



# **Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP/YOI Winchester**

**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, and
- 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 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 Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) is part of the United Kingdom's National Preventive Mechanism.

## **2. Description of the establishment**

His Majesty's Prison/Young Offender Institution Winchester (HMP/YOI Winchester) is an all-male reception and resettlement (local) prison operating within the South Central group of prisons. Approximately 19%<sup>1</sup> of the prisoners are young adults aged between 18 and 25 years. The prison serves the criminal courts of Aldershot, Basingstoke, Bournemouth, Portsmouth, Salisbury, Southampton and Winchester and functions as a local and a resettlement prison.

The main fabric of the prison was commissioned in 1846 and received its first prisoners in 1849. It is in a Jeremy Bentham panopticon radial design whereby wings emanate from a central area. The prisoners are either on remand, charged, sentenced, or awaiting sentence. The prison had an operational capacity (the maximum number of prisoners that can be held without serious risk to safety, security, good order and the proper running of the planned regime) of 664 in May 2025.

In a separate block from the main building, 120 (125 operational capacity) category C prisoners are accommodated in two resettlement units, West Hill and the Hearn. These units are adjacent to but separate from the main prison. While the prison is designated for category B prisoners it holds B and C category prisoners on the four main wings. The lower ground floor of D wing temporarily houses the care and separation unit (CSU) until a purpose-built facility is completed. Work to build a new CSU started in 2022 with all footings/foundations put in place. However, following a stall in work while the design was modified to make it fully 'fit for purpose' the main building contractor ISG went into liquidation.

A healthcare unit (HCU) is also situated on the prison complex, accommodating 17 beds in a separate unit from the wings. E wing houses administrative services, the Governor's and other offices, the chapel and the control room.

### **Background to Report**

During this reporting period the Board has seen HMP/YOI Winchester respond to a number of pressures including continuing capacity issues, a continually high percentage of men held 'on remand' (held in prison until the time of their trial or subsequent sentence hearing, circa 70-79%), the implementation of various early release schemes and the result, in October 2024, of His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP), following an inspection issued an Urgent Notification to the Secretary of State for Justice, resulting in a 22 point plan.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

In his letter of 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2024 to the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State, Shabana Mahmood, the Deputy Chief Inspector of Prisons wrote:

*‘This is the fourth time we have inspected Winchester since 2016 and it is a prison that has persistently underachieved. At this inspection, the jail attracted our lowest healthy prison assessment in three of our four tests – safety, respect and purposeful activity – with many of the concerns raised at our previous inspection in 2022 still to be addressed. Despite reporting some encouraging indications following our independent review of progress (IRP) in November 2022, we found that outcomes had now deteriorated in many critical areas. The prison remained one of the most unsafe in the country, and many men lived in very poor conditions, without access to purposeful activity and frustrated by the inability to get even basic things done<sup>2</sup>.’*

The IMB at Winchester had, for some years, delivered annual reports which flagged many, if not all, of the concerns that were highlighted as a result of the Inspection. The status of Urgent Notification, when announced, did affect staff morale somewhat negatively but it was noted by the IMB that, not only did this institution respond positively under pressure, it started to take the necessary steps, with some additional support, to re-set and improve its operation on many levels.

The visit to Winchester by Lord Timpson and His Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) colleagues on 4 December 2024 brought attention to the challenges faced by staff running an over-crowded local prison in a poor state of repair having a high throughput of prisoners. It is understood that one result of the Minister’s visit was the unlocking of resource to commit to improvements including relocation of the rat-infested main control room to another more suitable location at the earliest opportunity (see section 5.1 Accommodation).

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<sup>2</sup> <https://cloud-platform-e218f50a4812967ba1215eaecede923f.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/sites/19/2024/10/Letter-to-the-Secretary-of-State-HMP-Winchester-UN.pdf>

### 3. Key points

#### Overview

Winchester faces many challenges which are outlined in the main findings below, supported by the evidence sections. However, the Board wishes to foreground three issues arising which affect the fair and humane treatment of prisoners in an overcrowded, dilapidated institution.

**i. Staffing** – staffing levels, to manage and deliver consistent regime allowing prisoners out of cells for the maximum amount of time to attend exercise, activities and education, are frequently under pressure at Winchester. Such staff shortages are caused by the removal of officers for escort duties and bed watches, plus secondments and in-service training. The disruption of regime through shortage of staff has a direct impact on prisoner welfare and progression. It is also understood to be a contributory factor in raising tensions within the prison, causing increased violence and exacerbating mental health issues and disruptive behavior including self-harm (section 6.5).

**ii. Activities and education** – the importance of prisoners' time out of cells to pursue organised activities, work and education cannot be over-estimated. Reductions in violence and self-harm plus improvements in mental health and wellbeing can be found in prisons where such regime is offered consistently. Winchester has fallen below expectations in this regard during 2024-25 as a result of over-stretched staffing, prisoners not being allocated or refusing to attend because they are on remand, and lack of appropriate courses for a population that is in a state of constant churn. Despite this, figures have been improving during 2025. However, a further challenge is that the education budget is facing a cut of 7.5% and the direct purchase scheme a cut of 20% (sections 7.1 and 7.2).

**iii. Ingress of illicit items and substances** – Winchester has experienced a 28% increase in 'finds' of illicit substances, during the reporting period, and an increase in 'code blue' incidents (when a prisoner is found to be unresponsive or having trouble breathing). More powerful artificial opioids and cannabinoids, the advent of concealable mini phones and use of drones all place increasing pressure on security. The supply of illicit substances in prison lies at the heart of much violence, prisoner poor health and recidivism (section 4.5).

Despite these, and other issues listed below, Winchester staff at every level remain professional, responsive and adaptive in pursuit of improvement.

It is therefore the Board's assessment once again that, while addressing the HMIP's Urgent Notification, Winchester is responding positively to make progress in its drive to improve conditions and outcomes for prisoners.

### **3.1 Main findings**

#### **Safety**

- The late delivery of prisoners into Winchester reception by contractors SERCO, some past the established 8.00 pm evening deadline, leads to staff staying in the prison late into the night, sometimes well past midnight, to process men and get them into cells. This is not good for the welfare of staff or the prisoners (section 4.1).
- The total number of self-harm incidents and the number of prisoners who are self-harming remain of great concern to the Board. This concern is reinforced by the further worsening of Winchester's position within its comparator<sup>3</sup> group for self-harm incidents (section 4.2).
- The number of assaults on staff or other prisoners was slightly down on last year but still high by comparison with other comparator prisons (section 4.3).

#### **Fair and humane treatment**

- On 960 occasions, in the period, there was use of force to control or restrain prisoners (down 8%), but this figure is 40% higher than average for the comparator group (section 4.4).
- More than a quarter of the complaints concerned loss of prisoners' property, up 40% on 2023/24, reversing the significant downward trend the IMB noted from 2022/23 in the last report (section 5.8).
- Winchester prisoner accommodation remains over-crowded, with most single cells occupied by two inmates and those with mobility issues experiencing cell access challenges (section 5.1, p 16).
- Delivery of the daily regime to enable the largest number of prisoners maximum time out of cell for education and activities is not consistently achieved. Staff shortages and prisoner turn-over have been cited as reasons (section 6.5).
- Despite some building repairs being completed successfully in the reporting period there is much continuing dilapidation of the prison fabric (photos 5 – 12).

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<sup>3</sup> The comparator group of prisons is used to compare the performance of similar prisons. For HMP/YOI Winchester, this group comprises HMPs Bristol, Chelmsford, Durham, Lewes, Lincoln, Liverpool, Norwich and Preston.

- GFSL provides responsive maintenance services, although any significant building works are referred up to HMPPS and then submitted to tender. This process can involve months if not years of delay before commissioning and completion (e.g. new CSU building – see photo 2).

### **Health and wellbeing**

- In 2024-2025 there were 166 healthcare complaints raised as ‘concerns’ resulting in eight progressing to Stage 1 complaints. This was an increase in concerns of more than 19% on the previous year but a reduction in Stage 1 of 27% (section 6.1).
- The requirement for a doctor to visit the CSU every 72 hours<sup>4</sup> was not met several times during the reporting period (section 6.1).
- A large proportion of prisoners exhibit challenging behaviours and/or mental health problems which can be disruptive, difficult to manage and impact the welfare of other prisoners (section 5.2 and 6.3).

### **Progression and resettlement**

- Winchester is regularly ranked in the bottom ten prisons across the country in terms of efficiency of education spend and attendance rates; however, this is common amongst category B local prisons with an unsettled, high churn population. Generally, more than 70% of Winchester’s prisoner population are held on remand and they are not obliged to attend work or activities sessions. Despite this, allocation rates have been improving and are now hovering around 70% – 80% (section 7.1).
- The HMIP inspection of October 2024 scored purposeful activity as ‘poor’. Despite the challenges, the education skills and work staff have worked to improve the situation. Recent statistics show that around 450 jobs and activities are available across the prison, with average allocations between 80-90% (section 7.2).
- National initiatives regarding the early release schemes and prison overcrowding are adding pressure to Winchester and impacting resettlement planning. The caseload for the resettlement team sits at the full prison population of 629 men for the one member of the team in post. Staff commented that there is very limited direct - and even less scope for private - interaction with prisoners, exacerbated by a lack of space within the prison to carry out interviews (section 7.5).

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<sup>4</sup> PSO 1700 S 2.3 para 4: ‘The doctor must visit each prisoner in segregation as often as their individual health needs dictate and at least every three days.’



### 3.2 Main areas for development

#### **TO THE MINISTER**

- Will the Minister work with his team and HMPPS to ensure necessary prison building and repair works, previously agreed, are fast-tracked to satisfactory completion?
- What can be done further to monitor effectively the work of outsourced prison service contractors to ensure they continuously improve their performance for the benefit of prisons leadership, staff and prisoners alike?

#### **TO THE PRISON SERVICE**

- The prison regime is observed often to be disrupted when staff are necessarily deployed to constant watches both on-site and off-site to hospitals, requiring two and sometimes three officers to be in attendance every 12 hours. What solution can be offered by the prison service to resource the regular need for constant watches without having an impact on delivery of regime?
- What can be done to accelerate the implementation of long-standing capital investments urgently needed at Winchester – for example, building the new care and separation unit and the new control room?
- Can means be found, as a matter of urgency, in a temporary measure, to repair and replace the mesh window grilles on B wing which have been damaged or removed (pending a full project to overhaul mesh window grilles throughout Winchester)? *Update: work to repair/replace mesh window grilles was swiftly undertaken and completed under the auspices of GFSL in the weeks prior to report publication.*
- What further steps are being taken nationally to support prisons in addressing the problem of the ingress of illicit substances and items into prisons?

#### **TO THE GOVERNOR**

- How will the challenge of managing regime be further improved to enable prisoners more regularly to have greater time out of cell?
- What are the forward plans to further improve education and activities for prisoners at Winchester?
- What additional steps are being taken to reduce self-harm and violence in Winchester?

### 3.3 Response to the last report

Issue raised	Response given	Progress
<p><b>To the Minister</b></p> <p><b>1.</b> When will further resources be provided to prison and probation services to lessen the effect on staff and prisoners of the administration, as well as the lessen the impact of ECSL (end of custody supervised licence) and any further short-notice capacity management initiatives?</p> <p><b>2.</b> What can be done to support and reduce the high number of men on remand who are released immediately from court on bail, licence or as time served?</p>	<p><b>1.</b> National initiatives have been in place through the Operation Resourcing and Stability Panel since October 2023 to provide an uplift in resource, including Case Administrators to support the surge in work related to capacity management and a submission was made to the HM Treasury to extend this until March 2025. Recruitment and retention also remains a priority across the Probation Service, with the launch of various initiatives to deliver more robust supervision, recruit more staff and reduce caseloads.</p> <p><b>2.</b> Accommodation support services do support all people in prison at HMP/YOI Winchester. However, it is recognised that the increase in people in prison being released time served, or with very short periods left to serve, can present challenges, this is particularly true for immediate release from court, as this is difficult to predict. The South Central Probation region actively engaged with a National Immediate Release “Task and Finish Group” to improve the understanding of immediate release. This has resulted in a series of recommendations that have been accepted by the Senior Operational Leadership Team in an effort to improve outcomes for prison leavers and people in the community.</p>	<p><b>1.</b> Staffing levels have improved in the offender management unit (OMU) but remain under pressure particularly junior staff. The probation service has been particularly under pressure with unexpected early releases. The Temporary Presumptive Re-categorisation Scheme (TPRS) is of concern as prisoners might be sent direct from courts to open prisons without the ability to properly assess their risk to the public or provide the support prisoners might need to avoid reoffending.</p> <p><b>2.</b> No changes in local accommodation.</p>

<p><b>To the Prison Service</b></p> <p><b>1.</b> When will the much-delayed construction of the new CSU restart?</p> <p><b>2.</b> When will the funding for the construction of a new emergency control room and modernised CCTV system be approved?</p> <p><b>3.</b> What can be done to hold further to account Practice Plus Group's activities for the purposes of monitoring delivery of healthcare services under terms of contract and PSO1700?</p>	<p><b>1.</b> The CSU project was in the process of mobilising to restart, with a projected completion date of November 2025, when the primary contractor ISG went into administration. Once the commercial process with ISG is complete, the project will be retendered as a priority and a revised programme scheduled</p> <p><b>2.</b> A feasibility and options study for the control room, including the CCTV system, has been completed and a business case was presented to the capital maintenance assurance panel in October 2024 to allow funding to be considered. In the interim, the existing current control room remains able to provide the correct level of operations to keep everyone living and working at HMP/YOI Winchester safe and there is a robust local contingency plan in place in case of loss of service. Repairs will also be managed via the Computer Aided Facilities Management system (CAFM) where control room staff report faulty cameras and associated equipment</p> <p><b>3.</b> NHS England is fully committed to ensuring that the highest standards of healthcare are provided, especially for vulnerable groups such as segregated prisoners, including through closer monitoring and evaluation of the service delivered by healthcare providers. NHS England will continue to work closely with the healthcare provider at HMP/YOI Winchester to ensure that the healthcare services meet the</p>	<p><b>1.</b> As in last year's report there is, at the time of writing (June 2025), still no confirmed date for when the building work on the new CSU will be completed.</p> <p><b>2.</b> A temporary control room is planned for completion in November 2025 but at the time of writing this report work has not started.</p> <p>The Ministry of Justice has yet to sanction the funding for the complete replacement of all the broken cameras. Some broken cameras have been repaired.</p> <p><b>3.</b> At the time of writing, the results of the audit and review of healthcare for men in segregation is not published.</p> <p>The data presented to the planned regular contract meeting between NHS England and PPG is not routinely shared with the IMB, despite requests.</p> <p>As in previous years recruitment and retention of staff by PPG remains</p>
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	<p>expected standards under Prison Service Order 1700 Segregation and the terms of the contract.</p> <p>NHS England is in the process of strengthening its performance review mechanisms through regular audits to ensure that contractual obligations are met, which will particularly emphasise key performance indicators (KPIs) tied to patient care and outcomes. An established regular contract meeting to examine service performance is already held between NHS England and the healthcare provider locally at HMP/YOI Winchester, allowing challenges related to service delivery to be discussed and this has an ongoing focus on healthcare staffing and service provision to segregated prisoners. NHS England are exploring opportunities for additional independent oversight of healthcare services to further bolster accountability and have commissioned an independent consultant to review the current healthcare support available to care and separation units, which is due to be completed by March 2025. In addition, NHS England acknowledges the healthcare staff challenges that have been experienced at the prison.</p> <p>While there has been progress in recruitment efforts and staffing levels, these are being closely monitored and contingency plans are in place to address any shortfalls in personnel that might impact service delivery.</p>	<p>an issue. Leadership changed seven times in the last four years (with four substantive appointments and three interim). Staff shortages within PPG continued to be an issue with a vacancy rate of some 38% in the healthcare staff establishment in May 2025. Grades most affected were senior – general practitioner (GP) cover, senior leadership and management, and advanced nurse practitioners.</p> <p>As an example of the impact on prisoners of staffing issues by PPG, 120 visits by a doctor to the care and separation unit should have taken place in the reporting period. Only 62 visits by doctors were recorded including four by psychiatrists.</p>
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<p><b>To the Governor</b></p> <p><b>1.</b> What are the plans to reduce the level of violence in the prison as it appears to be an unsafe environment for both prisoners and staff?</p> <p><b>2.</b> What can be done to ensure all prisoners can access purposeful activity more quickly with all the benefits purposeful activity brings?</p>	<p><b>1.</b> Prisoner on prisoner assaults raised slightly from 417.21 per 1000 prisoners in April to 436.85 per 1000 prisoners in May 2025. The mid-June deconfliction of the prison regime has increased attendance in meaningful activities. This is one of the main plans to get the prisoners' time out of cell maximised. Staff upskill sessions are being held to enable staff to utilise professional curiosity at appropriate points and a recent scenario-based training day demonstrated to 20 staff how early engagement and professional curiosity can reduce frustrations and violence in a preventative manner.</p> <p><b>2.</b> To ensure that all prisoners can access purposeful activity more quickly, Winchester has adopted an approach that prioritises early assessment and streamlined allocation. Upon arrival, each prisoner undergoes a comprehensive induction that includes skills audits and educational assessments. This</p>	<p><b>1.</b> Prison safety depends on staff vigilance and action. HMP Winchester receives around 3,000 prisoners annually, most with violent offences and approximately 70% flagged for public protection. While staff assaults occur, they are typically minor and have not resulted in sickness absence.</p> <p>Prisoner-on-prisoner violence often stems from external disputes and is driven by illicit drug activity. Misconduct is addressed through incentives, adjudications, and court prosecutions, supported by our embedded police team.</p> <p>The prison continuously campaigns for appropriate staffing levels to ensure operational capacity, and maintains a structured training plan to enhance staff competence and confidence. Drug ingress is tackled through robust intelligence systems, and we've secured additional resources to disrupt supply routes.</p> <p><b>2.</b> Recently the core day was adapted to deconflict domestic periods with activity periods. The change is very recent but early indications are that prisoners are more engaged in attending activities when they are not required to sacrifice</p>
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	<p>data feeds into the allocation process that matches individuals to appropriate activities – be it education, vocational training, or rehabilitative programmes – based upon their needs, interests and sentence length. Reducing bureaucratic delays and ensuring that staff are trained and resourced to ensure swift placements helps prisoners engage in purposeful activity.</p> <p>Equally important is the need to expand the range and capacity of purposeful activities available. This includes investing in partnerships with external providers, employers and voluntary organisations to deliver diverse programmes that reflect labour market needs and personal development goals. By embedding purposeful activity into the core of prison life, Winchester seeks to foster a rehabilitative culture that supports reduced reoffending.</p> <p>The challenges to these processes at Winchester remain the inadequate Careers Information Advice and Guidance provision and the slashing of education budgets. We have adapted to these challenges as best we can and remain committed to providing our prisoners with the best possible access to purposeful activity.</p>	<p>shower, gym or library time.</p> <p>Work is ongoing to ensure that incentives are available to encourage participation. Regular monitoring and feedback mechanisms – such as prisoner councils or surveys – have helped to identify barriers to access and have informed continuous improvement.</p>
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## **Evidence sections 4 – 7**

### **4. Safety**

#### **4.1 Reception and induction**

Reception staff were observed to be professional, engaging with prisoners and having an overall calming effect on arrivals to facilitate the transition into HMP/YOI Winchester. All prisoners were put through an airport-style x-ray security scanner to reduce instances of illicit items being smuggled into the prison. The prison has confirmed prisoners returning from court are also scanned. The amount of exposure to radiation is well within established safe parameters.

The reception staff are supported by two red band prisoners (who have been granted a position of trust, typically earned through demonstrating good behaviour), who help with issuing kit and providing a meal and drinks whilst the new arrivals wait for their cell allocation.

On a number of occasions, Board members observed that prisoners were being delivered to the prison by SERCO late into the evening. During the reporting period, some 398 prisoners (an average of more than seven per week) were recorded as being delivered after 7.30pm. A total of 138 of these arrived after the 8.00 pm deadline. This resulted in reception staff working long after their shifts had ended to process the new arrivals, which was exacerbated by shortages in staff. The delays are said to be due to a shortage of SERCO vehicles and staff and the late ending of court sessions.

Board members have also attended, for monitoring purposes, a number of induction sessions on A wing. These are known as Level 2 induction, where services such as Ingeus (provision of accommodation post release), Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), Spurgeons and gym staff relay information to new arrivals at Winchester. It was observed that although the material presented contained a great deal of relevant information, delivery relied on wing workers from A wing and varied in quality, depending on their training on the material. These sessions are held daily from Monday to Thursday and, since March 2025, a further session for general prisoners on Saturdays. Vulnerable prisoners now receive their Level 2 induction separately on Fridays.

#### **4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody**

The number of assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documents (used to support prisoners at risk of self-harm and suicide) opened fell from 600 in 2023-2024 to 276 in 2024-2025. The number opened in any one month ranged from 11 in

December to 35 in March, with an average of 23 opened each month. Staff attribute the reduction in ACCTs opened to an increased focus on key work, additional staff training, increased work opportunities for prisoners and the opening of the Incentivised Support for Substance-Free Living (SFL) and Neurodiverse areas on C wing.

Self-harm incidents are recorded as having remained broadly the same at 795 in 2023-24 and 784 in 2024-2025, with reported self-harm per 1,000 prisoners up 3% on 2023-24. Winchester moved from having the third highest self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners in 2023-24 in its comparator group to having the highest in 2024-25, and 40% more than the comparator group on average. The number of individuals involved in self-harm reduced from 405 in 2023-24 to 367 in 2024-25 with the majority of self-harm involving self-cutting.

The total number of self-harm incidents and the number of prisoners who are self-harming remain of great concern to the Board. This is compounded by the further worsening of Winchester's position within its comparator group.

The Board notes that the prison provides access to Samaritans which gave 832 hours of listening support through 1,127 calls in the last financial year. The prison also provided Listener suites (where prisoners trained by the Samaritans can provide confidential emotional support to fellow prisoners) and induction packs to address self-harm issues.

There were five deaths in custody during the reporting period, two of which occurred within 14 days after release from custody. The causes of death have yet to be confirmed.

#### **4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation**

Violence remains a concern at Winchester, although in most respects there have been improvements compared with our last report for 2023/24 (see below). However, on most measures the level of violence at Winchester is high compared with its comparator group of prisons.<sup>5</sup>

There were 148 assaults on staff by prisoners during the reporting year compared with 233 last year, a significant reduction of 36%. However, Winchester continues to have the highest number of staff assaults per 1,000 prisoners in its comparator group, experiencing 8% more staff assaults per 1,000 prisoners than the next highest in the group, and double the average for the group. Nevertheless, this is an

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<sup>5</sup> A comparator group of prisons is used to compare the performance of similar prisons. For HMP/YOI Winchester, this group comprises HMPs Bristol, Chelmsford, Durham, Lewes, Lincoln, Liverpool, Norwich and Preston.



improvement on last year when Winchester reported the highest number of assaults, 44% greater than Chelmsford.

Five assaults on staff were classified as serious (i.e. causing serious injury or being sexual in nature), an improvement compared to the total of 26 for the previous year.

Prisoner-on-prisoner assaults were down from 289 the previous year to 273 this year, a modest reduction of 6%. Still, Winchester remains high on the list of comparator prisons (scored based on incidents per 1000 prisoners), being second only to HMP Durham and 32% higher than the average for the group.

33 assaults on other prisoners were classified as serious, 21% fewer than last year.

According to anecdotal evidence from members' observations, gathered particularly during adjudications<sup>6</sup>, following incidents of violence where prisoners are given an opportunity to explain the reasons behind their use of violence, three motives stand out. Prisoners turn to physical aggression:

1. out of frustration with a sense of perceived unfairness or injustice in how they are treated by staff, especially if this involves physical contact,
2. as a form of status preservation, to avoid victimhood, and to ensure that they are not bullied by fellow prisoners, or
3. as a form of fellow prisoner intimidation and punishment.

#### **4.4 Use of force**

There were 960 occasions during the reporting year when force had to be used to control or restrain prisoners, 8% fewer than in the previous year. Based on the measure of incidents per 1,000 prisoners, this is 40% greater than the rest of the comparator group of prisons compared with 48% greater for the previous reporting year 2023/24.

Every occasion when force is used is subject to scrutiny at a weekly meeting where body worn video camera (BWVC) evidence, and the associated reports by officers involved, are scrutinised in detail. IMB members observed some of these meetings and have noted a reduction in the number of occasions when scrutiny is made more difficult because one or more officers were not wearing BWVC or had not turned them on. It is important for officers to turn their cameras on as soon as an incident occurs, but to mitigate the loss of information if the cameras are not turned on immediately, the cameras have been modified to retain a buffer of 30 seconds recording from before being activated.

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<sup>6</sup> An adjudication, which the IMB may observe, is a disciplinary hearing when a prisoner is alleged to have broken prison rules, held within 28 days of an offence in front of a prison governor after a prisoner is put on a report/charge.

The safer custody team believes that robust feedback to officers who neglect to wear cameras or turn them on late, or fail to complete the associated paperwork, along with the increasing experience of the officers, has contributed to the reduction in use of force from last year. Time out of cells increased during the year and this is also thought by the safer custody team to have led to a reduction in frustration and thus fewer incidents requiring force to be used. The 15% reduction in use of force is encouraging, but there is still much work to be done while Winchester remains 40% higher in its figures than the rest of its comparator group.

The prison's use of force coordinator has recently started what may be described as an after-action review process interviewing the prisoners involved in these incidents (as per existing national best practice). In these reviews, the prisoner is given the opportunity to explain his behaviour, feedback on the use of force and explore ways of avoiding being caught up in similar incidents in the future. Member observations from a small number of these reviews indicate a basic acceptance of the use of force by the prisoners whilst staff explained the mitigating circumstances that led to the failure to resolve the incident peacefully.

#### **4.5 Preventing illicit items**

The number of intelligence reports (IRs) has been rising, with a 10% increase reported over the last two years. The prison benefited, at the close of the reporting period, from having no backlog of unprocessed IRs. Following HMIP's inspection of Winchester in October 2024, staff reported that steps had been taken to improve the flow of information and allocation of responsibilities for acting on intelligence within the prison.

Routes of ingress for illicit substances included Rule 39<sup>7</sup> mail (legal letters) infused with spice (a chemical compound that mimics the effects of the active ingredient in cannabis), recall and reception prisoners secreting illicit items about their person, throw-overs (where people from outside the prison throw parcels over the walls), cuckooing (coercion of innocent men handling illicit items) and corrupt staff/contractors. Intelligence was first received in September 2024 that drones were being used to convey illicit items into the prison with the first sighting in October 2024. Each month, one or two drone sightings were observed and one parcel retrieved in November 2024 contained six mobile phones, charging leads and herbal substances. Security noted that the damaged fabric of the building, including broken window grilles and CCTV, exacerbates the situation.

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<sup>7</sup> Rule 39 prisoner correspondence with courts and legal advisors may only be opened, stopped or read under special circumstances.

Illicit items discovered through searches continued to include drugs, typically cannabis and cannabinoids, 'hooch', which is alcohol illegally brewed in the prison, (276.9 litres in the reporting period ranging from 0 litres in September 2024 to 56.2 litres in May 2025), phones, SIM cards for mobile phones, memory cards and weapons. Drug finds increased to 0.73kg for the reporting period as compared to 0.57kg for the previous year, an increase of 28%. The high prevalence of illicit substances was evident in the number of 'code blue' alerts linked to prisoners under the influence. On 9th March 2025 there were 15 code blue incidents recorded - all but one of which was linked to illicit substances. In March 2025 healthcare (Practice Plus Group) observed that the use of Naloxone (a medication used to reverse or reduce the effects of opioids) at Winchester was greater than at any other prison in the estate.

All prisoners undertook a body scan when entering the prison and were searched when leaving the prison if an intelligence report indicated the need. Mandatory drug testing (MDT) was reinstated in August 2024 after its suspension in November 2023 and for January 2025 it was reported that 45% of MDT had tested positive.

An incentivised substance-free living (ISFL) landing was opened in February 2025. By May 2025 there was still no barrier preventing ISFL prisoners mixing with other prisoners on the same wing.

## 5. Fair and humane treatment

### 5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

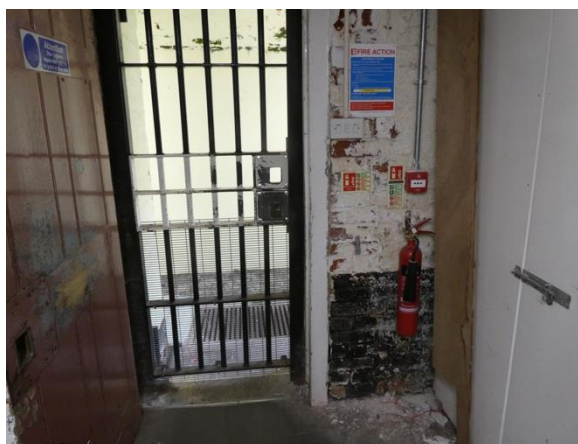
As reported in many previous IMB Winchester annual reports, the prison was built 178 years ago, is dilapidated and considered to be unfit for purpose. Cells were designed for one person, but mostly contain two, causing cramped occupancy for years. Accommodation capacity issues, exacerbated by the current lack of spaces across the prison estate, lead to inappropriate prisoners sharing cells, which creates risk and hampers the effective running of the wings. The prison was not designed with older or disabled prisoners in mind and doorways to most cells are not wide enough for wheelchair access. Temperature is difficult to control across the main wings, leaving some cells reportedly 'too hot' or 'too cold' at different times.

There is some positive news on the repair front in that the gym roof leak which had remained unfixed for some three years has now been repaired, meaning that the gym floor is no longer dangerously slippery in wet weather. Other departments, such as education and the correspondence office, still report leaking ceilings.

The underground, malodorous, control room remains infested with rats and at least half of the security cameras are not working. Following a Ministerial direction to MoJ, a temporary control room is to be available by November 2025.

#### *Overdue building works projects at HMP/YOI Winchester*

**Photo 1.** basement entrance to the control room with mesh on lower door to inhibit ingress of rats. New facility to be installed as soon as November 2025



**Photo 2.** Ground work and footings installed for building a replacement CSU – the work has been halted for some three years



Many mesh security grilles on the outer cell windows of B wing have been damaged and bent upwards or are missing. Security reports that drone sightings continued and it is likely they were targeting these windows for easy access. Window replacement is needed but would require the wing to be vacant, and with current overcrowding issues this is not an option. This is problematical as the occupants of these cells may not be drug users and intelligence from security suggests these prisoners are often under threat by the intended receivers if they do not hand the contents over, and face prison adjudication issues if they do.

Repair is likely to be the compromise solution to the broken grilles, but HMP Winchester reports working at height also presents difficulties and adds to the cost. It has also been reported that planning permission would be necessary to install new anti-drone grilles, which adds time and complexity to the works. Permission to tender for this urgent work is being sought at the time of writing.

### *Damaged B wing mesh window grilles allowing the potential for drone drops*

**Photo 3.** B wing mesh window grilles bent outward by prisoners creating potential access for drones



**Photo 4.** Example of a B wing window with mesh window grille entirely missing



### **Kit**

The provision and supply of prisoners' kit, such as bedding, clothing and towels, is largely going well. Replacement should be one for one, i.e. a dirty sheet is handed in for laundry and a clean one issued. In reality there is often a mismatch, meaning the stores department has to cope with a fluctuating demand. Prisoners' habit of disposing of unwanted kit in refuse sacks was addressed during the reporting period, with such kit being retrieved through better waste management.

### **Kitchen**

The daily allowance for providing prisoners with three meals is £3.02 per person (at the time of writing – June 2025). The kitchen should be applauded for successfully serving 2,100 meals each day when it has often been short of the necessary numbers of non-attending B and C wing workers. D wing is now the kitchen workforce and provides a consistently efficient service, with prisoners keen to learn. The provision of breakfast packs delivered in the morning has continued successfully and the IMB observed that microwave meals are provided to late arrival prisoners in reception. The kitchen has also provided meals for specific religious festivals, such as Eid and a Buddhism day. Meals are served on the wings and eaten in cells.

## **Westhill and The Hearn**

The entry gates between the main site and Westhill and the Hearn are in poor condition. Users must notify Control that access or exit is needed and this system is prone to breakdowns, leaving the units inaccessible.

Since last year's report, Westhill has been re-roofed and its water ingress problems resolved. It is currently in reasonable repair, but some mould is still evident in showers. Accommodation in Westhill is regarded as superior to that provided on the main wings.

The criteria to be housed in these units are to be category C, have 'enhanced' status on the incentives scheme, which is a system of earned privileges for prisoners, and good behaviour, with a maximum of two years still to serve. Population management across the adult male estate has caused problems with this. Most of the current limited available space in the prison estate is within category D establishments elsewhere. The offender management unit (OMU) finds itself coming under pressure to lower the category of some occupants to the presumption of category D so that they qualify to leave HMP/YOI Winchester to go to an open prison elsewhere. This creates spaces in Westhill and the Hearn which must be filled. Prisoners are therefore sometimes moved from HMP/YOI Winchester's main wings (which are category B) to fill these spaces sooner than they might have been in normal circumstances (sometimes before men are fully ready for the category change), which has an effect on its culture of rehabilitation for release. There has been an increase in vandalism, illicit substance use and there has been some refusal to work or attend classes.

## **Government Facility Services Ltd (GFSL)**

GFSL is the company currently engaged to undertake repair and maintenance within HMP Winchester. Unfortunately, due to the pressure of outstanding maintenance work at any one time – from repair of cells that have been purposefully damaged by their occupants to ensuring that shared facilities on the wing, such as showers, remain operational – most maintenance is reactive rather than proactive.

From the Board's observations, GFSL is generally considered effective and prompt in the services it provides for repair and maintenance, but larger projects which fall under the management of MoJ Property can be hampered by lack of finance and a prolonged tendering process.

The cost of repairing vandalism for the financial year, within the prison, was substantial. Between April 2024 and March 2025 there were 220 requests to replace smashed cell observation panels. This is a minimum number of actual replacement



panels as numerous broken panels can be put on one order. Minor repairs are carried out by two teams of prisoners who are in the process of refitting 180 cells. Since our last report in 2023-2024, there has been some progress in addressing long-term maintenance issues including:

- repair to roof over main gymnasium at the end of A wing (photos 5 and 6)
- repair to the corridor ceiling between A wing and education (photos 7 and 8)
- repair to the roof in Westhill
- repair to landing railings on B wing

### *Repairs and improvements undertaken in 2024-2025 at HMP Winchester*

#### *Gymnasium roof repair*

**Photo 5:** 2023-2024 - improvised drainage rig attempting to take leaking roof water away from the gym's operational area.



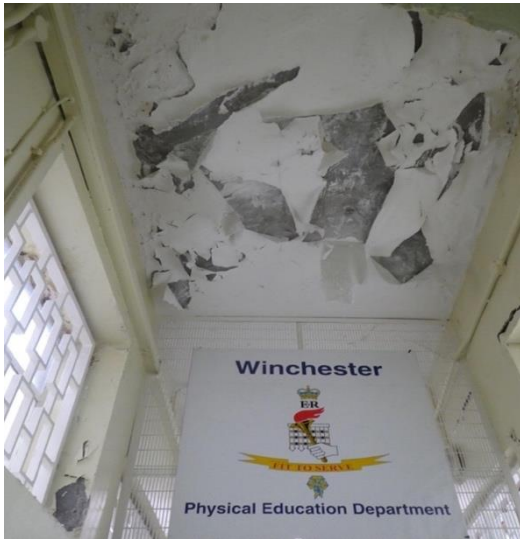
**Photo 6:** 2024-2025 - drainage rig now removed following full repair to gymnasium roof





### *A wing corridor improvement*

**Photo 7.** A wing corridor ceiling in 2023-2024 – now improved (see Photo 8).



**Photo 8.** A wing corridor ceiling repainted and repaired 2024-2025



### *Continued dilapidation in other areas:*

**Photo 9:** Vegetation growing on A wing wall junction as a result of leaking roof gutter lacking end-stop above



**Photo 10:** Effects of water ingress A wing corridor – repair started but then stalled



There are many further examples of continuing decay to the fabric of the estate of HMP Winchester. The main education block, built some 50 years ago, is deteriorating structurally.

**Photo 11.** Deteriorating concrete framing of the education and reception block



**Photo 12.** Protection from falling masonry externally



## 5.2 Segregation

The care and separation unit (CSU), where prisoners are segregated<sup>8</sup>, continues in its temporary location on the ground floor landing of D wing. The latest update on the progress of the planned purpose-built unit elsewhere in the grounds of the prison confirmed that revised plans have been approved, and a new contractor to complete the work has been chosen and commissioned. However, building work has yet to resume, and given the project's history of repeated delays (see photo 2), the Board awaits firm evidence of progress.

In the meantime, the current location in D wing offers a total of nine cells, two of which can function as constant watch capacity for healthcare, thus potentially reducing CSU capacity by two cells. In addition, the unit provides one holding cell, one special accommodation cell (where items such as furniture, bedding and sanitation are removed in the interests of safety), a shower cell and a small exercise yard.

A notable problem has been the number of cells out of action. One cell (D1-06) was unusable for over 18 months due to an issue with replacing its door, finally fixed in January 2025. During rota visits, members observed at times a further two to three cells out of action, overwhelmingly due to prisoner vandalism, deliberate flooding or

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<sup>8</sup> An individual prisoner may be 'segregated' for a number of reasons – inappropriate behaviour, the need to keep others safe, as a punishment following adjudication or for their own protection.

even arson, reducing the unit's capacity to as few as five cells on, at least three occasions in the first two months of the year. This reduced capacity matters, as it has an impact on the prison's ability to use segregation as part of the system of both punishment (avoiding unfairness in adjudication outcomes) and the management of very disruptive prisoners through the good order or discipline (GOoD) reviews (where the prison determines if the prisoner should remain segregated). In March 2025 the Board observed all nine accommodation cells being used for the first time during the reporting period.

The good level of staffing on the unit noted during the rota visits (typically three staff) offers a better targeting of prisoners' specific needs than is available in the rest of the main prison. The rostering of a group of dedicated officers provides a more consistent approach to the often troubled and challenging prisoners held on the unit, and in several cases has resulted in good outcomes, such as improved mental health stability and successful reintegration on to normal location. The Board was able to verify this in the feedback from prisoners on the unit during their segregation reviews and IMB rota visits.

The Board has continued to raise the cases of prisoners whose lengths of stay on the unit exceeded 42 days (the limit allowed without external authorisation). CSU staff responded well to those enquiries and offered reasonable justifications. We observed discussions regarding the re-integration of these individuals into the regular regime on the wing. GOoD reviews observed by the IMB on ten different occasions, were conducted thoroughly and fairly.

A particular Board concern, observed on at least eight separate occasions, remains the impact of the CSU being used to manage prisoners in a moment of acute mental health crisis or with significant mental health challenges. This excludes prisoners in a mental health crisis on constant watch under the management of healthcare who are located in the CSU facilities due to the limited availability of that type of cell in the healthcare unit. Just as highlighted in last year's report, the Board has observed at least three incidents when prisoners on segregation rule have presented as being in real crisis (confirmed by the mental health practitioners). CSU staff continue to report feeling overwhelmed by the responsibility (they receive little or no specialist training), and the elements of the CSU accommodation used to locate vulnerable prisoners, which were identified by one mental health practitioner as unsafe during the last reporting period, have not been addressed.

### **5.3 Staff-prisoner relationships, key workers**

During this reporting year, much time and effort has gone into improving the lack of prison knowledge and expanding the limited life/work experience of relatively newly recruited young officers. Through conversations with some prisoners, we have been told that officers – particularly those who in the early stages of their careers – were perceived as acting unfairly. These perceptions of injustice were occasionally linked to escalations in poor behaviour among prisoners, which had negative consequences for the individuals involved, other inmates, and prison staff. In response, targeted staff training has been implemented, focusing on skill development and team building to strengthen overall practice. Success is evidenced in that resignations of operational staff have decreased by approximately 38% compared with last year.

In May 2025 the number one Governor gave examples of some exceptional multidiscipline working with officers and agencies successfully engaging with some of the most complex prisoners, many of whom have histories of trauma, mental illness and other issues, thus avoiding potential violence or self-harm.

#### **Key workers**

In the context of UK prisons, a key worker is a prison officer who provides one-to-one support and guidance to a small group of prisoners, helping them to navigate their sentences and engage with rehabilitation programs.

Whilst the ideal is for all prisoners to be allocated a key worker, priority is given to those who have spent time in care, under 25s, first time in custody and complex cases. Prison officer work tasks include daily time for staff working in the CSU, healthcare and C1 (neurodiversity landing), allowing staff to provide keywork for these prisoners to build stronger relationships. This is monitored at a daily operational meeting.

Key working is challenging in HMP Winchester. The IMB finds that key work sessions often do not happen because of lack of staff availability. Sickness, maternity leave, incidents, temporary promotion, suspensions, bed and constant watches all affect the ability of staff to undertake this task. In June 2024 the target was exceeded, but since October 2024 less than 50% of sessions have been achieved with only 25% taking place in April 2025. The deputy governor confirms that regular delivery is uncommon and is no longer one of the prison's key performance indicators, but states that the content of the key working sessions, in terms of practically and emotionally supporting the prisoners, was being delivered through other means and interventions.

The need to improve has been identified and keyworker training is ongoing, completed by approximately 34 officers, with more sessions diarised.

#### **5.4 Equality and diversity**

The dedicated diversity and inclusivity (D&I) post remained unfunded and dedicated forums had to be cancelled last summer due to a lack of resource to deliver this function. This post has now been funded locally and a temporary appointment is reinvigorating this area, subject to recruitment of a permanent Band 6 in summer 2025. Staff members have each been allocated a protected characteristic to lead on and monthly D&I forums will start again and focus on staff education and training. The number of discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs) received for this year is 68. This is a decrease from 86 last year, but not quite back to the 2023 level of 52. Almost 50% (33) are again referencing race issues, with eight relating to sexual orientation, seven regarding religion and eight regarding disability.

The number of foreign nationals in the prison continues to increase, particularly from Eastern Europe. Language and cultural barriers can be a problem leading to misunderstandings. Prison officers are encouraged to use 'Big Word,' a telephone translation service to ensure understanding. In-person translators can be used but are not widely available.

Sadly, the structure and fabric of this prison mean that there are limited facilities for those who are disabled; very few cells can accommodate a wheelchair and there is only one lift in the main prison area, which makes access to activities difficult. This situation is unlikely to change; staff manage the allocation of suitable cells to the best of their ability given all the other competing demands for single cells.

The IMB has been made aware of at least four discrimination issues between prisoners. In each case, senior staff or governors have ensured that a DIRF has been completed and that incidents are investigated where appropriate, leading in one case to the removal of a prisoner from the Prison Council.

#### **5.5 Faith and pastoral support**

Overall, the chaplaincy service has been affected by a number of absences, in particular the long-term sickness absence of the Roman Catholic priest who is unlikely to return in the short term. The Imam was also on sick leave for some time and this affected the delivery of a number of services.

The managing chaplain repeatedly reported during morning briefing sessions that the service was stretched to the limit and this was alleviated with the appointment of an anglican chaplain. He also reported that some services had been delivered with

the help of chaplains from HMP Guys Marsh and the Roman Catholic Bishop of Portsmouth.

Highlights this year have been the Eid celebrations in April, when approximately half of the prison's Muslim population were able to attend a service in the chapel, followed by lunch where the kitchen had supplied a choice of four dishes. The chaplaincy also delivered a Buddha day prayer meeting in May which again was followed by lunch – the IMB observed the managing chaplain delivering the meal to two prisoners located in the CSU.

### **5.6 Incentives schemes**

The incentive scheme is designed to encourage and reward good behaviour. Each prisoner starts on the same level but can earn more privileges by displaying good behaviour or lose them by breaking rules. For example, one sanction is the loss of an in-cell TV. This rule is difficult to apply, in a prison with double occupancy cells, when one 'misbehaving' prisoner should lose the TV but the other has done nothing to warrant the loss. Enhanced prisoners can receive one extra visit each month. Prisoners who commit another offence while in prison will face an adjudication. If guilty, they will lose privileges or can have their sentenced lengthened. Recently adjudicators have been given authority to award suspended punishments that will not be activated if the prisoner takes part in an activity that is aimed at their rehabilitation. For example, to engage with a substance misuse service or Alcoholics Anonymous, or to engage with Hampshire Fire Service if the prisoner committed arson. The Incentivised Substance Free Living landing uses rewards to encourage occupants to live drug-free.

### **5.7 Complaints**

Prisoners submitted a total of 995 complaints to the prison management during the reporting year, averaging 83 per month, a small increase above the previous reporting year's total of 962.

Over a quarter of the complaints concerned loss of prisoners' property, up 40% on 2023/24, reversing the significant downward trend the IMB noted from 2022/23 in the last report.

Other issues leading to significant numbers of complaints included canteen (the system for prisoners to purchase items of food, toiletries etc), accommodation and relationships with staff.

Confidential complaints, submitted to the Governor in a sealed envelope, were reduced by two thirds this reporting year following a changed, more robust process for rejecting any submitted this way which did not genuinely need to be treated as

confidential. Any complaints rejected in this way had then to be resubmitted in the normal way.

Another important change to the process for confidential complaints was to remove the option for them to be submitted to the IMB rather than to the Governor. The IMB regarded it as important, to maintain their strict independence, that they should not be seen as part of the prison complaint management process.

### **5.8 Property**

The Board had received eight applications related to missing property in the last 12 months, predominantly relating to property issues during prison or court transfers. In most cases prisoners were not aware of the correct procedures to report property issues and how to raise a complaint, which the IMB was able to advise upon. 255 complaints have been raised internally to the prison regarding property and a further 62 external complaints about property were received, mostly regarding items left behind. 31 complaints were about property being left at their previous prison and the remaining 224 internal complaints are varied, including some about property they believe has been stolen and some about property they believe has gone missing in the laundry process.

Property that arrives with a prisoner continues to be dealt with efficiently, including the recording of property on a property card. Prison staff did comment that some inexperienced staff have allowed prohibited items on to the wings. There is still a backlog of prisoner property left behind, which the prison must keep and store for 12 months. Any clothing not claimed is recycled for use by prisoners exiting without suitable civilian clothing. One issue that continues to draw attention is the matter of incoming parcels, which can sit for days in reception awaiting security checks. Periodically this issue is gripped but it has been a recurring theme this year.



## 6. Health and wellbeing

### 6.1 Healthcare general

Practice Plus Group (PPG) continues to be the healthcare provider commissioned to operate at HMP Winchester. The prison's self-contained healthcare facilities were routinely monitored by IMB members throughout the period and no concerns had been raised by Board members. However, an HMIP inspection in October 2024 identified issues around cleanliness in healthcare facilities. It should be noted that this matter is not a direct responsibility of PPG.

Prisoners make most complaints and applications relating to healthcare direct to PPG and the IMB has no sight of these for reasons of 'medical confidentiality'. However, the IMB does receive occasional applications which relate to healthcare and these broadly fall into two categories: (i) concerns about speed and quality of attention and (ii) issues around changes or delay to prescription medication.

Formal complaints to healthcare are dealt with internally by PPG in what can be a four-stage process<sup>9</sup>. All complaints received are recorded as 'concerns' through a face-to-face discussion, which aims to try to resolve the matter as soon as possible. All complainants receive a reply. If the complainant is unhappy with the response, he can follow up and escalate the matter to 'Stage 1'. In 2022-2023 there were 175 recorded concerns and 13 that went to Stage 1, whereas, in 2023-2024, there were 139 concerns resulting in 11 Stage 1 complaints.

In 2024-2025 there were 166 concerns resulting in eight Stage 1 complaints, which was an increase in concerns of more than 19% on the previous year but a reduction in Stage 1 of 27%.

If a Stage 1 response does not resolve the matter, it can be escalated to Stage 2 (involving the Managing Director of PPG). Beyond Stage 2 there is a further level – Stage 3 – which would involve the PHSO (Parliamentary Health Service Ombudsman). During the reporting period there was no record of any healthcare complaints at HMP Winchester reaching Stage 2 or Stage 3.

Staff shortages within PPG continued to be an issue, with a vacancy rate of some 38% in the healthcare staff establishment in May 2025. Grades most affected were senior – general practitioner (GP) cover, senior leadership and management, and advanced nurse practitioners. Once again there were changes to appointment to head of healthcare during the reporting period and this continued a pattern of turnover, with seven changes in leadership recorded in the last four years – albeit three of these appointments were interim from elsewhere in PPG. Work

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<sup>9</sup> *Practice Plus Group Complaints and Feedback Policy 2020.*



shifts affected by vacancies were reported to be covered by bank and agency staff. Reduced staff numbers sometimes had a negative impact on attendance at key prison meetings by healthcare staff.

PPG had found it difficult to appoint a GP to full-time post in HMP Winchester until autumn 2024 when a 0.25 FTE appointment was made. Locum GPs were engaged to provide further cover. The requirement for a doctor to visit the CSU every 72 hours (PSO1700<sup>10</sup>) was not met several times throughout the reporting period, including July 2024 when there was just one documented GP visit. In the period June 2024 - May 2025 there were 62 visits by doctors recorded to the CSU (including four visits by psychiatrists), whereas full attendance once every 72 hours would have numbered 120 visits. This shortfall has been a repeating story, and one which PPG has defended by stating that medical practice has changed and the CSU responsibilities can be covered by an advanced nurse practitioner. In early June 2025, it was reported by the head of healthcare that two GPs were being on-boarded.

In May 2025, against a staff complement of 80 full time equivalent (FTE) healthcare staff, there were 49 staff in post and 31 vacancies at HMP Winchester across healthcare. In May 2025 the overall staff vacancy rate was running at 38% – slightly better than in May 2024.

## **6.2 Physical healthcare**

Physical healthcare is delivered on-site by PPG with a staff establishment of 80 FTE, of which there were 49 in post in May 2025 with a further 22 staff in the process of ‘on-boarding’ including an advanced nurse practitioner and two GPs. Churn in healthcare staff has been a persistent issue in HMP Winchester and there have been significant challenges in recruiting and retaining new staff, so a recruitment specialist has been engaged by PPG to address the situation.

PPG reports monthly to the Local Delivery of Quality Board (LDQB) which is chaired by the Governor and includes NHS commissioners, head of healthcare, primary care lead, mental health lead and NHS England/NHS improvement representatives. The IMB has observer status on this Board. During 2024-2025 the frequency of meetings was reduced as a result of cancellation, changes in staff and the necessity to serve the needs of HMIP inspection.

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<sup>10</sup> PSO (Prison Service Order) 1700 S 2.3 para 4 *The doctor must visit each prisoner in segregation as often as their individual health needs dictate and at least every three days.*

A number of agenda items frequently roll over between LDQB meetings. One of these is 'recruitment and retention'. Another is the plan to build a pharmacy at HMP Winchester, which was agreed more than 12 months ago but a start on building works has not yet been made. A further repeating agenda item is to address the paucity of appropriate clinical consultation rooms on wings in the main prison. In one case suitable room space, previously identified, had returned to use for accommodation as a result of capacity pressure.

Cleanliness of clinical spaces was an issue raised by HMIP inspectors. The prison is therefore exploring the employment of deep clean specialists within the maintenance group GFSL. PPG does not have responsibility for the cleaning of clinical spaces.

The frequency of missed clinical appointments was another regular agenda item for discussion at LDQB. Prisoner attendance at long-awaited external specialist appointments can be disrupted at short notice by non-availability of escorts through staff shortage or the urgent deployment of escort staff to emergency duties. There has been an increasing number of older prisoners in HMP Winchester and this group tends to require more external healthcare appointments and so more escorts than in the past. PPG is considering implementing telemedicine<sup>11</sup> techniques for some appointments, to avoid the resource-heavy need to escort prisoners off site.

One issue which did arise more than once during 2024-2025 was the matter of men who had been taken under escort to a bed in the Royal Hampshire County Hospital, because their condition warranted treatment there, only to be released back to HMP Winchester healthcare because there was a perception among staff within the hospital that the healthcare centre in HMP Winchester offered equivalent facilities and care. This is not the case. At its worst, this resulted in a man moving backwards and forwards between the two establishments, which was clearly unacceptable and had to be rectified through greater communication and understanding between the two institutions.

## **Dentistry**

During 2023-2024, the IMB at HMP Winchester reported that 'the proportion of prisoners breaching the six-week standard for a dental appointment had risen from 10% in May 2023 to 22% in May 2024'. In May 2025 it was confirmed that the backlog that had built up in the past had been cleared, and there had been no breach of the six-week standard during the previous six months, and this is a significant improvement. Dental care at HMP Winchester is delivered under contract

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<sup>11</sup> The delivery of healthcare services and medical consultation via online systems.

by Time for Teeth, with a dental nurse attending four days a week and a dentist three days a week.

### **6.3 Mental health**

In December 2024 the specialist neurodiverse landing on C wing became fully operational, having started in September 2024, offering 38 beds in a more relaxed environment and extra activities to support individuals with neurodevelopmental differences or conditions. Prisoners are selected to be offered a place via an assessment process and have to sign a contract regarding their behaviour. Since its implementation, staff working on the landing have commented that self-harming had reduced for individuals housed on the landing. Staff stated that there was also a reduction in violence and an increase in engagement in purposeful activity for these prisoners. Prisoners report to IMB a sense of community, and staff feel they get to know the prisoners well and are better able to support them. Its newly established reputation means HMP Winchester is receiving referrals from other establishments. IMB observes no physical barriers between landings on C wing, which includes both the neurodiverse and ISFL landings.

Mental Health staffing has improved since the previous reporting year. Caseloads have reduced from approximately 40 per practitioner to approximately 10, but this can vary.

In September 2024, there was a waiting list of approximately 40-50 for a routine mental health assessment, which had been reduced to approximately 20 by May 2025. In September 2024 the target of five days for a routine assessment was met <1% of the time, but this had improved to 42% by March 2025 with all referrals seen in ten days. As of May 2025, urgent referrals are seen within 48 hours. Waiting for transfer to specialist facilities is generally within the 28-day time limit. There were, however, several cases where men displayed very serious behavioural or mental health problems. For their own safety and well-being, they were effectively confined to the care and separation unit (CSU) whilst decisions were made on where best to secure them. There was concern that the CSU might be being used as accommodation of last resort, pending further deterioration of behaviour that would warrant renewed mental health assessment to support a move to a specialist secure mental health unit (see section 5.2).

Since September 2024, the breadth of psychology services and the number of staff has increased, resulting in more timely services for those with mental health needs. Patients are triaged in three to four weeks and then await treatment. The waiting time for non-urgent referral to the psychiatrist is approximately six weeks, urgent

referrals are triaged for referral as needed. For psychology services one-to-one treatment waiting times are approximately 16 weeks, but if group work is an alternative this can be provided sooner in many instances as a stop gap. The group work waiting list is triaged monthly to assess need and prioritise. All patients on the one-to-one waiting list are written to, explaining the options. Services offered in groups are 'Making Sense of Worries', a low intensity intervention, and 'Making Sense of Emotions' a moderate intensity intervention. If the need is assessed as urgent and patients cannot engage in talking therapies, then the patient is referred to alternative services. See also section 5.2 above.

Despite the introduction of the neurodiverse landing and the increase in staffing, there remained a number of prisoners who exhibited challenging behaviours and/or mental health problems which could be disruptive, difficult for prison and healthcare staff to manage and impacted on the welfare of both prisoners and staff and on the operation of the prison generally.

#### **6.4 Social care**

PPG have 37 hours per week contracted for social care, although currently there is only 21-22 hours per week allocated. The social care lead has a caseload of 8-11 prisoners at any one time. Prisoners are assessed at reception regarding any physical disability, sensory need, neurodiverse need and any injuries on entering HMP that might necessitate support e.g. broken bones. Adjustments to cells are made such as grab rails, roll guards, bedding requirements according to need. An occupational therapist is available on demand. Officers on the wing can also refer prisoners for a social care assessment. PPG records all needs and a review on all cases takes place every couple of months.

Services offered include help with domestics, personal care and showering.

Healthcare assistants are available seven days a week to conduct all personal care and some domestic duties. A buddy system is in place, whereby non-personal care support from another prisoner is provided – such as help to get food, go to the library, education and work. Training is planned to establish healthcare peer supporters, a paid prison job, which promotes health and well-being.

The bimonthly Social Care Board meeting has not been in place for the last year. The Board brings together all professionals engaged in the service with the stated aim of identifying concerns and discussing individual cases. Membership includes the Governor responsible for healthcare, healthcare workers, social care lead and healthcare assistants delivering social care.

## **6.5 Exercise, regime**

The current time out of cell is 2.5 hours per day for those not engaging in education classes or work. Two of the main wings offer work and activities in the morning and two in the afternoon. Off-wing workers complained that they did not have time to do domestic tasks (time spent on personal hygiene, calling family and socialising), before lock-up time, so now receive an additional 15 minutes for these tasks. Planning is continuing to extend time out of cell by moving activities such as gym and library to the opposite part of the day so as not to clash with domestic periods. Sufficient staffing is required to reach desired levels, which is difficult to achieve with constant overcrowding, violent incidents, leave, sick leave and staff regularly deployed to bed watches of hospitalised prisoners. Such bed watches are numerous. Two or three daily is common along with constant watches, within the prison (seven on one occasion), required as well. They require the constant attendance of two or sometimes three officers who undertake a 12-hour shift. There is no allowance in the prison's staffing profile for this task meaning that, when bed watches are required, officers are drawn from the prison rota via calls for volunteers. Off duty officers are regularly given bed watches on overtime which means they sometimes work too many hours in a 24-hour period, so fewer officers than necessary are available within the prison.

## **6.6 Drug rehabilitation**

Approximately 25% - 30% of prisoners entering HMP Winchester each month were known from national data sources to have drug misuse issues. Other prisoners with drug and alcohol issues were identified on reception or later during their stay. Use of the prison's Substance Misuse Services (SMS), provided by PPG, was voluntary, with the services primarily focused on supporting prisoners while at HMP Winchester and facilitating the continuation of support when prisoners transitioned into the community or moved to other prisons. With the average stay at HMP Winchester approximately 60 days, progress on typically long-term treatment plans was limited.

SMS was mainly directed towards drug and alcohol misuse with opiates, cocaine and cannabis/cannabinoids all featuring. Prisoners consuming illicit substances may not have been aware of the drugs actually used, being dependent on the availability of supply. There were no significant changes in the treatments available to support prisoners between 2024/25 and 2023/24. The SMART Inside/Out psycho-educational group work programme to support recovery from addiction introduced in May 2024 was withdrawn in November 2024 following a reduction in the number of SMS team members. By May 2025 steps were being taken to rebuild the team, adopt the less punitive, more supportive, national approach to drug misuse and

move towards a four-pillar<sup>12</sup> pathway approach, working more closely with other members of the prison's healthcare team. Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous groups continued to operate throughout the year, with the prison also continuing to be one of the most highly rated in the region for transitioning prisoners back into community support programmes.

## **6.7 Soft skills**

Spurgeons (a charity for the children of prisoners) continue to support fathers in prison with their families, and to prepare fathers for release, offering practical advice to sustain and grow their relationships with their children and families. Spurgeons offer advice and support to improve communication, to stay involved and to look after their own mental health and physical wellbeing.

The Saints Foundation continues to provide 'through the gate' support for prisoners released in the Southampton area.

The Bearface Theatre grant was not renewed, although separately funded individual classes are run on an ad hoc basis.

In May 2025 the IMB observed an art workshop, where prisoners had created art to express their feelings and to provide positive messages to others. At the workshop all were asked what they had taken out of the projects, and prisoners quoted the following: 'felt like I was treated as a human', 'spoken to with mutual respect', 'enjoyed the time out of cell' and 'felt like getting back to some normality'.

Prison officer use of force training includes time to embed the approach, to take time to talk to prisoners, and to develop relationships and trust which supports understanding of root causes of behavioural issues. An officer notes that the current prison environment and regime (see key working section 5.3) makes it difficult to apply the chosen method. However, he went on to reference an incident where a prisoner changed his behaviour as a result of a prison officer taking the time to speak to him.

Music, yoga, staff versus prisoner sports events and engaging prisoners in special events continue to develop under the guidance of dedicated staff. Training continues for new members of staff and there is support for all staff to encourage the building of positive relationships and confidence in dealing with prisoners.

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<sup>12</sup> 'Four Pillars' of the addiction recovery process are identified as health, home, purpose and community.

## **7. Progression and resettlement**

### **7.1 Education and library**

In addition to the HMIP Inspection in October 2024, OFSTED separately inspected education skills and work (ESW) provision and Winchester scored 'inadequate' across all areas. This was not a surprise to the IMB given a lack of resources, staff recruitment challenges and the considerable issues with prisoner churn. OFSTED made several recommendations, most of which are not achievable without a significant increase in resources and investment. At the time of writing (July 2025) budgets have been cut by 7.5% and OFSTED recommendations have not been enacted.

It is the Board's view that the education service provided under contract by Milton Keynes College does not meet the needs of a local prison with high churn and a large proportion of remand population. Functional skills maths and English courses are mandated and consume a large part of the budget but require 60 guided learning hours to complete. Only 14 prisoners have completed English and 12 completed maths in a 12-month period, as most prisoners do not stay in Winchester for the length of time required. This year the budget has been cut further so new courses cannot be funded. Direct purchase system (DPS) funding has also been cut by 20%, hence the Education Outreach programme has been cut, including Bearface Theatre and Therapeutic Art, which were reasonably well attended and popular activities.

Allocation rates have improved this year and are now hovering around 70-80%. However, attendance rates remain a concern, averaging 56%, although this increases to around 68% after allowable absences are taken into account (e.g. attending court, sickness, visits etc). IMB members have observed education classes with less than 50% attendance. A general complaint from prisoners is that those who do attend education and work miss out on time for domestics and association. A new regime is being implemented in June 2025 which aims to re-incentivise education and purposeful activity.

### **Library**

The library was understaffed for six months but is now back up to full strength and attendance visits have improved significantly. Library attendance figures vary considerably throughout the year. They are reliant on wing officers to unlock and escort prisoners and for them to keep to the library timetable. Some wings have better attendance than others, but all are scheduled for at least three hours per week as part of the core day, allowing up to 48 visitors for 20 minutes either morning or afternoon but staff report that sessions are often only ten minutes duration due to

delays in freeflow<sup>13</sup> movements. This is not sufficient time to read any legal documents or research anything meaningful.

A Shannon Trust Coordinator<sup>14</sup> has finally been recruited after more than two years. Work is ongoing to recruit and train suitable mentors (there are five currently); however, there are some obstacles to success. Shannon Trust mentors are not classed as wing workers so are often not unlocked to carry out their duties. Mentors may be moved out to other prisons and training new mentors is sporadic.

## **7.2 Vocational training and work**

The HMIP inspection in October 2024 scored purposeful activity at HMP Winchester as 'poor'. Staff reported that this was disappointing and affected their morale. as they had been working hard to the backdrop of challenges faced by the prison including staff shortages, recruitment issues, inadequate facilities and building fabric and the high churn of prisoners who all require educational and risk assessment before being able to take up work and activities. The head of education skills and work (ESW) post was vacant for six months, and subsequently the activities lead post was vacant for six months. The governor head of reducing reoffending had also been vacant for periods throughout the year.

The new head of ESW is driving improvements to the allocation and attendance process to drive up rates and purposeful activity, which is in the interests of all prisoners. It can take up to three weeks from arrival before a prisoner can be allocated to work, with an average of 60 new prisoners arriving per week and an average stay of only six to eight weeks. Recent statistics show that around 450 jobs and activities are available across the prison with average allocations between 80-90%.

Textiles (workshop 4) was closed for ten months due to a problem with the roof but reopened in August 2024. Woodwork (workshop 6) has relocated to smaller premises to allow Waste and Recycling to move into the larger workshop and increase the number of full-time jobs available in recycling to 26; this is in direct response to a government mandate that prisons must sort their own waste recycling onsite. This has been introduced on time; however, the prison requires additional staff to supervise workers and some workshop upgrades to ensure the facilities are suitable and sustainable to deliver this critical function. Kitchen worker attendance was very poor and led to significant food delivery issues, however the matter was

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<sup>13</sup> The status of freeflow movement permits prisoners to move about controlled areas in the prison, to and from activities, unescorted.

<sup>14</sup> Shannon Trust – a national charity dedicated to supporting people in the criminal justice system to learn to read and improve other basic skills including numeracy.



successfully addressed by allocating these roles (26 spaces) solely to prisoners from D wing. Tailoring is also allocated to vulnerable prisoners only (11 spaces). Since last year HMP Winchester have been given permission to reintroduce a BIO waste qualification; a new instructor has been in post since December 2024 who can deliver industrial cleaner training for all serverly staff and wing workers. Prisoners will now get a qualification in BIO waste handling for first time, which is welcomed. New initiatives include the Small Winchester Improvement and Fixing Team (SWIFT), wing painters and Purposeful Prisoners Work (PPW) who receive accreditation. These initiatives allow trusted prisoners to conduct small repair and maintenance jobs within the prison to improve accommodation and living standards. Whilst some Tier 2 activities had to be cut to deliver savings, efforts are being made to encourage new activities delivered by local volunteers such as pottery and chess. These are ad hoc but provide a much-needed diversion for some prisoners and those who are unsuited to formal education or work settings.

### **7.3 Offender management and progression**

Managing this prison population, which is consistently at or close to maximum capacity, has a significant impact on staff workload. The offender management unit (OMU) continues to operate under considerable pressure from the high demand/ high churn and in responding to frequent government initiatives to try to release prisoners early or relocate to lower security prisons. The OMU is under-resourced for the high number of remand prisoners. More than 70% of prisoners held in May 2025 were on remand. The ECLS 70<sup>15</sup> initiative ceased on 9 September 2024 and was replaced by SDS 40<sup>16</sup> on 10 September (first tranche serving sentences under five years), and on 22 October 2024 (second tranche serving sentences of over five years). Home detention curfew (HDC) criteria introduced in June 2024, resulted in 13 reassessments. TPRS 12<sup>17</sup> altered the rules for transfer to category D prisons and resulted in 72 prisoners being reassessed for potential move. 16% of these early releases were assessed as risk concerns. IMB receives few applications regarding OMU sentence management and the support to prisoners provided by staff and observed by IMB is thorough and helpful.

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<sup>15</sup> ECLS – End of Custody Supervised Licence 70 allows prisoners to leave up to 70 days before end of sentence

<sup>16</sup> SDS 40 – Standard Determinate Sentence release after serving 40% of sentence rather than 50%

<sup>17</sup> TPRS 12 – Temporary Presumptive Recategorisation Scheme for those with 12 months or less of a sentence to serve

## **7.4 Family contact**

Family services are provided by the charity Spurgeons, both as part of a publicly funded contract with the prison (centred around prison visits) as well as additional services funded by charitable grants. Spurgeons staff attend daily inductions for new arrivals, offering prisoners support for any family-related concerns.

IMB observed the Time to Connect session for prisoners who do not have social visits, either in person or via social video calls, continuing the practice introduced during the previous reporting year. Prisoners who provided feedback indicated gratefulness for the opportunity to take part, and the ability to forge positive connections with the services represented.

Observations of prisoners and their visitors in the visitors' centre during social visits gave the impression of a friendly and welcoming environment. The venue with the Tea Bar and the children's play area supported by Spurgeons volunteers is welcoming and colourful, so helping visitors to feel comfortable in the environment. Both prison and Spurgeons staff interacted easily with the attendees. Spurgeons staff have quoted prisoners providing very positive feedback on those visits. A cashless payment system for buying items from the Tea Bar is reported to be working well.

A significant issue was the delay in the set-up of telephone numbers on prisoners' personal identification numbers (PIN). Both the increased requirement for telephone number vetting and attempts to improve the turn-around time by involving additional staff, resulted in a steady worsening of the situation. In April 2025 delays experienced reached in some cases four weeks, creating delays for prisoners trying to contact family and leading to a marked increase in prisoner applications on the subject to the IMB. The prison acknowledged the issues and has undertaken a process review with all stakeholders, the changes resulting from which showing improvements in the outcome for prisoners.

## **7.5 Resettlement planning**

Resettlement planning is carried out within the establishment by staff who are part of the Probation Service. There is currently only one member of staff in this service (out of a planned team of four) as recruitment has taken some time and is subject to vetting requirements. There is one trainee who has stepped up from an administrative role supporting the sole PSO (Probation Service Officer).

Resettlement work now covers the initial prisoner assessment for all prisoners arriving from court, supporting them with banking, housing and other issues that may

arise. The team reassess all prisoners 12 weeks prior to their release and at the time of writing their eight week-to-release list numbers over 60 men.

The number of staff providing the contracted service to assist with the provision of accommodation on release (provided by Ingeus) has continued with one in post. The focus has also switched towards the remand population and those prisoners who may be subject to immediate release under the new legislation. Data shared with the Board via a reducing reoffending meeting shows that 20% of men were released homeless, and that 8% of men were back in prison by the sixth day of the following week.

National changes regarding the early release scheme and prison overcrowding are adding pressure to HMP Winchester and impacting on resettlement planning. The case load for the resettlement team sits at the full prison population of 629 men for the one member of the team in post. Staff commented that there is very limited direct - and even less scope for private - interaction with prisoners, exacerbated by a lack of space within the prison to carry out interviews.

Successful interventions provided by third-sector providers: the Saints Foundation, Spurgeons, Making Connections and Catch 22, continue to be delivered. In addition, prisoners have access to other sessions within the prison, such as connect sessions, for example, which provide focus and discussions on resettlement.

The national target for prisoners in employment six weeks post-release is currently 22.5% and HMP Winchester reported an average of 14.3% for the reporting year. The reason for missing the target given by prison management was the Prison Employment Lead role being vacant from January for three months.

The Employment Hub is currently going through a relaunch to ensure it is always available for prisoners if they need support with employment. This currently sits with the following stakeholders, Prison Employment Lead, ID and Banking administration, Department of Work and Pensions, Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) and includes the support of multiple external agencies.

## 8. The work of the IMB

The Board at HMP Winchester has seen four members resign during the reporting period, one of which was after long service, two for personal reasons after less than a year's service and one who had come to the end of their tenure. One new member transferred to HMP Winchester from HMP Isle of Wight, and one new member joined following the national recruitment campaign. The vetting process had taken considerably less time which made the onboarding of the new member a lot more straightforward.

### Board statistics

Recommended complement of IMB members	12
Number of IMB members at the start of the reporting period	11
Number of IMB members at the end of the reporting period	9
Total number of visits to the establishment – this includes ten shadow visits by new members	441
Total number of reviews attended	24

The content of this report has been based on the observations recorded by the Board over the period. Of the total of 759 observations recorded in the Board's Observations Log, 312 were members' personal observations with the remainder coming from staff or prisoner reports, official documents and notifications.

## Applications to the IMB

Total applications to the IMB fell by 9% when compared to 2023-24 and by more than 21% when compared to 2022-2023. Applications relating to healthcare fell significantly as did applications relating to accommodation.

Code	Subject	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	21	33	22
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	3	8	11
C	Equality	5	5	1
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	18	14	15
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	39	35	39
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	28	11	16
F	Food and kitchens	5	7	5
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	52	64	48
H1	Property within the establishment	34	19	12
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	20	15	14
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	5	12	5
I	Sentence management, including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	50	25	33
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	27	25	28
K	Transfers	10	0	1
L or U/C	Miscellaneous or Unclassified	17	13	10
X	Confidential access request	0	1	1
	Total number of applications	334	287	261



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