



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP/YOI Stanford Hill

**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 the establishment	4
3. Executive summary and key points	5
 Evidence sections 4 – 7	
4. Safety	8
5. Fair and humane treatment	10
6. Health and wellbeing	14
7. Progression and resettlement	18
 The work of the IMB	
Board Statistics	23
Applications to the IMB	24
 Annex A	
Service providers	25
 Annex B	
Tables and graphs	26

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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 (NPM) 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 Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) is part of the United Kingdom's NPM.

2. Description of the establishment

Standford Hill is one of a group of three prisons near Leysdown in Kent. Two prisons adjoin it – HMP Swaleside (a category B training prison) and HMP Elmley (a category B local prison). It is sited on 300 acres of farmland and was originally a Royal Air Force camp in the Second World War.

Standford Hill is an open prison and classified as a category D prison and Young Offender Institution (YOI). It provides accommodation for 464 male prisoners¹ who have been categorised as suitable to be held in open conditions. Each prisoner has his own room in one of three wings. A wing usually houses new prisoners; more established prisoners occupy B wing; and most of the occupants of C wing work outside. Their work hours are often flexible, and they may work through the night.

A and B wings both have space for 192 prisoners; each wing has three landings, with four spurs on each. C Wing has 80 individual pods.

A and B wings have their own serveries. In both wings, if space permits, prisoners can eat meals either in their rooms or together, on tables provided on the ground floor. There are also several microwave ovens on each wing, which gives prisoners the option to cook and prepare their own food. C wing has a servery, and meals are taken into the prisoners' individual pods.

The main priority for HMP/YOI Stanford Hill is the resettlement of prisoners and supporting them to avoid reoffending on release. This encompasses education, training, work, and preparation for resettlement.

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. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

The period under review was one of significant instability in the Prison Service. Both before and after the reporting year, legislative changes to sentences were made to address overcrowding in prisons. The consequent steps taken to overcome this problem mainly took place in the reporting year. This had wide-ranging consequences for many prisons including Stanford Hill. We feel the impact has been particularly great in open prisons (category D) as it has affected the rehabilitative function of those prisons.

Early release schemes and the temporary presumptive re-categorisation Scheme (TPRS) have had a significant impact on both the mix and the number of prisoners at Stanford Hill. Stanford Hill has had a stable environment for many years with increasing success at reducing reoffending. This was reflected in an inspection during the year by His Majesty's Inspectorate for prisons (HMIP) which received high scores across most inspection categories.

We believe that the change in the prison population has already compromised the rehabilitative functions of the prison. The influx of generally category C prisoners combined with the reduced duration of prisoner stays threatens the pre-existing stability of the prison and negates the ability to substantially improve prisoner behaviour and occupational prospects. Due to early release schemes, at times the prison has also been substantially under-occupied. The offender management unit (OMU) has been under extreme pressure due to the necessary work required to facilitate the release of prisoners early.

We understand the population pressures that required such drastic action to be taken. However, it impairs the effectiveness of a prison that has been producing exceptional results in relation to educational attainment and reducing reoffending. A very well constructed prison model is at risk of being destabilised.

There have been frustrations for the IMB during the year as recommendations we have suggested more than once have not been implemented. The prison, at the time of compiling this report, has still not implemented the system of PIN phones and it is still lacking adequate scanning equipment in reception.

While the establishment of the prison shop is very positive, we believe it could be improved with some basic revisions of the model.

The recruitment freeze during the year has left the prison with some gaps in personnel, particularly in relation to security staff. This has now been remedied.

Overall, the Board observe that Stanford Hill is an exceptionally well run and effective prison with outstanding results in the rehabilitation of prisoners. It is however very important that the population settles, so the prison is able to focus on rehabilitating prisoners and not being used as a short-term holding facility.

3.2 Key points

3.2.1 Main findings

Safety

The Board views that the prison is generally safe, although the atmosphere has been subtly changed by the changing mix of prisoners. However, the prison management have been able to maintain a safe, well-run prison in which prisoners' welfare is paramount.

Fair and humane treatment

From the Board's observations, we believe that the prison regime is fair with a strong emphasis on trying to rehabilitate prisoners.

Health and wellbeing

The Board notes that healthcare services have radically improved in recent years, and the provision now is very good. There is a strong emphasis on improving prisoner wellbeing.

Progression and resettlement

Successful resettlement is the core of what the prison does and despite the disruption occasioned by the reduction in the prison population, we do not view that this has changed as yet.

3.3 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

We believe that the disruption to the prison population has resulted in the prison struggling to maintain its effectiveness as a vehicle for rehabilitation. It is essential that open prisons are given the stability to focus on rehabilitation, and this can only come with a more stable and appropriate prison population.

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

Standford Hill's initiative in establishing a prison shop is to be commended, but it could be improved by employing staff with the right level of experience or provide training in running retail businesses. If the management of the shop can be improved, the service should consider a bigger premises with a more ambitious remit in order to serve the prisoners better.

Staffing levels at night are very low, raising concerns about whether the prison is adequately resourced to respond effectively to unexpected incidents. We question whether the prison has adequate staffing to ensure 24-hour security under these conditions.

Technology to validate release on temporary licence (ROTL) has been suggested in previous reports - we believe this needs to be implemented to save significant staff costs.

The provision of PIN phones has been discussed for a very long time. It needs to be implemented to support relationships and rehabilitation.

TO THE GOVERNOR

While we appreciate that the prison has tried to obtain authorisation for non-internet mobile phones, this needs to be pursued. The current telephony provision is inadequate.

We believe that prison officers should wherever possible be on the wings for greater visibility, and to manage risk rather than in the wing office.

Body worn cameras should be worn routinely.

3.4 Progress since the last report

Issue raised	Progress
Gov facility services Limited (GFSL) concerns	We have maintained regular dialogue and seen some improvements
Impact of the temporary presumptive recategorisation scheme (TPRS)	So far there has not been a discernible deterioration, but we keep this under review
Staff sickness	Continuous improvement
Laundry	Some new machinery, especially new dryers have been installed. There has been an improvement, but we keep the situation under close review.
Condition of the buildings	A significant programme of renovation has begun.
Scanning equipment	X-Ray machine and bag scanner has been implemented.
PIN phones	Still not implemented
Technology for monitoring prisoners on RoTL	Not implemented

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

The reception area is just adequate for the ongoing transfer of prisoners in and out of the prison. This year it has been very busy with the ongoing early release schemes and the TPRS.

During the year the number of receptions has rapidly increased. Trying to maintain capacity has been difficult at times due in part to the transfer of prisoners between prisons and the lack of transport to and from Standford Hill. This needs to be addressed across the prison service if Standford Hill is to maintain numbers at or near capacity.

The storage area in reception continues to have problems. A new storage area is still awaited when the prison expansion project is undertaken.

The induction process continues with two mandatory sessions per week. Here prisoners get their induction “passport” stamped, this enables them to progress to RoTL, education or employment

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

In the period under review there were two deaths in custody, one suspected self-inflicted death and one from natural causes. The prison continues to identify those prisoners with problems that may cause them to feel the need to harm themselves.

Mental health support is greatly enhanced with the ongoing neurodiversity lead and assistance of healthcare. Prisoners who have issues are identified and supported through the – safety intervention meeting (SIM)

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

The reducing reoffending strategy focuses on the procedures that identify potentially disruptive prisoners and help them to overcome those issues.

It aims to prevent violence and self-isolation by the use of intelligence. Intelligence about disruptive prisoners is shared at the SIM meeting, and action plans laid. However, this does not prevent cuckooing (exploitation of those who are vulnerable) and intimidation taking place but when these are identified they are effectively and proactively addressed.

In some cases, prisoners are returned to closed conditions.

In the reporting period there was one violent incident reported.

We view that prison officers should be on the wings to monitor what is going on. We have expressed our concern that too often officers are in the wing office as a group.

Night supervision

We have commented before that the prison is lightly supervised at night. There are a handful of officers looking after the two wings and security is primarily obtained by shutting the spurs (sub-section of a wing) on A and B wings. There is no direct officer supervision of the pods which are monitored by close circuit TV. We believe this is a

situation that renders the prison very vulnerable if there is a major incident especially in one of the main accommodation blocks

4.4 Use of force

Prisoners are removed to closed conditions if required but use of force is limited.

Officers have body worn video cameras (BWC) when they enter into a potentially confrontational situation with a prisoner. Officers are encouraged to draw BWCs for every shift. We have noted that the use of BWC is patchy and needs to be worn routinely.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

Illicit items are a significant and persistent problem in all prisons, including Standford Hill. The prison undertakes a whole range of intelligence-based operations to address the issue. These include mandatory drug tests (MDT), cell searches, surveillance of the extensive and open grounds and searches of some prisoners returning to the prison from RoTL and following attending work in the community.

Despite this, a whole range of illicit items have been found in the prison. Those include alcohol, food, drugs and mobile phones. The open nature of the prison lends itself to this situation as well as the fact that in cell telephony is not currently available. This year 'spice' (a psychoactive substance) was found in the prison and this is very disturbing given the dangerousness of this drug.

The prison covers a large area in an isolated position on the Isle of Sheppey. Prisoners regularly leave the prison for town visits, resettlement overnight release (RoR) and RoTL.

Over 70 prisoners work out of the prison every day and return in the evening. 50 are in paid employment, 18 in community work and others are undergoing training and 2 at college. However, this is a problem in so much as prisoners are not currently scanned on re-entry and illicit items can be brought into the establishment. This can lead to prisoners being returned to closed conditions when found with illicit items. We have mentioned in previous years that scanning facilities are limited and need to be improved.

In this reporting year, 94 prisoners were returned to closed conditions, in comparison to 143 the year before and 130 the year before that. The reduction reflects the declining population of the prison over the year.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

Background

C wing consists of a group of 80 pods, which have ensuite facilities. This accommodation is more modern and attractive and most of the prisoners who are accommodated here work outside the prison, many of them at night. To be eligible to occupy a pod prisoners must meet the following criteria:

- they have less than two years remaining on their sentence
- they are in regular employment
- they have no negative adjudications (a disciplinary hearing to establish if a prisoner has broken prison rules)

The other pods are occupied by orderlies, trusted prisoners who help to provide services that contribute to the running of the prison

Accommodation

We do not often receive complaints about the accommodation at Stanford Hill despite the fact that it is relatively old. We believe that this is primarily because prisoners have their own individual rooms. These rooms do not contain washing or toilet facilities, nor is there any form of telephony in the individual rooms. Some prisoners who reach Stanford Hill after being at more modern prisons do feel that the accommodation compares unfavourably with other prisons they have been confined in, but this is generally offset by the setting of the prison.

Some brightening up of the wings has been undertaken by the art class and this has improved the environment noticeably. The introduction of the pods has been a positive step in the modernisation of the prison, replacing as it did the crumbling and narrow block C which was demolished several years ago. The pods are also the most suitable place to house disabled or seriously ill prisoners.

We have commented before about the difficulty that some prisoners experience in adapting to the space and ambience of Stanford Hill. Discussions at the open prisons group suggest that adaptation to an open environment after years in closed conditions is complicated and that may be worthy of more detailed studies. Some prisoners do settle into the new environment after a while, but some have to be returned to closed conditions to protect their mental health.

Summary of the plan for expansion

The expansion of HMP Stanford Hill has been in the pipeline for around 5 years but has been delayed for a variety of reasons, most notably the pandemic and the financial collapse of two contractors who had tendered and been chosen for the job.

Stanford Hill is currently awaiting official confirmation that Bovis will be the main contractor to undertake new builds and all ancillary work. This would include a new kitchen, the OMU records building, the locker building for prisoners, a new library, a new healthcare administration building, an increase in reception roller racking (mobile shelving system designed to maximise space and securely store items), and an increase in the size of the healthcare waiting room and pharmacy. Changes to the chapel building, conversion of the motor mechanic space into a workshop and a

new training building to accommodate 10 classroom spaces are also proposed in what will eventually be a substantial expansion and redevelopment of the prison

Bovis are to undertake all new surveys, with commencement of work not expected until summer 2026 with a completion date set for the end of 2028/beginning of 2029. This is several years behind the ongoing schedule for the redevelopment of the prison.

Over the last eighteen months there has been concern about the stability of some of the buildings on site. GFSL have undertaken an intensive review of the buildings which had generated most concern. This has resulted in the commencement of remedial work on some of the buildings. Scoping work for some buildings was still ongoing at the time of the report.

Laundry

The situation in the laundry area is much improved after close liaison between prison management, GFSL and the IMB. New driers have been installed, and the IMB keeps a log to chart problems to ensure that management are aware of any issues.

We bring this regularly to the attention of the managers as the laundry is an essential part of the prison regime.

Population mix in the prison

Changes to the mix of prisoners has been taking place over the last two years and has been accelerated following the change of government in summer 2024. We have closely monitored the impact on the way the prison operates as the mix of prisoners change. There is no doubt that an influx of category c prisoners into a category D prison has the potential to unbalance and compromise the way the prison system operates with consequent effects on the atmosphere in the prison and the focus on reform and rehabilitation.

Of the 39 prisoners that have been returned to closed conditions since the 1 January 2025, 10 have been from the TPRS cohort. Unlike some prisons, Stanford Hill has not seen a significant decline or deterioration of stability within the prison. There have been some instances of some prisoners pushing the boundaries and talking back to staff, but not of a serious nature, particularly as they have been appropriately challenged by staff. On one week the prison management increased the stability level to amber because of the significant increase in prisoners coming into Stanford Hill, however the following week this was reduced back to Green. We will continue to keep a close eye on this situation, but we are reassured that the prison management are also assessing the situation very carefully and we are satisfied that this the case.

Food

We receive relatively few complaints about the quality or quantity of the food despite the fact that the current arrangements for providing food are far from ideal. There are no facilities at the prison to cook fresh food on a mass catering basis. There are a number of microwaves which give prisoners the option to cater for themselves. The bulk of the food is prepared in the kitchens at HMP Swaleside which is a part of the prison cluster and is situated a few hundred yards from Stanford Hill. There are two disadvantages with the current system. Firstly, food cannot be served as fresh

as if it were cooked on the premises and there are occasional problems at the kitchens on Swaleside. Additionally, the process of transferring food from one prison site to another provides an opportunity to pass contraband between the prisons.

The expansion plans for the prison provide for on-site kitchen facilities. This will be transformative for the prison as it will significantly improve one of the main pressure points within the establishment and help the prison to improve security. IMB members regularly sample the food that is served and recently discussed arrangements with a number of prisoners who were overall pretty realistic about the quality of food. It would be fair to say that there was a reasonable level of satisfaction with the quality of food given the less than optimal situation with the transportation of food from Swaleside. We have referred to the latest plans for the expansion of the site previously in this section.

One of the most significant changes during the year was the establishment of a shop situated next to the laundry. Prisoners can purchase a range of foods and confectionery as well as toiletries and shaving equipment. The shop is heavily patronised by the prisoners and turnover is significant with Tuesday proving the busiest day. The size of the shop was limited by the decision to utilise existing buildings to provide a site for the shop. Given the level of turnover, it is feasible that the shop could be expanded, and this would enable it to offer a wider range of items. A recent conversation with the team who run the shop suggested that they did not feel that the first manifestation of the concept maximised the potential that did exist. Inevitably lessons will be learnt given the scale and ambition of the project, but it has got off to a promising start. It is important that the staff understand the key factors in running a successful retail operation. We believe the shop was a very important initiative, but that implementation of the project could have been improved. One option might be to employ external staff with retail experience.

5.2 Segregation

As an open prison, Stanford Hill does not have a care and separation unit (CSU) used for segregating prisoners. In the reception there is a single cell that is used as a holding facility if prisoners need to be returned to closed conditions.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

We generally feel that Stanford Hill provides a supportive atmosphere and relations between staff and prisoners are good.

We believe that the culture of Stanford Hill is generally respectful to prison officers and also to the IMB. We are closely monitoring this to detect if this changes as the mix of prisoner changes in the light of the early release schemes and TPRS.

5.4 Equality and diversity

The racial mix in the prison is provided in Appendix 5 of Annex B.

Although prisons are sometimes perceived as environments prone to racial tension, this is not something that we have observed at Stanford Hill, we believe primarily because management takes the issue very seriously. They have also developed a culture of respect for the diversity that exists within the prison.

Separate members of the senior management team oversee each protected characteristic which are more extensive than those protected by the Equalities Act

and embrace living in care, IPP/ prisoners serving life sentences and veterans.

Staff consult regularly with prisoners about equality and diversity and holds a monthly protected characteristics meeting and facilitates specialised meetings about other aspects of diversity as required.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

There is an acknowledgement of the multifaith environment within Standford Hill. The managing chaplain is Muslim, and he interacts effectively with representatives of other religions represented in Standford Hill. The largest group represented is Muslim, however all major faith groups are acknowledged and religious festivals for each are recognised and celebrated within the establishment. The flexibility and respect shown by the various ministers enables worship to function effectively, although there was not a Christian minister operating in the prison for most of the reporting period. The lack of Christian ministry is not acceptable, although we do accept that the prison has tried to find a suitable candidate. A new Church of England minister was recruited during the year but provision of support for Roman Catholic prisoners needs to be improved.

5.6 Incentives schemes

No issues have been raised with the Board in relation to this.

5.7 Complaints

A member of prison staff handles and co-ordinates prisoner complaints. The Board prefers that prisoners try to resolve issues through the formal complaints system before they are referred to IMB. This is to avoid confusion in resolving issues. However, all members of the Board are visible to prisoners and happy to try to help with queries or issues that they may raise verbally.

Prisoners regularly submit applications to the IMB which we record and review regularly. The number of applications is relatively low and a number of those that do arise are resolved verbally.

5.8 Property

One of the most frequent issues raised with the IMB deals with are problems relating to the transfer of property. While the Board encourages prisoners to prioritise official channels to trace official items, it is often necessary to try to investigate more complex cases, as property transfers are notoriously likely to cause problems. Where appropriate, the IMB facilitates complaints about property to the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO).

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

Health and wellbeing is an area that is increasingly under the spotlight and one that a modern prison must take very seriously.

The combination of the stress of prison life, separation from family and some with pre-existing mental health conditions, are all challenges to managing at Stanford Hill.

From our observations, Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust continues to provide a very good service. The service provision is now well established, and current policy and procedures are kept under review. Since Oxleas assumed control, we have observed a significant improvement in both the quality of healthcare and the management of the department.

The neurodiversity support manager (NSM) continues to enhance the service to improve inclusivity throughout the prison.

Some years ago, this was an area which generated a number of complaints, and the level of communication needed to be enhanced, but communication from the health care team is now excellent, and they are always willing to discuss policy and procedure with us when we feel it necessary. The initial screening of new arrivals has continued, and the comprehensiveness of this health induction has led to very positive results.

Nurse-led clinics are the basis of the provision, which is then developed through the addition of specialisms required for primary health care.

GP services are supplied by 'prisons in Kent GP', and they provide continuity of service. There are three GP sessions each week and the Board is not concerned about waiting times for appointments.

Waiting times:

- GP routine appointment 14 days.
- GP urgent appointment 1-2 days.
- Physiotherapy: 21 days.
- Dental routine: 45 days.
- Dental urgent: 2-3 days.
- Optician: 35 days.

There is also a GP pharmacist available once a week for medicine reviews. Each month, the lead GP and GP Pharmacist run a joint review for patients with complex health needs.

The NHS dental Service operates two days each week, and an NHS optician service operates one day each month.

Particular specialisms are covered, these include a psychologist and a counsellor, who are available one day each week. A psychiatrist attends on one day each month.

6.2 Physical healthcare

The 'quality improvement project' started in June 2024, and is an incentive aimed at lowering the number of missed appointments. The health centre issue appointment slips a week prior to the appointment, and they have the facility to move or cancel the appointment. Failure to attend an appointment can result in a warning under the Incentives Scheme.

This project has seen a fall of missed appointments from the almost 25% recorded on last year's report, to 14.4% in this reporting period.

12 months data below:

Service	Booked appointments	Did not attend (DNA)
GP	1832	315
Dental	1262	240
Nurse Led Clinics	7915	1021
Substance Misuse	108	1
Mental Health	909	26

6.3 Mental health

We are satisfied through our monitoring that the prison takes the issue of mental health very seriously.

Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust provides a full time mental health nurse and part-time learning difficulty nurse who provide specialist care. This is enhanced by the work of the neurodiversity manager at the prison.

A psychology assessment is taken during a prisoner's first days in custody as part of health screening. This will be identifying those who have or potentially have a mental health condition. This assessment is based on a points system to highlight any concerns, this enables a practitioner to suggest the appropriate intervention. The uptake of services will depend on the individual's openness to be referred. However, if there is a risk of self-harm or suicide the referral is mandatory.

Mental health is checked as a part of the initial health assessment on arrival in reception. There is screening of health and wellbeing history. This is an assessment of how the person is feeling at that time, self-referral, history, prison staff's observations and past referrals.

Information sharing and joint management between departments is also an integral part of care and a way to manage the safety of those who are deemed vulnerable. The Safeguarding intervention meetings take place weekly and look at support plans and how best to deal collectively with a problem.

There is also peer support through 'Listeners' who are prisoners trained by The Samaritans to provide a sympathetic ear for those who are struggling to cope.

There is also a 'managing stress and change' group that gathers once a week. All prisoners are welcome to attend and can discuss matters such as fear of upcoming release. These meetings can be peer led, where participants can advise and support each other based on their experience.

It is also believed, as with the wider public, that discussion of issues is more readily undertaken among the younger community, rather than the older generation. This results often in the younger generation being more open to discuss and seek support for mental health concerns in the prison.

6.4 Social care

Please refer to section 7 of the report.

6.5 Exercise, regime

Along with full gym facilities, the prison is situated on extensive grounds which provide an environment to walk and jog.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

Please refer to 7.4 and the work of the charity Change, Grow, Live

6.7 Soft skills

We have observed prison staff utilise soft skills as part of prisoner management.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

Education results at Stanford Hill in the year 2024-2025 are good and high standards from previous years have been maintained. This was confirmed by the reports from HM Inspectorate of Prisons and Ofsted, who visited in late 2024.

The percentage of students achieving pass marks in examinations for the core subjects for the year were as shown in the chart below and show positive improvements compared with a year ago.

	2023-2024	2024-2025
English	91%	94%
Mathematics	87%	89.5%
Health & safety and first aid	97%	99.5%

As commented in last year's report, this level of achievement is regarded as normal at Stanford Hill and continues to be maintained, although Ofsted's comments on figures for the early part of the year resulted in a strong effort by the prison during the last quarter to raise the outcomes resulting in the overall improvements shown above. Indeed, Stanford Hill rose to third in the national tables for the last quarter.

The only problem noted is that there is some difficulty in ensuring that attendance is as high as hoped for. In the open environment there are many essential calls on student time, particularly in the early part of their stay here. They have to attend sessions in, for example, with the OMU to ensure that all the necessary checks are made on their progress in preparation for their release, and that prisoners are keen to get paid jobs. Although the Board has noted that some appointments may clash, prisoners are expected to manage these conflicts themselves. When they leave the prison, this becomes a normal part of life, and they will need the skills to organise their time effectively amidst many competing calls on their time. Art continues to be a very popular voluntary option and is very successful, with good numbers of submissions to the Koestler charity. It has been noted before that attendees with mental health problems benefit greatly from the art provision. The therapeutic value of this activity is significant and adding significantly to the positive atmosphere of the prison.

It is also apparent from course feedback that the students have a high regard for the value and presentation of the courses.

Overall, the education department has had another good year, and the quality and continuity of staff have made a significant contribution to this. This essential and highly successful provision is a credit to the prison. The education department are always looking at ways to refresh their offering and to introduce innovative ways of introducing subjects. It is at the heart of everything the prison aims to do in helping prisoners to rehabilitate.

7.2 Vocational training, work

We have commented in great detail in successive reports on the success of the working out scheme (WOS). In appendices 1 - 3 of annex B statistics relating to the scheme are provided.

In essence prisoners are free to engage with WOS after clearance from the risk board. The focus of the scheme is for prisoners to source their own work wherever possible. However, the statistics provided in appendix 3 show that this is not always successful, with many prisoners expecting to be found a job. Prisoners will have to source their own work on release so relying purely on WOS is not in their own best interests. However, given the success of finding work opportunities by WOS this does not hinder the progression of prisoners into outside work.

It is also worth noting from the statistics supplied in appendix 2 that the involvement of different racial groups is roughly comparable to the population of the prison as a whole.

The WOS focuses on providing training and work opportunities to prisoners.

Training courses are available for prisoners to access. They focus on skills that are in demand in the world of work. This is always changing depending on skill vacancies and funding. Examples include:

- Streetworks
- Construction
- Rail works

In addition, courses are held in soft skills that help prisoners to make themselves more employable, such as:

- Intervention alliance to help older prisoners
- Rocketeer for business and self-employment
- Shannon Trust for reading skills
- Kinetic youth for the under 25s
- Training and skills training changes over time as skill and employment gaps are identified.
- Work Opportunities are made available in a whole range of industries including:
 - Retail
 - Delivery and HGV drivers
 - Railways work for different rail systems
 - Hospitality
 - Building

The WOS is always looking for new employers, but this has been made more difficult due to the low numbers at the prison during the year. Put simply, if people are not available for employers then they may review their continued involvement in the scheme. Despite this, new links have been made and recently opportunities have been obtained with a very large national retail organisation.

WOS provides many opportunities for prisoners. It is up to the prisoners to make the most of them.

However, despite all this good work the wider problems in the prison system, and the actions taken to combat these, have adversely affected WOS and other rehabilitative functions within the prison.

In order to deal with the fact that there were not enough prison spaces, specific actions have been taken.

Prisoners have been recategorised as automatically being eligible for transfer to category D prison under the TPRS scheme. This is based on time to release and not necessarily on suitability for transfer to category D prisons. It is felt within the prison that such people are less prepared for rehabilitation and therefore they are less likely to commit to rehabilitative work, be it education, training or employment.

Prisoners have been released early under national schemes. This has meant some prisoners have arrived at the prison and then discovered that they are leaving earlier than anticipated. Consequently, many have not had sufficient time in the prison to qualify for the WOS scheme. Also, prisoners on the WOS scheme with employment have been released early, meaning that they have not had the full benefit of the scheme. This has also meant that employers who have put effort into training prisoners have not had the benefit of their work as they would have expected. This is not good for retaining employers.

Many prisoners have been transferred to the prison for very short periods of days or weeks. They are never going to be there long enough to take advantage of what the prison has to offer. Effectively they are only being housed there for these short periods

The effect of all these changes was that from October 2024 to March 2025 the population of the prison was as low as 300 against a maximum capacity of 464 prisoners.

The most tangible effect of this is that whereas in the previous year over 100 prisoners were released to work daily, in the reporting year this has fallen to as low as 50.

It is essential that the population of open prisons are stabilised and that those allocated to it have sufficient time to take advantage of the services offered. If not the rehabilitative goals of the prison will not be maximised.

In previous reports we have raised two issues we believe to be important but have not been acted upon:

It is important that a formal comparison mechanism is set up to compare the relative performance of open prisons.

The Board believe that automated systems could be used to track prisoners while at work, as this would save considerable time spent by officers undertaking that role. Commercial systems that could track prisoners are available and should be actively considered. It would be a cost-efficient way of ensuring that prisoners given the privilege of being out of the prison are where they should be.

7.3 Offender management, progression

The offender management unit (OMU) is responsible for the sentence management of prisoners. They calculate the length of sentence remaining on transfer to the prison to ensure that prisoners serve their appropriate sentence. In addition, they are responsible for the clearance of prisoners to leave the prison on a regular basis as part of life in an open prison.

The OMU ensure that all prisoners leaving the prison on resettlement overnight release (ROR) and release on temporary licence (ROTL) are thoroughly checked to ensure that all partners are happy with that release and that issues like exclusion

zones are fully considered. For prisoners to leave the prison for work they have to be similarly checked. This is an issue of concern for many prisoners and the OMU hold regular drop-in sessions so that issues may be raised.

During the year under review the OMU have been under exceptional strain due to the early release schemes. Large numbers were released in October 2024, and consequently the prison was substantially under-utilised. This caused substantial extra work for OMU, and they are to be congratulated for the fact that no substantial issues or delays occurred. This continued and over 80 prisoners were released in June 2025, and this required planning well before release.

We have noted elsewhere that in the year under review the prison was significantly under-utilised for several months. Also, the nature of the prisoners now being sent and the short periods for which they are sent have had an adverse effect on the rehabilitative functions of the prison. It is to be hoped that greater stability and longevity of sentence served at Standford Hill will return the prison to its key role of rehabilitation.

We would like to point out that OMU have had to work in unsatisfactory conditions as the main building was identified as having possible subsidence. The time taken to resolve this is excessive and the OMU staff did not have accommodation fit for purpose.

7.4 Family contact

The nature of a prison sentence means that family contact can be difficult to maintain, particularly over long sentences. Re-establishing contact and relationships are vital and that is primarily achieved by special licences that allow prisoners to leave the prison and return home for a specified period of time. Resettlement overnight release and ROTL is awarded after all necessary checks have been carried out.

The provision of visits also allows families to meet. The facilities for these meetings are good but at times the availability of visit slots has been inadequate. Steps were taken towards the end of the reporting period to improve this.

The lack of adequate telephony to facilitate regular family contact needs addressing. Currently there is ongoing work with the MOJ to obtain mobile PIN phones that can be used on the wings and in cells to support more family ties. Standford Hill has volunteered to be a pilot site for this with approximately 160 phones. It has taken an inordinate amount of time for the prison service to authorise this, and it is still not actively working at Standford Hill in July of 2025.

Despite such substantial support some prisoners and their families need additional specialist support and counselling. This is provided by contracted outside bodies, such as:

- Change, Grow, Live (CGL)
- Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT)
- Shaw Trust
- Creating future opportunities evolution (CFO Evolution) is a UK government-funded programme (From August 2024)

There is targeted intervention to assist in family relationships. For example, extended family visits can be facilitated before planned visiting time.

Throughout the year a number of specific family days are held. These are extended periods of time together with a range of family activities provided. These are an excellent intervention and are much appreciated by the prisoners.

CGL provide individual support to prisoners with substance misuse issues: leaving prison with such issues not being addressed will put additional strain on family re-integration.

We believe that the range of support provided is very good, but it is worth noting that there needs to be prisoner engagement if progress is to be made. The prison encourages self-help instead of expecting the prison to do everything for them. Prisoners do not always take up the support available for them: a homework club to help family links was advertised but no interest was expressed by prisoners.

7.5 Resettlement planning

Prisoners do not leave the prison without being offered substantial assistance. That assistance is advertised well in advance and prisoners are encouraged to take advantage of it.

The most basic requirement is to have accommodation on release. For the majority of prisoners they return home so it is not an issue, but around a quarter of prisoners do need assistance. Given the national situation this can be challenging. However, the dedicated staff member dealing with this gives an excellent service and recently there have been no prisoners leaving the prison without accommodation, despite the effect of early release programmes. The limited accommodation is booked in advance and if release is then brought forward then the whole process needs to start again.

The general situation requiring accommodation has improved recently with the establishment of the community accommodation service tier 3 (CAS3) which is able to offer private rented accommodation for up to 84 days. Although the provision stops at that date this gives the released prisoner a period of time in order to obtain alternative accommodation. We are informed that accommodation is available although the released prisoner may need to be flexible on location.

An employment hub is in operation. This was a national initiative with the funding available for two staff members.

The first focus is on ensuring that everyone has the documentation they require on release. People in the community take this for granted, but some prisoners do not have all the personal identification they need and may not have a bank account. There are banks that will provide basic accounts, and the prisoners are helped to obtain them. However, for those with financial crimes this may not be possible. To repeat the point if prisoners are released early this will put pressure on the service to obtain what is required. The service also provides links to benefit agencies, so the necessary benefits are being processed prior to release.

The wider focus of the employment hub is to help obtaining employment on release. Most prisoners have work ready for their release, but many do not, and this is where the employment hub steps in. Work opportunities are actively sourced and then those interested can receive introductions to, and presentations by, prospective employers. Prisoners are also given training in the standards expected of people going to work so that they present themselves to prospective employers in the best

possible way.

The employment hub sets employment targets by which they are measured, and the latest figures are:

Target	Actual	
Six weeks post-release	50%	43.1%
Six months post-release	50%	62.9%

The employment hub has consistently met its targets but currently the six-week figure is under target. This reflects the churn in the population and the short time some prisoners spend in prison.

We have already discussed the family support that is available. Support is also provided so that prisoners have the skills required to make a success of their time after release. This requires commitment to making the most of any support provided.

Since August 2024, CFO Evolution provided resettlement support. This is mainly one-to-one support to ensure that issues are identified and resolved on a personal basis. This tailored support service focuses on skills and can be community based. For example, issues of personal finances are addressed.

Training courses are also supplied, with titles such as: coming home, staying connected, living independently and wellbeing.

The test of all the resettlement work is best seen in reoffending rates (see appendix 4 in annex B) for the supporting documentation

In summary the rates of reoffending are:

Over two years 7.22%

Over three years 8.07%

This reflects the success of the prison over time in helping prisoners be ready for their return to the community

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	10
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	5
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	6
Total number of visits to the establishment	300
Total number of shifts on the 0800-telephone line	0
Total number of segregation reviews attended	N/A

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	0	0
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	0	1
C	Equality	0	0
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	3	1
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	0	0
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	2	1
F	Food and kitchens	1	0
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	7	2
H1	Property within this establishment	0	2
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	8	13
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	0	0
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	2	9
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	1	0
K	Transfers	1	3
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	6	3
	Total number of applications	31	35

Annex A

Service providers

- PEF - Milton Keynes College
- DPS - Rocketeer
- Interventions Alliance
- Extra Provision - East Kent College
- Library - KSS libraries
- CGL (Change, Grow Live) - substance misuse
- Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust: mental health; dentist, physiotherapist, optometrists; and EPIC
- Gov Facility Services Limited (GFSL)
- Combat for Care – veterans
- Irish Roman Catholic chaplain
- Romani Slovak Czech community
- Pact / CG03 – (Prison Advice and Care Trust) – family work
- Alpha Course - chaplaincy
- New Build – MACE and Bovis – awaiting official announcement
- Kent Autism Trust
- Kent Youth Justice team

Annex B

Appendix 1: overview from WOS

Tables and graphs

The working out scheme at HMP/YOI Stanford Hill offers a supportive but testing regime which allows individuals to demonstrate that they are ready and safe to return to our community, by fully participating in unpaid restorative community placements, external vocational and academic training and/or full-time paid employment.

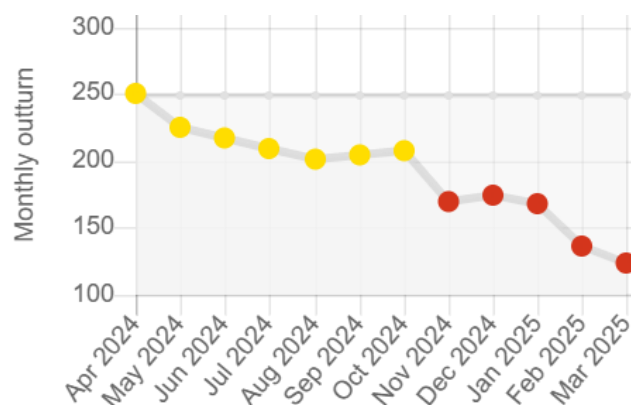
The scheme utilises release on temporary licence (RoTL), to allow individuals to progress into secure, sustainable, risk assessed employment prior to their release from custody. It is designed to assist in achieving safe reintegration into local resettlement areas and overall, reduce the risk of re-offending.

HMPPS performance hub

The figures reported on the performance hub reflect the figures recorded locally. Since the middle of 2024, we have seen a decline in RoTL for paid work, due to the early release schemes and TPRS. The population churn, including short sentences along with limited custodial time remaining, has impacted our ability to increase our figures and performance in this area.

From October 2024 until mid-March 2025, HMP Stanford Hill population sat at under 300 prisoners, against a maximum capacity of 464 prisoners

With the implementation of HDC-24 (early release scheme) in May/June 2025, we would expect this performance measure to decline further. The WOS is working closely with OMU to capture those that are eligible to engage with the scheme.



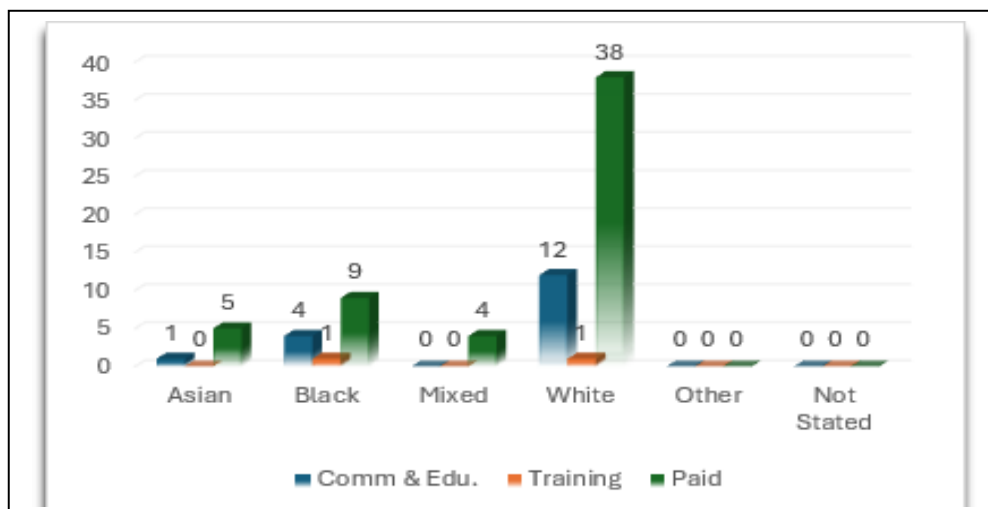
The following stats from the scheme are taken from the month of **March 2025**:

Population – 457 of which 55% (**251**) are not risk assessed and therefore not eligible for RoTL. We are working with 75 prisoners, 16% of the population and **36%** of risk assessed prisoners.

APPENDIX 2: WOS RACIAL MIX

Breakdown of WOS ROTL Figures

Ethnicity	Comm & Edu.	Training	Paid
Asian	1	0	5
Black	4	1	9
Mixed	0	0	4
White	12	1	38
Other	0	0	0
Not Stated	0	0	0



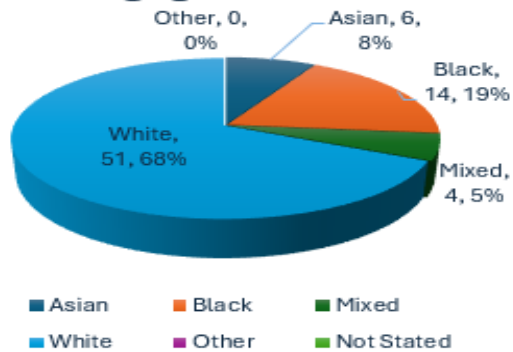
Ethnicity Breakdown v Engagement

Ethnicity	WOS Eng.	%	Pop	
Asian	8	8.00%	43	9.41%
Black	40	18.67%	127	27.79%
Mixed	4	5.33%	30	6.56%
White	51	68.00%	244	53.39%
Other	0	0.00%	11	2.41%
Not Stated	0	0.00%	2	0.44%

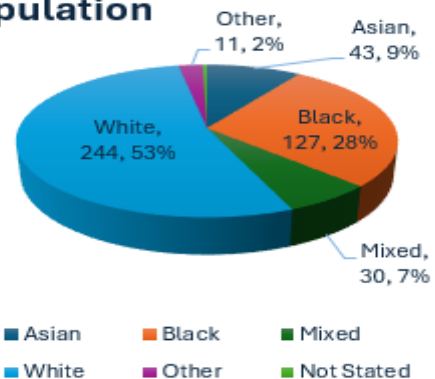
Total	75
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457	100.00%
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WOS Engagment

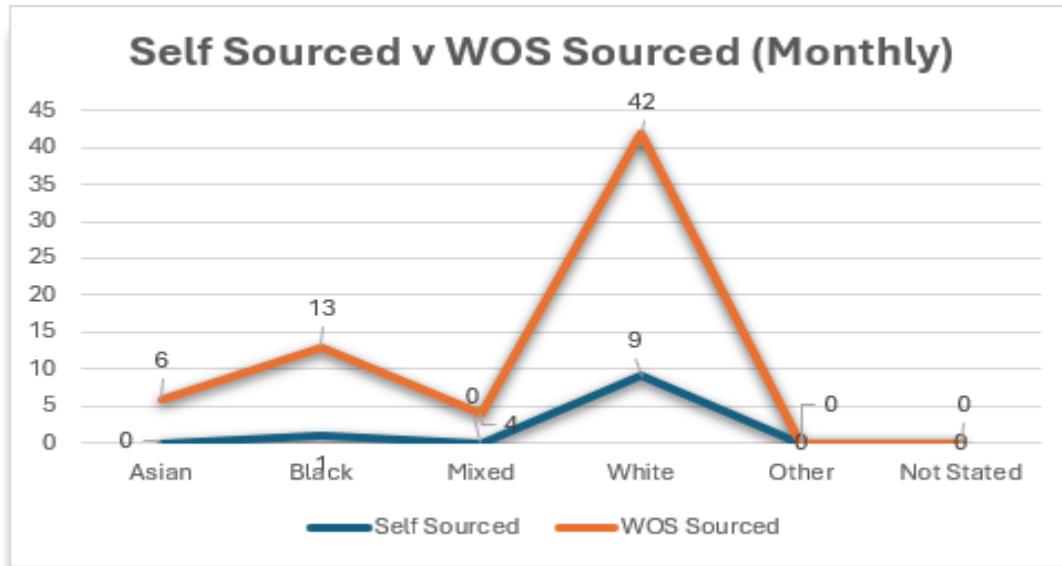


Population

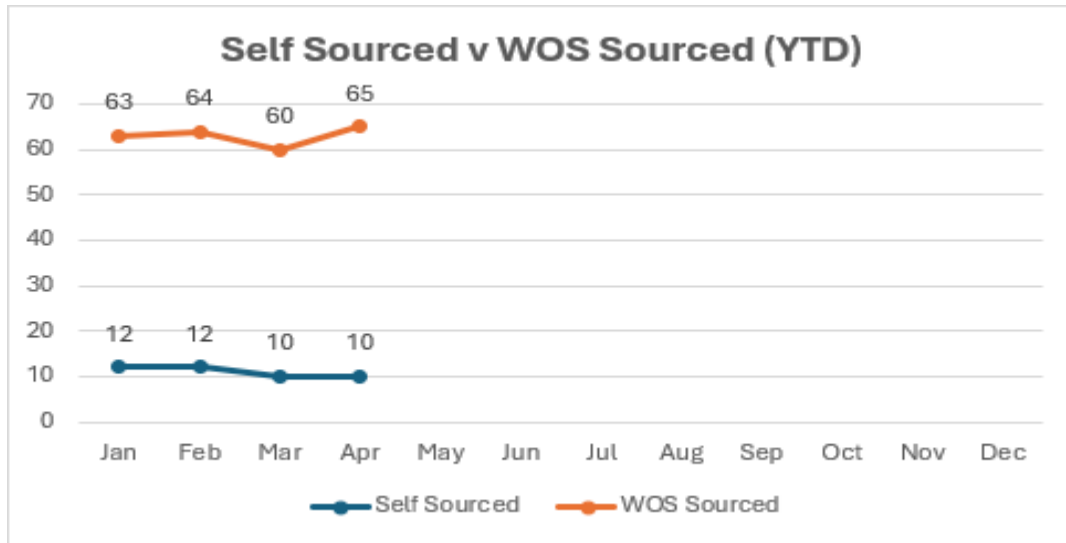


APPENDIX 3: ANALYSIS OF SELF SOURCED WORK ON WOS

Self-Sourced V WOS Sourced (Monthly)					
Ethnicity	WOS Eng	Self-Sourced	%	WOS Sourced	%
Asian	6	0	0.00%	6	100.00%
Black	14	1	7.14%	13	92.86%
Mixed	4	0	0.00%	4	100.00%
White	51	9	17.65%	42	82.35%
Other	0	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Not Stated	0	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Total	75	10		65	



Annual statistics



Appendix 4: reoffending rate

HMP Stanford Hill's re-offending rate is:

Reoffending rate January 2020-December 2024

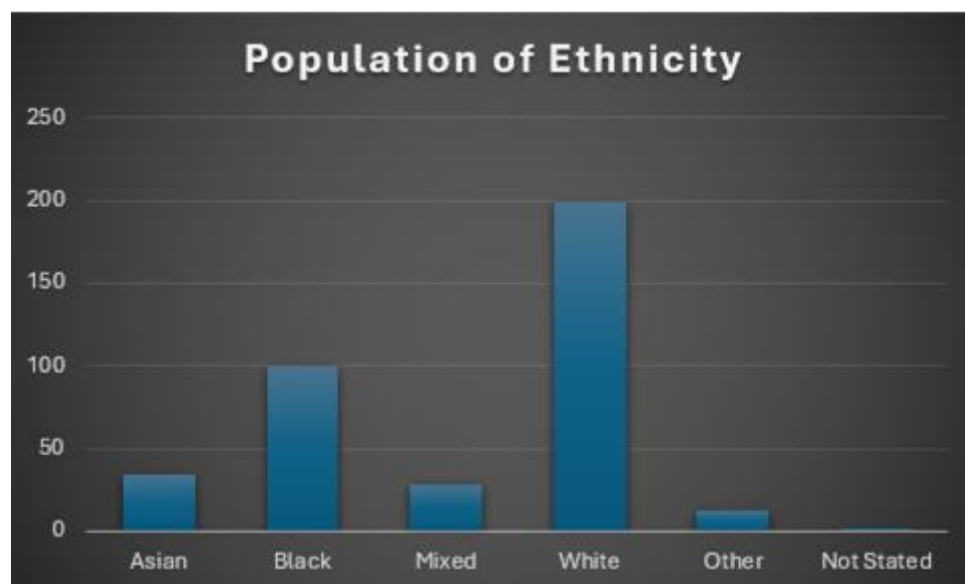
- January-December 2020: 328 discharged, with 33 returned to prison = 10.06%
- January-December 2021: 256 discharged, with 43 returned to prison = 16.8%
- January-December 2022: 271 discharged, with 28 returned to prison = 10.33%
- January-December 2023: 262 discharged, with 15 returned to prison = 5.72%
- **January-December 2024: 458 discharged, with 37 returned to prison = 8.08%**

Therefore, the prison's multi-year reoffending rates are:

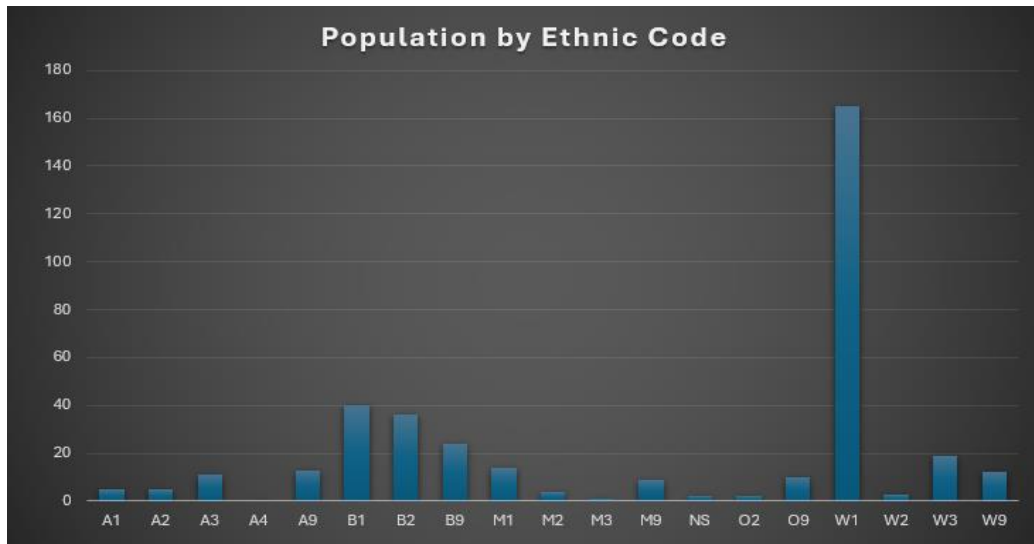
- Over 2 years: 8.06% to 7.22% **(an improvement of 0.84%)**
- Over 3 years: 10.65% to 8.07% **(an improvement of 2.58%)**

Appendix 5: prison ethnicity analysis

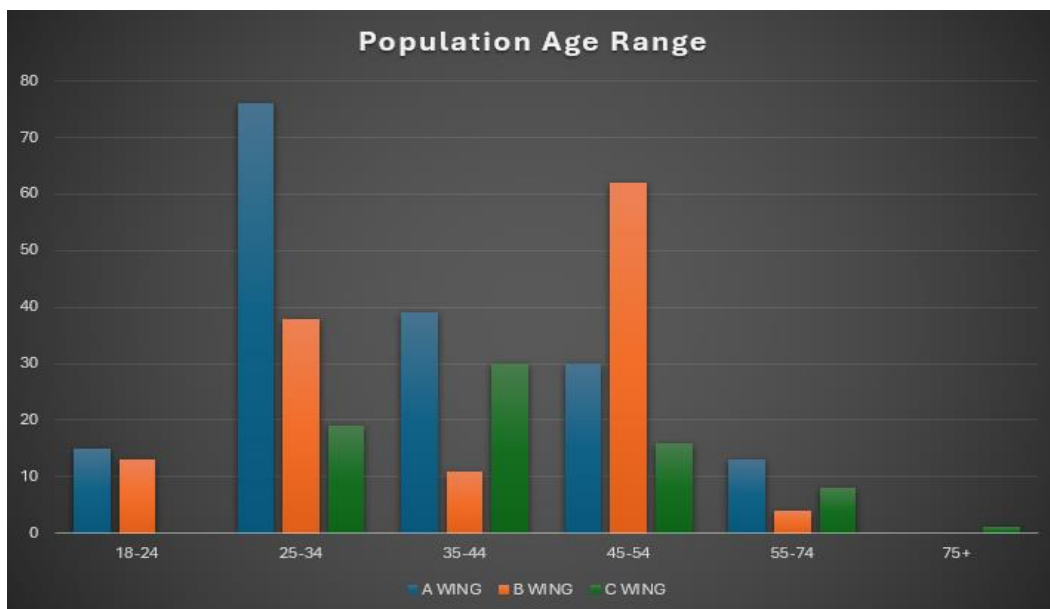
Ethnicity	Total number of Prisoners	Total number in Percentage
Asian	34	9.07%
Black	100	26.67%
Mixed	28	7.47%
White	199	53.07%
Other	12	3.20%
Not Stated	2	0.53%
	375	



Ethnicity	A-WING	Percentage	B-WING	Percentage 2	C-WING	Percentage 3
ASIAN	16	9.25%	13	10.16%	5	6.76%
BLACK	51	29.48%	38	29.69%	11	14.86%
MIXED	15	8.67%	11	8.59%	2	2.70%
WHITE	81	46.82%	62	48.44%	56	75.68%
OTHERS	8	4.62%	4	3.13%	0	0.00%
NOT STATED	2	1.16%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
	173		128		74	



AGE	A WING	Percentage	B WING	Percentage 2	C WING	Percentage 3
18-24	15	8.67%	4	3.12%	0	0.00%
25-34	76	43.93%	54	42.18%	19	25.67%
35-44	39	22.54%	45	35.15%	30	40.54%
45-54	30	17.34%	17	13.28%	16	21.62%
55-74	13	7.51%	8	6.25%	8	10.81%
75+	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	1	1.35%
	173		128		74	





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