



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP/YOI Sudbury

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

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Contents

Introductory sections 1 – 3	Page
1. Statutory role of the IMB	3
2. Description of the establishment	4
3. Key points	5
 Evidence sections 4 – 7	
4. Safety	10
5. Fair and humane treatment	13
6. Health and wellbeing	19
7. Progression and resettlement	23
 The work of the IMB	
Board statistics	30
Applications to the IMB	30
 Annex A	
Service providers	31

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Introductory sections 1 – 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

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

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

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

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

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

2. Description of the establishment

HMP/YOI Sudbury is an open, category D prison for young adults and adult men, south of Ashbourne, Derbyshire. The prison is located in a rural location, but is well connected by road to several large towns.

Prisoners at Sudbury have been assessed to be trustworthy in open conditions, and include men serving both long and short sentences. The main aim of the prison is rehabilitation and resettlement, and men are encouraged to take opportunities available for education and vocational training, as well as applying for full-time work outside of the prison.

The population at the end of the IMB reporting year was 655¹, with 57 prisoners under the age of 25. The operational capacity of the prison (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) is 661. Two new living accommodation units were completed for prisoner occupation and a number of prisoners are housed in single pods (small, separate, self-contained housing units), and these have single rooms with individual shower and toilet facilities. However, it remains the case that most dormitory buildings date from the time of the Second World War, with shared toilet and shower facilities. These are extremely challenging to maintain in good repair and in line with modern standards. Most of these rooms house two prisoners. While the new accommodation has phones in rooms, prisoners in the older blocks have to share phones situated in the dormitory corridors.

Prisoners have access to a gymnasium and outdoor exercise equipment, and there are open spaces in the grounds with seating. Education and some vocational qualifications are provided by People Plus, and healthcare is provided by the Practice Plus Group. The Secret Diner caters for the public and provides training for prisoners in catering and hospitality, while the Secret Garden sells garden produce grown in the prison's market garden.

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

3. Key points

3.1 Main findings

Safety

- From data viewed, levels of self-harm, violence between prisoners or towards staff, and the use of force all appear to remain low, and prisoners report to the Board that they feel safe in the prison environment.
- From the Board's observations, there has been an increase during the year in the number of prisoners arriving at Sudbury who may not be ready for, or willing to accept, the regime at an open prison.
- The Board remains concerned about illicit items entering the prison.

Fair and humane treatment

- While newly erected accommodation is of good quality, the majority of prisoners remain housed in buildings, which are, in the Board's view, of a poor standard.
- The kitchen provides good-quality food and varied meals, although food preparation facilities for prisoners in the older accommodation blocks are poor.
- The response to prisoner complaints is generally prompt and appropriate, and responses to discrimination complaints (discrimination incident reporting forms/DIRFs) has improved dramatically in the second half of the year.
- Contacts between prisoners and their initial point of contact (IPOC) officer are insufficient, and the quality of these, in the Board's view, very variable.
- Loss of property on transfer between prisons has shown little improvement over recent reporting years.
- There have been multiple instances of the failure and malfunctioning of equipment in the main prisoner laundry and in the kitchens during the reporting year.

Health and wellbeing

- The Board has no concerns about the waiting list for primary healthcare appointments and other healthcare services
- As in our previous report, we again note the number of prisoners arriving who have complex health and mental health needs continues to increase.
- The drop-in health facility staffed by a prisoner health worker provides a valuable and well used service in the dormitory area.
- The prison provides a supportive environment for those prisoners who are struggling with substance misuse, with regular testing for drug use and the incentivised substance-free living area (ISFL) now successfully embedded.
- There appears to have been little progress in the extension of enrichment activities for prisoners.
- The Board has no concerns about the waiting list for primary healthcare appointments and other healthcare services

Progression and resettlement

- The quality of teaching in education has reached very good standards during the reporting year, and results in English and Mathematics are at a high level.

- From the Board's observations, there has been improvement in library provision and in activities run by the library.
- Digital provision remains inadequate, with some work areas not able to access Wi-Fi, a drop in the number of computers available for prisoner use, and a large proportion of prisoners not receiving digital training.
- While workplace instruction and support in some areas is of a good standard, this is not consistent across all areas. Workshop closures, through instructor shortages or absence, have left significant numbers of prisoners without daytime activity consistently during the latter half of the reporting year.
- The IMB recognises the unprecedented nature of the demands placed on the OMU (offender management unit) during the reporting year, and commends staff for the professional manner in which this was handled. It hopes that now these have been addressed, steps can be taken to reduce the time taken for many prisoners to gain ROTL (release on temporary licence), which has, for many prisoners, caused considerable frustration.
- The IMB also commends the resettlement teams for their successful preparation of so many prisoners for release, and for the efforts made to retain and extend places for prisoners to work in the community.
- Prisoners have continued to receive excellent support from the charity, Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT), and family visit days (which bring together prisoners and their families outside of their statutory entitlement to social visits, usually in more informal settings) have been imaginative and successful.
- From the Board's observations, phone provision for most prisoners remains limited and lacks privacy.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- Changes to prisoner categorisation have created challenges for open prisons in the provision of adequate rehabilitative opportunities for all prisoners arriving, some for relatively short lengths of time. Will the Minister ensure that the resources are provided to meet these increased demands through staffing in the prison, education and the broadening of training opportunities and preparations for release within the prison?
- As in previous reports, the poor quality of the elderly accommodation remains, despite cosmetic improvements, well below the desired standard in terms of facilities and structural soundness. When will the Minister address this issue?
- Will the Minister exert pressure to ensure that inadequate provision in the community, such as probation services and approved premises, is improved to ensure that prisoners are not delayed in their rehabilitative programmes, both before and after release?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- Despite some improvement during the reporting year, the provision of equipment and connectivity to support digital training and web-based learning remains limited, with fewer computers, some work areas not Wi-Fi connected, and no extension of laptop provision. When will this be addressed?

- It is to be hoped that the proposed changes to the kits being used to test for substance misuse do not lead to a loss of effectiveness of, and confidence in, the testing regime.
- It is a source of concern that prisoners are still arriving at HMP Sudbury with very low educational levels, despite having been in prison for a length of time, with resulting delays in their rehabilitative experience. What can be done to address this?
- When will steps be taken to improve the phone provision for prisoners at HMP Sudbury, by the installation of phones in rooms?
- Despite the development of new protocols, the loss of prisoner property during transfer remains unresolved. What is being done to address this?

TO THE GOVERNOR

- It is clear that the initial point of contact (IPOC) system has not functioned adequately this year. It is to be hoped that issues can be resolved and quality control improved to ensure that all prisoners receive regular contacts.
- Despite the collation of information about enrichment and recreational activities, these have not been noticeably extended during the reporting year. Will action now be taken to develop these?
- The IMB recognises that it has been a challenging year for the OMU. What steps are being planned to reduce the length of time taken for prisoners to achieve ROTL (release on temporary licence) to meet the advised target of 12-14 weeks, and identify and take action in cases that are exceeding this?
- What is intended to be done to ensure that all prisoners receive digital technology assessment on their arrival and, if necessary, adequate digital training?

3.3 Response to the last report

Issue raised	Response given	Progress
To the Minister and Prison Service Resources to upgrade poor-quality accommodation.	Two new accommodation units have been opened. An estates investment proposal bid has been submitted to replace some existing dormitory accommodation. In preparation for the up-and-coming fire safety improvement project, there is now a programme of redecoration for prisoners' rooms planned. HMPPS will continue to improve the standard of accommodation by redecorating communal areas.	The opening of the two new units has provided good-quality accommodation for 120 prisoners. An ongoing programme of redecoration and refurbishment of communal areas in the older dormitory areas is improving the appearance of these areas. The general standard of accommodation in these areas remains, however sub-standard. The fire safety project has been delayed through the company entering into administration.

To the Minister and Prison Service Improvement to connectivity to prepare for skills required after release.	Project to deploy improved Wi-Fi and network infrastructure in prison education departments and provide new laptops at HMP/YOI Sudbury is due to be completed by end of March 2025.	Whilst there has been some improvement to Wi-fi, there are still significant areas of the prison that are not covered, and the number of computers and laptops remains insufficient.
To the Prison Service Improvement to arrival times for prisoners transferred to Sudbury.	Escorts are required to ensure that the receiving prisons are informed of delays and agreement is sought in advance for the safe receipt of any late arrivals. Prison escort custody services (PECS) will continue to monitor all aspects of the contractors' performance and, where it fails to meet the agreed levels, it is raised with the contractor for Improvement. NHS England has commissioned a health and social care needs analysis, which identified a need to increase reception cover to meet the population changes.	It remains the case that some prisoners arrive at the prison outside usual working hours, which means that not all the usual processes can be completed that day. A business case for additional funding has been approved.
To the Prison Service Improvement to property transfer, to resolve the issue of property being lost or mislaid during transfer.	Careful consideration will be given to the findings in the IMB national thematic report on how property loss impacts prisoners, as well as from Independent Prisoner Complaint Investigations. It is key that prisoners comply with volumetric control limits, since anything within those limits will transfer with them. HMPPS is focusing on what more can be done to ensure	Throughout the reporting year, the IMB has continued to receive complaints from prisoners about the loss of property during their transfer between establishments. However, some prisoners continue to transfer with a high volume of property.

	compliance with the requirements of the Prisoners' Property Policy Framework.	
To the Governor Addressing of inconsistencies between OMU (offender management unit) staff in the processing of applications, and in communication with prisoners.	Work is taking place with the support of psychology colleagues to produce a local ROTL (release on temporary licence) policy, which clearly outlines the process in OMU for ROTL in a use friendly procedurally just way. This will involve input from prisoners.	The serious pressure that has been experienced by the OMU during the reporting year has created additional demands, which have handicapped attempts to improve delivery. The local ROTL policy document is now complete and available in the library, and posters have been produced.
To the Governor Expansion of 'downtime' activities for prisoners.	An enrichment activities committee is in place to monitor activities and to explore further opportunities to improve the provision.	There has been little development of new opportunities during the reporting year.
To the Governor Improvement in the delivery of the IPOC (initial point of contact) system to ensure that prisoners have awareness of, and contact with, their IPOC officer.	There are employee relations challenges with the delivery of IPOC that are being worked through. An open letter has been sent to staff to set expectations around delivery. The local policy is to be reviewed.	A clear emphasis has been placed on the requirement to carry out IPOC responsibilities, but this has been delayed by ongoing discussion to reach agreement with staff representatives. The quantity and quality of IPOC contacts remains very variable.
To the Governor Broadening of education and training opportunities.	The prison continues to work with partners to increase education and training opportunities. This is further promoted through the EAB (employment advisory board). Opportunities that are in line with the labour market are explored by the head of education, skills and work.	There has been some encouraging broadening of opportunities within education and training during the reporting year. Some of these have not been offered regularly or provide formal qualifications.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

Prisoners are generally complimentary about their arrival and reception. Adjusting to the open environment is, however, a steep learning curve, which some prisoners find difficult to achieve. An induction programme is designed to familiarise prisoners with their new environment; however, this requires prisoners to grasp a large amount of information.

- In conversation with the IMB, the majority of prisoners arriving at Sudbury express appreciation of the considerate and helpful attitude of the staff in reception and in the induction dormitory to which they are initially allocated. In the overwhelming majority of the receptions that the IMB has observed, staff acted in a welcoming, professional and informative manner.
- Many prisoners speak to IMB members about the difficulties they face in adjusting to the environment, the regime, and the expectations of an open prison, particularly the expectation that prisoners will develop self-reliance. This adjustment is challenging for some prisoners and staff make allowances for this in the first weeks after arrival. Despite attempts made by HMP Sudbury to familiarise prisoners with what to expect on transfer (including sending a video about HMP Sudbury to other prisons), prisoners arriving at Sudbury frequently say that they have received little information from their previous prison, and that some of what they do receive is inaccurate.
- The prisoner induction programme provides information and introductions to key personnel in the prison. The IMB has observed good presentations, with staff positive, informative and approachable. However, there is a danger that the presentation of necessary information can overload prisoners with too much detail at this stage.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

- The IMB has routinely made enquiries of prisoners they encounter or who seek them out about the extent to which they feel safe within Sudbury and has found that these prisoners report that they do feel safe in the environment of the prison.
- The number of prisoners who present as vulnerable and then require monitoring and support through the ACCT (assessment, care in custody and teamwork) system, used to support prisoners who are at risk of self-harm and suicide, remains low. The Board has not observed indicators that the safety of prisoners at Sudbury is of concern.
- There have been no instances of suicide at Sudbury during the reporting year.
- The number of ACCT plans between April 2024 and April 2025 has increased compared with the previous reporting year figure of 28. This may be a consequence of the gradual increase in the total prisoner population at Sudbury during this period, and may also reflect changes in the readiness for open conditions of prisoners received through accelerated release schemes.
- It was noted by IMB members that open ACCT documents, which should have been following the prisoners concerned to all their locations throughout the

day, were not, in fact, doing so. This was raised with the Governor and the Board was made aware of notices to staff reminding them to ensure that the documents accompany prisoners as they move through their daily activities. The Board will continue to monitor the system to assess if the issue has been addressed effectively.

- ACCT documents seen by IMB members were thoroughly completed by staff, with observations being made regularly.
- Very low numbers of prisoners arrive at the prison with a history of ACCT and self-harm, and instances of self-harm remain low. For example, the data presented at the safer custody monthly meeting indicates that, in the first quarter of this calendar year (January to March 2025), over 90% of prisoners arrived at Sudbury with no history of self-harm.
- The safer custody committee has produced a survey designed to explore reasons why prisoners might not report thoughts of, or actual, self-harming. The survey is to be carried out at the time of reporting.
- During the reporting year, there have been no deaths of prisoners at the prison. However, in February 2025, a prisoner died within two weeks of being released and this event is classed as a death in custody. This will be investigated by the PPO (Prisons and Probation Ombudsman).

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

Incidents of violence between prisoners and towards staff remain low at Sudbury, as does the need for staff to use force in managing prisoners' behaviour. Preventing the supply of illicit items remains a challenge for the prison, with a significant proportion of the adjudications (disciplinary hearings when a prisoner is suspected of having broken prison rules) against prisoners resulting from being found in possession of such items.

- Instances of violence between prisoners and between prisoners and staff have traditionally been low at Sudbury. The use of force committee routinely scrutinises and analyses data concerning the number of such instances, including monitoring them in terms of the protected characteristic profiles (including age, race, religion, disability, gender reassignment and sexual orientation) of those involved. Between April 2024 and April 2025, there were five recorded instances of prisoner-on-prisoner assault and two of prisoner on staff, one of which resulted in three members of staff being assaulted.
- The early release schemes, initiated by Government in autumn 2024, have introduced an element of inconsistency in the type and behaviour of some prisoners allocated to Sudbury, as shown by the disproportionate number of negative referrals received (see 5.6/incentive schemes). The prison is now monitoring all instances of violence, in terms of whether those involved were transferred under one of the early release schemes.
- Members of the IMB have received some comments from prisoners who were already resident at Sudbury that the arrival of some of the early release prisoners has seen an increase in poor behaviour, which they naturally view as a negative change in the overall culture of the prison.
- Occasions are rare when prisoners seek to be located in the secure accommodation unit (SAU) for their own protection.

4.4 Use of force

It remains the case that there are low numbers of occasions when staff have to use force in managing prisoners' compliance. Location of prisoners in the SAU is routinely carried out without the need for force to be applied.

- The use of force committee meets quarterly to scrutinise data concerning the number of occasions on which staff need to use force to manage prisoners' removal to the secure accommodation unit. These incidents are low in number at Sudbury when set against the number of times prisoners are required to be located in the SAU. In the reporting year, force was necessary on 43 occasions, of which 19 required the use of ratchet handcuffs. This information is now also being monitored to track whether instances involve prisoners transferred under early release arrangements.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

It remains a challenge for the prison to monitor and intercept the entry into the establishment of prohibited items, including illegal substances and mobile phone technology.

- As observed by the Board in previous annual reports, the number of prisoners released on temporary licence (ROTL) each day, to attend employment, represents a challenge in terms of ensuring that these 'outworkers' do not bring items into the prison on their return. The Board notes that the more successful the establishment is in identifying external employment opportunities, as part of the rehabilitation objectives of an open prison, the higher the risk of illicit items being brought in. It appears to still be the case that resources are insufficient to allow for comprehensive searching of prisoners on their return to the prison.
- The number of finds of illicit items is evident in the data showing the reasons for prisoners being placed on report and, subsequently, attending adjudication procedures.
- Prisoners found to have been in possession of illicit items are reviewed for their suitability to remain in open conditions.
- In the attempt to reduce illicit items being brought into the prison, searching of some visitors was reintroduced in January 2025 and, since March, 5% of visitors have been subject to level B rub-down searches (basic body searches conducted by an officer using open hands to feel over the clothed person's body from shoulders to their feet).

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

The newly built wings offer accommodation of a good standard, but a high proportion of prisoners are still housed in unsatisfactory 80-year-old prefabricated buildings. Most prisoners are complimentary about the standard of food prepared by the kitchen.

- Two recently opened wings each contain 60 ensuite rooms with phones. Some of these are allocated to prisoners on the substance-free living scheme (ISFL). There are 80 pods in use, which are single units with ensuite facilities. Twenty of the pods are occupied by neurodivergent prisoners; the rest are occupied by prisoners whose sentences are for life or over 10 years, or have indeterminate sentences (a sentence that does not have a fixed date) for imprisonment for public protection (IPP), or are outworkers.
- Despite a laudable programme of redecoration of corridors and communal spaces, these buildings still exhibit dampness in rooms in winter and have suffered leaks, flooding and drainage problems in some areas during bad weather. To many prisoners arriving from establishments where facilities are better than those at Sudbury, the accommodation is disappointing, with the IMB regularly hearing complaints about the limited cooking facilities, where one toaster and one microwave are shared by up to 40 prisoners. A programme of upgrading involves installing stainless steel surfaces and industrial quality microwaves.
- It remains a common concern of many prisoners that they have to share a room during their first months at Sudbury. The Board is regularly approached by prisoners who had single cell status in their previous prison and are now in shared facilities.
- Early release schemes have brought a rapid change in prisoner numbers, with significant numbers of admissions from the closed estate. This has, at times, presented a challenge to the induction staff in housing new arrivals in induction wings.
- There are four handymen available to deal with small repairs and Amey, the building maintenance contractor, has been attending to some damp issues. Teams of prisoners are involved in painting and decorating work on the wings. Most wings visited by the Board are kept clean and tidy by their cleaning orderlies (prisoners whose work role is the cleaning of their wing), but the Board has questioned whether supervision of cleaners is sufficient to ensure consistent standards.
- In order to combat rodent infestation, metal food waste bins are now deployed and this has contributed to controlling the problem with rats around the site that was experienced in previous years.
- Throughout the reporting year, the IMB received complaints from laundry staff about the malfunctioning of machines. The replacement of equipment has brought an improvement in laundry issues and some improvement in breakdowns. With most prisoners in the older wings relying on this facility, equipment is under considerable pressure, and the Board is concerned that machines do not appear to be sufficiently maintained or cleaned.
- For prisoners who arrive with limited possessions, clothing is available from the reception area. Some prisoners from privately operated establishments

have complained to the IMB about a lack of bedding on arrival, as they are required to return bedding on transfer. We have ascertained that duvets and warm bedding can be loaned to prisoners, but it has not always been made clear to prisoners or staff that these are available.

- Food continues to be of good quality and is regularly tasted by the IMB. All festivals are catered for and the prisoners are regularly invited to give feedback. Black History Month menus were extremely popular. Portions are good and there is always a hot option at lunchtime. There is a comments book, which is regularly checked by the Board and the kitchen manager: it contains very few complaints, some suggestions for dishes, and several complimentary remarks.
- From the Board's observations, the kitchen has handled well the extra pressure brought by increased numbers in the prison, a higher proportion of whom are confined to the prison due to being recent arrivals and not having ROTL clearance. A recent improvement in the collection system for meals has reduced waiting times.
- The malfunctioning and failure of equipment in the kitchen has, on occasion, hindered kitchen staff in their preparation of meals.

5.2 Segregation

The SAU (secure accommodation unit) consists of two cells and one holding room. Prisoners are rarely held more than 24 hours in the SAU before either being transferred or returned to their normal location in the prison. Adjudications are regularly held in the larger room available. Prisoners whose rooms are being searched are located temporarily in the SAU.

- The cells have a toilet in the room which is screened off. Cells inspected by the Board have been stocked with linen, towels and other basic items. There is no exercise yard. Cells have a television, but no longer have distraction materials or books for prisoner use. The area is clean and showering facilities are available.
- The IMB requires staff to inform them when prisoners are located to the SAU for reasons other than room searches. While this is generally done, there have been occasions during the year when staff have had to be reminded of this requirement. Prisoners are seen regularly by the IMB and the healthcare and chaplaincy teams.
- The IMB is satisfied that prisoners located receive proper care and attention, and that protocols are correctly followed.
- We have observed that staff in the SAU have a good relationship with prisoners, despite some challenging situations, and are attentive to the welfare of the prisoners held there. On the rare occasion when a prisoner is held in the SAU overnight, the IMB has been satisfied that the welfare of the prisoner is ensured.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

Few prisoners have approached the IMB regarding unsatisfactory relationships with staff during the reporting year. While it is the case that some of the applications (prisoners' written representations) to the IMB have featured an element of negative feeling towards a staff member, it has not been a regular characteristic of prisoners' concerns.

- IMB members have observed examples of positive and supportive interactions between staff and prisoners. Most prisoners spoken with by the Board have no complaint of staff behaviour. However, some feel that whilst most officers are very approachable and helpful, others offer little in the way of co-operation and support.
- Open prisons do not operate a key worker system. However, prisoners are allocated an IPOC (initial point of contact) officer and communication between these and the prisoner should take place on a regular basis. Members of the Board have heard comments from some prisoners that they either do not know who their IPOC officer is or have had very little contact with them. For example, in May 2025, IPOC entries suggested that only one-third of prisoners had had any person-to-person contact with their IPOC officer during the month. The Board notes that there is consistently a number of prisoners who have not been allocated an IPOC officer. The Board regularly raises this issue with the Governor and it has been a focus for improvement during the reporting year.
- Board members have commented that recorded entries by IPOC officers vary in length and quality. We note that staff training in IPOC duties for new and inexperienced officers may be required.

5.4 Equality and diversity

The prison continues to monitor performance in terms of ensuring that prisoners are treated fairly and with respect. The main focus for this is the quarterly diversity and inclusion action team (DIAT) meeting. There has been no diversity, inclusion and engagement lead in post since January 2025 and this has, naturally, had an impact on the work of the team; however, recruitment for a replacement has been successful and the new lead will begin work in July.

- IMB members attending the quarterly DIAT meeting have observed the breadth and detail of data that relates to, for example, prisoners' access to opportunities, appearance at adjudications, being subject to incentive scheme review procedures and a range of other features of the prison experience. Data is carefully reviewed and comparisons made with previous quarters of the year. Where it is clear that the number of prisoners in certain protected characteristic groupings (which include age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion/faith/belief, pregnancy and maternity, sex and sexual orientation) are occurring more frequently than the number of them within the total Sudbury population would suggest, deeper investigation is requested and results reported at the next meeting. For example, between October and December 2024, it was observed that the number of Muslim prisoners triggering a review of their incentive status was greater than their proportion in the prison. Further investigation showed that the main reason for this was due to absence from work, and an action was allocated to a team member to investigate further. The Board is not able to verify any outcome to this information.
- IMB members attending the segregation monitoring and review group (SMARG) have observed that there is careful scrutiny of the profile of prisoners located in the SAU and those attending adjudications. This information is carefully monitored by the prison to identify whether numbers of

prisoners are consistent with the numbers in their groupings within the total population.

- The prison operates on the recommendation of the Mubarak Trust charity, in terms of the numbers of prisoners appearing in data compared with the total number of their protected characteristic grouping within the establishment total. Therefore, if a difference exceeds 5%, it will trigger further scrutiny and reporting by the prison.
- Prisoners and staff who are concerned that they may be experiencing discrimination based on their protected characteristic can complete a discrimination incident reporting form (DIRF). DIRFs should be investigated within 14 working days and fully completed within a further 28 days. Senior managers are responsible as leads for each characteristic grouping, known as strands, and oversee the final completed DIRF.
- Members of the IMB have access to regular information regarding the number of DIRFs submitted and progress in investigating them. The time taken to complete investigations is an issue that has been noted and discussed with the Governor, and there has been a significant improvement in the speed of responses to prisoners in the second half of the reporting year.
- The number of DIRFs submitted between June 2024 and April 2025 was 31, which is an increase on last year. It remains the case that the majority of these concern race and/or faith or belief, with 15 of the 31 concerning race and seven concerning faith or belief.
- The strand leads are also responsible for organising forum activities to enable prisoners within the groupings to meet with staff and raise any issues. External organisations are sometimes invited to attend the forums. Between October 2024 and December 2024, for example, forums were held for age groups and on issues relating to pregnancy and maternity.
- The prison has two adapted rooms to accommodate wheelchair users on the original dormitory blocks, which also have two disabled-access shower and toilet areas. All dormitories have ramped access at both ends of the buildings. The newly completed dormitory blocks are completely accessible for wheelchair users on the ground floor and have ensuite facilities.
- At HMP Sudbury, the neurodiversity support manager (NSM) operates under the wellbeing team in the prison. A significant development has been the allocation of 12 modular, self-contained housing units (pods), designed to support individuals with specific neurodivergence needs. These pods offer single-room accommodation in a quiet, structured environment, which is vital for helping these men successfully remain in open conditions. Without such support, they would be at greater risk of resorting to unhelpful coping strategies, such as substance misuse, absconding or self-harm.
- The number of prisoners with neurodivergent (ND) needs has increased over the past 12 months. This rise may be attributed to a combination of factors, including improved identification and diagnosis, population churn, and the success of ND support in closed conditions. In particular, in the Board's view, the presence of NSMs in closed prisons may contribute to better outcomes, enabling more men who have neurodivergence to progress to open conditions such as Sudbury.
- The men are selected according to their needs by the NSM. Prisoners first see a mental health nurse who is, however, only available during weekdays. The NSM calls those with high-level needs to an appointment within three

weeks, and usually within one week. Those referred to by education, the mental health team, the substance misuse service or wing staff are seen sooner.

- Efforts have been made to ensure that staff are able to understand more about ND and the management team is supportive of the work being undertaken by the NSM. The IMB has noted that instructors have been aware of men in their work areas with neurodivergent needs.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

A new multifaith centre has been completed and offers a modern approach to prisoner worship. There are no artefacts visible, so all faiths can use all rooms. A small room is available for private interviews and counselling sessions.

- There is a full-time Imam, who is the managing chaplain, and a Catholic chaplain, while all other chaplains are sessional. A new sessional Rabbi has been appointed. There is an Anglican vacancy, which is presenting a challenge, with vigorous attempts being made to recruit an Anglican priest since November 2024.
- Muslims represent the largest religious group in the prison. There have been no applications to the IMB regarding issues with religion.
- All festivals seem to be catered for, with appropriate food supplied by the kitchen. Meals are provided at appropriate times during Ramadan. The kitchen works closely with the chaplaincy team to provide the correct menus.
- Services attended by the IMB have been imaginatively and thoughtfully led.

5.6 Incentives schemes

The standard incentives scheme features basic (bottom), standard (middle) and enhanced (top) levels. It has generally been the case at Sudbury that most prisoners attain enhanced status, with fewer on standard and very few on basic levels. As in previous years, the Board notes that the proportions of prisoners on each level has remained stable throughout the reporting year.

- Information regarding the number of prisoners on each of the incentive scheme levels is available to all staff on the daily briefing sheet. The scheme remains the primary system for managing prisoners' compliance with the necessary regulations within the establishment, as they can be moved from one level to another if they do not comply. It is also a means of rewarding prisoners who do comply.
- The Board reported last year that the prison had made the recording of positive, as well as negative, comments from staff in respect of individual prisoners a focus for improvement. We also noted that data to show the number of positive to negative comments for prisoners arriving at Sudbury through early release schemes is now separately recorded. Information available suggests that while the proportion of positive to negative comments has generally remained high during the reporting year, the difference for early release scheme prisoners was far less. (From February to March 2025 1.1 positives were awarded for every negative for early release prisoners, and 1.85 for other prisoners.)

5.7 Complaints

A high percentage of complaints are responded to punctually and in a considered and constructive manner. Whilst, numerically, the highest number of complaints overall during the reporting year concern property, within the prisoner body in HMP Sudbury, matters relating to canteen (a facility where prisoners can buy snacks, toiletries, stationery and other essentials, using their allocated funds) and the offender management unit (OMU) constitute the biggest issues.

- Responses sampled by IMB members have shown complaints to be satisfactorily addressed, in a timely and courteous manner, and with the decision adequately explained, in accordance with the criteria laid down for responses.
- As in previous years, the majority of complaints from prisoners in Sudbury have been about canteen issues (21%) and offender management (17%). Whilst these fluctuate throughout the reporting year, there was a noticeable increase in complaints about the OMU in the months leading up to releases in September and October 2024.
- There is evidence that, towards the end of the reporting year, the proportion of complaints from some minority ethnic groups is greater than the proportion of those protected characteristics groups in the Sudbury population. However, the information from the prison has not been sufficiently consistent in its presentation to enable a definitive comment on this to be made by the Board.
- Most complaints about property issues are from prisoners who have been transferred. Prisoners being transferred are now being asked to sign agreements that all their property has been collected and bagged before transfer. However, sometimes property has to be sent onwards by carrier and the IMB has observed that it is difficult to track when items then go missing.

6. Health and wellbeing

Health care is contracted out to the Practice Plus Group.

6.1 Healthcare general

There have been no major changes in the reporting year to healthcare provision overall. However, the influx of prisoners has significantly increased the workload, particularly due to a rise in the number of complex cases in both primary care and mental health. Healthcare services are available daily, with prisoners able to access a nurse each day through a triage system. An evening surgery is also held every Thursday. A GP is contracted for 12 hours per week, with an additional five hours provided through SEMP (Society of Emergency Medicine Pharmacists), occasionally supplemented on an ad hoc basis.

- A 'drop-in' health check facility has been set up in the dormitories. This provides prisoners with the opportunity to regularly monitor their weight and blood pressure. The service is manned by a trained peer mentor, who also encourages awareness of broader health issues within the prison community.
- A business case for additional funding has been approved on the back of the health needs assessment, which showed there was a shortfall in staffing due to an increase in prisoner numbers.
- One terminally ill prisoner was released last October. During the reporting year, two prisoners required the use of wheelchairs. However, a prisoner wishing to acquire, through the community, a wheelchair that would allow him to be more self-sufficient has been informed that there is a lengthy waiting list.
- A psychiatrist visits twice weekly, with bookings made up to two months ahead. There are two psychologist sessions per week, which is deemed by the healthcare manager to be sufficient.

6.2 Physical healthcare

There has been no change to physical healthcare provision. This includes dental, physiotherapy and chiropody services. The Board has no concerns about waiting times for appointments.

6.3 Social care

Social care provision continues to be delivered by Derbyshire County Council. At the end of the reporting year, there were no prisoners receiving daily social care support.

6.4 Time out of cell, regime

Positive efforts have been made to improve the external environment although, in the later months of the reporting year, ground maintenance has not been up to its usual high standard, due to staffing challenges. While indoor gym activities are limited, gym equipment is available outdoors, and some prisoners can be seen running during their free time. While many prisoners appreciate the opportunity to walk around the site, especially in the summer months, comments to the Board are frequently received as to a perceived lack of activities, leading to boredom, particularly at weekends.

- Prisoners at Sudbury enjoy the freedom provided by an open establishment. The prison has made positive efforts to improve the external environment. However, staffing issues have resulted in prisoner employment on the work in the gardens being cut back, with very noticeable effects on the appearance of the grounds.
- As has been noted in previous annual reports, a link to local wildlife trusts would be beneficial to prisoner wellbeing, in terms of exploring the potential offered by the rural site. Possible education and training activities suitable for the conservation sector may also be a useful addition to the employment routes already offered. The small wildlife garden that was constructed needs further maintenance.
- All prisoners have the opportunity to attend gym sessions. Frequently, this seems to be restricted to weights work, although various activities, such as badminton, are offered in the evenings. There is a regular park run. It has been possible this year to run a football team to play in the local league, and matches have been observed to draw good numbers of spectators. Time has been allocated for mid-week training. Further outdoor gym equipment was purchased in the previous reporting year, which prisoners are, at times, observed to be using. The recreational playing of anything deemed to be a contact activity, such as, for example, football or basketball, is not, however, permitted, the reason given being that these might lead to possible confrontations between prisoners.
- IMB members have been told by prisoners that they struggle with boredom and a lack of recreational activities when they are not at work or in training. In an attempt to address this, a booklet has been produced for prisoners, which outlines opportunities. The IMB notes, however, that there has been little development of enrichment activities. There is little in the way of new recreational opportunities, with some proposed activities delayed, such as, for example, beekeeping and a games console league. The prisoner council (Comcil) has been inactive in the later months of the reporting year, and this has further limited the development of new activities. There is no music or choral activity planned, and the music room is barely used. Neither are there activities based on nature, even though the Sudbury site offers opportunities for this. Both of these areas have been proven to have benefits for mental health. The proposed allotment area for older prisoners has not been developed.
- Under an inspirational new librarian, activities in the library have become well-supported, including, for example, quizzes and a creative-writing course. The library also provides games and jigsaws for prisoners and is a focus for some art activity.

6.5 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

The prison has proactive and visible support systems for prisoners wishing to address their substance misuse issues. IMB members have received comments from prisoners which indicate that many of those who interact with the team have a high regard for the help they receive. The prison has made continued progress in the reporting year, with the drive to incentivise prisoners to address their substance misuse issues. The implementation of the CBDT (compliance-based drug testing) system, noted our previous report, is now used across all prisoners. The resulting

increase in the number of prisoners subject to testing on a regular basis is considered to largely explain any increase in positive results, when compared with previous years.

- The SMS (substance misuse service) operating within the prison continues to see all prisoners at their induction to Sudbury. Attendance at these meetings, or acknowledgement of the information pack provided if they do not attend, is incentivised, with prisoners being placed on report if they fail to comply.
- A range of interventions and group activities are offered to support prisoners in addressing their substance misuse issues, and these are well attended.
- The Board notes that the CBDT system is a more individualised and supportive approach to dealing with prisoners who are found to have been using illicit substances, through which prisoners are helped to address any initial failures and succeed in remaining substance free.
- Cannabis remains the most widely misused substance within the prison. It is the most often reported by SMS clients and also indicated in failed drug test results.
- A range of other substances has been identified during the reporting year, including Subutex, which is an opioid substance, and Pregabalin (a pain killer), although instances have been low in number.
- In our previous report, we noted that the prison had introduced ISFL (incentivised-substance free living), and we have been encouraged to see that this initiative has been successfully embedded and extended during the year. The scheme now runs with two dormitories allocated exclusively to participating prisoners. New entrants to the scheme begin on W3, which is one of the older dormitories, and, if successful in remaining substance misuse free, they can progress to P5, which is the ISFL dormitory in the newly built accommodation area. This has proved an effective incentive, given that the accommodation here is single occupancy and has ensuite facilities. Results of the testing of ISFL prisoners occupying P5 in May 2025 showed that there were no positive results in the 119 tests carried out. W3 tests were also all negative. This seems to indicate that the incentives the ISFL scheme offers is encouraging those prisoners to remain drug free.
- The prison operates CBDT for all prisoners and this scheme, which was only just being implemented at the time of our previous annual report, is now fully established. Of the 573 tests carried out in February 2025, 509 were negative; 39 of the 52 positive results indicated the use of cannabis
- MDT (mandatory drug testing) continues to be carried out in addition to the CBDT system. In February 2025, 60 MDTs were carried out, of which 29 were of randomly selected prisoners. Prisoners are also required to undertake MDT if there have been any reports indicating that they may be misusing a substance. Of the 60 tested, 14 produced positive results.
- Board members have noted that the impact of early release schemes since autumn 2024 has resulted in an increase in the caseload of SMS staff. Prior to the schemes being implemented, the average caseload for the team was around 80 prisoners, but this was reported to have risen to 98 in May 2025. In addition, the SMS team is finding that there has been an increase in the number of prisoners arriving at Sudbury who are actively misusing substances other than cannabis. Some of these prisoners will anticipate having access to prescribed medication to help address their misuse but, given that there has

been a very low number of prisoners historically who need this service at Sudbury, there is no on-site facility for prescribing.

- Information available concerning suitability reviews for prisoners shows that men at Sudbury are regularly found in possession of illicit substances and under the influence of illicit substances. In addition, some are found to have produced positive results when routinely tested for drug use or to have tried to avoid producing positive results by using urine samples produced by someone else. For example, between January 2025 and May 2025, 146 of the suitability reviews carried out were in respect of prisoners found to have failed tests, or who had attempted to use samples not their own or been in possession of illicit substances. It is also interesting to note that, in the same period, there were regularly numbers of prisoners reviewed for suitability because they tested positive for drug use on arrival at Sudbury.

6.6 Soft skills

Prisoners are encouraged to develop self-reliance at Sudbury. There has, however, been little progress in providing prisoners with a range of enrichment opportunities.

- Prisoners are required to complete a three-stage work skills programme before their application for release on temporary licence (ROTL) can be approved. The programme includes various aspects considered necessary to become ready for employment, such as timekeeping, respect and communication, and working in a team. Most prisoners will complete this programme through attending a prison-based work activity. Punctuality and regular attendance are key parts of the programme, and there has been a strong emphasis on these throughout the reporting year.
- The prison has been working to develop an enrichment provision, following the issue being highlighted in the HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) inspection report in August 2023. However, it is the opinion of the IMB that these have faltered over the course of the reporting year, with a number of previously run activities being paused, including the healthy lifestyle course, the economics simplified finance course, and breakfast clubs for various cohorts, and the implementation of new activities being delayed.
- Under the auspices of the library, a small number of prisoners have submitted entries to writing competitions, such as, for example, the Derby Book Festival.
- In many areas of the prison, staff have been very complimentary about the contributions made by prisoner peer support workers (PSWs), which have also been observed by the IMB.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

From the Board's observations, a range of functional courses are delivered effectively, with prisoners commenting positively to the Board about the support they receive from staff. Whilst there are still places unfilled on courses, attendance has improved during the reporting year. The information technology (IT) infrastructure, however, remains deficient, and IT training for prisoners is limited. The library is fully staffed and is a welcoming and well-resourced environment, with imaginative initiatives put in place.

- Education is delivered by People Plus. The two education buildings are welcoming and display material is regularly refreshed. The facilities are well maintained and all areas are accessible for prisoners with mobility issues.
- Since the introduction of the early release schemes, some prisoners arrive at Sudbury with fewer than eight weeks left to serve. Digital progression opportunities are provided for these prisoners, consisting of content that will be useful in helping to prepare them for future employment. However, between October 2024 and March 2025, only 14% of prisoners received an IT assessment on arrival and, in May 2025, only 43% of prisoners had a recorded IT level, with 45% of these being below Level 1. IMB members have received comments from some newly arrived prisoners who have previously been held in more modern prisons, where they often had access to modified laptops in their cells. Sudbury is technologically ill equipped in comparison. Coracle laptops are available for prisoners to use, but their restricted capability makes them of limited use. Developing the digital skills of prisoners should be a high priority, given the rapid development in digital technology in the community, which prisoners will need to be competent to use once they are released.
- In general, staffing across education seems to have been relatively stable during the reporting year. Problems associated with the quality of lesson delivery in Maths have been resolved with the appointment of an experienced, respected and proficient teacher. Where classes have to be covered by replacement staff, the quality of the prisoners' experience has been observed to be high. Board members have also observed very good relations between prisoners and teaching staff, with prisoners talking positively about their teachers and the support they are given. Lessons observed have been delivered very capably, with students fully involved and individual needs addressed. Learning support needs are assessed when prisoners are inducted and the necessary information provided to all teaching staff. The quality of teaching is assessed regularly, with consistently high results, and teaching staff seem to be well supported.
- Success rates in English and Maths for those completing courses have been consistently good, with Maths results recovering well after the poor results over three months in 2024, which were teacher-related. A monthly success rate in English or Maths of less than 75% was only recorded three times in the six months from November 2024 to April 2025. The attainment of students from different ethnic groups and of different learning needs is evaluated regularly by the education managers and, from data provided, the Board observes that there are no significant disparities.

- The primary aim of most prisoners arriving at Sudbury is to access vocational training or external employment opportunities, so education activities are not seen by many prisoners as a priority. This is heightened by the short length of stay of many prisoners, which prevents them from starting courses. This is reflected in the fact that 26% of those who arrived between December 2024 and May 2025 did not attend an education induction, and in prisoners regularly having to be pressed to attend assessments, such as, for example, for reading ability.
- Achieving English and Maths at a minimum of Level 1 is a requirement to apply for external employment, and there remains concern about the low levels of achievement in English and Maths of many prisoners arriving at Sudbury. In May 2025, 19% of arrivals at Sudbury were below Level 1 in English and 21% were below Level 1 in Maths. A total of 12 prisoners in this group of arrivals had not even achieved Entry Level 2 in English and six in Maths. Despite efforts in the prison to liaise with many of the regular sending prisons regarding the importance of achieving Level 1 before they arrive, many prisoners do not realise that without this level of achievement, many opportunities in an open prison remain inaccessible to them.
- As in previous years, it remains the case that having achieved the minimum functional skills levels required to allow them to apply for external employment, only modest numbers continue to Level 2. In the 12 months from April 2024, only 12 prisoners took courses to Level 2 in English, and six in Maths.
- Prisoners for whom English is not their first language are usually supported by the class learning support tutor, as there is no specific provision for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). There is, as yet, no curriculum designed to meet the needs of prisoners for whom activities focused on employment may be inappropriate. There is no provision to support prisoners who want to study in their rooms.
- Prisoners are encouraged to apply for distance-learning courses, and in May 2025, 23 prisoners were doing so through the Prisoner Education Trust (PET), with a further 15 studying for Open University (OU) qualifications. As in previous years, little progress has been possible in accessing apprenticeships for prisoners, with approaches frustrated frequently by conditions imposed by employers.
- A number of prisoners have attended creative writing workshops, which have been offered quarterly.
- Attendance rates at education and training activities have become a focus of monitoring for the prison. Failure to attend is now challenged, and successful efforts have been made to reduce clashes with other, legitimate regime activities. As a result, attendance levels between March and May 2025 have exceeded 91%.
- The library service is provided by People Plus and is fully staffed. This enables the library to open daily (except Sunday) and on three evenings per week. The library is a welcoming environment. It has been re-ordered to improve the attraction of its layout, and imaginative and topical displays are regularly changed. While the library is adequately resourced, it has recently fallen below the recommended number of books for the size of the prisoner population. It provides books, DVDs, newspapers and magazines, as well as a range of materials required by statute to be available to prisoners.

- The library is well used, with a monthly footfall regularly exceeding 4,000 visits. The majority of library loans were for DVDs. Compared with the total Sudbury prisoner population, some minority ethnic groups did not use the library as much as prisoners with Caucasian heritage, and the librarian is seeking to diversify the stock to try to address this.
- Prisoners can access Storybook Dads through the library, where they make a video recording that their children can then watch. Numbers using this are, however, small, since once ROTL is accessed, most prisoners have other means of contacting their families.

7.2 Vocational training, work

Whilst a range of work opportunities are provided, quality of training and purposeful activity varies considerably, in the Board's view. There have been times during the year when full employment within the prison for prisoners has not been provided. Numbers on outwork have declined because of the number affected by early-release schemes.

- The education and training provision at Sudbury remains largely as it was in previous reporting years. A forklift truck qualification, introduced last year, has proved popular, but due to staffing issues, it does not run on a regular weekly basis. The Rail Track engineering course continues to run several times a year. A number of one-off courses have been offered during the reporting year (e.g. dumper truck training, construction bootcamps, and leadership through rugby), and prisoners have also been able to undertake courses in traffic management and telescopic handling. Self-employment support is offered weekly. Not all of these courses lead to formal qualifications but they do provide opportunities to develop life skills.
- Further diversification of opportunities would obviously be desirable, were funding adequate, with courses to assist prisoners in securing employment on release in developing vocational areas, such as, for example, in active travel, biodiversity, conservation and the expanding demand in the environmental management industries.
- Over the reporting year, the increase in prisoner numbers to full capacity has coincided with a reduction in outwork placements, with prisoners on outwork leaving due to early-release schemes, some of whom kept their outwork jobs, which reduced the number of jobs available. From 1 January to 31 May 2025, 523 prisoners transferred in to Sudbury, resulting in insufficient ROTL-approved prisoners to take outwork places. The result has been to put great pressure on workplaces inside the prison, which has been compounded by the absence and resignations of instructors. For several months, the Board has been concerned that a considerable number of prisoners have been sent away from work placements and with no other purposeful activity to fill their time.
- Prisoners are interviewed by a work allocations board on arrival. Boards observed by the IMB have been positive, welcoming and constructive, with advice and encouragement being offered to prisoners in regard to work and education courses available. Whilst the prison makes serious attempts to place prisoners in situations that will help them in following a career path, this is not always possible, due to the pressure on work placements and the

limited range of placements on offer. At boards observed by the IMB, no staff from healthcare were present.

- Prisoners have commented positively to IMB members about the training and support offered by the workshop instructors in many areas, in particular those such as painting and decorating and bricklaying, where qualifications are gained. The IMB has received many positive comments from prisoners working in the market gardens, which is a calm space for older prisoners and those who are less socially confident, and a productive area in which many prisoners take pride in what they grow. As in previous years, whilst many prisoners who speak to IMB members are satisfied with their experience of work activity in the prison, there is clearly an element of dissatisfaction in some workshop areas, in that the amount of work available appears to be insufficient to keep all those employed there fully occupied. The IMB frequently receives comments from prisoners that, in the carpentry workshop, very little training is being delivered, and we have observed, on a number of occasions, that interaction between instructors and prisoners appears very limited. It has been noted by the IMB that different areas have adopted inconsistent policies on sending prisoners back to their dormitories when work is insufficient to occupy them.
- In addition to vocational workshop activities providing qualifications (e.g. bricklaying, painting and decorating and catering), there are courses in Rail Track engineering and Step Into Construction. The Recycling Lives project involves electrical equipment being broken down for recycling and can lead to supported placements on release. There is a waiting list for the workshop for the Sunbelt company, where pay is productivity based, and which also provides welding training. Prisoners are also given work in the kitchens, market gardens, wood assembly workshop, laundry, recycling and as dormitory cleaners. It remains the case, however, that qualifications to improve prisoners' employability are not offered in most areas of work.
- The IMB continues to be impressed with the work of staff in the resettlement area, in seeking to establish effective collaboration with a range of employers to provide employment opportunities for prisoners who are able to work outside the prison. The early release schemes led to the loss of some placements, but the strenuous efforts made by staff in recent months have resulted in new opportunities being developed, although it is to be regretted that the length of time it can take to gain approval for these can lead to employers withdrawing their offers of work. The Board has been informed that, since 2020, charities appear to be more reluctant to offer work to prisoners, with the result that there have been few opportunities for work with charity organisations since 2020. The number of prisoners with outwork experience who have employment on their release is consistently higher than 60%.
- The IMB has rarely observed uniformed or management staff visiting areas of work.

7.3 Offender management, progression

The early-release schemes have created extra pressure for offender management staff, and the IMB was impressed with the care and efficiency with which these were

handled. It remains, however, the case that delays in gaining ROTL constitute the biggest prisoner grievance communicated to the IMB.

- It is difficult to overstate the impact of the early release schemes, changes to home detention curfew (HDC) and the temporary presumptive recategorisation scheme (TPRS), which are designed to move category C prisoners to category D/open prisons earlier than usual, have had on the offender management unit (OMU). The preparations necessary for prisoner release, combined with the high number of prisoners arriving at Sudbury, has diverted staff from their regular responsibilities. Despite this, prisoners have been receiving their initial interviews with their prison offender manager promptly and within the required timeframe.
- The IMB commends the professional and thorough manner in which preparations were made for the early release of prisoners at various points during the reporting year, and were impressed with the smoothness with which this took place in practice. The burden of preparing for the release of so many prisoners simultaneously, in September and October 2024, and, again, in June 2025, added considerably to the workload of an already hard-pressed department.
- However, a consequence of this was that regular responsibilities in other areas, particularly with regard to ROTL boarding, were delayed. While most prisoners showed understanding of the pressure, there was understandable frustration that the time being taken to gain ROTL boarding in many cases far exceeded what prisoners were told on arrival. Work done by the OMU showed that only 16-26% of prisoners gained ROTL boarding within the 12-14 week guidelines during the three months from August to October 2024, while, in May 2025, it was estimated that 168 prisoners were still waiting after 20 weeks.
- In too many cases, prisoners have arrived at Sudbury with inadequate OASys (offender assessment system, which evaluates the risks and needs of prisoners) paperwork, which places further demands on staff in the OMU.
- Prisoners frequently express concern to the IMB at what they perceive as lack of progress in their ROTL application or inconsistency between prisoner offender managers (POMs), or they have concerns at changes made on arrival in their level of risk. The IMB's enquiries into these concerns reassure them that the majority of prisoners are dealt with fairly and professionally. Board members appreciate that the highly complex nature of the work required to securely approve applications to release prisoners on temporary licence can be time consuming and is frequently delayed by the lack of responses from external agencies for information. We have sometimes observed that the issue seems often to be one of inadequate communication on the progress of their application between OMU staff and prisoners; while many staff keep prisoners informed, on occasion, a wish to be encouraging has led to prisoners feeling disappointment and disillusionment; staff who communicate with prisoners regularly and openly frequently receive praise from them.
- In recent months, successful attempts have been made to speed up the process whereby ROTL is signed off. Also, procedures are being put in place to improve the monitoring of ROTL applications in order to prevent undue delays in processes within the prison. A well-written revised local ROTL policy

document has been produced, in association with the prisoner council, to give prisoners a clear indication of what they can expect. The IMB will be observing to see whether these are effective in reducing the length of time it is taking for many prisoners to get ROTL approval.

7.4 Family contact

- Family days (which bring together prisoners and their families outside of their statutory entitlement to social visits, usually in more informal settings), supported by PACT (the Prison Advice and Care Trust), are well attended and considered very successful, with consistently positive feedback, particularly in regard to staff support. There are 40 family days annually.
- A dedicated visitor session for prisoners with children who have neurodivergence has also been successful, with both prisoners and their partners expressing appreciation for the tailored space and the availability of appropriate materials. Holding this session separately has also helped reduce pressure on the regular afternoon social visiting period.
- Prisoners can apply for family social video calls; however, it is not clear that all prisoners are aware of this and PACT is intending to promote it around the prison.
- In conversations with the IMB, prisoners have expressed dissatisfaction that the limited access to phones in the main dormitory areas can interfere with contacts with their family.

7.5 Resettlement planning

Despite the pressures during the last year brought about by early-release schemes, the work of the resettlement teams in preparing prisoners for their release has been effective. Prisoners are invariably complimentary about the assistance they receive, and outcomes are good.

- The Board continues to note the good levels of support provided by the staff in the through-the-gate (TTG) hub, which are frequently commented on by prisoners. A whole range of necessary arrangements for life on release are supported by the team, including help to set up bank accounts, driving licences and passport applications, debt cancellation and court fines (including traffic and parking offences, which could not have been committed by the prisoner as they were in prison at the time).
- As in previous years, the employment hub continues to offer excellent support for prisoners prior to their release. From the Board's observations, strenuous efforts have been made to establish links with employers. To help prisoners find work on release, an attractive and welcoming resource area provides job details, and there are accompanied visits to job clubs in a local library and meetings organised in the prison with prospective employers. Prisoner journey events take place, which include visits from former prisoners who can outline their career development since their release. Employers giving presentations frequently comment on the good qualities of prisoners they speak to. Meetings are invariably well attended. In the 12 months from April 2024, only 30% of prisoners released from Sudbury were not in employment or training six months after their release (excluding those with medical exemptions).

- Staff have been very successful at ensuring that prisoners leave Sudbury with accommodation. From data seen by the Board, all prisoners in the early release group in September 2024 were released into accommodation, and it is very rare that any prisoner is released without accommodation.
- The IMB has noted in previous annual reports that prisoners often find it difficult to open bank accounts whilst still in prison, with applications to one linked bank being frequently refused. The TTG team has negotiated an arrangement with a different banking organisation, and most prisoners now apply in person whilst on ROTL, or are supplied with a letter to present on release. Some long-term prisoners can do this on a resettlement adjustment visit (RAV), accompanied by an officer, for example a prisoner with neuro-diverse needs was accompanied by the prison neurodiversity lead.

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	11
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	4
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	4
Total number of visits to the establishment	156

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	2	1
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	0	1
C	Equality	0	0
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	0	3
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	0	0
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	0	1
F	Food and kitchens	0	2
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	2	1
H1	Property within the establishment	0	3
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	5	16
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	1	1
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence), parole, release dates, recategorisation	5	7
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	1	1
K	Transfers	1	0
L	Miscellaneous	3	5
	Total number of applications	20	42

Annex A

Service providers

1	Maintenance	Amey
2	Prisoner transport	GeoAmey
3	Canteen	DHL
4	Education	People Plus
5	Through-the-gate services	• IAG • Pact
6	Library	Suffolk Library Service/People Plus
7	Healthcare	• Practice Plus Group • Time for Teeth (dental services) • PPG MSK (physiotherapy and chiropody) • Derbyshire Social Services (social care) • Inclusion (substance misuse service)



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