



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Bullingdon

**For reporting year
1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025**

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Introductory sections 1 – 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

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

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

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

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

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

2. Description of the establishment¹

HMP Bullingdon is a local/resettlement category B prison for men, situated near Bicester in Oxfordshire. At the end of June 2025, about 63% of prisoners were on remand or were convicted but not yet sentenced; the remainder were either on recall or sentenced. Most prisoners transfer to other prisons when they are convicted and sentenced. For the six months ending June 2025, there were 4243 prisoners in total arriving in reception. This high level of `churn` leads to various problems.

On 30 June 2025, the end of the Board's reporting year, the prison's operational capacity (i.e. its permitted maximum number of prisoners) was 1112 and the average operational capacity for the six months to 30 June was 1082, the difference being explained by a number of cells not being available to house prisoners. Many prisoners share cells that were intended for single occupancy.

The prison has had a rolling programme of wing upgrades. This programme has been interrupted with the appointed contractor entering financial administration. There is currently a major expansion project underway to provide a new wing and associated facilities.

As in previous years, the prison has had staff shortages and a high proportion of inexperienced staff. These factors have had an impact and are set out in the key concerns raised below.

The prison should have 216 Band 3 officers as of June 2025, but the prison was operating with an available workforce of 173 officers due to recruitment gaps, training commitments and sickness absences. There were 69 Band 3 officers within their first year of probation at the end of the reporting year.

The prison has recognised that the new staff lack experience, and this makes it difficult for more senior and experienced colleagues to mentor junior staff. The prison organised for a standards team, which has been operating in the prison to build operational experience at a faster pace.

In addition to prison officers, a large number of non-operational staff work in the prison (e.g. in administrative and other support roles). The Board acknowledges that many members of staff (both operational and non-operational) are working under significant pressure.

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

In June 2025 the IMB carried out a prisoner survey to understand their views and experiences, which can be seen in annex C. Out of a total of 1066 prisoners, 650 responded, which represents 61% of the prison population. This survey will be used throughout the report to triangulate the Board's findings. The Board recognises that, whilst it is a valuable source of evidence, statistically, it does not necessarily represent the views of all the prisoners at HMP Bullingdon.

Safety

- the high turnover of prisoners affects the stability and safety of the prison and its rehabilitative work.
- levels of self-harm remain high.
- levels of violence remain high.
- three wings are covered by CCTV systems and three have no CCTV coverage.
- the use and frequency of drones delivering banned material has significantly increased, resulting in higher levels of illicit items such as drugs and mobile phones.
- of the 650 prisoners who responded to the IMB survey, more than 22% said they felt quite unsafe or very unsafe.
- the prison introduced a new reception and induction process which has improved the prisoner experience on arrival.

Fair and humane treatment

- much of the prison shows signs of dilapidation, including the main accommodation blocks.
- many cells designed for single occupancy are occupied by two prisoners and there are some cells with three occupants. At the end of June 2025 there were 392 prisoners sharing in cells designed for one prisoner.
- food provision in terms of quality, variety and quantity has improved over the reporting year.
- prison staffing issues have had an effect on prisoners' time out of cell and access to activities such as gym.
- key work is being delivered to an identified priority group in line with the regime plan. However, staffing levels do not currently allow for delivery across the whole prison.
- the introduction of a laptop project known as Launchpad has provided prisoners with the ability to access such things as general applications, visit planning, canteen choices and menu selection. The laptops are provided to all prisoners shortly after they arrive and have limited and controlled applications loaded onto them. Launchpad kiosks are provided on each wing for those prisoners who have not received a laptop.
- recording the language needs of foreign national prisoners is inconsistent and the level of interpreting/translation support is uneven.

Health and wellbeing

- healthcare provision has deteriorated over the reporting year, with longer wait times for GP and mental health appointments.
- at 19%, healthcare was the largest source of applications (prisoners' written representations) to the IMB over the reporting year.
- the contracted healthcare provider has staffing issues, with only 66% of registered nurses and health care assistants in post as of 30 June 2025. Agency staff are regularly used.

Progression and resettlement

- a large number of prisoners are released homeless, and this has been negatively impacted by the early release schemes.
- some 13% of released prisoners were in employment six weeks post-release. Bullingdon was third best in its comparator group of nine prisons.
- the education and training curriculum has been revised to take account of the changing needs of the prison population and resource constraints. Low attendance at education classes presents a continuing challenge.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- the high turnover of prisoners, with large numbers on remand, makes it difficult for staff to work towards the rehabilitation and progression of prisoners rather than simply detaining them. How will the Minister address this issue to ensure prisoners are properly rehabilitated?
- how will the Minister address the overcrowding of the prison, with a significant number of prisoners sharing cells designed for single occupancy?
- how will the Minister work with others to find accommodation for men at risk of being homeless upon their release from Bullingdon?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- the Board continues to be concerned about the ongoing shortage and high turnover of staff, which has an impact on almost every aspect of the prison. How does the Prison Service plan to address these staffing issues?
- the prison continues to be a violent and unsafe environment for prisoners and staff (for example, there are some significant areas of the prison which remain uncovered by CCTV systems, and the use of illegal drone activity is increasing) What more can the Prison Service do to address these issues to ensure every prisoner is safe?
- the Board is concerned at the continuing issues in healthcare services, such as staff shortages, waiting times for appointments and medication delivery. How will the Prison Service resolve these matters with the outsourced providers?

TO THE GOVERNOR

- how will the levels of prisoner attendance at education be increased?
- how will the levels of key working be improved to meet the targets set?

3.3 Response to the last report

Issue raised with the Minister	Response given	Progress
Chronic overcrowding and a high turnover of prisoners makes it difficult for staff to work towards the rehabilitation and progression of offenders rather than simply detaining them. How will the Minister address this fundamental challenge?	By reducing time standards from 50% to 40%. A 10-year prison capacity strategy to provide more spaces. Launch of an independent sentencing review	The prison remains chronically overcrowded.
How will the Minister work with others to find accommodation for men at risk of being homeless on release from Bullingdon?	Implementation of strategic housing specialist bodies.	Prisoners continue to be released homeless, and this often results in recalls.
Issues raised with the Prison Service	Response given	Progress
Concern over continued shortage and high turnover of staff. How does Prison Service plan to improve retention of experienced staff and support and mentoring for new recruits	HMPPS and Ministry of Justice resourcing have put in place a number of initiatives. Prison officers have been recruited through two national schemes.	The prison continues to operate below the established number of officers.
The prison continues to be a violent and unsafe environment for both prisoners and staff. What more can the Prison Service do to address this issue?	Range of physical security measure to reduce harm including the smuggling of contraband. HMPPS is committed to removing wet shave razors which can be used as weapons.	The incidence of drones used to bring in contraband has increased. The prison continues to see high levels of violent incidents.

The high proportion of inexperienced staff and the complex challenges that they face make it difficult for them to work towards the rehabilitation and progression of offenders rather than simply detain them. How will the Prison Service help its staff to address this fundamental challenge?	All prison officers have a two-week induction at their home establishment followed by seven weeks of face-to-face foundation training.	There continues to be a significant number of prison officers with less than 12 months experience.
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Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

The high number of arrivals into reception, some 4243 prisoners, in the six months to June 2025, places significant pressure on reception and induction. Many prisoners have arrived at the prison late and in volume and this adds to the pressure on staff.

The prison introduced a new induction policy during the reporting year, and this has had a positive effect in managing new prisoners through reception, induction and on to the main wings.

The Board has monitored a number of prisoners who have been through the revised process from reception to the induction wing and on to the main wings and the outcomes have been satisfactory.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

Recorded levels of self-harm have reduced compared with the previous year, although the Board has noticed a rise in the three months to June 2025. A total of 753 incidents of self-harm were recorded in the reporting year.

Most self-harm is caused by cutting; this has reduced since the introduction of electric razors and the withdrawal and prohibition of wet razors. The main reasons given for self-harming are wing moves and various issues with staff.

Not all self-harm is observed and recorded, as incidents may take place unobserved when men are locked in their cells. It remains the Board's view that the recorded incidents would be much higher were it not for the attempts to reduce self-harm through collaboration between operational and healthcare staff and the use of assessment care in custody teamwork (ACCT) plans to support prisoners at the risk of self-harm or suicide and other interventions overseen and monitored at the weekly safety intervention meeting (SIM).

The prison keeps the ACCT process under review and safety custodial managers sample test ACCT documents weekly.

The Board has monitored this issue through attendance at the SIM and through reviewing sample ACCT documentation on the wings and other units.

The Board has observed that the number of ACCTs opened in the year to 30 June 2025 was 678; the previous year was 597.

During the year there were three deaths in custody and one in the community which occurred within 28 days of release from the prison. Two in custody were from natural causes and the inquests have been completed with the Prison and Probation Ombudsman report issued. The remaining two deaths are still under investigation.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

The Board continues to be concerned at the high levels of violence in HMP Bullingdon despite efforts to reduce them using the challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIP) and the multi-team discussions at the weekly safety intervention meeting (SIM).

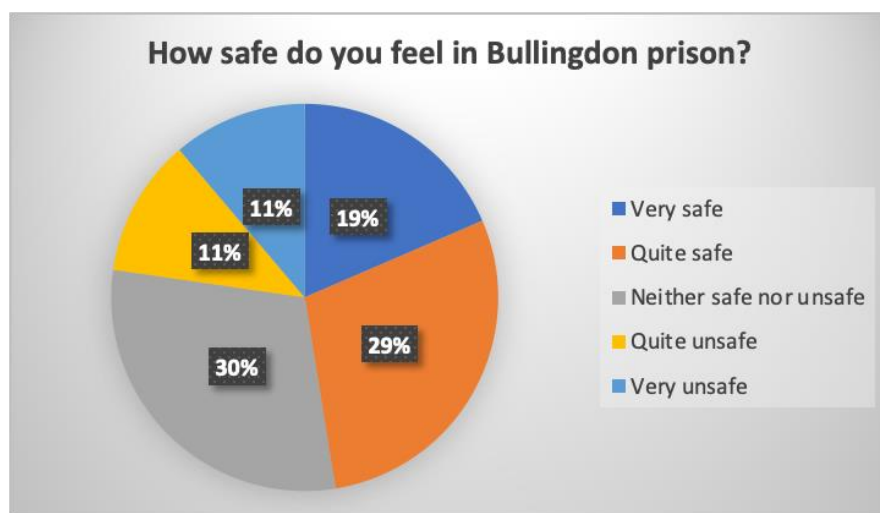
Violent incidents totalling 570 for the reporting year had started to decrease and rose again, with 59 incidents recorded in June 2025.

Assaults on staff totalling 140 in the reporting year have increased, rising from eight in February 2025 to 13 in June 2025

Only three wings have CCTV coverage. On those wings not covered by CCTV systems, investigations into violent incidents and the illicit passing of contraband are harder to conclude.

Nineteen incidents were classed as serious; in one case, a prisoner required hospitalisation.

The reasons for violence are complex. Prisoners have stated that causes include poor response from staff, being in debt, gang issues. The Board has noted that some prisoners use violence in an attempt to gain single cell accommodation. The prison is supporting the wings with safety analysts to assist in defining the issues.



The result of the IMB survey highlights that 22% of 650 responding prisoners felt quite unsafe or very unsafe. These findings reflect what the Board has observed through monitoring.

4.4 Use of force

Use of force (UoF) incidents in the prison for the six months to June 2025 show a marked increase over previous years with February 2025 the largest number in three years at 149. The main reasons for the use being: 33% non-compliance (e.g. refusing cell return, ignoring instructions), 31% fight/assaults, 13% threatening behaviour, 9% escorting between locations, low-level force, rigid-bar handcuffs (RBH) for risk reduction).

The drawing and use of PAVA spray (an incapacitant spray similar to pepper spray) has increased year on year, with PAVA being used 16 times. In June 2025 PAVA spray was drawn 18 times, mostly at an 'all available' incident on B wing which was an incident of concerted indiscipline (where two or more prisoners act together against the requirements of the prison regime).

Special accommodation, a bare cell in the CSU where there are no furnishings that can be damaged and is safer for prisoners at risk of severe self-harm, was used 20 times in the year ended June 2025, a reduction from 38 in the previous year. A body belt was used on a single occasion.

The Board has observed the use of force at planned interventions; the briefing, the intervention, and the debriefing have been conducted satisfactorily.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

The volume of illicit items (including drugs and mobile phones) entering the prison remains high. The number of incidents involving illegal drones has significantly increased and is identified as the primary method of delivering illicit items into the prison. Drones have delivered mobile phones, SIM cards, drugs, USB devices.

The prison is working with the local police force to counter the increase of drone incursions.

Only one wing has had `drone proof` windows installed. The use of illegal drones appears to be becoming more sophisticated.

The prison uses intelligence-led activities to detect illicit items using cell searches, dog teams and mobile phone detection technology.

Mandatory drug tests continue to take place: in the six months to June 2025, 260 were performed and 96 (37%) were positive.

5. Fair and humane treatment

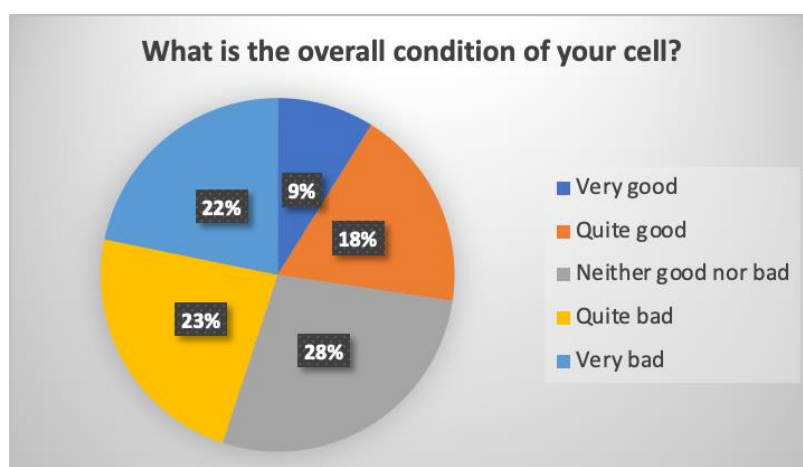
5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

Much of the prison shows signs of dilapidation, including the main accommodation blocks. There has been some work undertaken to address this with a rolling programme of wing refurbishments. This has been interrupted because of capacity pressures and the collapse into administration of a major construction supplier during the year.

Prisoners continue to share cells designed for single occupancy. This is of significant concern to the Board: as at the 30 June 2025, 392 prisoners were sharing cells designed for one person.

Some cells lack effective privacy screens for toilet facilities. The Board has observed some cells with extremely dirty toilet areas and badly stained flooring. See annex B for photographs of dilapidated cells and facilities.

Responses to the prisoner survey in June 2025:



The Board has also noted some cells occupied by two prisoners with only a small table and a single chair, consequently, as there is insufficient room for additional furniture, prisoners often have to eat meals sitting on their beds.

The creation of `decency teams` to repair furniture in cells has been welcome.

Some shower blocks on non-refurbished wings, for example E wing, are in very poor condition, with mould growing and flaking paint.

The prison has few cells on the main wings which can accommodate wheelchair users. On most wings, there is no lift available to move between floors.

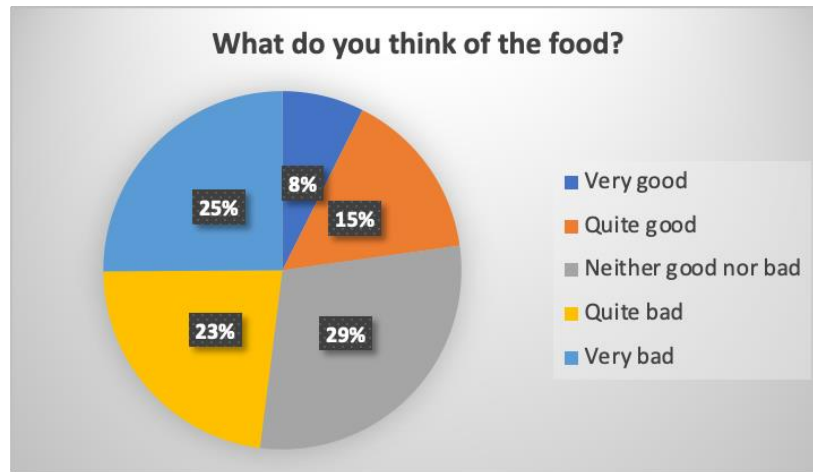
There have been some issues with the provision of food during the reporting year. A flood in the kitchen area necessitated the installation of a temporary kitchen, which was in use for several weeks. The provision of a restricted menu raised some concerns with prisoners such as too much carbohydrate-based food.

The kitchens have been operating with reduced levels of staff both at the contracted caterer level and of risk-assessed prisoners.

The Board has noted comments from prisoners and observed that Halal and non-Halal food is conveyed to the wing in the hot trolley and there is concern about cross-contamination.

The Board has observed the use of unclean food trolleys being used to transport food to wings. This matter was addressed after several instances were reported.

In the IMB survey, 48% of respondents rated the food as 'quite bad' or 'very bad', a similar proportion to the rating of cell conditions.



The Board has observed that the introduction of the LaunchPad laptop programme has improved the accuracy of delivering menu choices, as the laptop replaces the previous paper-based process.

5.2 Segregation

The care and separation unit (CSU) is where prisoners may be sent for the good order and or discipline (GOoD) of the prison, for their own protection or for punishment. The CSU is in poor physical condition with cells often untidy and graffiti on the walls and the showers on the lower floor are in poor condition.

The CSU often accommodates prisoners with challenging behaviours and complex needs including mental health and self-harm issues. It operates a limited regime which includes access to exercise and in cell work. The Board is concerned about the impact of segregation on prisoners with mental health issues.

The unit consists of 20 cells and occupancy has been high in the reporting year. There have been 746 stays in the year, with an average stay of seven days. As of 30 June 2025, one prisoner had been in the unit for 143 days continuously.

40 (GOoD) reviews (where the prison determines if the prisoner should remain segregated) have been observed by the IMB: they were conducted fairly and followed the required procedures.

The use of special accommodation was used on 20 occasions and the Board observed this was used as a last resort. 'Dirty protests' (when a person deliberately urinates or defecates without the use of the proper facilities supplied, as an act of non-compliance or protest) did not automatically result in transfer to special accommodation.

The IMB observed that the CSU was staffed throughout the year with officers with experience showing patience, care, understanding and professionalism in their duties.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

The Board notes that the prison operates with high levels of inexperienced staff. The prison management acknowledge that even with a full complement of experienced staff the prison would be unable to carry out all activities effectively.

Staff in general were observed to display a caring and supportive approach to prisoners. The Board has heard prisoners commenting on the inexperience of staff and lack of knowledge on process and procedures in the prison.

The Here to Help (H2H) scheme, where prisoner mentors are trained in mental health first aid, learning to advise, and critical thinking, also provides useful skills for prisoners outside of prison.

The purpose of the scheme is to provide peer support, help prisoners with issues such as complaints and operate as a go-between with prisoners and staff.

This has become a very useful service and is respected by prisoners and staff alike. During the reporting year there were 15 men on average employed as H2H reps and trained to carry out the role.

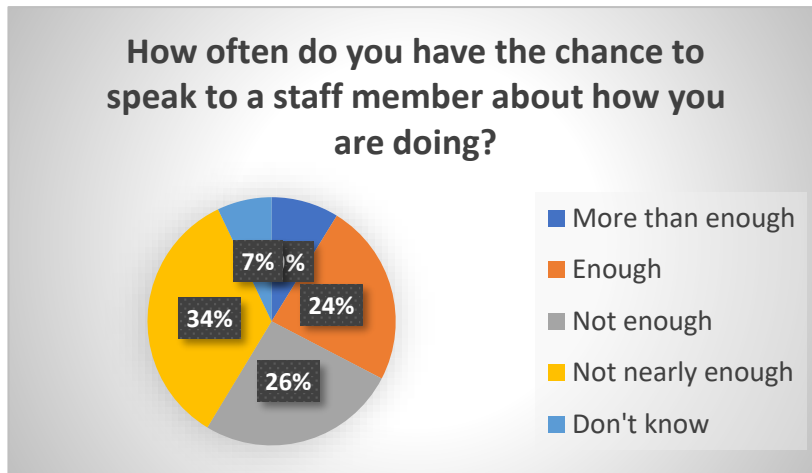
The Board has observed the H2H reps delivering induction meetings to new prisoners with clarity and understanding, particularly to those who are in prison for the first time. Because of the high levels of churn in the prison, it is difficult to retain the H2H reps.

The prison also operates a 'prison council' where prisoner concerns are raised with team managers, and where actions are noted and investigated.

The Board is concerned with the level of key working sessions delivered to prisoners. All prisoners should be allocated a key worker within four days of arriving in the prison. Key working sessions have been seriously impacted by the staffing issues. The safety intervention meeting (SIM) is utilised to identify the prisoners in most need of key working.

In the reporting year, 11,645 key working sessions were allocated but only 5059 (4187 in the previous reporting year) were completed. The remainder were missed or simply unable to be held. December 2024 had the lowest number of key working sessions at 520 and April 2025 the highest at 884.

The IMB survey results highlight that 60% of responses say that there is not enough or not nearly enough opportunity to speak with staff members about how they are doing.



5.4 Equality and diversity

In June 2024, following the loss of the diversity manager post, equality and diversity was added to the responsibilities of the governor for the CSU. The monthly equalities meeting identifies clear actions where disproportionality data indicates a particular group may be disadvantaged.

Foreign national prisoners (about 50 nationalities) account for just under a fifth of the population. In April 2025 an officer for foreign nationals was appointed to the offender management unit (OMU). It is too early to evaluate the impact of this post.

The main sources of interpreting and translation support (ITS) are the Big Word telephone interpreting service and various documents in translation. During the 2024-25 financial year, Big Word was used on 116 occasions (18 languages). The budget of £3000 was underspent by more than 50%. The Board believes this was just unused as opposed to not needed. The languages most frequently needed were Albanian (17), Arabic (16) and Polish (15). Practice Plus Group (PPG) use the Language line telephone ITS system.

Staff routinely rely on Google Translate and on other prisoners to act as interpreters. Using prisoners in this role is not always appropriate; translation applications are less reliable when based on less commonly spoken languages.

Prison information leaflets are available in translation in 16 languages, but surprisingly these do not include Arabic or Polish. Various departments hold information in foreign languages, but it is not possible to get a comprehensive view of what is available across the prison.

Last year's improvement in recording language needs has not been sustained; this may be attributable to reduced administrative support. Under-recording occurs; the prison has identified first night interviews as an area for improvement, and they are now being monitored more closely.

There are a number of prisoners who are wheelchair users and there are only two cells outside healthcare which are wheelchair accessible. Consequently, some prisoners have to be housed in healthcare when, if given the facilities, they could be in the general population.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The chaplaincy provides religious services for all faiths and pastoral support for those of all faiths and none through a multi-faith team, some of whom also visit neighbouring prisons.

The Board has received some positive feedback from prisoners on the support given by the chaplaincy team.

5.6 Incentives schemes

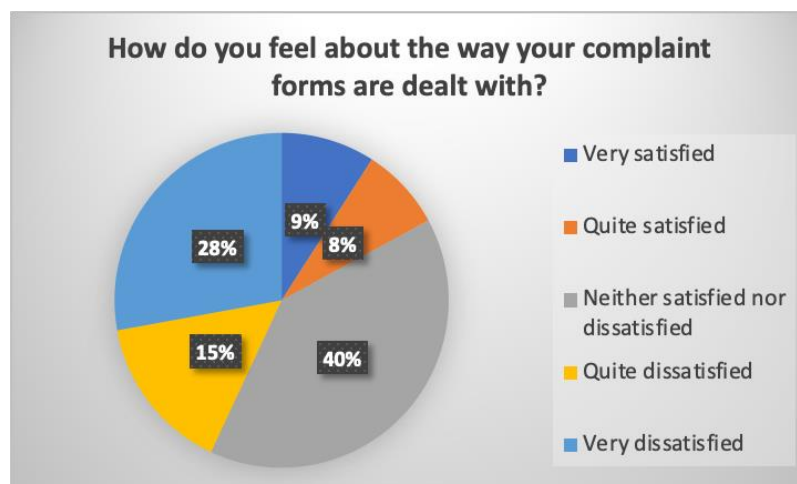
Under the incentives policy, prisoners may be placed on a basic, standard or enhanced level, which affects the privileges for which they are eligible in order to encourage positive behaviour.

Prisoners at Bullingdon who are on the enhanced (highest) level are eligible for consideration for `red band` status where they may be given responsibility for carrying out specified tasks across several areas of the prison. Examples of this are working in library and book delivery and working in the staff café.

The high turnover of prisoners creates difficulty in filling these positions as the prison is limited on placing prisoners on hold rather than transfer.

5.7 Complaints

The quality of response to complaints COMP1 (an ordinary complaint) and to appeals of COMP1 decisions (COMP 1a) remains variable. Prisoners have complained to the Board that the responses are often delayed past the agreed timescale.



These findings have been supported by the IMB survey with 43% of respondents quite or very dissatisfied and 40% neither satisfied or dissatisfied, which probably represents a normalisation of timing and responses to the complaint.

In the 12 months to June 2025, the prison received 1706 COMP1 complaints; 113 of those were appealed via a COMP1a, which is considered by a more senior officer.

The introduction of Launchpad has helped, as general applications such as prisoners being able to contact safer custody when they have concerns, requesting medical appointments, and submitting sentence queries, now are sent online. Previously, the process for general applications was paper-based and slow. Lack of response then gave rise to formal complaints from prisoners.

5.8 Property

The Board did not see any improvement in the handling or management of property either in the prison or on transfer between prisons.

The Board has received applications from prisoners relating to missing 'canteen' orders (these are agreed catalogue items such as additional food, toiletries etc) which have been delivered to the wing but not to the prisoner. This seems to be an issue around cell/wing moves where a prisoner orders canteen whilst on one wing and is moved to a different wing before the order is delivered and the order goes astray.

6. Health and wellbeing

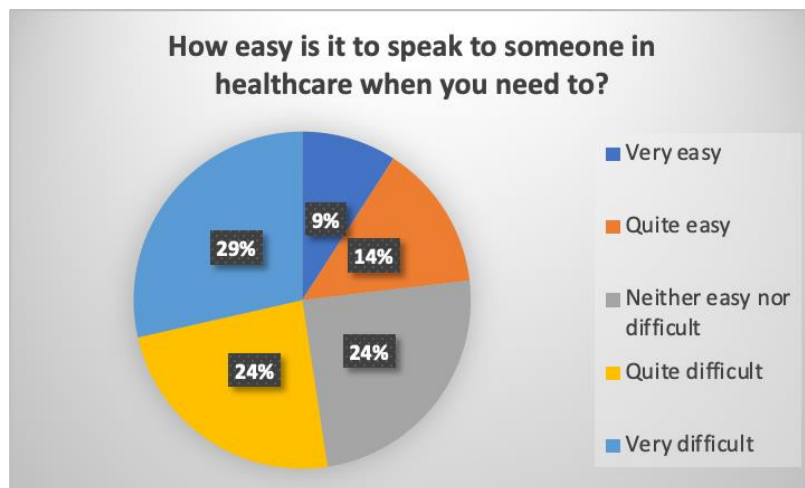
6.1 Healthcare general

The Board has observed that healthcare provision has been patchy throughout the reporting year. The services are placed under strain as a result of staff shortages and the use of agency staff which interrupts continuity of care. Healthcare applications to the IMB were the biggest source of applications and related to lengthy waits for appointments and changes in medication.

The Board has observed that the inpatients unit is often untidy and dirty in both the cells and in the communal area and that this situation has shown little signs of improvement.

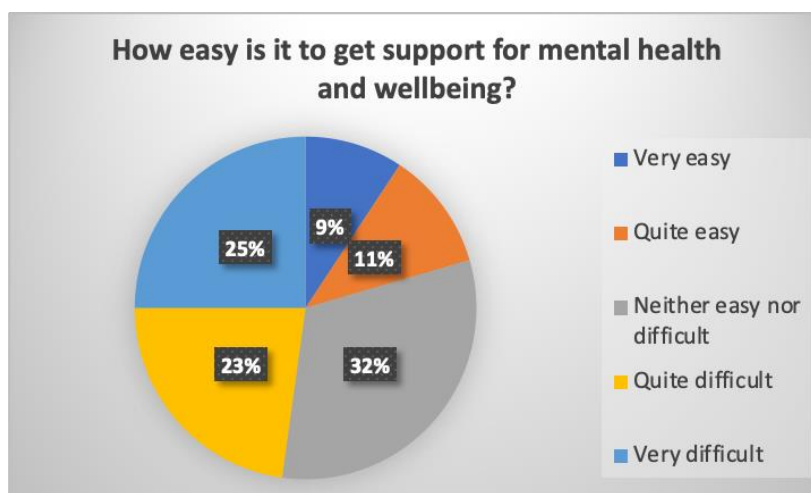
The prison has escalated the issues of healthcare support to HMPPS.

6.2 Physical healthcare



In the IMB survey, 53% of respondents said it is very difficult or quite difficult to speak to healthcare professionals. The Board has observed through monitoring delays in GP appointments, late delivery of medication to the wings. There has been consistent shortage of healthcare staff in the unit and the shortfall often covered by agency staff.

6.3 Mental health



In the IMB survey 48% of respondents stated that it was quite or very difficult to get mental health support. This finding is supported by the monitoring activities of the Board in the reporting year. Members have observed that there have been lengthy waits for support and finding suitable alternative accommodation for ill prisoners has proven difficult.

6.4 Social care

There were eight prisoners with social care needs in healthcare inpatients at the end of the reporting year. Many of the prisoners receiving social care have to be housed in the healthcare inpatients unit. Most are elderly and have mobility issues and are unable to be accommodated on the general wings as the prison is not designed for prisoners with impaired mobility.

The Board has observed satisfactory levels of care for prisoners in this position.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

The senior management team regularly reviews the regime. The Board has observed that staff availability is the main cause of restricting the regime; this has at times resulted in restriction of access to gym facilities, and to meaningful activity in the workshops.

The prison gym has been refurbished, and the Board has received many positive comments on the changes.

The Board has observed that prisoners who are not undertaking activities such as work or education are often only out of cell for around three hours per day.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

The Board continues to be concerned about the number of reported incidents of prisoners under the influence (UTI) and the increased use of Naloxone (a drug that can reverse the effects of opioids in overdose or withdrawal) administered to help those most seriously affected. Healthcare staff are trained to administer Naloxone; operational staff are also being trained to use it in emergencies.

Despite seeing multiple recordings of UTI incidents listed on the Oscar 1 (the orderly officer) report, the figures show a decrease in comparison with the same period last year. From January to June 2024 there were 374 recorded observations of UTI prisoners, but from January to June 2025, there were 254. The number of incidents does not consider any prisoners under the influence in their cells and not under observation by prison staff. There was an increased use in May 2025 of psychoactive substance (PS), also known as spice (a chemical compound that mimics the effects of the active ingredient in cannabis), with many prisoners using multiple times, which may change the downward trend.

The Board looks forward to seeing whether the new oral fluid test kit for compliance-based drug testing (CBDT) makes a difference in identifying the type of illicit substance most used.

At the end of the reporting period during June 2025, there were 170 referrals to the inclusion unit, and nine group sessions were held during the month. Inclusion will speak to every prisoner reported to be UTI and offer him harm minimisation information; this offer is not always taken up.

Inclusion offers a weekly drop-in session on the incentivised substance free living on one of the 3 spurs on the wing (ISFL) which is proving to be very popular. Men are treated with acupuncture beads placed in their ears. The men on the ISFL have also worked on a garden project growing produce and flowers and are receiving support from new initiatives being delivered regularly on the spur.

The prison works with external agencies, Oxford Rehab project and One Recovery Bucks, to create a pathway for prisoners who have substance abuse issues when they transfer back to the community.

The Board has received comments from prisoners on other wings about how easy it is to access drugs and alcohol. Some prisoners are concerned about the aggressive behaviour shown by fellow prisoners when they are UTI.

The Board has also experienced the smell of cannabis on the wings whilst monitoring.

6.7 Soft skills

Wellbeing information is posted on wing notice boards. The Here2Help scheme, Shannon Trust and Listener representatives (trained by the Samaritans) provide confidential peer support to prisoners who are struggling with prison life.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

The vacancy for a head of education, skills and work (ESW) was not filled until July 2024. As the 2024-25 annual development plan (ADP) was already underway, few modifications were possible before the next financial year; these included a bespoke 'Reading for your rights' course offered to prisoners with low literacy levels, and entry level 2 functional skills (FS) classes (English and maths) were provided successfully for vulnerable prisoners (VP) in the E wing classroom.

The environment of the main locations, the 'Bullington College' and the 'Bullington Beacon', has been made more welcoming. The monthly bulletin presents enrolment opportunities and feedback in an attractive format in print and via Launchpad; this has generally improved communication with prisoners.

The prison aims to deliver FS in classrooms on the main wings; a pilot entry level maths course is provided on B wing for A and B wing prisoners.

The review for the 2025-26 ADP was constrained by reduced resources (9% cut for prison education framework (PEF), 5% for dynamic purchasing (DPS) provision); some courses had to be discontinued. The curriculum has been broadened with more creative activities including music. [See 7.2 below for vocational courses]

'Way2Learn' independent learning courses are a significant source of purposeful in-cell activity, with 1000 participants in 2024-25 and good completion rates.

The library continues to provide a good service but further ways of improving attendance are being sought. Opportunities for purposeful activity include chess and 'Storybook Dads' which enables fathers to record stories for their children, and a craft activities workshop in collaboration with the Oxford Museum of Natural History. The library is expected to play a more prominent part in implementing the reading strategy, for example, with emergent readers.

7.2 Vocational training, Work

Vocational pathways include construction and maintenance, hospitality and catering, and self-employment. There is insufficient time for short-stay prisoners to complete education or training qualifications or to progress from low-risk to higher-risk jobs. A 'short stay pathway', comprising low-risk work and FS, has been introduced for prisoners who are in the prison for under six weeks.

Vocational training includes bicycle repair, materials recovery with the carpet-manufacturing industry, and the 'right track' rail programme. The latter comprises two weeks during sentence and following release two days online and two days in person learning. Initial outcomes are encouraging. A similar collaboration with Volker Highways is being explored.

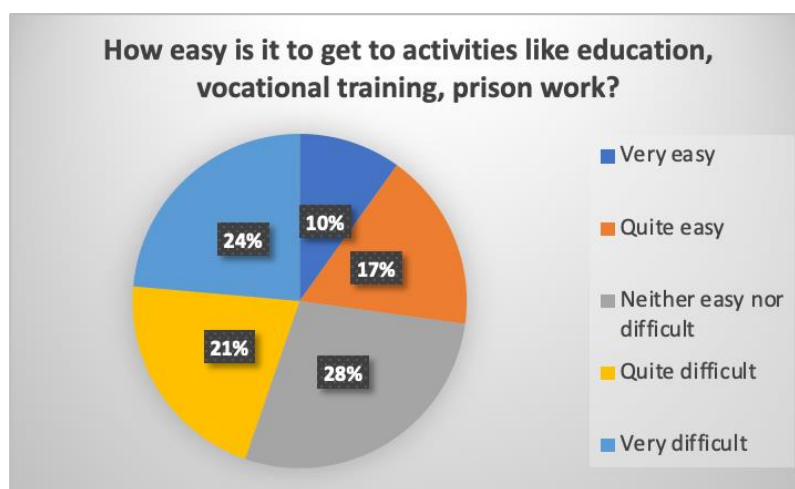
There is now more emphasis on the role of Shannon Trust mentors and workshop section leaders. Prisoners providing support and those about to take Open University or other examinations need to be placed 'on hold'. Given the population pressures on the prison estate, the Governor's discretion to keep specific prisoners on hold is greatly constrained.

The provision of additional CIAG (careers information and guidance) assessment sessions has reduced the waiting time for access to purposeful activity. Follow-up work is restricted as there are three CIAG advisers.

The high churn leads to delays in filling workspaces and long waiting lists while risk assessments are carried out. A new approach to waiting lists has four levels of priority to match provision to need and improve progression; this has replaced a single list based on 'first come, first served'.

Attendance at work is 70% on average, compared with 53% for attendance at education. This is a key area for improvement. The prison attributes the discrepancy to factors including slow wing-staff cultural change, teacher sickness absence, and the unwillingness of some prisoners to leave the wings.

In the IMB survey, 45% of respondents have said that it is quite difficult or very difficult to get to activities and only 27% say it is very easy or quite easy.



7.3 Offender management, progression

Government initiatives on early release schemes have created significant work for the offender management unit (OMU) and the IMB has observed this increased workload and significant extra hours involved in implementing the scheme. Shortfall in the staffing levels within the OMU during the reporting year has limited contact with prisoners and the IMB has received applications relating to lack of contact from prison offender managers (POMs) and therefore have not had release dates confirmed.

7.4 Family contact

The introduction of the Launchpad laptop programme has streamlined the visit scheduling process for prisoners. The Board has observed family visits in the visit hall and generally have been seen to work efficiently.

The family liaison team has held a number of family days in the prison sports hall with fun activities for children. Celebration days for prisoners acquiring qualifications are also appreciated by their families.

The Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT) are actively involved supporting family members during visits and at release and mentoring prison leavers in the community.

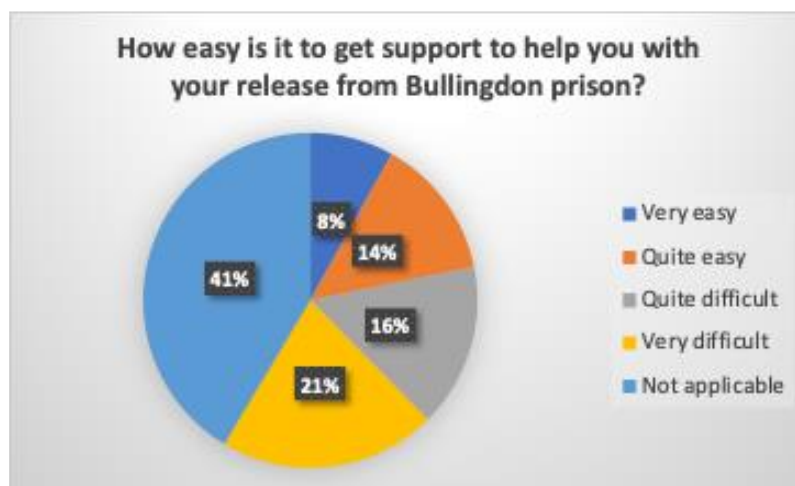
7.5 Resettlement planning

The prison has introduced a 'departure lounge', situated just outside the prison; this provides a friendly and well organised environment for prisoners on their release day and has assisted 650 prison leavers. The departure lounge offers practical support, such as access to community health services, and acts as a hub for resettlement organisations mostly from the third sector. There are facilities for phone charging, some basic mobile phones and small a supply of clothing. The Board has observed that the facility is well run and appreciated by departing prisoners.

Unfortunately, because of unavailability of staff the departure lounge is not available at all scheduled times prisoners are released from Bullingdon.

Up to 30% of prisoners are released without any confirmed accommodation in the community: many of these prisoners are often the subject of recalls.

There were 13.11% of released prisoners in employment six weeks after release in the year to 30 June 2025; HMP Bullingdon is third best in its comparator group. This compares with 15.47% in the previous year when the prison was also third in its comparator group. Resettlement planning has been impacted by the introduction of early release schemes.



In the IMB survey, a large number, 41% responded to say this is not applicable and 37% say it is quite difficult or very difficult to get support relating to release with 22% saying it is quite or very easy.

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	16
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	10 (including two on sabbatical)
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	9 (including one on sabbatical and one in training.)
Total number of visits to the establishment	265

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	42	34
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	18	2
C	Equality	8	6
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	28	15
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	52	52
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	13	10
F	Food and kitchens	51	24
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	103	92
H1	Property within the establishment	49	63
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	37	13
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	22	10
I	Sentence management, including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	33	31
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	80	38
K	Transfers	18	6
L	Miscellaneous	79	97
	Total number of applications	633	493

Annex A

Service providers

- Aramak provides catering services.
- DHL provides canteen services.
- Gov Facilities Services Limited (GFSL) is responsible for maintenance.
- Milton Keynes College provides education and training.
- Oxfordshire County Council provides library services. OCC also work with Practice Plus Group to provide Social Care.
- Practice Plus Group provides physical healthcare services, some items are sub-contacted by them.
- Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust provide mental health services.
- Serco provide prison transport services.

Annex B

Photos of prisoner accommodation in HMP Bullingdon



A cell with dirty walls, food on the floor and not enough furniture



A cell with a wall unit missing



The corner of a shower room used by prisoners.

Annex C



A Survey about Your Stay in Bullingdon Prison

The IMB would like to understand more about your stay in HMP Bullingdon. This survey is an opportunity for you to tell us how you feel about a number of specific topics – it's a chance for us to hear your voice. You do not have to do this survey, but if you do, it will give us a better picture of what is happening in Bullingdon Prison.

The IMB is a team of independent volunteers. We regularly visit Bullingdon prison to monitor your day-to-day living conditions and treatment while in prison – monitoring for fairness and respect. You may have seen or spoken to us, but we may not have had the chance to speak to each one of you. This is why we want to know more about your life in Bullingdon.

PLEASE PUT THIS SURVEY IN THE IMB BOX ON YOUR WING BY <DATE>.

Any information you give is anonymous and will be stored securely.

Mark the box (with a circle, a tick, or a cross) that is closest to your view to give your answer to each question.

Q1. How safe do you feel in Bullingdon prison?				
Very safe	Quite safe	Neither safe nor unsafe	Quite unsafe	Very unsafe
Q2. What is the overall condition of your cell (for example bed, toilet, furniture)?				
Very good	Quite good	Neither good nor bad	Quite bad	Very bad
Q3. What is the condition of the shared areas of your spur / wing?				
Very good	Quite good	Neither good nor bad	Quite bad	Very bad
Q4. What do you think of the food?				
Very good	Quite good	Neither good nor bad	Quite bad	Very bad
Q5. How often do you have the chance to speak to a staff member about how you are doing in the prison?				
More than enough	Enough	Not enough	Not nearly enough	Don't know
Q6. How easy or difficult it is to speak to someone in healthcare when you need to?				
Very easy	Quite easy	Neither easy, nor difficult	Quite difficult	Very difficult
Q7. How often have you been able to have contact with friends or family (through letters, parcels, phone, visits)?				
Very often	Sometimes	Once in a while	Rarely	Never
Q8. How do you feel about the way your complaint forms are dealt with?				

Very satisfied	Quite satisfied	Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied	Quite dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Q9. How easy or difficult it is to get to activities like education, vocational training, prison work?				
Very easy	Quite easy	Neither easy, nor difficult	Quite difficult	Very difficult

Q10. How easy is it to get support for mental health and wellbeing?				
Very easy	Quite easy	Neither easy, nor difficult	Quite difficult	Very difficult
Q11. How easy is it to get support to help you with your release from Bullingdon prison?				
Very easy	Quite easy	Quite difficult	Very difficult	Not applicable
Q12. Had you heard of the IMB (Independent Monitoring Board) team of volunteers before this survey?				
Yes		No		

Q13. Please tell us the 3 most important things that could make your life better in prison.				
1.				
2.				
3.				

Choosing any of the questions above, is there any more information you want to give us?				

Q14. What is your current age?											
20 years old or under		21-29 years old		30-59 years old		60 or over		Don't want to say			
Q15. What is your ethnic group?											
White		Black		Asian		Mixed		Other		Don't want to say	

Q16. Do you think that you have a health condition or disability that affects your day-to-day activity?				
Yes		No		

Q17. Are you on Remand?							
Yes					No		
Q18. Which wing / residential unit are you in?							
B	C	D	E	F	SSCU	Healthcare	Don't want to say

Thank you very much for completing this survey



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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at imb@justice.gov.uk