



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Swinfen Hall

**For reporting year
1 May 2024 to 30 April 2025**

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Introductory sections 1 – 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

The Prison Act 1952 requires every prison to be monitored by an Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) 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 young adult 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

This report presents the findings of the Board at HMP Swinfen Hall for the period 1 May 2024 to 30 April 2025.

As in previous years the Board's findings are based on a combination of observations recorded during monitoring visits, conversations with young adults and staff on residential units and in workplaces, and reviews of wing forums and prison council meetings. The findings are also a result of attendance at, and reviews of, the minutes for safer custody, use of force, and other meetings, including those with the Governor and her Deputy.

HMP/YOI Swinfen Hall is a public sector prison comprising an integrated young offender institution (YOI) and a category C training prison for young adults. The prison is defined as a 'national resource,' so receives young adults from all over the country.

Swinfen Hall's agreed criteria is sentenced young adults aged between 18 and 28 serving a minimum of 16 months. During the reporting year, at least 80% of the population were young adults aged 18 to 21. Around 580 (around 95%) young adults present a high or very high risk of harm and have complex needs.

Profile data¹ for the establishment are as follows:

	30 April 2020	30 April 2021	30 April 2022	30 April 2023	30 April 2024	30 April 2025
Total young adult population	556	570	583	614	618	616
Serving four years or more	98%	<90%	93%	>98%	<90%	<98%
Serving a life sentence	38	56	78	106	124	131

As of 30 April 2025, there were:

- 83 young adults aged 18 to 21 serving a sentence of 10 years or more
- 125 young adults aged 22 to 27 serving a sentence of 10 years or more
- 81 young adults aged 18 to 21 serving a life sentence
- 50 young adults aged 22 to 27 serving a life sentence

At the end of the reporting period, around 33% (209) of the population were young adults convicted of a sexual offence (PCoSO).

The population of the prison has been between 600 and 620 young adults for most of the reporting year.

¹ Figures included in this report are local management information. They reflect the prison's position at the time of reporting but may be subject to change following further validation and therefore may not always tally with Official Statistics later published by the Ministry of Justice.

3. Key points

3.1 Main findings

It is the Board's view that the prison continued to struggle to deliver the improved outcomes planned for young adults in the last 12 months and in some areas has provided reduced outcomes.

The prison is under resourced and fails to be recognised for the very specialist role it carries out with a high-risk population that presents with many issues, as detailed in a letter (annex A) the Board forwarded to HMPPS officials in April 2025.

The Board has consistently been told by both staff and young adults that they consider the prison to be fundamentally unsafe.

The Board's considered view is that, despite considerable efforts by the Governor and her leadership team, the prison has failed to meet its primary objectives in the year.

Last year's report noted that:

'The Governor and the SLT (senior leadership team) share a vision for the future. The Board considers that the current plans, if delivered, are expected to improve outcomes for young adults at Swinfen Hall.'

The Governor and SLT continue to be committed to this objective and in June 2025 commenced a full review of the regime provided as they recognised the current regime was not suitable.

Early in the year several actions showed signs of positive steps forward:

- A 14-week program of training based on creating confidence and competence skills. The course was curtailed after eight weeks when the prison regime changed, and attendance by staff reduced massively.
- Introduction of SO's (supervising officers) model on wings to create an experienced staff group to support staff confidence and competence.
- Once active the new SO model will add eight experienced officers to the work force who are tasked to support building confidence and competency
- Incentivised Payment Plus model (a bonus scheme for prison officers who work accessed to address staff shortages.
- A renewed focus on cleanliness, which is partially delivered.
- Improved identification of those who choose to self-isolate following a review of the criteria of an isolator, which is partially delivered.
- A focus on increasing access to the gym, (identified as under used) for all young adults, which is partially delivered.
- Successful introduction of free flow movement to and from work and education under supervision.

However, by the end of the year many of the planned actions had failed to have any positive impact as various factors negatively impacted on the objectives;

- A focus on support for new staff with competence and confidence training is not embedded sufficiently with staff.

- Many wing-based staff lack confidence, or are too scared, to direct and challenge young adults over poor behaviour, and to build meaningful relationships.
- An increase in the number of young adults sentenced to long and life sentences, and an increase in young adults, many life sentenced, and in the care of the Local Authority, transitioning from the Youth Custody Service (annex A).
- The lack of key work sessions impacted adversely on the plan to increase confidence and competence.
- Reduced availability of staff due to sickness, unauthorised absence, restricted duties, suspension, resulting in wing closures especially at weekends.
- There has been no effort at weekends to provide a reasonable time out of cell on all wings.
- The Board is unconvinced that positive incentivisation is part of the rehabilitation ethos at Swinfen Hall.
- On various occasions a perception by some young adults that poor and violent behaviour directed at staff through assaults will result in a transfer from the prison as per their wishes.
- Although identification of self-isolators has improved over recent weeks the Board are aware that many support plans are not being fully implemented by staff on wings and the Board believe self-isolators continue to be under reported and not fully supported.
- Failures to search thoroughly for weapons resulted in increased injuries.
- Significant delays in timely production of OASYS (to assess the risks, needs, and rehabilitation requirements of prisoners) reports for recently sentenced young adults

As an example, the stability report for 18.12.2024 noted:

“We also have significant resourcing challenges and our RMP rating is in amber-red with numerous wing closures. The amber-red forecast is due to high levels of local non-effective (as outlined below). The wing closures may lead to frustration from our Young adults however we are ensuring that we minimise the risk by being transparent and having clear communication with both staff and Young adults about the closures”

Every aspect of the prison’s overall effectiveness was undermined by the limited regime. Not enough purposeful activity places were available, and the curriculum lacked ambition and was impacted by staff absence and unfilled vacancies.

Relationships between staff and young adults were too inconsistent, with key work sessions held infrequently, if at all, for most young adults, a reflection of the considerable inexperience among the staff group.

The prison lacks enhanced gate security to prevent illicit substances from being smuggled into the prison.

The paper-based applications (prisoners’ written representations) system is not effective and the promised review to make improvements was not delivered.

Safety

The SLT's own assessment of stability each week has been an accurate review of the safety of the prison.

The Board notes that during the year staff members have expressed concerns that the prison is less safe. There was a period when the Board were told staff were not willing to attend certain floors in residential areas as they were considered a 'no-go' area. This has been successfully addressed.

The quality of searches observed on / off wing and workplaces is often inadequate and perfunctory especially considering the weapons used in assaults have been a serious concern. This was driven in part by timings of the regime to meet roll count requirements.

For many months the locked door policy was not applied consistently on some wings resulting in a series of in cell assaults by up to six young adults, some being serious and resulting in hospital attendance. This concern is now reducing as staff follow direction more consistently.

Violent incidents recorded in the weekly stability report were consistent in nature throughout the year, although the use of weapons became more serious with stabbings and assaults via kicks and stamps to the head later in the year.

During the year there were a series of serious incidents, each was reviewed in detail post event by the SLT and Board members were fully briefed. The causes of the incidents vary from personal dissatisfaction to protesting behaviour to serious assaults on staff or young adults. The serious incidents monitored were all managed well and ensured the immediate needs of the whole population were met.

The Board is satisfied that the post serious incidents investigations and immediate actions were measured and proportionate, including referral to the police for those alleged to be assailants, and did not disadvantage the population in general, although inevitably the regime on the affected wing was reduced.

The Board retain concerns that for certain young adults the message they receive is that these behaviours are "rewarded" by a transfer out. This view is supported by conversations with both young adults, other agencies in the prison, and some staff members. At the end of the year following several incidents young adults became more vocal in expressing this point of view.

Young adults at the April prison council noted that in their view *"since the razor ban there has been an increase in more dangerous weapons being used"*

Conversations with staff from HMPPS who are focused on reducing violence across the prison, have reflected members views that the prison faces serious challenges from a cohort of high-risk young adults who have high levels of need and support in terms of keeping the prison safe and addressing their rehabilitation needs.

Following a night monitoring visit, the Board had several concerns:

- Staffing levels are pared down to a minimum. One "event" can be managed but if two coincided, contingency options are very limited. That "second event" may be as trivial as officers reporting in sick before the shift, or officers deployed on a hospital bed watch.

- If absences (sickness or hospital escort duties,) occurred on the same night as a significant event (an in-cell fire for instance) it is a concern that there be sufficient staff to maintain safety needs. It is particularly doubtful that there would be sufficient officers available to open a double cell (three officers are required to be available per young adult) whilst maintaining assessment, care in custody and teamwork document (ACCT), used to support prisoners who are at risk of self-harm and suicide. observations for others.

Fair and humane treatment

Regime wing shutdowns, especially during weekends have resulted in young adults being locked in their cell for up to 23 hours each day.

In early April, according to the weekly stability report there were 10 staff long-term sick and 13 short-term sick, eight staff absent due to maternity/paternity, special leave and suspensions and eight officers on restricted duties.

The report noted:

“Whilst the wing shut-downs are reducing, it is a common topic of conversation with our Young adults and remains a frustration. At the Prison Council on Friday 4th April the Young adults expressed their frustration.”

As an illustration the notes below were made by prison staff on April 26 2025;

“Some lads on X Wing complained about routine shoving in in meal queues. To call it a "free-for-all" would be very polite. I saw little or no control. The last 20 or so Young adults were left with insufficient food, some with none. Some Young adults complained that this was "normal". The ones suffering most appeared to be the PCOSO Young adults.”

Health and wellbeing

- Based on the evidence of applications submitted to the Board and on discussions with young adults at the prison, the Board is largely satisfied that the physical health needs of those detained at Swinfen Hall are being met.
- There is a great demand for mental health support/intervention at the prison. At the time of writing (June/July 2025), 120 young adults are enrolled for services provided under the inclusion team (see below) in addition to those supported under the offender personality disorder pathway (DEE service, PIPE, ESS, NRTS – see 6.4). Despite this, the Board has been made aware of other cases where young adults struggling with their mental health needs have been unable to access timely support.
- At least six out of 10 young adults at Swinfen Hall have neurodivergent traits (not necessarily diagnosed conditions). Whilst there has been some very good work to support this cohort over the reporting period, there is a great deal more to be done. The Board is concerned that the regime curtailments common over the reporting period have disproportionately impacted neurodivergent men.
- The Board is further concerned that the lack of any real incentives in a principally punitive regime is particularly unhelpful for young adults with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Progression and resettlement

- The Board considers the range and depth of education, training, and work opportunities available at HMP/YOI Swinfen Hall to be very limited and inadequate for the population being served.
- Wing support for education and promotion of education possibilities on the wings is particularly weak with many young adults being unaware of their options, particularly beyond level two courses.
- Opportunities for those on long/life sentences are minimal and this has been a great concern to the Board over the reporting period.
- Opportunities for young adults to plan their development or to accept responsibilities are very limited. The Board is unconvinced that positive incentivisation is part of the rehabilitation ethos at Swinfen Hall.
- It is clear to the Board that the budget for activities and education provision is inadequate, given there are around 800 part time spaces (some of which are menial and have no rehabilitative value) when there are around 600 young adults held at Swinfen Hall

The Board has noted that many of the young adults would appreciate more positive feedback and encouragement. Whilst negative comments recorded against them are freely available, the staff culture is such that getting any positive feedback or thanks is high-on impossible. For those approaching parole or Cat D boards this is destructive and unfair.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

When will the prison be provided with kiosks and young adults with laptops (which were available in the youth estate) to facilitate improved communications and ease the many unnecessary frustrations the Board observes young adults enduring every day?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

The HMPPS prison officer appointment process continues to result in some unsuitable appointments. As governing governors are not permitted to review the suitability of newly appointed band 3 staff prior to their starting the job at the prison, is the Prison Service accepting that staff appointed lack confidence and competence?

TO THE GOVERNOR

Over the course of the reporting period, the ability of the prison to deliver a full regime Monday to Friday has fluctuated. In contrast, the weekend regime has completed a second year of constant wing closures where young adults are held in patrol state for half of every weekend day. What is the roadmap to end this practice?

When can the Governor commit to introduce a fully operational key worker scheme that will address much of the young adults/staff relationship challenges and provide answers and solutions to the many small but frustrating concerns young adults raise via apps which currently are often not answered competently if at all?

As many staff are quick to comment negatively but slow to offer praise, can the Governor ensure the regime reset and current staff training model will address the imbalance between negative (>80%) and positive (<20%) entries on young adults computer records?

3.3 Response to the last report

Safety

Concern/issue last year (2024 report)	Assessment	Progress
The use of weapons has increased. The Board is concerned that searches of men as they leave residential areas and workplaces are failing to detect weapons.	Concern increased and includes concern over quality searches as young adults move to and from wing and workshops.	None.
A small number of young adults, despite the efforts of staff, continue to isolate.	The self-isolator engagement in wing regimes remains concerning, in terms of positive outcomes.	Minutes of meetings support the view of the Board that there are men isolating who are not monitored adequately.
Concerns over safety of newly arrived young adults.	Transitioning young offenders, who have been convicted of serious sexual offences, from the YOI estate to Swinfen Hall are very vulnerable. Many were previously on designated wings for vulnerable young adults. Some arrive at Swinfen now knowing they will be integrated with young adults with non-sexual offending history.	Limited concern that population pressures mean some young adults may move from the induction wing prior to completing process, but wing staff assesses this concern carefully.

Fair and humane treatment

Concern/issue last year (2024 report)	Assessment	Progress
Concern over clothing parcel distribution issues.	During year significantly improved, following intervention by a newly appointed custodial manager, but has since failed	Depending on staff availability improves and then relapses much to frustration of young adults.

Health and wellbeing

Concern/issue last year 2024 report	Assessment	Progress
An insufficient out-of-hours GP service.	The Board is not confident that the out-of-hours GP service will carry out night visits. This is still a concern.	There have been no complaints on this issue this year.
Dentistry: reduced capacity.	Clinic capacity has increased, but more initial appointments has led to a greater backlog of treatment required.	Average appointment waiting time has reduced from 42 to 19 days.
Difficulty recruiting mental health nurses.	Situation has improved.	Not currently an issue.

Progression and resettlement

Concern/issue last year (2024 report)	Assessment	Progress
Young adults fell behind with educational studies.	Attendance levels remain a concern.	Education attendance has been reduced by the number of wing closures, and by a high level of teachers being absent (for various reasons including vacancies, sick and suspensions).

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and Induction

The induction wing provides a thorough program of support to new arrivals.

Young adults transitioning from youth custody have become used to using laptops. They arrive at Swinfen Hall to no laptops, with only a paper-based system, where their applications are not recorded accurately. Whilst some departments are efficient in handling applications (Business hub, work allocations) others (in particular, reception) are not with applications lost, or not answered, or ignored. The prison needs to introduce a means of recording applications and quality assessing responses in the same way as they do for complaints which are mostly handled effectively in a timely manner.

The Board is concerned that the prison has been advised (deputy governor at prison council April 2025) that the project to install Kiosks or laptops to improve how basic administration tasks are addressed for all is on hold and it is uncertain when or if it will restart. This is, if correct, a money saving exercise that is counterproductive as it increases costs adversely and reduces staff effectiveness.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

There were no deaths in custody during the reporting period although two serious incidents could have had a different outcome if staff had not reacted with great haste and professionalism to preserve life.

There were 169 self-harm recorded incidents between January and April 2025, of which 17 were so serious as to require a hospital visit.

The trend regarding self-harm over the last two quarters showed an increase in ingestions. Cutting remained the most common form of self-harm but since the removal of wet shave razors there has been an increase in other implements being used: drawing pins, Perspex and prison issue cutlery.

There were several incidents of self-harm including one ligature attempt and one very serious fire incident, where fatalities were avoided. The prison reviewed processes and some early learnings were made, (the staff involved did not have all the resources needed to prevent injury for a serious in cell fire)

The Board awaits sight of the investigation report related to this serious incident.

Most self-harm incidents are correctly considered low risk and the wing staff are aware of the underlying causes. The Board considers it to be essential that the new regime directly addresses the bullying and threatening culture alongside regime restrictions that are identified below to support the reduction of young people's vulnerability and risk of self-harm.

The stability report for 18.12.2024 notes.

“Self-harm remains high at 18 incidents, the reports of harm have been low risk and some of the Young adults are on open ACCT documents. The reasons for the self-harm have been a mixture of reasons such as feeling low, coping mechanisms and

bullying. The core-reason is due to the regime restrictions and struggling with the festive period approaching”

The safety meeting in December noted that *“There are currently 26 ACCT’s open, and the number is likely to increase due to VP Young adults and feeling under threat on the wing. There are now 43 CSIPs open and have been allocated, this number is high as it includes all those who are isolating.”*

The SLT also highlighted the frequent poor quality of ACCTs for young adults transferred in from other establishments. There was a focus to thoroughly review these ACCTs to ensure they were updated to be accurate.

The Board agree with the safety review of August 24, that not all ACCT observations and entries were up to standard. More focus was carried out on the risk as at the time wing staff did not appear to be taking ownership of ACCT documents. This has started to improve with the introduction in March of senior officers on wings.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

The Board expressed concern over young adults being assaulted when left unsupervised in association rooms on A, B and C wings. Managers explained the absence of staff as due to of a lack of confidence and capability by staff.

Self-isolators

A self-isolator is defined as a person who deliberately withdraws from interaction with others. This can occur for a range of reasons, including personal preference, health concerns, psychological factors, or the nature of their offence.

A young adult is classified as a self-isolator if they voluntarily disengage from some or all elements of the prison regime for a period exceeding five days The "regime" includes work, gym sessions, visits, exercise, and wing-based activities such as meal collection, domestic tasks, and association.

The number of self-isolators at Swinfen Hall fluctuated over the year, with some individuals remaining in isolation for extended periods—the longest recorded case lasting 1,206 days.

Swinfen Hall has implemented a self-isolator support plan. While this plan is designed to be comprehensive, in practice it faces challenges. The reasons young adults choose to self-isolate are diverse and complex, meaning a single policy cannot effectively address all needs.

Any member of staff who believes a young adult meets the criteria for self-isolation can initiate the self-isolator plan. Once opened, staff are expected to document all relevant actions in the daily occurrence log. Monitoring by members recorded this log was not always available, undermining effective tracking and support.

Adjudications

Adjudications (disciplinary hearing when a prisoner is alleged to have broken prison rules) attended have been chaired fairly and clearly with the process clearly explained and judgements made understood by the young adult.

There were 691 adjudications during January to April 2025, with 93 (14%) failing to proceed.

The reasons for failure recorded were either blank or lack of evidence.

74 offences were referred to the police in the last 6 months, and 107 offences were referred to the police during last 12 months, supporting the Boards view that a change in approach during the year has been positive.

There were 58 ongoing investigations with 3 proceeding to court.

4.4 Use of force

Board Members are regular attendees at the weekly use of force (UoF) meetings to observe, monitor and ask questions where appropriate. On request Board members viewed CCTV or body-worn video cameras (BWVC) independently of the weekly meetings:

The opinion of the Board is that the process for reviewing incidents is robust and that managerial oversight is clearly evident, with both training needs and good practice identified. Resulting actions were reviewed at subsequent meetings and outcomes recorded.

Incidents with CCTV coverage and BWVC recordings reviewed offered invaluable insight into how the incident was managed and whether it was necessary, reasonable, and proportionate to the situation.

There is a clear expectation that BWVC is activated at the scene of the incident by prison staff. When this does not happen, (the use of force database indicates this is around 40% of incidents) actions are taken to follow this through with the staff member involved. (evidenced by use of force minutes).

It is acknowledged that CCTV coverage is not present in some parts of the establishment.

- The drawing and use of Batons and or PAVA (an incapacitant spray similar to pepper spray) is given serious attention. A decision was made at a use of force meeting in January that due to significant learning points coming out of reviewing the use of batons/PAVA to carry on with 100% viewing of all incidents.

The use of force to prevent imminent self-harm/danger to life has been used on occasion. Monitoring reviews noted that the use of force was reasonable and the SLT recognise that such restraints can be traumatic for young adults and staff.

The HMPPS data set records that between May 1 2024, and April 30 2025, there were

- 878 use of force incidents
- 506 using guiding holds,
- 437 applications of handcuffs
- 6% use of pain inducing technique
- 70% + of incidents involved young adults aged 18-21
- 23% of incidents involved young adults on young adults assaults
- 21% of incidents involved a fight between young adults
- 13 % of incidents involved were to prevent harm
- 3.6% of incidents involved assaults on staff

- Batons were drawn seven times and used on three occasions
- Pava was drawn 139 times and used 118 times (85%), not used 21 times (15%)

All PAVA incidents were reviewed at UoF meetings, and the Board were provided rationale which seemed defensible for why PAVA was used in the incidents monitored.

BWVC were only used in 60% of incidents which is a concern.

Incidents analysed by ethnicity reflect the ethnic population of prison:

White 46% Black 30% mixed 15% Asian 7% Other 2%.

There are no obvious spikes or excess reports identified when compared to three comparator prisons.

The 'lifer wing' (I) with one more staff member and a more settled regime has the lowest levels of use of force, again illustrating the benefits of additional staff resourcing and specialist training from psychology staff to create an environment for a cohort of very challenged young adults. A concern is that staff who moved to the lifer wing after the initial training was complete have had no lifer specific training apart from a booklet to read.

The Board noted in November 24 that:

"I Wing was very settled if boisterous for dine out session, the wing Custodial Manager was genuine in his assessment of wing issues, violence and self-harm down, relationships strong, & lifer wing incentives well received by men, staff keen to tell me how well wing functions and that they are on top of Key Work sessions provided fortnightly to most men."

4.5 Preventing illicit items

A renewed focus on security issues under a new security governor along with increased liaison externally within the security department has had a positive effect on tackling ingress of illicit items. Drone sightings have remained low during the year, however there have been multiple throwover finds.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

During the summer of 2024, the Board had reason to write to the Governor regarding the continual failings in ensuring cleanliness around food/kitchens/hygiene. Food trolleys were filthy, waste food was left unbagged all around the prison, faulty kitchen equipment remained out of action for months. See the letter to the Governor (annex A); whilst improvements have been made in part, cleanliness and waste disposal remains a failing in some residential areas. A lack of repairs and replacement of failed kitchen equipment are a significant concern and present a risk to health as correct processes are not followed.

The Board regularly noted that young adult food preparation areas on wings were unclean, equipment and tables had not been cleaned for some time and fridges had mould inside, with sinks blocked and containing dirty water/food waste. This was a frequent observation, consequently the room would be closed for up to two weeks as a punishment, when the issue was a lack of supervision by staff and a lack of responsibility by a few young adults.

In the reporting period wing officers, concerned for the welfare of the young adults, have urged Board members to raise and report the poor quality of the food. The standard has deteriorated even since the last reporting period. The kitchen was said to be clawing back a budget overspend, although it is unclear how it had overspent considering the quality of the final product. In this area, the Board agrees with the conclusion of the recipients. The food is often bland, poor quality and repetitive. The young adults feel forced to use their very limited canteen funds to supplement the prison fare.

To make matters worse, several of the servery food warmers have been in a state of disrepair throughout the reporting period. So, the repetitive, bland, poor-quality food is often tepid as well.

5.2 Segregation

The Care and Separation unit (CSU) is well run and supervised, with staff focused on a supportive daily regime.

In CSU cells, the toilet pans are filthy with ingrained matter and their use in the current condition is inhumane, the sinks are little better.

Health and safety management agree. The response from the prison was that the cost of replacing the “indestructible” toilet pans was outside of budget. The Board believes that placing a young adult in a cell with a toilet that is in such poor condition it would not be used by choice is both unreasonable and counterproductive to building positive relationships.

On occasion, young adults on ACCTS have been placed in segregation as the most suitable location. When the decisions made to support the ACCT have been monitored the reasons why the individual has been placed in segregation are viewed as robust by the Board, and the care extended by segregation staff has met the young adult needs. When the level of support required (with up to seven young adults on an ACCT) is increased, extra staff and management have supported the unit.

Some young adults remain “wing restricted” for long periods, one example being around four years.

5.3 Staff and young adult relationships, key workers

The Board notes that the Lifer wing (I) with an extra member of staff and specialist training (promised but not fully delivered), completed 21% of all key worker session with only 12% of the population.

However, the Board is concerned that staff based on I wing express regret that the training promised to them has not been delivered, and they have had to develop their personal training from a booklet that not all have read. The Board have noted failings to deal (consistently) with basic requests to have photos released to young adults, there is an inconsistency in censorship by staff dependent on who is on duty.

Inter prison phone calls are promised but young adults claim they are not provided, and staff always place the fault as at the other prison.

5.4 Equality and diversity

The Board have not been aware of any valid complaints related to diversity.

Support for young adults with trans issues is mixed, e.g. a trans young adult was noted as needing support due to on wing bullying during July, but Board members noted she was still being bullied on the same wing in April, some nine months later. Another trans young adult also complained of discrimination by her peers, the wing management are aware and do address these on a regular basis.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The Chaplaincy team continue to give superb support to young adults as and when needed during periods of crisis over various events including family bereavement.

The work of the chaplaincy, as with other areas, has been undermined by pressures from the prison regime, particularly at weekends. Although the prison service instruction (PSI) 05/2016 (Paragraph 4.5) states that corporate worship should be available for 1 hour from the time young adults are assembled and the chaplain is ready to begin, Anglican and RC services seldom last more than 40 minutes by this definition (often young adults are still being chaperoned to chapel 20 minutes into the hour).

Muslim prayers proceed with good attendance hampered by late arrival of some young adults. Observance of Ramadan was supported well throughout the whole prison

Because of the restricted regime provided at the weekend, young adults generally have no access to further association time with peers on their wing if they choose to attend a religious service. For this reason, many would attend only fortnightly (on the weekend when their wing would otherwise be locked down). This further erodes the work of the chaplaincy.

5.6 Incentives schemes

The highest level a young adult can reach on the incentive scheme is platinum and it is viewed by young adults as of no real advantage as an incentive, even though being a “platinum” young adult presents positively for any Cat D application.

5.7 Complaints

Internal complaints were administered effectively and most meet time deadlines, the quality and clarity of responses were varied.

5.8 Property

The Prisons and Probation (PPO) property report noted that;

“A consistent issue our researchers found was that prisons are insufficiently motivated to improve property practices. This strongly suggests the need for HMPPS to make operational changes (driven and monitored by key performance indicators and audits) to help motivate prisons to address property handling, the PPO would suggest that establishments should consider whether having a designated property officer would help them with property complaints handling.

The Policy Framework mandates that the cell clearance certificate (with the property card) must be stored in the young adult’s core record. Our investigators often find staff have failed to do this.”

The Board fully agrees with this statement and is certain that having a designated property officer who is managed under key performance indicators and correctly resourced would reduce the level of complaints and frustration young adults reasonably express over the handling of their property. When there are staff shortages the staff in reception are the first to be moved to other duties (along with those allocated to key work).

There were 42 complaints to the Board about property issues.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

Healthcare is provided by Practice Plus Group (PPG). It is integrated with mental health and psychosocial substance misuse services, which are sub-contracted to the Midlands Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust provided through its 'Inclusion' team.

6.2 Physical healthcare

In the reporting period, the Board has received very few complaints or negative comments about the medical and dental facilities in the prison (healthcare applications occasionally go without response. It is impossible to know if this arises due to bad communication within the prison or due to shortcomings in the healthcare provision).

In the reporting period there have been a total of 575 hospital visits, 36 of which required overnight stays. Of these, most occurred as a result of on-site violence, something which puts a stress on many aspects of delivery. Whenever Board members have witnessed violence on-site, healthcare workers have been at the scene speedily, providing care in often fraught circumstances.

6.3 Mental health

Those suffering from complex mental health issues constitute a significant portion of the prison at HMP/YOI Swinfen Hall. At the time of writing, there are approximately 120 young adults receiving support under the mental health team, with a further 70 receiving support to address drug dependency issues.

The team of specialists delivering mental health services are supported by a psychiatrist, contracted to both HMP/YOI Swinfen Hall and HMP Long Lartin on a part-time basis.

6.4 Services provided under the offender personality disorder pathway

Although not a mental health service in the traditional sense, the offender personality disorder (OPD) pathway is a collaboration between HMPPS and the NHS. It is a long-term change programme that commissions treatment and support services nationally for people with personality difficulties/disorders, whose complex mental health problems are linked to their serious offending.

Services are provided both in dedicated residential environment and outreach services to the wider prison population. The delivery of the enhanced Support service (ESS), a specialist intervention within the offender personality disorder program has been hindered by staff non-availability. Capacity is for 60 young adults and there is a waiting list (currently closed) of over 60 young adults.

The services are well-received and never short of those wishing to seek such support, or in need of it.

The OPD pathway report for 2023, identified the need to improve support at times of transition. This area remains a concern to the Board and is pertinent to both OPD pathway services and mental health services.

6.5 Care for neurodiverse young adults

Currently HMP&YOI Swinfen Hall holds 393 young adults who have been identified as either having a diagnosed neurodiverse condition, self-declared or having highlighted neurodivergent traits on completion of the rapid screen questionnaire (see below).

In a recent survey to young adults who have self-harmed at the prison, 95% claimed to have a neurodivergent condition (not all would have received a formal diagnosis), highlighting both the additional difficulties experienced by this cohort and the importance of addressing their needs.

The prison has a dedicated lead to support those with neurodivergent needs, tasked with both educating staff, as well as enlightening practice to deal with the challenges presented to and by this group. Board members have seen situations where a young adult's neurodiversity needs have been taken into consideration but have also seen others where further work is needed.

6.5.1 Identification of neurodiversity

In its report to the of 2023 Criminal Justice Joint Inspection (CJJI), including His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons recommended that:

“A common screening tool for universal use within the criminal justice system should be introduced, supported by an information sharing protocol specifying how information should be appropriately shared within and between agencies, to make sure that necessary adjustments and extra support are provided for individuals as they progress through the criminal justice system.”

This is done primarily by a self-assessing questionnaire (rapid screener) completed by new arrivals to prison (not necessarily to Swinfen Hall). In the reporting period, 40 young adults have had an in-depth screener completed on site, with a further 75 young adults have transferred in with an in-depth screener already complete.

To support the young adults, the prison offers a care plan via the 'This Is Me' (TIM) document. This document is completed with an individual –with a focus on triggers, support, and communication. Currently 42 young adults have an active TIM plan.

The unfortunate case of B highlights that there is still much more which needs to be done:

“B entered Swinfen Hall with issues around drug misuse and was frequently getting into trouble due to his behaviour. Whilst awaiting adjudication in CSU, an IMB member raised concerns with the adjudicating governor that he suspected undiagnosed ADHD. Later that week healthcare agreed to refer him for assessment and his ADHD condition was eventually confirmed. Unfortunately, this was close to the end of his sentence. So, at the time of his release, he had been unable to begin

medication and in his own words, “I came to Swinfen Hall with a drug problem. I’m leaving with an addiction.”

Failure to identify his condition earlier, through effective screening, contributed to his continued self-medicating practice (i.e. drug taking) and to him leaving the prison without any tangible level of rehabilitation.

6.5.2 Catering for young adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD)

Prisoners with ASD are supported by In-reach, an external company who deliver an accredited course to young adults seeking further support. The course is delivered over five weekly sessions, it is informative, interesting, and educational for the learners. Each learner receives a certificate and a sensory box on completion. Over the last 12 months, 25 young adults have completed the course.

In March, the first neurodiverse friendly family visit was held, supported by In-reach and volunteer staff. Ten young adults and their families were invited to the event, which was warmly received.

6.5.3 Catering for young adults with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder/attention deficit disorder (ADHD/ADD)

In contrast to those with ASD (who are disproportionately represented among those sentenced for sexual offences), the cohort of young adults with ADHD tend to present with more disruptive, or sometimes violent, behaviour and may have been excluded from mainstream education.

Further work needs to be done, particularly with respect to the balance between incentivising good behaviour and sanctioning bad behaviour. The Board feels that this is true across the prison community, but it is particularly stark among the ADHD cohort. The prison-typical approach towards errant behaviour:

- (ii) Removal of privileges (including access to TV etc) under incentives downgrading
- (ii) Removal from work

leads to extended periods (i.e. 23 hours per day) in cell without distractions. Such a regime is very harsh for many of those with ADHD. Although difficult to quantify, it is almost certain that this contributes to further disruptive behaviour, increased self-harm and “self-medication” (use of illicitly brewed alcohol and drugs).

The psychologically informed planned environment unit (PIPE) is a 60 bed wing where residents engage in structured and socially creative group sessions, and the delta enabling environment (DEE) unit comprises of 30 beds, or a half-wing, for high risk/harm men who have experienced complex trauma and present with emerging personality disorders.

The non-residential treatment service (NRTS) caters for a further approximately 20 young men. Whilst the enhanced support service (ESS) seeks to support those with persistent, challenging behaviour.

6.6 Time out of cell, regime

As noted elsewhere staff absence causes repeated wing closures which impacts negatively on young adults outcomes, for example during the week of 18 December 2024, the prison noted:

“There are 40 officers who are not available for full operational duties (1/3 of TSF). And the prison is currently relying heavily on staff willing to work additional hours.”

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

Board members frequently find classes with only two or three people engaged in learning. Wing closures, which have occurred throughout the reporting period, impact attendance but this is not the sole, or even primary, issue. Sometimes young adults are assigned to courses for which they have no interest (or incentive/motivation).

Whilst there are some very good classes, the provider has many times failed to ensure that subject tuition can be properly resourced.

The prison would like everyone to achieve level 1 in maths and English but, in reality, this is a challenge for many.

7.1.1 Accessing education

There have been numerous occasions in the reporting period where young adults have complained that they have tried to access education courses and have been ignored. This is not necessarily the case as the archaic, paper-based applications systems, which is recognised as being dysfunctional, contributes to poor communication across a range of functions.

Nevertheless, young adults have asked to enrol in courses, both classroom-based and distance-learning courses and have failed to get the necessary support to progress.

Wing outreach has been weak. Opportunities for those wing-restricted are particularly limited.

That said, most young adults have access to 'Way 2 Learn' courses via their in-cell TV.

7.1.2 Available curriculum & attainment

From April 2024 to April 2025, the following achievement levels have been attained:

- Number of young adults achieving English Level 1: actual success = 62.96%
- Number of young adults achieving English Level 2: actual success = 74.51%
- Number of young adults achieving maths Level 1: actual success = 30%
- Number of young adults achieving maths Level 2: actual success = 42.86%

Growth of uptake in Way2Learn courses has been positive in the reporting period. From a total of 52 workbooks passed in 2023-24, the number rose to 312 workbook passes (94 young adults) in the 2024-25 year.

7.1.3 Further education opportunities

The Young Adult Education Trust provides access to a range of distance-learning courses and there are currently 17 young adults enrolled on such courses.

There are currently nine young adults engaged in Open University courses. However, this is only a fraction of those who could benefit.

Many are excluded from this opportunity as funding is only available (through Student Finance) for those in the final six years of their sentence. The Board has been particularly concerned that opportunities for those on life/long terms are severely curtailed – both in terms of education and training opportunities. This lack of support does not reflect many lifer needs, impacts negatively on outcomes for young adults and is outside of the control of the prison.

7.1.4 Library

The library continues to deliver a range of services, including Storybook Dads, book clubs, author visits etc, creatively and enthusiastically. This is despite having an extremely limited budget for new books (currently £1,000 for the year, or £1.60 per prison place) and being one of the first facilities to close when staff shortages occur.

7.2 Vocational Training

Where vocational training is available (carpentry, plastering, cookery, business studies, forklift training, personal social development and art), it is well-run and very popular, but numbers involved are tiny in comparison to the prison population. Opportunities are far too limited.

Places are usually allocated preferentially to those approaching their release dates. This makes sense in terms of people learning skills which may lead to young adults securing employment on release, but the Board considers that withholding places on these courses from longer-term young adults (and this applies equally to comments made about further education above) deprives them of opportunities for personal development and to build a sense of achievement.

By expanding the opportunities available, the prison could not only benefit the young adults' development but also enable more young adults to make a positive contribution to the prison and increase resource to meet the prison's own needs – for example: in cleaning, painting, plumbing, general maintenance etc.

7.2.1 Work & Industries

A small number of (non-domestic) work opportunities are available including:

- (iv) bike repair
- (iv) fencing (for a national company providing garden trellising etc)
- (iv) tailoring - towel production for HMPPS
- (iv) packaging for another outside company

Over the reporting period, the prison has not made any significant improvement to the number of placements available in education, training and work. This remains an area of concern to the Board and one which impacts directly on “time out of cell” figures.

Entry learner information from IS log from April 2024 to present day 396 learners' data recorded upon entry to establishment.

SUMMARY OF WORK PLACE ATTENDANCE IN A TYPICAL WEEK

	Activity	L&S	Services	Indust' / Work	Interventions Totals	Total	TIER 2 Activities	notes
11/04/2025	Capacity	61	267	106	38	472	196	Friday pm no activities
	Allocated	54	222	88	22	386	177	
	Attended	37	205	63	22	327	150	
	%	61%	77%	59%	58%	69%	77%	
14/04/2025	Capacity	176	442	212	86	916	172	part time equivalents
	Allocated	157	378	174	55	764	122	
	Attended	106	344	123	54	627	90	
	%	60%	78%	58%	63%	68%	52%	
15/04/2025	Capacity	216	439	210	75	940	223	part time equivalents
	Allocated	195	374	176	44	789	203	
	Attended	107	336	105	42	590	117	
	%	50%	77%	50%	56%	63%	52%	
16/04/2025	Capacity	189	438	212	77	916	204	part time equivalents
	Allocated	161	374	176	57	768	152	
	Attended	77	325	110	57	569	87	
	%	41%	74%	52%	74%	62%	43%	
17/04/2025	Capacity	206	435	212	88	941	143	part time equivalents
	Allocated	179	371	187	53	790	126	
	Attended	106	325	123	52	606	67	
	%	51%	75%	58%	59%	64%	47%	

7.3 Offender management, progression

Whilst there has been greater visibility on wing of offender management unit (OMU) staff this year, the reality is that where offender managers have a case load of up to 80 high risk and very high-risk young adults, they cannot provide a reasonable support service to positively address outcomes for all those they supervise. This is a significant weakness in terms of positive outcomes for young adults.

With an excess workload there is a consequent delay in writing sentence plans which young adults are keen to see and understand to support them in progressing their sentence. There were at least 60 overdue sentence plans in April 2025.

The expectations of staff in the OMU are not controlled by the prison and are completely unreasonable and not possible to deliver. The Board notes that the efforts and results achieved by the OMU staff, given these pressures are exceptional and to be applauded.

7.4 Family contact

Of the visits monitored, family days ran well with positive staff, young adult and family interactions.

7.5 Resettlement planning

The comments in 7.3 address resettlement planning.

The SLT and Board both recognise that many of the young adults at Swinfen Hall have experienced the care system and so need additional support in terms of addressing future outcomes. This is an area that will need more focus in the future as the population complexity increases and the Board welcomes the planned support.

The OMU include a “care experienced team” managed by the head of the offender manager delivery team and in October 2024, Swinfen Hall celebrated Care Experienced Week with several events being organised for care experienced young adults. This proved to be a successful event and was instrumental in launching a forum for those young adults previously looked after by their local authority. HMYOI Swinfen currently have around 200 (33%) young adults who have relevant “looked after” status or former relevant status. It is accepted that this number is likely to be higher as some young adults do not realise they may be classed as previously looked after. An example is where adults have been “remanded” to the care of the local authority or been subject to a “court ordered secure remand”.

OASys (offender assessment system, used to assess the risks and needs of prisoners) assessments do not always highlight if a young adult has been in care. The primary purpose is to support these young adults by promoting links with their personal advisors. For example where a pathway plan is evident, the local authority where the young adult last resided and has community links is expected to support the young adult in terms of resettlement.

The initiative also aims to increase awareness for staff so they can also gain an insight into the individual needs and complexities etc of this largely unsupported group of young people.

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	14
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	8
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	9 (4 on sabbatical)
Total number of visits to the establishment	287

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	9	16
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	16	16
C	Equality	0	1
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	33	22
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	13	15
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	6	6
F	Food and kitchens	3	7
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	17	15
H1	Property within the establishment	38	42
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	22	13
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	4	4
I	Sentence management, including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	13	36
J	Staff/young adult concerns, including bullying	29	14
K	Transfers	33	8
L	Miscellaneous	8	5
	Total number of applications	236	220

Annex A: Letters sent during reporting year



Independent Monitoring Board
Swinfen Hall HMP & YOI
Lichfield, Staffordshire, WS14
9QS

Governor Laura Whitehurst
Swinfen Hall HMP & YOI
Lichfield, Staffordshire, WS14 9QS
18th June 2024

Waste management and wing cleanliness;

Dear Laura,

I write to you to record the Boards concerns regarding waste management and wing cleanliness; You will recall this concern has been raised at Board meetings over the last 3 months and also in many of the weekly rota reports in that period.

Members have also had applications from young adults working in waste management who have objected very clearly about the conditions they are required to work with. Staff in the waste management group have also complained to members and now Phil Seager has supplied a series of photos of waste management incidents which are not good.

Whilst members understand your and Louise's plans to deliver competency training to staff and have made some management staff moves to address these concerns along with other residential wing concerns the Board have concerns that:

- There is a serious risk to health from the fly infestations we and young adults and staff have noted
- Staff tell us that there is now a rodent problem around bins and they fear there will be a rodent problem on serveries shortly.
- The future plans and competency training do not tackle the problem now.
- Previous responses at Board meetings have been positive thank you, however delivery has not been made on some wings
- There appears to be a disconnect in the process between the residential managers at the prison, the gate staff providing prompt access to the food waste collection vehicle, and the kitchens staff.

It's unusual for this Board to write specific correspondence on any topic to the Governor as we appreciate that we have always been able to speak with you and Louise as and when we feel we need to, both informally and at Board meetings.

We did discuss the issue of Waste management and wing cleanliness at the June Board after you had left and determined that the concerns we held and the apparent slow ability to fix the problem were such that we needed to record our concern in a formal manner.

Kind regards,

Roger Swindells , Chair IMB Swinfen Hall

Matt Grey Executive Director Rehabilitation

Sent via e-mail: ExecutiveDirectorRehabilitation@justice.gov.uk

22nd April 2025

Dear Matt

REHABILITATIVE SUPPORT FOR THOSE ON LONG SENTENCES

I am writing to you on behalf of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP/YOI Swinfen Hall. We are concerned that a systemic gap in provision of rehabilitative opportunities for individuals servicing long sentences is having a detrimental impact on Young adults.

As you will know Swinfen Hall is a national resource, is classed as a category C training prison and has a growing population of Young adults, with around 93% of the current cohort being under the age of 25². Over the last five years the number of individuals at Swinfen Hall serving a life sentence has drastically increased from 38 in April 2020 (population of 556) to 132 in April 2025 (population 618). We note that over half of those with a life sentence have been a looked after child and more than 60% have some form of neurodiversity.

We were pleased to see that in April 2025 the operational function of HMPPS agreed to pause briefly the number of individuals serving life sentences that were being sent to Swinfen Hall and that a number of young adults were transferred elsewhere in the estate to reduce some local pressure. However, the Board now firmly believes that HMPPS should provide additional rehabilitative support for long and life sentenced individuals at Swinfen Hall.

We remain very concerned that those currently in, and soon to arrive at, Swinfen Hall, who may face up to a decade here, are not on the whole provided with purposeful and meaningful rehabilitative activities, suitable to their needs. Whilst those in Swinfen Hall are no longer children, it cannot be said that the predominant age profile of those held at Swinfen Hall are not at a critical point in their personal and societal development and that they require suitable programmes and opportunities.

For instance, those who are academically inclined and wish to improve their education but are on a life sentence, face barriers in getting access to Open University courses, as funding is aimed at those in with an earliest release date in the next eight years, with local education courses often being aimed at individuals with lower academic abilities. This is just one example of a missed opportunity to avoid Young adults stagnating during their formative years.

Furthermore, the Board regularly observes many Young adults working on menial tasks or unskilled wing work, being isolated behind their cell doors for exceptionally long periods or being excluded from training opportunities in favour of shorter

² Figures in this letter are taken from local management information.

sentenced young adults. One of the key drivers behind this letter was the repeated instances of Board members hearing Young adults express little hope for their future or that they could achieve their ambitions within their sentence.

However, we do wish to note that the local senior leadership team have taken independent steps, within their remit, to support this cohort. We have seen the introduction of a transitional support programme for Young adults, a review of suitable employment opportunities and most notably a wing for life sentenced Young adults. On this wing there are additional and centrally unfunded staff to provide enhanced support, with all staff on this wing having additional training in the needs and expectations of Young adults with life sentences. We have observed this wing as the most stable, and anecdotally, the safest in Swinfen Hall.

Despite these local operational initiatives, the Board believes that further central support is now required at Swinfen Hall to improve the rehabilitation of the Young adults on long and life sentences held there.

Whilst we have included the regional prison group director in copy to this letter and we understand many future steps may involve the operational side of HMPPS, we do believe that as the Executive Director for Rehabilitation this gap in provision, and the resultant impact on individuals, is something worthy of your attention. I would be happy to discuss this further with you, or one of your officials.

Yours Sincerely,

Roger Swindells
IMB Swinfen Hall Chair

Copied to:

Governor HMP Swinfen Hall
Prison Group Director
IMB National Chair
IMB Chief Executive Officer
IMB Policy Team



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