includes one awaiting results)
Textiles	NCFE	42 Level 1 Awards 15 Level 2 Certificates
Food safety/ Hospitality/ Professional Cookery	City & Guilds	38 Level 1 Awards 6 Level 1 Certificates
Education/learning support	City & Guilds	28 Level 2/3 Awards
Essential Digital Skills	NCFE	10 Entry Level 3 qualifications
Customer Service/ Team Leading		37 Awards 7 Certificates



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