



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Wealstun

**For reporting year
1 June 2024 to 31 May 2025**

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Introductory sections 1 – 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

The Prison Act 1952 requires every prison to be monitored by an independent board appointed by the Secretary of State from members of the community in which the prison is situated.

Under the National Monitoring Framework agreed with ministers, the Board is required to:

- satisfy itself as to the humane and just treatment of those held in custody within its prison and the range and adequacy of the programmes preparing them for release
- inform promptly the Secretary of State, or any official to whom authority has been delegated as it judges appropriate, any concern it has
- report annually to the Secretary of State on how well the prison has met the standards and requirements placed on it and what impact these have on those in its custody.

To enable the Board to carry out these duties effectively, its members have right of access to every prisoner and every part of the prison and also to the prison's records.

The Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT) is an international human rights treaty designed to strengthen protection for people deprived of their liberty. The protocol recognises that such people are particularly vulnerable and aims to prevent their ill-treatment through establishing a system of visits or inspections to all places of detention. OPCAT requires that states designate a National Preventive Mechanism to carry out visits to places of detention, to monitor the treatment of and conditions for detainees and to make recommendations for the prevention of ill-treatment. The IMB is part of the United Kingdom's National Preventive Mechanism.

2. Description of the establishment

HMP Wealstun is a category C training and resettlement prison (which houses those whose escape risk is considered low but who are not yet deemed ready for open conditions), for men, situated in a semi-rural area near Wetherby, West Yorkshire. It now has an operational capacity, or OpCap (the maximum number of prisoners that can be held without serious risk to safety, security, good order and the proper running of the planned regime), of 908¹.

There are 11 residential units, built at different times, and a segregation unit. The units include 40 rapid-deployment cells, which opened in January 2024. The site also comprises a kitchen, visitors' centre, chaplaincy, gym, library, healthcare centre, College and a number of workshops. A reception area for prisoners' visitors is located outside the main gate.

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

3. Key points

3.1 Main findings

Safety

- Receptions have nearly doubled over the reporting period. This has caused significant work for staff across the prison which, despite efforts made, has affected prisoners in many ways.
- The massive churn of prisoners with prisoners from all over north and central England including those with less than two weeks left to serve, has meant that the stability of the prison has reduced.
- Whilst the number of prisoners on open assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) plans remains consistent, the level of violence has increased.
- Despite a considerable amount of work by the prison, illicit substances are still widely available and contributing to the violence and debt problems. Positive mandatory drug tests peaked at 44% in one month of the year.

Fair and humane treatment

- The Board remain concerned about the condition of the older wings and the plan to increase more double cells across the prison.
- The segregation unit is generally well managed with all prisoners having clear reintegration plans in place. The length of time that prisoners are segregated has reduced this reporting year.
- The Board is pleased that despite the significant churn of prisoners, applications and prison complaints relating to property have reduced significantly.

Health and wellbeing

- The Board is satisfied that the healthcare provision is generally good.
- The length of time prisoners are permitted outside their cells continues to be of concern, particularly for those prisoners unemployed or on a basic regime.

Progression and resettlement

- Most prisoners continue to be employed on a part time basis. The Board hopes that the extended working week will lead to more prisoners being employed for longer hours.
- The high churn of the prison, with many prisoners having very short sentences remaining, has limited the work that can be done by the prison to prepare prisoners for their release.
- The loss of jobs from the beverage packing facility has reduced work options for prisoners and may have disproportionately affected prisoners with neurodiversity.
- Prisoners serving imprisoned for public protection (IPP) sentences continue to struggle to make progress through the system.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- When will the Minister recognise that the additional churn of prisoners impacts staffing across the whole prison and ensure an increase in budget to recruit staff to undertake this additional work?
- As referenced in previous reports, what steps will the Minister take to ensure that prison is not used to house severely mentally ill people whilst they await a place in a suitable institution?
- When will the Minister end the inhumane treatment of prisoners serving IPP sentences across the prison estate and release all remaining IPP prisoners with no conditions?
- What will the Minister do to help tackle the increasing rates of illicit substances entering the prison and support the prison service in this work?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- As referenced in previous reports, what is the prison service doing to ensure that prisoners are not housed sharing cells, as this is inconsistent with the obligation to provide high standards of decency for prisoners, particularly in respect of toilet facilities?
- As referenced in previous reports, when will sufficient restoration work take place on the older wings (A and B wings)? It is increasingly apparent that this accommodation, built in the 1960s, needs significant remedial action for a number of reasons and is not a humane environment for prisoners.
- The outsourcing of drug testing to the national centre has resulted in delays in bringing prosecutions, which affects security in the prison. When will these delays be addressed?
- Why has the performance measure on first night accommodation ceased to be collected at a time of increased pressure due to the early release schemes?
- What will the prison service do to address the retention issues amongst officers and provide better training for the role?
- When will the performance targets be set with an understanding of prisons? The current process is demotivating for staff and must impact on prisoners.

TO THE GOVERNOR

- How will the Governor resolve the inconsistency between wings, such as communication by officers and subtle changes to regime that are evident throughout this report?
- Will the Governor consider reinstating the mental health sessions in the gym?
- As referenced in previous reports, how will the Governor ensure that information in an ACCT file only includes paperwork for one week whilst archiving and storing the remainder? The size of some files make them difficult to navigate by staff and IMB members, thus potentially failing to see the continuity clearly.
- How will the Governor ensure that key workers sessions are provided for each prisoner and raise their profile?

3.3 Response to the previous report

Responses to the areas for development for the Minister and Prison Service were as expected given the current population crisis across the Prison Service and long-standing issues, for example, serious mentally ill people being held in prisons still to be addressed through Parliament.

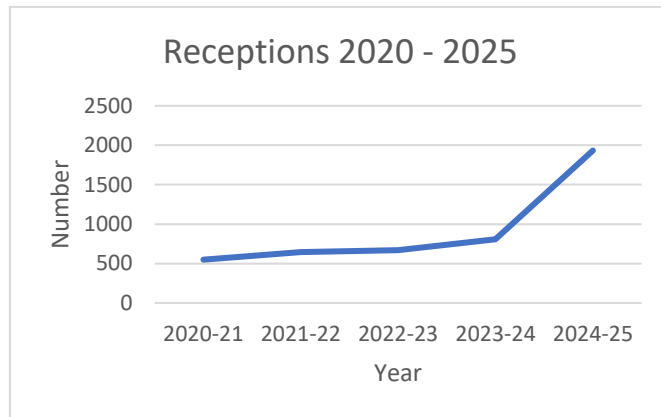
The Board have observed positive improvements to time out of cell for prisoners by increasing the regime and providing more work and education opportunities as additional funding has been secured for the extended working day. The changes are expected to take place in autumn 2025, as staff reprofiling is required. The Governor is also in the process of recruiting a senior member of staff with responsibility for equality and diversity.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

4.1.1 Receptions have more than doubled in the past reporting year, from 807 to 1933. With the operating capacity remaining at 908, the number of receptions is now more than twice the prison population. Many prisoners arrive with very short sentences remaining (2-4 weeks in some cases). The high turnover of prisoners coupled with short sentences has a major impact on the prison in terms of stability and operations.



4.1.2 Historically, HMP Wealstun consisted of a mostly local population of mainly West Yorkshire prisoners with many being transferred from HMP Leeds. Security and safety concerns have required HMP Wealstun to take more prisoners from outside the region. HMP Holme House has re-rolled as a reception prison, resulting in more prisoners from the northeast being transferred. Prisoners from outside the region find visits from relatives and friends difficult due to distance they need to travel and this can be unsettling.

4.1.3 The Board observed a very well-planned release of 55 prisoners under Standard Determinate Sentence (SDS40) on 10 September 2024, where certain prisoners are released after 40% of their sentence. Although there were no receptions planned for 10 September, 18 admissions were expected on each of the next three days. There was a whole prison plan in releasing the prisoners and it started at 7am and all prisoners were released by 11am.

4.1.4 Nearly 40% of new arrivals were on recall, raising further concerns about preparation for release and the effectiveness of post-custodial supervision support. There were a number of changes to sentencing throughout the reporting year. The Temporary Presumptive Recategorisation Scheme was introduced and has now been extended to include prisoners with up to three years of their sentence remaining, meaning that there are more moves to open prisons. There are other changes planned in 2025 which will further impact on the level of churn of the prison and the Board will continue to monitor these developments closely.

4.1.5 The Board previously had concerns that the increase in receptions would negatively impact on both prisoners and staff and this has been very evident this reporting year. The problems include the length of time prisoners spend waiting to be processed in reception and delays in getting property. It has been observed that

officers have done good work in reception and on the induction wing. Short sentence prisoners have been seen to be disruptive on the induction wing as they have nothing to lose and there is little or no opportunity for resettlement in the short time they are in prison.

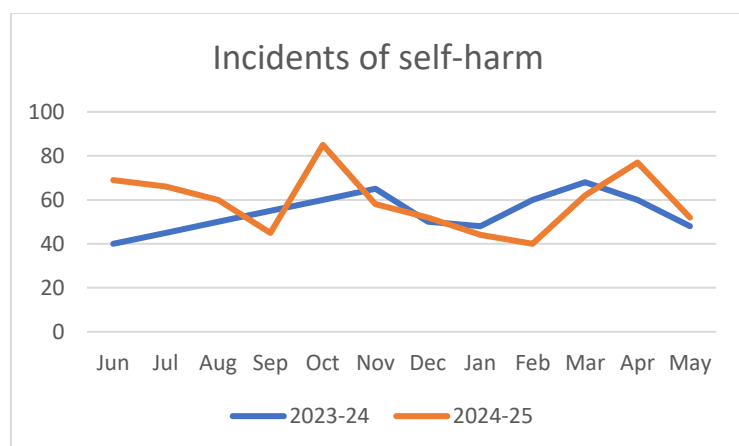
4.1.6 In addition to the increase in new receptions, there are other movements through reception which also need to be managed. These include hospital, court, transfers and releases. There were 5666 movements during the reporting year, equating to 110 movements a week. This is more than five times the staff profile for the anticipated 25 movements a week. However there has not been any additional officer recruitment for reception or other areas of the prison, including the business hub to support prisoner resettlement into the community. The Board is concerned that the considerable churn of prisoners continues to impact on the smooth running of the prison, with minimal additional resources to manage the additional intake.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

4.2.1 There was three deaths in custody (one from natural causes and two, yet to be determined) and one death following release (which has yet to be determined).

4.2.2 The number of ACCTs in the prison throughout the year has remained similar to the previous reporting period at around 15-18 each week. The Board has had the chance to observe a few ACCT reviews and when doing so have noted that they have been performed with respect, allowing the prisoner to speak. A number of open ACCT documents have also been observed, and appear, in the main to be completed correctly but still contain information which should be filed in safer custody. The safer custody team carries out staff training, especially of band 3s, 2s and operational support grades, in safety awareness and how to complete ACCT documentation. The training pack given to staff carries clear and concise instructions.

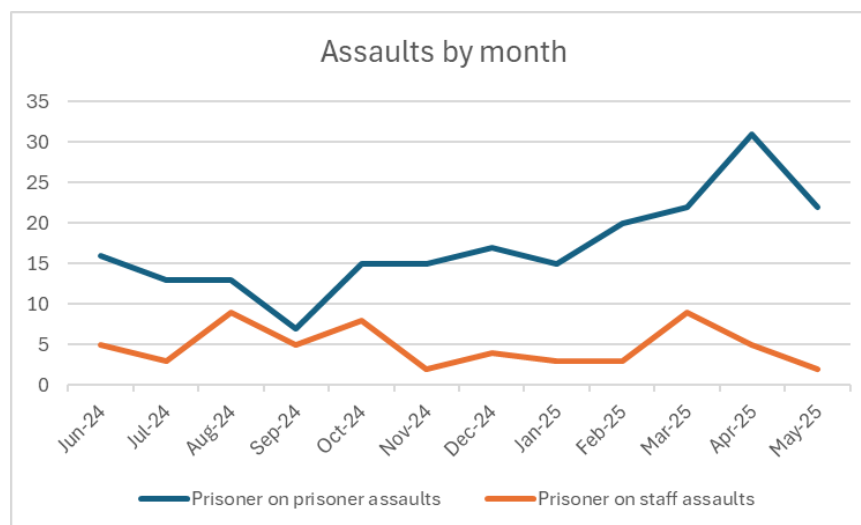
4.2.3 However, the levels of self-harm have increased in this reporting year (see graph below) and remain high. The Board have noted that there are a considerable number of prisoners who are prolific self-harmers and require additional support. Their needs are discussed at the safety intervention management (SIM) meeting held weekly, which Board members have occasionally observed. Notable new arrivals are also discussed, as well as cell share risk assessments. The single case management system appears to work well, with the prisoner and case worker able to form a stable working relationship.



4.2.4 There are 18 trained listeners, who are managed by the safer custody team. Listeners are carefully selected prisoners who have received eight weeks of training from Harrogate Samaritans so they can offer peer-to-peer support. Listeners are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. One of the challenges faced by the prison is losing listeners due to early release and category D (open prison) transfers.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

4.3.1 The Board are concerned that the number of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults has risen over the reporting year and is significantly higher than the previous reporting year, as well as being the second highest in its prison comparator group. There were a total of 213 prisoner on prisoner assaults and 65 prisoner on staff assaults.



4.3.2 The number of Challenge Support and Intervention Plans (CSIP) referrals was 2385 in the reporting period, with 481 of these being violence related. This is a considerable increase on the previous reporting year, which is indicative of the instability in the prison. The Board has observed discussions between Custodial Managers and prisoners and there were no concerns. CSIP management seems to be thorough and prisoners on CSIPs are discussed at the weekly SIM meetings. The number of prisoners self-isolating fluctuates with no obvious reason and are also discussed at the weekly SIM meeting and the next steps agreed.

4.3.4 The prison has in place 22 safety champions, two violence reduction representatives, 125 prisoners who have completed the clear mind debt workbooks and 12 problem support mentors to help address the violence. However, the impact has not yet been felt.

4.3.5 In the Board's view, the availability of illegal substances throughout the year and the continual churn of prisoners will have caused the increase in violence and the Board will continue to monitor this closely in the next reporting period.

4.4 Use of force

4.4.1 As expected due to the increase of violence, the total number of use of force (UoF) incidents, including employing handcuffs, over the reporting year was 542 (86.4% unplanned, 13.6% planned). This has increased from 409 from the last reporting year. It was observed that the spikes tended to occur when there was a large

quantity of illicit substances available in the prison. Incidents of the use of PAVA incapacitant spray remained low, at three times used and three drawn but not used.

4.4.2 The Board have observed a sample of the monthly use of force meetings, which now include the control and restraint instructors, as well as the Deputy Governor. A considerable amount of data is presented, together with full details of any incidents. There are also weekly scrutiny meetings to provide initial thoughts on the use of force incidents and start management investigations where necessary. Advice is given to officers when any concerns or opportunities are identified for improved prisoner control or restraint. The Board have not seen any incidents where the use of force appeared obviously excessive.

4.4.3 Of significance is that 80% of the need for force has arisen due to a downgrade of the Incentive Policy Framework (IPF), as prisoners do not like to lose things like their televisions. High rates are also seen amongst those unemployed and on the basic incentives scheme level. There also seem to be indications that where inexperienced staff are on duty, the use of verbal de-escalation may sometimes be less successful, with a higher chance that these incidents will result in force being used. The prison appears to be addressing this issue by reminding new officers about the importance of verbal de-escalation.

4.4.4 The use of body worn video cameras (BWVCs) in incidents involving force has fluctuated throughout the year, with an average of 66% and the prison continue to impress their importance of BWVCs to officers. The Board has observed footage from BWVCs on a number of occasions and found that it allows for much better scrutiny than footage from CCTV. Of merit is that 100% of prisoner debriefs following an episode of use of force do take place.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

4.5.1 Illicit items continue to present a significant problem, which is detrimental to physical and mental health of prisoners and raises levels of bullying, debt and safety. They enter the prison in several ways including throw overs, drones and conveying by visitors or staff. The high turnover of prisoners has increased the challenges for intelligence gathering and searching in reception.

4.5.2 HMP Wealstun, HM Prison and Probation (HMPPS) regional teams and West Yorkshire Police are all involved in managing security risks and issues. This includes the multi-agency response to serious and organised crime. A dedicated search team (DST) is based at HMP Wealstun, complemented by specialist dog handlers from the Yorkshire Area Search Team. Mandatory drug testing (MDT) of a random 5% of the prison population is undertaken each month, using a list autogenerated from Nomis (the internal computer system). Security searches are also undertaken where the prison has additional intelligence relating to certain prisoners.

4.5.3 There have been fluctuations in the level of illicit substances throughout the year, as shown by the varying levels of positive searches, results of MDT and intelligence information. Positive MDT tests peaked at 44% in one month, in the reporting year, indicating the high amounts of drugs in circulation. The number of prisoners found to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol has also fluctuated, with up to 118 episodes recorded in a single month.

4.5.4 Strategies deployed by HMP Wealstun during the year included increased searching at the gate for visitors and staff. This is still not done for all entries to the prison and the Board is of the opinion that, given the high rates of drug use, all visitors and staff should be thoroughly searched on every occasion. However, we recognise that this would need extra resourcing.

4.5.5 Cell searching by the DST has continued to lead to many significant finds, including large quantities of hooch (illicit, prison-brewed alcohol).

4.5.6 All prisoners arriving at HMP Wealstun are required to undergo body scanning to check for concealed items. Prisoners who refuse or where the scan indicates positive result are segregated from the general population. In previous years the Board has heard directly from prisoners questioning the accuracy of the body scanner but there have been no complaints this reporting year. The results of the scanning continue to undergo quality assurance checks through the HMPPS physical countermeasures team, who are also available to review uncertain scans.

4.5.7 The rapid scanner in reception is used to test any suspicious item for possible drug contamination. Any large quantities of drugs would normally be sent to the national drug service for testing, but there are significant delays in prisons receiving results since the service was outsourced. This has resulted in possible convictions for supplying drugs being missed.

4.5.8 The external perimeter fence continues to be upgraded and enhanced searching of outside areas occurs before prisoners are allowed to walk in them.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

Accommodation

5.1.1 The national pressures on the prison estate have mandated for all available potential cell space to be identified. 17 potential extra prisoner spaces at HMP Wealstun were identified through conversion of existing wing laundries. Despite pressure, the Governor has obtained agreement that the showers on D wing are upgraded before 12 existing single cells will become double cells. All of these will be double cells and the Board continues to be concerned about decreased decency when prisoners have to share cells.

5.1.2 The conversion of the existing wing laundries to new cells will necessitate the laundry service changing to a centralised operation. Prisoners have raised concerns that this may lead to loss or damage to property. However, the Board have been advised by the Governor that other prisons have implemented a similar scheme, and the feedback has been positive. However, this is an area that the Board will monitor closely. During the year, there have been reports of broken washing machines on wing, meaning prisoners were not able to wash their clothes frequently.

5.1.3 Decency checks are carried out by the senior management team and middle management team each week and this system covers all wings every six weeks. The findings seem variable, and the Board is concerned about the inconsistency across wings.

5.1.4 The netting covering some exercise yards came down under the weight of the snow during the winter. Consequently, exercise yards had to be closed entirely for a few days before reopening with additional officer patrols for security reasons. The work to refit the netting took several months to complete. The failure of the netting to withstand the weight of the snow is a recurring problem. The Board understands the issue is cost related but prisoners losing access to outside exercise is not acceptable.

5.1.5 The new K wing (opened in early 2024) continues to be a positive addition and houses some enhanced prisoners who can be trusted with a more relaxed regime. The prisoners have been very positive about the wing in general and welcomed the chance to cook communally and enjoy more freedom. Some prisoners on this wing have expressed a reluctance to make any complaints as they fear they may be moved off the wing. The Board has not seen any evidence that this is the case.

5.1.6 The standard of the older wings (A and B), built in the 1960s, continues to be of concern to the Board. Planning has started to refit these cells, but final plans are awaited. The Board hopes that any remedial work will include an improvement to the standard of fabric of the accommodation including better temperature control and window fittings. The Board has been consistently flagging the concerns about the standard of these wings since the 2020-21 annual report.

Clothing

5.1.7 There have been no applications (prisoners' written representations to the Board) this year concerning availability of prison clothing. The prison operates a charity clothing project that supports prisoners who do not receive any money from their

families and who are unable to purchase new clothing items. Prisoners are offered a clothing parcel from the charity if they have inadequate supplies on release.

5.1.8 Since February 2025 prisoners are no longer able to receive clothing parcels from friends and family unless the items have been purchased through an approved supplier. Previously shoes had to be purchased through an approved supplier, but other clothing could be sent in. This can be prohibitively expensive for some prisoners but has been bought in due to security concerns.

5.1.9 Despite the prison operating a policy whereby vaping is only permitted in a prisoner's own cell, the Board has witnessed, on several occasions, prisoners vaping in the communal wing areas without being challenged by staff and we have heard from prisoners who feel their health is adversely affected by breathing in such fumes. From the Board's observations, the application of this rule is inconsistent across the prison.

5.1.10 Prisoners have complained to the Board that they do not have adequate supplies of toilet rolls. It seems that the supplies are variable across wings and the Board have been told by officers how they sometimes must take supplies from other wings. It appears that two toilet rolls per prisoner per week are ordered. The Board has also heard that deodorant supplies can quickly run out. The Board note that this is likely another area where there is inconsistency between the wings.

Canteen

5.1.11 The majority of prisoners continue to be employed only on a part time basis resulting in lower wages than those working full time. With continued inflation, the prices of goods on the canteen continue to rise and not all prisoners have access to additional private funds. This makes it difficult for some prisoners to afford items such as vapes, phone credit and additional food items.

Food

5.1.12 The catering manager continues to drive forward standards and innovation despite ongoing budgetary pressures. The daily food allowance has increased from £2.75 to £3.12 but due to inflation the pressure on the budget remains and with it the challenges of providing nutritionally balanced food. The budget is aided by use of an in-house bakery and produce from the prison's farms and gardens. Around 50 prisoners have special dietary requirements, which can be more expensive to provide.

5.1.13 The kitchen offers themed dishes that are designed to support awareness of diversity. Black history, Eid and Christmas are examples of feature menus that seemed to be received well.

5.1.14 Each wing has a servery lead prisoner who attends a monthly food council meeting chaired by the catering manager. The six weekly prisoner council meetings are another opportunity for the prisoner wing representatives to share ideas around menus, and the Board has witnessed their feedback being taken on board.

5.1.15 Menus are preselected by prisoners and include nutrition and allergy information. The information is written in typed form and presents an issue to prisoners who find difficulty in reading.

5.1.16 The communal cooking facilities on K wing are being utilised with two kitchens (one reserved for Halal) available. This facility allows prisoners to work in a team to

produce meals and increases social interaction. Prisoners who work in the kitchen housed on H wing also cook once a week and share the meal amongst a group. No funds are available for purchasing ingredients with the prisoners needing to self-fund if they choose to participate. The Board, therefore, have concerns about how inclusive this is.

5.1.17 There is a new requirement that breakfast must provide at least 500 calories. The existing breakfast packs provide around 340 calories. There has been no increase to the budget to accommodate this extra calorie increase and consequently the start of the policy has been delayed.

5.2 Segregation

5.2.1 Overall, the Board considers the segregation unit to be quite well run, with an experienced core number of officers most of the time. Reintegration plans are in place for all prisoners early in their segregation. On occasion, the unit appears quiet, with few prisoners. However, the staff still have much paperwork to complete for adjudications, ACCTs and information for the segregation, monitoring and review group that requires knowledge and experienced officers. Staff inform the Board when prisoners are segregated and have recently provided a weekly report for Board members, which we have found very useful.

5.2.2 The Board have often received comments from prisoners that they are well looked after in segregation unit by caring officers: “understanding and good”, “listening”. One Board member was present at a review that lasted over an hour because the prisoner with complex mental health needed to talk. The member commented on the calm competent manner in which staff communicated with him.

5.2.3 Last year, vaping was prohibited in segregation. This was due to the prison believing it may discourage some prisoners from trying to get segregated (for example, by setting a cell fire or causing cell damage) in order to force a transfer to a different wing or prison. It is hard to determine whether the ban has discouraged this behaviour because there have still been destructive prisoners requiring segregation. There has been little prisoner pushback on the lack of vapes.

5.2.4 Occupation of the unit varies enormously. The Board have seen 10 cells occupied and, on other occasions, two or three.

5.2.5 Some prisoners in segregation have significant mental health issues. The Board remains concerned about the lack of alternative provision for these prisoners. There have been examples of prisoners on repeated dirty protests for several days.

5.2.6 There has been ongoing damage to the fabric of these cells. One prisoner destroyed three cells burrowing into the walls with his cutlery. Many observation hatches have been destroyed, along with phones and property. The Board has seen examples of rapid cleaning after such incidents. The Board was present after a sewage pipe burst and saw the efficiency with which the area was cleaned. The unit has been painted and smartened. The Board was aware of the lack of curtains in some cells and informed the management and curtains appeared soon afterwards.

5.2.7 Several prisoners have been segregated while waiting to be transferred across the estate for long periods, whether because of a re-categorisation or unsuitability for HMP Wealstun. The lack of capacity across the prison estate has slowed this down with some prisoners waiting for longer than 42 days.

5.2.8 Most complaints from segregated prisoners are promptly dealt by staff, but on one occasion a prisoner did not have his inhaler and the Board was concerned that it took several days before he received it.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

5.3.1 The high turnover of the prison population continues and may be contributing to the challenges of forming effective relationships between staff and prisoners. 60% of officers are within their first three years of the role and can now be recruited from the age of 18 years. The Board is concerned that the relatively inexperienced staff population may also be contributing to the challenges in working relationships between staff and prisoners.

5.3.2 Prisoners report to the Board that they do not receive necessary information or may not understand certain communications from officers. The Board often hear that prisoners have never seen their key worker. Whilst some prisoners do report that certain wing officers can be helpful and approachable, this is not the case across the whole prison and appears to the Board to vary widely. There have also been occasions where prisoners have complained to the Board about the treatment by staff on certain wings, including locking up early and inconsistent messaging. This was raised with the Governor and staff changes were made. However, the Board would like to see more consistency across the prison in treatment of prisoners.

5.3.3 The Board believes that key worker sessions are very important in helping prisoners build meaningful relationships with members of staff and help them through their journey, identifying challenges to progression early. It is disappointing that only 55% of planned key worker sessions took place in the last reporting year. This was due to limited staffing numbers according to the prison. A new process to address this shortfall has started with a provision of eight officers having most of their working time allocated to carry out key worker sessions. The Board is unclear how effective this has been and will continue to monitor any developments.

5.4 Equality and diversity

5.4.1 The Board is pleased that the prison continues to encourage diversity, equality and inclusion through the Inclusion, Diversity, Equality, Access, Leadership (IDEAL) meetings. The Discrimination Incident Reporting Forms (DIRFs - diversity related prisoner complaints) are discussed, and considerations are given to ways that the differences might be celebrated across the prison. The meetings also scrutinise adjudications and the way that IPF is applied. Each governor represents a different protected characteristic, and the engagement with their specific groups varies. The IDEAL group meets every three months and the Board questions whether this frequency provides sufficient momentum. Funding for a dedicated Equality and Diversity Lead was agreed, and the recruitment is nearing completion; the Board are hopeful that the frequency may change.

5.4.2 Diversity representation among the prisoner population remains strong, with 18 prisoner representatives meeting every six weeks.

5.4.3 The DIRF process remains in place, with a standard 14-day response window, extendable to 28 days with Governor's approval. All Band 5 and Band 6 staff will be trained in DIRF investigations and a new internal scrutiny panel has been established with representation from prisoners, further strengthening transparency and inclusion.

5.4.4 Work is ongoing to reduce the number of prisoners listed with “ethnicity unknown” and recruitment is underway for equality champions among staff.

5.4.5 Progress has also been seen in sexual orientation disclosure. The percentage of prisoners refusing to disclose their sexuality dropped to just 7% in Q4 2024, indicating improved trust and openness. Although forums were arranged, attendance was nil, highlighting a need for renewed engagement strategies. One transgender prisoner received tailored support, including adapted shower arrangements, and clothing sourced from HMP Askham Grange.

5.4.6 Disability and neurodiversity remain central to the inclusion strategy. A disability forum meets bi-monthly, and neurodiversity representatives are now present on most wings. A neurodiversity information pack is being finalised to better support prisoners with hidden disabilities. The Board will monitor its impact.

5.4.7 Older prisoners continue to benefit from regular social engagement through coffee mornings and bingo events.

5.4.8 The prison has some very challenging performance targets to meet with regards to their performance, some of which are outside their control, including the disparity between ethnicity and UoF, which is clearly a problem because of the prison population (the majority of whom are white). There are other targets that seem to have been raised because they met them the previous year, which are unachievable and seem to have been set by someone with a lack of prison experience.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

5.5.1 The Board’s view is that the Chaplaincy team do an invaluable job in the prison with strong leadership. Daily visits are made to segregation, and support is provided to prisoners in times of personal need. Friday prayers are attended by approximately 100 men. The team also oversees the Listeners programme. The lead chaplain has been instrumental in coordinating a calendar of faith celebrations and is building connections with community mentors in Bradford to support global majority prisoners ahead of release. The Welcome Directory (a nationwide directory of faith or belief communities able to support people leaving prison) is actively promoted by the chaplaincy, to aid men find a faith community upon release.

5.5.2 Faith-based learning is active and varied, including “journey through the bible”, weekly bible study groups, a four-week course on parables, and three to four visits annually from the Prison Fellowship.

5.5.3 Two faith-based family days were arranged: one for Eid on 9 April and one for Easter on 16 April.

5.6 Incentive schemes

5.6.1 The local IPF is the prison's approach to managing prisoner incentives and is subject to regular reviews. For example, the Board highlighted changes to PSI 75/201 for increased time out of cell for basic prisoners and the framework was quickly updated.

5.6.2 The Board has received a number of applications regarding incentive scheme levels, particularly around the lack of accompanying paperwork and incorrect application of the process. The Governor recognises that there are variations due to the

inexperience of officers and cases are reviewed to ensure the scheme is applied fairly and consistently.

5.6.3 One issue raised in relation to the incentives scheme involves prisoners on the basic level. At the start of the year, a decision was made to allow all new arrivals on basic to have a television on their first night. This was intended as a supportive measure to help ease the transition and reduce early stress. While this approach was generally welcomed, it has led to some confusion among prisoners, particularly around what restrictions are genuinely associated with the basic level. Ensuring clarity and consistency in the application of basic level conditions remains important for maintaining confidence in the incentives scheme.

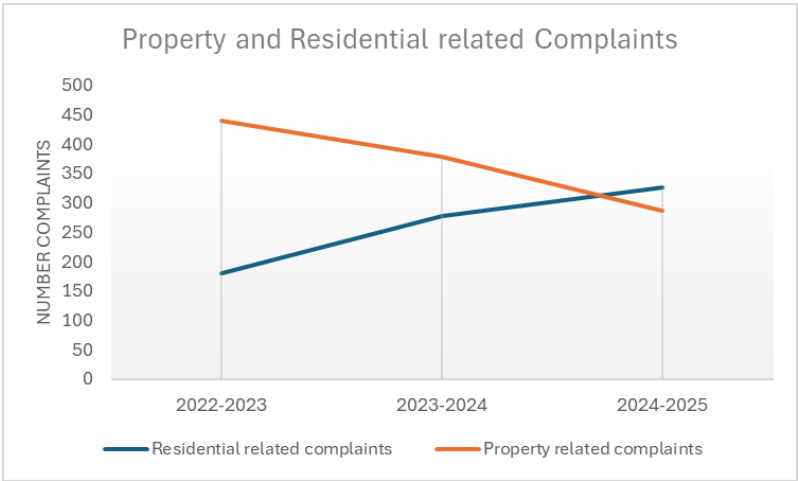
5.7 Complaints

5.7.1 The overall complaints process appears to the Board to continue to function well, benefiting from the continuity of the management of the administration. The monthly performance meeting identifies any consistent areas of complaint so that they can be managed. There is also a process to sample and check the quality of responses. However, the Board has heard from several prisoners that they have not received replies from complaints. It seems that although there is a clear log kept of when replies are sent, once the replies are picked up by an officer for delivering to the prisoners, no further logs are kept. The Board is concerned that some replies may have gone missing before the prisoners receive them but have been unable to independently check this. The prison is undertaking an assurance check and will update the Board on completion.

5.7.2 There continues to be a lack of clarity between both prisoners and staff between what should be handled by a general application to the prison and what is a complaint.

5.7.3 During the reporting year there was a further marginal reduction in the number of overall complaints and a trend towards lower complaint numbers during the year, from a high in May 2024 to a low in May 2025 which is surprising given the churn of prisoners.

5.7.4 Property and accommodation issues continue to dominate the subject of complaints. Interestingly, whilst still high, the trend for complaints regarding property have shown an encouraging reduction for a third year. Complaints regarding accommodation issues have trended upward.



5.8 Property

5.8.1 The management of property within the prison seems to have improved, with fewer prison complaints and applications to the Board. The number of applications to the Board relating to property at another establishment has reduced slightly which is surprising given the significant churn of prisoners. Issues arise as a result of property allegedly not arriving at the prison and inconsistencies in property cards. The fact that not all a prisoner's property travels with him will also increase the probability of missing items.

5.8.2 The Board would also note that where property is lost in transit it is problematical to allocate responsibility to one establishment and therefore the prisoner is left seeking compensation from the system where both are reluctant to accept responsibility. This causes prisoners confusion and delays in receiving compensation.

5.8.3 The Board would also acknowledge that differences in facilities list from one establishment to another creates frustration amongst the prisoners where an item is allowed in one prison and not another. The Board would also recognise that during the frequent visits to reception that staff appear dedicated and keen to resolve issues.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

6.1.1 The Board have seen few issues with the provision of healthcare services in this reporting period. There were 18 applications to the IMB from prisoners about healthcare, a reduction from the previous year. These were either directly about healthcare matters or where healthcare was one of a set of related issues raised in an application. Of these applications four were medication related. The remaining applications raised issues in relation to problems from previous prisons, collection for appointments and several concerns about prisoners vaping out of their cells and how this affects other prisoners.

6.1.2 Healthcare currently has few vacancies and these are back filled by agency staff to ensure that the service is not compromised.

6.1.3 Healthcare forums are held every eight weeks. They have been restructured recently and, while the forum is still chaired by someone from Mental Health, other healthcare services are invited to attend the forum. This is done in rotation with one healthcare service attending each time. Participants in the forum are chosen at random. They are asked if they would like to attend to offer their opinions on healthcare. The forums are reportedly well received by those who take part and, generally, over 50% of people asked if they would like to participate do attend.

6.1.4 Healthcare complaints have increased from 10 to 75 from the previous year. The Board is unclear as to the reasons for this and will monitor in the next reporting year.

6.2 Physical healthcare

6.2.1 Primary care and pharmacy are almost fully staffed and the Board have received no applications from prisoners about waiting times for appointments.

6.2.2 There was one complaint to the prison about the waiting time for medication to be dispensed. This was queried and it seems that the decision about unlocking for medication is the remit of the officers in charge rather than healthcare. In line with local process, officers will unlock people who are going to work or education first as per the unlock list, which can result in a delay for other people – again, this is inconsistent across the prison.

6.2.3 Attendance at healthcare appointments continues to be monitored. The number of prisoners not attending their appointments and shortages of officers for escort is also monitored. This is showing an improvement this reporting year.

6.3 Mental healthcare

6.3.1 Mental health, substance misuse services and drug and alcohol recovery services were almost fully staffed at the end of the reporting year. Waiting times for an appointment to see a psychiatrist is about five days, but urgent appointments are generally seen within 48 hours, which complies with The Mental Health Act 1983. A triage system is in place at reception to identify people with mental health needs and to try to ensure that they receive care in a timely manner.

6.3.2 In previous years there have been delays in transferring patients to secure hospitals. However, current referrals seem to be taking place in a timely manner and within the 28 day window.

6.3.3 As with other areas of healthcare there has been increased pressure on the mental health team due to increases in the prison population and the churn of prisoners and consideration may need to be given to increase healthcare staffing.

6.4 Social care

6.4.1 Wealstun has an overall youthful prison population. If a prisoner is in need of social care support, a social worker from HMP Leeds will come in to make an assessment. The social workers has visited Wealstun five times since November 2024. Their assessment is put to Leeds adult services and a care package will subsequently be drawn up. Healthcare has recently looked to see if a nurse at HMP Wealstun could carry out the assessments with no response yet.

6.4.2 There are two designated disabled cells on J wing. There are another two cells on another wing, which can accommodate wheelchair access but are not suitable for disabled prisoners, as the medicines hatch is on a different floor.

6.4.3 A there are three prisoners who have social care needs; two men are on J wing in wheelchairs. Members have been able to see inside an accessible cell on J wing. This is one of the larger cells, where the sink is at a lower height and there are handrails around the toilet..

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

6.5.1 Despite the prison being reported as nearly fully staffed, the time out of cell (TOoC) for prisoners remains a significant concern. This issue has been consistently highlighted by the Board. While there has been a gradual increase in TOoC over the past reporting year, the lack of available staff has meant that the regime is curtailed regularly.

6.5.2 The majority of prisoners are engaged in part-time work or education. They are allocated 2.5 hours of Structured Wing Activity (SOWA) and domestic activities which is fixed. Depending on their IPF level, they may also get an additional hour on some evenings. TOoC at weekends has now increased to 2.5 hours a day. Prisoners on basic IPF now get 2 hours TOoC each day.

6.5.3 The Board are concerned that prisoners miss their association time if they are on a visit or have a healthcare appointment. Additionally, the tight schedules mean that prisoners returning from the gardens are unable to have a shower occasionally which is another cause of frustration to prisoners.

6.5.4 The Board are pleased that the prison has secured funding as part of the Extended Working Week project which will increase the time that prisoners out of their cell. This is due to be introduced in October 2025.

6.5.5 The gym facilities have been a positive aspect of prison life. Consistent access to three sessions per week is a strong foundation for both physical and mental well-being. The mention of mental health sessions previously offered by gym staff is particularly important. The Board believes that reinstating those, staffing levels permitting, could provide significant benefits, especially in supporting rehabilitation and reducing stress and anxiety among prisoners. Prisoners have complained that they are unable to attend a session due to a clash with a religious service. The Board understands that this is under review with additional access or timetable changes being considered.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

6.6.1 The drug and rehabilitation services appear to be well run. The Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Team (DART) currently works with around 280 men in relation to drug and alcohol use and receive referrals via the clinical pathways well as self-referrals. DART delivers psychosocial interventions through individual sessions and in groups. Groupwork includes structured substance programmes, ad hoc needs led workshops, mutual aid such as narcotics anonymous, alcoholics anonymous, Smart Recovery as well as lived experienced groups, currently run in conjunction with local drug and alcohol community teams.

6.6.2 DART continues to run service user forums and issue "you said, we did" bulletins. There is also a recovery worker whose lead role is "service user wellbeing". They encourage prisoners to be empowered to take care of their wellbeing by delivering low level interventions regarding someone's wellbeing such as individual emotional regulation work and group work.

6.6.3 DART continues to have strong relationships with all agencies in the prison and have strengthened ties with community drug and alcohol services. They now have prison link workers from the community drug service who complete assessments on the prisoners prior to their release. This enables them to build rapport with the service prior to release and also allows them to concentrate on other things they need to do following their release. The team are currently delivering at the national average for the continuity of care figures (how many men have left HMP Wealstun in structured treatment with the drug service and then go on to receive structured treatment from a community service) and aim to continue improving the attendance rates.

6.6.4 Current focus is on increasing the number of prisoners accepting Naloxone on release due to increased threat and use of synthetic opiates in custody and in the community. Uptake is continuing to rise. In January 2025, 24 officers were trained in the emergency use of Naloxone. It is hoped that this will increase as it is used in an emergency, although the Prison Officers Association still hold the view that this must be voluntary.

6.6.5 There are now two incentivised substance free living wings which have received criticism from prisoners for not having enough incentives. Plans are in place to increase the incentives.

6.7 Soft skills

6.7.1 Soft skills refer to programmes and activities available to prisoners that, for example, help them to communicate effectively, develop approaches to resolving conflict, problem solving, parenting skills and initiatives that support wider wellbeing.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

7.1.1 The Board have observed a considerable amount of work being undertaken with education and the library although classrooms have not always been busy. It is thought by the prison that outreach work in workshops and cells provided better learning results than long classroom sessions. New education contracts are due in the next reporting year – not this one as expected – and it is highly likely that there will be cuts to the budget. The same level of support might no longer be possible in the same form which will be disappointing.

7.1.2 There has been an emphasis throughout the prison on literacy skills with posters stressing the importance of being able to read. The Shannon Trust trained over 50 mentors between April 2024 and March 2025. There were 15 learners in numeracy and 57 in reading. The Board were concerned that mentors missed out on association as the work should take place during the SOWA sessions. Letters of appreciation adorn the noticeboard in the education block, including: “I set myself to read 10 pages a day but have done 70 in five days”, “I now have the ability to do things (writing and reading) by myself”. “It makes the job worthwhile”, said a member of staff to a member of the Board in relation to the programme.

7.1.3 Prisoners on the basic level of IPF appreciate the books in the library most of all as they do not have access to televisions. There are some excellent escorts who encourage visits to the libraries. However, the Board are aware that not all officers shout very loudly when it is time to be escorted to the library and are concerned some prisoners may miss out because of this. The Board has raised this with the Governor and expects the role of escorting officers to be more proactive.

7.1.4 The prison and the education provider are measured on different outcomes for maths and English. The prison performance is measured on the progress prisoners make from their initial assessment, whereas the provider’s performance is based on attainment (the numbers who pass their allocated course). The IT system used for recording start points does not provide space for prior attainment to be recorded for those with qualifications gained outside of custody. These prisoners often show in prison performance metrics as having made no progress. For those with an initial assessment of Level 2 who then convert this into a qualification, no progress can be demonstrated in prison performance metrics as this is the highest level available. For prisoners assessed as pre-entry on their initial assessment, the performance metric does not account for this start point and therefore anyone assessed as this will show as having made no progress on the prison performance measure. The number of technical inaccuracies in the recording of initial assessments, prior attainment and information sharing between systems, raises concerns about the validity and reliability of this performance measure.

7.1.5 A prisoner on long term sick asked the Board for help to find something to do with his time, preferably artwork. He did not see the point in filling in forms and did not want to ask for help from the prison staff directly. The Board was told that ideally wing staff should have drawn attention to his predicament and this had not happened. The library was informed and supplied distraction packs.

7.1.6 The Neurodiversity Support Manager told the Board 60-64% of prisoners had additional needs. Staff can refer any prisoner to the Neurodiversity Support Manager

who they feel may need additional support. There is a cleaner on the induction wing who also has the role of providing initial support to any prisoners who may have neurodiverse needs. Suitable programmes are identified and adjusted for those with under six weeks, those with up to six months and those with longer periods, to serve. The Board observed a useful plan that had been created in a different prison. The Board found that, in addition to an initial plan for each neurodiverse prisoner, education undertake an in-depth assessment which recorded.

7.2 Vocational training, work

7.2.1 The Board is pleased that there has been an improvement in attendance at work over the reporting year after methods and responsibilities for organising prisoner movements were changed. The attendance figures are examined by activities staff the following day to understand unacceptable absences and those not recorded. Officers must also check reasons for non-attendance and issue IPF warnings where appropriate.

7.2.2 Full time work is nine sessions per week (one session is three hours in the morning or two and a half in the afternoon). Prisoners are allowed up to two sessions off for medical consultations or visits. Half time work is four to eight sessions per week usually all mornings or afternoons. Part time work is one to three sessions a week.

7.2.3 The employment hub works with various agencies so that from induction prisoners can be supported to learn skills leading to employment on release. After skills and training, employers are encouraged through specific jobs fairs or industry events to give interviews to appropriate prisoners.

7.2.4 The national contract for beverage packing was not renewed meaning 70 full and half-time spaces were lost. Although a workshop for packing has been re-opened at HMP Wealstun, there are only 22 places. The Board is disappointed for two reasons – neurodiverse prisoners enjoyed the workshop, as it was quiet, and secondly, the considerable amount of work that staff have undertaken to secure additional workplaces to support the extended working week project has been taken up with prisoners who were in beverage packing, rather than prisoners who did not have working allocations.

7.2.5 Allocating prisoners to the gardens is difficult as throwovers of drugs occur in the isolated area. Prisoners are required to undergo additional security checks before being allowed to work there and prisoners do not want to work in gardens as they may be pressurised to pick up packages. A smaller gardening club was created, working within central prison areas, to check motivation and security of prisoners.

7.2.6 The employment hub has achieved a number of successes this year including a skills boot camp training prisoners and a cleaning academy that teach skills involved in cleaning after release. Not surprisingly, courses that result in construction skills and food and catering accreditations are most popular.

7.2.7 The clinks scheme closed in July 2024 as did all catering parts of the charity in the north. They continued in the south. The prison took over that work providing qualifications in food hygiene with a team of six men work in the mess (producing food for staff and events) for four months at a time. Novus continue to offer Level 1 and 2 qualifications in catering.

7.3 Offender management, progression

7.3.1 It has been a challenging year for the offender management unit (OMU), with some staffing issues and the increase churn of prisoners, with some having as little as 14 days to serve. This means that staff do not have the time to build constructive relationships. Prisoners have complained that they were unable to contact their Prison Offender Manager or obtain up-to-date information. They also complained that they were unable to contact their Community Offender Manager by phone as they were not free calls but were told that there were plenty of video appointments available.

7.3.2 Although it was acknowledged that the end of custody supervised licence and the SDS40 scheme would be challenging, it was a very busy time, with incentivised overtime offered to staff to manage the workload. Probation staff have six weeks to plan for the releases under tranche one and then a 'minimum of six weeks' to prepare tranche two prisoners for release.

7.3.3 Caseworkers in the OMU have a caseload of about 45-51 cases each. The Board saw two caseworkers having to each deal with up to 14 releases over four weeks. The work relating to each release was enormous, assessments, licences, communications with outside agencies for example. If the OMU is to continue under such pressure, then there will need to be changes to ensure prisoners are properly prepared for release and the prison is aware of this.

7.3.4 At the end of the reporting year, there were 23 prisoners serving Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentences at Wealstun and there has been a drive to prioritise supporting them in release. Twenty-one IPP prisoners were released towards the end of 2024, although a couple have been recalled. However, it still seems that it is difficult for these prisoners to make any progress - as soon as they get into trouble in prison, it sets their parole hearings back. The Board has heard from IPP prisoners that they feel they are not prioritised for courses. The prison has advised the Board that IPP prisoners who are post tariff have yearly reviews. However IPP prisoners who are not post-tariff may be of less priority for courses due to other prisoners due for imminent parole or release taking priority.

7.3.5 A forum for IPP prisoners took place on 22 January 2025, chaired by a Governor and seven prisoners attended. The Board were told that it had not been well advertised and improvements were needed. The meeting on 21 May 2025 was also not well attended (five prisoners) but the prisoners who attended found them helpful, as they could have their say. The subjects covered were recalls, transfers closer to home, the timing of parole decisions and K wing. It was agreed to invite those serving life sentences to the next meeting and that an action plan would be formulated. The Board will continue to monitor the forums and the position regarding IPP prisoners.

7.4 Family contact

7.4.1 The Board have observed visits in the visits hall which has a maximum capacity of 23 prisoners per session. Each prisoner is permitted up to three adult visitors, and there is no formal restriction on the number of children that may accompany them. In one instance, a family brought eight children, which staff accommodated.

7.4.2 Jigsaw works with prisoners and their families to support them and to ease the pressure for families with young children. Children are provided with free cereal and juice and families are given the opportunity to have a family photograph.

7.4.3 Whilst prisoners find the visits invaluable, prisoners who are on basic and standard IPF dislike having to wear prison issue clothing. The visits hall café continues to thrive, especially the coffee stand, staffed by three trusted prisoners who manage cash transactions with confidence. Ice cream is a popular new addition to the menu, and “goody packs” can be purchased by visitors as gifts to prisoners. The Board have successfully persuaded the prison to purchase a camera to allow prisoners who are unable to attend family days to have the opportunity to have a photograph taken at normal visits. This has been particularly appreciated by prisoners who are serving life and IPP sentences.

7.4.4 Despite these positives, concerns about the cost of phone calls persist. Prisoners have expressed frustration at the pricing structure, especially for mobile and international calls. This is especially frustrating for prisoners who have no private cash and so cannot afford phone credit.

7.5 Resettlement planning

7.5.1 Release planning generally starts 15 weeks prior to release but given the number of prisoners arriving with very little time left to serve, there are considerable challenges. The Board has heard from several prisoners that appear to not have received a satisfactory level of communication from the OMU about release planning. The lack of key worker sessions taking place has further confounded this. A few prisoners complained to the Board that they were not told about their release early enough and the 15 week pre-release accommodation conversations were not happening. Other frustrations included that prisoners at the point of release did not know how to get to their probation appointment.

7.5.2 The continued shortage of community accommodation results in some prisoners not having accommodation confirmed until immediately prior to release which can be a source of great stress for the prisoner. There are still occasions where a prisoner is released with no accommodation secured. It is disappointing that the performance measure for prisoners in accommodation on release is no longer collected, which seems a backward step.

7.5.3 Job Centre Plus have new initiatives through closer working with the community jobcentre and making introductions directly with the prisoners to try and improve engagement. During the early release scheme they also piloted giving certain prisoners advance access to universal credit to smooth the transition on release. The growth company provides advice to prisoners around such issues as debt management and bank accounts prior to release. A prisoner can self-refer to them or a member of staff may ask them to contact the prisoner.

7.5.4 A new discharge hub is planned and is intended to improve discharge planning for complex situations by allowing one to one sessions between prisoners and key workers.

7.5.5 A new initiative called creating future opportunities has been a positive addition and affords certain prisoners the opportunity to learn new skills in the 12 weeks before release. However, only 12 prisoners can participate in the programme at any one time, and the Board feels that similar opportunities should be offered to all prisoners.

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	15
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	12 (including one on sabbatical)
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	10
Total number of visits to the establishment	205

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	11	4
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	20	15
C	Equality	4	6
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	7	5
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	15	14
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	8	10
F	Food and kitchens	8	7
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	25	18
H1	Property within the establishment	25	9
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	17	14
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	2	0
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence), parole, release dates, re-categorisation	27	25
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	26	25
K	Transfers	8	5
L	Miscellaneous	29	19
	Total number of applications	232	176

Annex A

Service providers

- Novus: education
- Practice Plus Group: physical and mental healthcare with subcontracts to:
 - Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust: psychosocial services, psychiatry and psychology services
 - Time for Teeth: dental care
 - Prison Opticians Trust: optical care
 - Health Share: x-ray and ultrasound
- GEOAmey: escorts
- Amey: facilities management and site maintenance



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