



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

**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 establishment**

HMP Brinsford is situated north of Wolverhampton in the West Midlands. It holds a maximum number of 577<sup>1</sup> remand (where an individual is held in custody while awaiting trial or sentencing, and is considered innocent until proved guilty) and sentenced young men, between 18 and 29 years of age, to support population pressures. The majority are young adults, with an increasing number of category C adult men (those who cannot be trusted in an open prison but who require maximum security). In 2021, Brinsford categorisation changed from a category C prison to a resettlement prison (designed to help prisoners prepare for release). This meant prison sentences for those residing in Brinsford changed from up to four years to 24 months of the sentence left to serve.

Prisoners are housed in five two-storey residential blocks, with four wings on each block, and one small wing holding a maximum of 19 prisoners. A total of 577 prisoners can be held in Brinsford. Approximately one-third of the cells are single occupancy; the rest are double occupancy. Single cells are usually reserved for CSIP and high-risk prisoners.

All cells have in-cell sanitation, while shower facilities are provided elsewhere on the wing hub. Residential unit 5 is the only unit with in-cell showers and it is the incentivised free living unit (ISFL), where each prisoner is drug free; they are tested regularly and are removed from the unit if they have three positive results. To remain on the unit, prisoners need to be working or in education.

Resident 6 is a small wing, situated above the healthcare department; it has 12 cells, with the potential of holding 19 prisoners. Designated use of this smaller wing has varied between induction and to house those on a challenge, support and intervention plan, or CSIP (used to help manage prisoners who pose an increased risk of violence), or who find it difficult to settle on other units.

Residential unit 1 is the induction wing, particularly for those new into prison who require extra help. Often for an 18-year-old, prison is a new experience for them and they need a little time to come to terms with their situation. They will attend an induction course, where prison rules are explained and to make sure they have the phone numbers of family and friends and canteen money, before moving onto another area.

Residential units 2, 3 and 4 are identical and house just over 100 prisoners each.

The care and separation unit (CSU), where prisoners are segregated from the rest of the population, is a 16-bed unit separated from the residential units. The 24/7 healthcare unit has 10 single cells (each with a bed, sink and toilet), two constant watch cells, and a cell where prisoners can speak to a Listener (a prisoner who has been trained by the Samaritans to offer confidential peer support). Initially, there was only one constant watch cell, but a second was added during the year.

There is a prison council, which is made up of prisoners from each residential unit, called wing representatives; a member of the senior leadership team attends the monthly meetings. When suggestions and questions are raised by prisoners, staff endeavor to find solutions or explain why something cannot happen.

Staff complete scheduled development once a month to encourage the whole prison to engage in learning, and this appears to be well received by them.

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

Early in the reporting year, two new house blocks were due to be built, with each holding 60 prisoners. In addition, the recycling building was to be moved and rebuilt. Preparatory work started, but the building company found asbestos in the grounds and decided it was too expensive for them to continue. Work stopped, leaving the prison with a temporary car park, temporary boarding and holes in the ground. The prison is waiting for the prison grounds to be returned to their normal state.

### **3. Key points**

#### **3.1 Main findings**

This report presents the findings of the Board for the period 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025. Our evidence comes from observations made during visits, scrutiny of records and data, informal contact with prisoners and staff, and applications (prisoners' written representations to the IMB).

#### **Safety**

- Despite an increase in violence in the prison and the high incidence of illicit items entering the prison, the Board is of the view that the environment is, on the whole, safe.
- We are of the view that gang culture remains a cause of friction between prisoners and often leads to premeditated violence. It can also result in prisoners being afraid of being on wings and mixing with other prisoners.
- There remains a minority of prisoners who self-harm, although credit must go to staff who work hard with these individuals to improve their situation. The prison uses a holistic approach to support them. The overall level of self-harm has continued to be a priority for the prison. There are a few prisoners who still self-harm, even after the best efforts of staff, and we feel that they often need specialist support.
- Cases of violence often increase when the prison receives higher numbers of transfers from other prisons over a short period of time. Prisoners are frustrated that they are in a young offender institution (YOI) and often far away from home and family. The number of self-isolators is higher than in previous reporting years. Prisoners tell us that they self-isolate due to the nature of their offences and because of debt.
- Violent incidents have increased over the reporting year. A substantial amount of fighting has occurred around the servery area at mealtimes. Arrangements are in place for around eight prisoners to collect their meals from the servery at any one time to try to avoid prisoners coming into contact with non-associates and to manage any fighting. Movements are also regulated so only small groups move at any one time, to avoid prisoners accidentally meeting prisoners they should not be associating with.
- The Board is particularly concerned about violence towards staff. In the reporting year, there were 96 assaults on staff, with six recorded as serious. A comparator YOI had 60 assaults on staff, eight of which were serious. Gang-related issues make it difficult to place prisoners in a safe location, which becomes more of an issue when there is an increase in transfers.
- There were 56 in-cell fires over the reporting year, which seems very high and potentially dangerous for the whole prison.

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

- The Board is of the view that, on the whole, prisoners are treated fairly and humanely in HMP Brinsford.
- That stated, we have observed occasions when officers have not been professional in their dealings with prisoners. However, managers seem to have dealt with these swiftly and used disciplinary procedures, where appropriate.

- The Board is of the view that prisoners need to be occupied, which is not always evident. Idleness and frustration can, and often do, lead to violence. Prisoners are testing established limits, and the lack of appropriate intervention by officers contributes to increased non-compliance. The Board has observed prisoners not wearing the appropriate protective clothing at the servery, as well as vaping, swearing and eating food, all whilst supervising officers ignore this behaviour.
- Prisoners' property remains a problem area: all too frequently, property goes missing, especially on prisoner transfer.
- Key work over the reporting year has been poor, with an average compliance rate of 8.16% in February, 6.23% in December and 9.22% in January. The Prison Group Director (PGD) has said that a minimum of 25% should be expected.
- The Board is concerned that prisoners remain restrained longer than necessary because officers do not check for compliance.
- The Board is seriously concerned about the failure to ensure a basic standard of accommodation for prisoners.

### **Health and wellbeing**

- The Board believes that the healthcare needs of prisoners are well met by the contracted provider, Practice Plus Group.
- The Board is of the view that there continues to be a problem in relocating prisoners with mental health problems to more suitable treatment centres. From the Board's observations, the healthcare centre and prison staff do an excellent job, but it takes too long to find a bed elsewhere for those prisoners assessed as requiring one. This has not improved during the reporting period and the Board is seriously concerned about the number of prisoners in custody with mental health issues.

### **Progression and Resettlement**

- The Board is of the view that the rehabilitative work and preparations for release are deficient and, therefore, not fit for purpose. We have previously raised this issue with the Governor, but there is little evidence that anything has changed.
- The Board is of the view that the education provided does not meet the needs of the prison population most of the time. We have raised our concerns about the poor education standards and low-level engagement of the prisoners with the Governor throughout the reporting year.
- It is the Board's view that Novus, the contracted education provider, has failed to ensure that all lessons are delivered, especially when vocational course teachers have been absent.
- We do not believe that prisoners are motivated to attend or that enough has been done to encourage better attendance in education.

## **3.2 Main areas for development**

### ***TO THE MINISTER***

- The Board is of the view there remains a problem in relocating prisoners with mental health problems to more suitable mental health facilities. All transfers to a secure mental health facility from HMP Brinsford continued to exceed the 28-day stipulated time frame. Will the Minister take steps to ensure that sufficient secure hospital places are available?

- The management of prisoner property, particularly on transfer between establishments, continues to cause many problems. A national policy and procedure has been in place for some time, but there is little or no improvement. When will the minister review the policy and ensure its implementation?

### **TO THE PRISON SERVICE**

- We have noted in our two previous reports that the 'new' heating system is not up to standard. When will the Prison Service commission an urgent review to find a better way of heating and controlling the heat within the prison?
- From the Board's continued observations, the education contract is still not fit for purpose. It has always proved very difficult to hold the provider to account and to ensure that the prison gets good education provision. Not enough is being done to motivate or encourage prisoners to attend regularly or consistently. When will a review be commissioned to look at the education services provided to ensure they better meet the needs of prisoners at HMP Brinsford?
- The overall condition of Brinsford is still very outdated and in a poor state of repair. Previous improvements and decoration were short-term solutions and completed to a poor standard. Brinsford still needs a great deal of investment to return it to an acceptable standard. How - and when - will the Prison Service address this issue?
- The showers in the healthcare centre are not fit for purpose. When will the Prison Service make the financial investment needed to bring the showers and ventilation up to standard?
- Activity places are limited and not 'meaningful', in the Board's view. Brinsford has been a resettlement prison for more than three years, but purposeful activity has not increased and the activities have not improved. It is important that every prisoner has the opportunity to work in meaningful and worthwhile activities, with training and the possibility of work on release. What steps will be taken to address the issue?
- There are still too many transfers between establishments. HMP Brinsford have often been very accommodating and supportive in receiving transfers into the prison. Bringing in prisoners from other establishments too regularly makes the gang problem more difficult to manage and the churn of prisoners destabilises the safety of the prison. What plans does the Prison Service have to remedy the situation?
- The Board remains of the view that when a prisoner needs to be moved urgently, it seems to be very difficult to find a place elsewhere. What will the Prison Service do to address this issue?
- The Board is of the view that, too frequently, prisoners are moved to HMP Brinsford when in the middle of a course at their previous prison, which is not on offer in Brinsford. This leads to frustration and anger. Similarly, transfers further from family lead to denying prisoners valuable family support through regular social visits. As a resettlement prison, what steps will the Prison Service take to mitigate these problems?
- Following the problems encountered in relation to the building of two new residential units, when will the prison return to normal, with the boarding and the temporary car park returned to its previous condition?



## **TO THE GOVERNOR**

- The Board is of the view that more places are needed in both education and work-based activities. More meaningful work would better prepare prisoners for work and rehabilitation. Will the Governor review the provision and availability of places?
- The Board believes that quicker entry into courses would make a major difference to those on short sentences and would provide a better way forward. Will the Governor consider running more courses and opening them up to prisoners earlier in their sentence?
- The Board is of the view that the key worker scheme has been ineffective over the last 12 months, mainly through staff shortages. This work is essential for a prisoner to have meaningful contact with an officer who 'knows' him. Will the Governor ensure that improvements are made to the key work programme?
- The Board believes that the Incentives Policy Framework (IPF) needs to be robust but fair and evenly used. It needs to be proactive and to mean something. Will the Governor review the use of the framework and ensure that sanctions are robustly followed?
- The Board believes that small maintenance jobs could be carried out by the cleaning rehabilitative enabling teams (CRED), but this does not appear to be happening. Will the Governor review the role and the use of the CRED team?
- The Board is of the view that the overall condition of the prison is still poor. Some painting has been done, but considerably more is required to return it to an acceptable standard. Cells are in a particularly poor state. Will the Governor undertake a review of the accommodation and ensure there is better living standards for the prisoners?
- The toilets and sinks in the CSU are stained and dirty and need replacing. Will the Governor put a timescale on when improvements will be made?
- The showers in the healthcare centre (HCC) have been condemned. What steps is the Governor taking to ensure they are replaced as a matter of urgency?
- What steps is the Governor taking to reduce assaults on staff, which have increased in the reporting year?
- Prisoners exhibiting disruptive behaviour are sometimes placed in constant watch cells in the healthcare centre (HCC). This behaviour can sometimes cause distress to prisoners who are unwell. Will the Governor consider providing a constant watch cell on the CSU rather than use facilities in the HCC?
- Subcontracted clinics are adversely affected by persistent and regular incorrect roll checks. What steps is the Governor taking to address this?
- HM Inspector of Prisons (HMIP) commended activity schedules within the HCC, but this has been hampered by HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) with staffing levels and availability to unlock.
- Delays in roll checks lead to delays and often cancellations of prisoner appointments in the HCC or them reaching other placements in a timely manner. When will the Governor review the current system and determine if improvement can be made?
- Staff shortages and lockdown days reduce the number of staff working in the HCC at any one time. This, in turn, impacts face-to-face contact with officers, which is detrimental to the health and wellbeing of patients. Staff and patients get used to one another; staff get to know trigger points and ways to deal with particular patients. Will the Governor consider using staff who are trained and skilled in working in the HCC for longer periods?

- There were 56 in-cell fires in the prison in the reporting year, which seems a very high number and, obviously, is potentially dangerous for the whole prison. How does the Governor plan to prevent these fires?

### 3.3 Response to the previous report

#### TO THE MINISTER

- **Issue raised:** Recruitment and retention of staff across the Prison Service.

**Response:** *The Ministry of Justice carefully monitors resourcing levels through a number of processes, which provide the appropriate level of information for staffing decisions to be made. There is a centralised recruitment model for Prison Officers and targeted interventions are applied to those prisons with the most need. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) continues to enhance its recruitment processes to ensure those it attracts and recruits have the relevant skills and attributes needed to meet the demands and expectations of the role.*

*To support retention, HMPPS have introduced a retention Toolkit, which identifies local regional and national interventions against the drivers of attrition.*

*With regard to HMP/YOI Brinsford, I am pleased to report that staff retention has improved, with resignation rates reducing from 9.69% in July 2024 to 5.7% in April 2025, this being amongst the lowest rates in a category C resettlement prison. The introduction of the New Colleague Mentor has helped integrate new staff into the establishment.*

- **Issue raised:** The Crown Prosecution Service does not follow up and prosecute sufficiently on assaults.

**Response:** *I was concerned to read that the Board considers The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) follow up and prosecution of serious assaults, both on prisoner on prisoner and those against staff, to be insufficient. It is of utmost importance that all assaults are dealt with swiftly and appropriately. I can assure you that the HMPPS Prison safety Group is working closely with the Police and CPS to ensure that those who commit violent offences in prison are prosecuted. To support prosecutions, over 3,000 Body Worn Cameras are available across the public sector prisons, meaning every band 3-5 officer can wear a camera on shift. Following the appointment of the Crime in Prison Co-ordinator at HMPS/YOI Brinsford in January 2025, there have been remarkable improvements in identifying and referring prison based crime. The police commendation nomination for the CiPCo at HMP/YOI Brinsford serves as a strong endorsement of the significant impact of this work.*

- **Issue raised:** Delays in the court system mean prisoners are on remand for longer.

**Response:** *I share your concerns regarding the delays in the court system and the articular impact of these on remand prisoners. The Government has already taken a number of measures to address the backlog. The first phase report of the Independent Review of the Criminal Courts, commissioned by the Lord Chancellor and led by Sir Brian Leveson, was published on 9th July 2025. Measures have included increasing Magistrates Court Sentencing powers from 6 months to 12 months and increased number of sittings. The MoJ is working closely with His Majesty's Courts and Tribunal*

*Service to understand the impact of the Levenson recommendations and establish timelines for implementation.*

## **TO THE PRISON SERVICE**

### **Issues raised**

- Investment in infrastructure of residential wings to provide flexible heating system is needed.
- Lack of investment in infrastructure – most cells need refurbishment and there are windows that don't open.
- Amey do not provide an adequate service.

**Response:** *HMPPS is continually reviewing the investment required across the estate. All requests from the establishment will be considered, noting that demands for maintenance are much greater than funding available.*

*The Board will be aware of the numerous projects underway or completed at HMP/YOI Brinsford, totalling in excess of £5 million. Future works include Fire safety Improvement programme, forecasted to commence 2026. Further bids have been made in relation to upgrading the heating system and water infrastructure and for replacement of old windows with vented cellular accommodation windows.*

*Through the Clean, Rehabilitative, Enabling, and Decent (CRED) programme, investment in a Band 6 Clean and Decent Lead and the re-introduction of the cleaning officer role, the prison has worked to improve both cell refurbishment and decency across the site. Living conditions have improved as a result. However, it is acknowledged that this area requires further attention. The maintenance contractor's local performance is now positive and all Key Performance Indicators are being met.*

### **Issues raised**

- Improvements to dedicated mental healthcare so that prisoners can access services in a timelier way is necessary.
- Prisoners with mental health issues wait too long for a bed in a secure hospital.
- Ongoing concerns regarding management of diagnosis of mental health issues and transfer to appropriate care.

**Response:** *A National Rapid Review Framework is being established to drive forward actions to improve the timeliness of prison transfers to secure mental health hospitals across the estate. Regionally, there is a monthly strategic working group across the Health and Justice Commissioning, specialised commissioning and provider Collaboratives that have developed a regional action plan to focus on key areas such as bed capacity, clinical prioritisation data collection and scoping new models of delivery. A fortnightly, clinically led operational group meets to discuss patient specific cases and actions required across all partners to ensure timely transfers to secure beds.*

*Visits to the Healthcare Centre are undertaken by the Governor at HMP/YOI Brinsford several times a week to monitor timescales and moves for prisoners waiting a mental health bed.*

- **Issue raised:** Loss of property on transfer; slow and unreliable solving of resulting issues.

**Response:** HMPPS note the Board's concerns about the handling of prisoner's property. This is an area that HMPPS is giving further attention. Careful consideration is being given to the findings in the IMB National Thematic Report on how property loss impacts on prisoners, as well as findings from the Independent Prisoner Complaint Investigation .

HMPPS also note the Board's concern about the lack of digital improvements on property handling. HMPPS recognises the current prisoner property card solution on NOMIS is not adequate and, consequently, it is not widely used across the estate. The MoJ Justice Digital team have prioritised their work to decommission NOMIS, meaning that prisoner property has not been addressed. Potential digital solutions will be explored and reviewed as part of routine quarterly prioritisation activity. Capacity to deliver a solution will be subject to the spending review.

At HMP/YOI Brinsford, the Governor has made property issues a priority, with both enhanced gate security and reception teams working collaboratively. This has seen a reduction in complaints relating to local processes. Revised procedures for receiving clothing parcels have been introduced, which aims to streamline processing and searching requirements. The recently introduced staffing profile additionally provides weekend cover to support the issuing of property to prisoners once processed and for prisoners transferring in.

- **Issue raised:** There is an incentive for Novus not to run courses, in case prisoners withdraw and they are penalised.

**Response:** Novus is contractually and ethically committed to deliver education that supports prisoner rehabilitation and reduces offending. Education providers are not penalised for withdrawal; rather, they are judged against success rate targets, which are calculated by the percentage of learners starting a course against the percentage who complete a course. This is in line with education providers in the community. The Prison Service is responsible for commissioning courses and for allocating learners at site level and not the education supplier. The provider faces financial penalties if they do not run courses that have been commissioned by the site and on the Annual Delivery Plan. There is an expectation that Novus will make efforts to re-engage learners and not cancel provision.

- **Issue raised:** Prisoners do not complete relevant courses prior to transfer to Brinsford (as per sentence plan) and then find they are not available to them.

**Response:** It is acknowledged that, due to a national overcrowding issue, there may have been continued cases of prisoners being transferred to HMP/YOI prior to completing course in their residing establishment and instances of these courses not being available in the establishment to proceed with. Prisoners should not be transferred whilst they are attending an Offending Behaviour Programme (OBP) and will be placed on hold when they are imminently due to start or are already on a programme.

## **TO THE GOVERNOR**

### **Issues raised**

- Concern about lack of body worn video camera use and faulty equipment.
- Increase in violent assaults during prisoner movement.

- Gang violence and how to address this.
- Support for self-harm reliant on peer support due to reduction in available key worker sessions.
- Managing levels of self-isolation, if it increases.
- Concerns of an increased use of PAVA (an incapacitant spray) as a first line of defence, rather than a baton.
- Poor photocopying of prisoner correspondence and a lack of colour copies.
- Increase in 'hooch' (prison-brewed alcohol) finds and how do you plan to prevent this?
- Poor condition of some beds (broken slats) and mattresses and lack of availability of clean bedding and towels.
- Black and mixed ethnicity prisoners are more likely to be in the care and separation unit.
- Key worker sessions reduced when short of staff,
- An increase in prisoners allowed to stockpile canteen.
- Purposeful activity places reviewed to allow more opportunity for all prisoners.

## **Evidence sections 4 – 7**

### **4. Safety**

#### **4.1 Reception**

Brinsford is a local prison serving local courts; as a result, prisoners often arrive late in the evening. Officers offer a call to family and, if necessary, offer prisoners something to eat.

From the Board's observations, prisoners are received at reception and are treated well.

The Board is particularly concerned about prisoners arriving at the prison for resettlement, as they have either completed necessary courses and find there isn't anything suitable for them, or they are in the middle of a course that isn't offered in Brinsford. Their frustrations can lead to them being argumentative and disruptive during the 16-month period that should have been preparation for release.

Prisoners who are 22 years plus see themselves as being in a YOI when they are adults. They have come from an adult prison, but feel they are being treated as 'kids'. This is seen as another reason to be disruptive and as a way to get a move to an adult establishment. Sometimes, prisoners arrive without their property, which has gone missing, or it is lost within Brinsford, often from poor record keeping, in the Board's view. Compensation of £2743.74 was paid out during the reporting year for lost property. In recent months, a new paper process has been introduced in Brinsford, where clothing parcels are recorded more accurately and signed for by the prisoner, which seems to be working well. The Board has not received any complaints in this area and the prisoners we spoke to have expressed satisfaction.

#### **4.2 Suicide and self-harm and death in custody**

There have been no self-inflicted deaths in the reporting period. The Board is particularly sad to report one death in custody during the latter part of the year. At the time of writing, in July 2025, the cause of death had yet to be determined, with an inquest due to be held. Following the death, an internal investigation by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) took place regarding staff responses, but the report has not been published yet. As a result, the Board is pleased to find that the local security strategy (LSS) has been changed. Every prisoner is now physically woken and checked and invited to collect his breakfast. This ensures that the prisoner is seen to be well; if not, it can be dealt with and the prisoner is up in time to go to activities.

There has been quite a considerable increase in self-isolators in the reporting period, rising from an average of two or three to up to 14 in one week in 2025. The reasons seem to be generally associated with their offence, debts and their own poor behavior, but it suggests that prisoners do not feel safe from reprisals. From the Board's observations, those who choose to isolate themselves from others are well cared for and well monitored. In the Board's view, the annual figure of 121 self-isolators, with an average of one each month, does not reflect the true number. The number of isolators is recorded on only one day of the month, not each day.

#### **4.3 Violence reduction**

The Board recognises the characteristics associated with prison violence: age, violent convictions, membership of gangs, low self-control, anger, temper, mental health problems, and antisocial attitudes and personality.

In addition, low educational attainment, drug offences or drug abuse, and the younger age profile of HMP/YOI Brinsford lead to a group that presents challenging behaviour. The Board is of the view that this needs to be managed effectively by providing a decent environment with purposeful, interesting and motivating activities, combined with a strict but fair interpretation of rules that could lead to mutual respect.

In-cell fires are also a major problem, with 56 reported over the year in review. At one point, there were 12 to 15 active arsonists and up to 40 prisoners who had committed arson in other prisons or in the community resident at HMP Brinsford. Staff are well trained to deal with fires.

Incidents of violence between prisoners increased this year, to 528, compared with 484 last year. In February, use of force (UoF) was used 23 times on one prisoner. The Board is satisfied that force was necessary due to the prisoner's behaviour.

The prison reported a 128% increase in violence in the first three months of the reporting year, which is believed to be due to a change in association and the domestic cleaning regime. The Board was made aware of the changes, which were to give extra time out of cell to all prisoners. One group was in the association room and outside yard, whilst the other group was locked onto a wing spur to undertake domestic cleaning.

Violence increased during this period, so from September 2024 the domestic cleaning part of association was canceled, and use of force figures came in line with comparable prisons. Domestic cleaning continues at other times of the day, with only a few prisoners out at any one time.

Challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIP), used to manage prisoners who pose an increased risk of violence, have had an impact on those who need help. However, they have not been so effective with gang-related violence, which is proving harder to address. Whilst young adults associated with, or affiliated to, gangs are often involved in violence, this does not appear to be the driver in Brinsford. It is usually low-level frustrations or debt of some kind. The CSIP programme is a good disruptor but has proven difficult to follow, due to the lack of space to move prisoners around.

During the first half of the reporting year, from 1 July to 31 December, 133 adjudications (disciplinary hearings when a prisoner is alleged to have broken prison rules) were sent to the police. The police indicated that 32 adjudications would be sent for prosecution. This was for 31 incidents, 25 of which were returned to prison for action, while six would proceed to prosecution.

From 1 January to 30 June 2025 (the latter half of the reporting year), there was a new crime coordinator (CIPCO) in post, which saw an improvement in the figures. There were 183 adjudications, with 117 accepted and 66 returned for adjudication within the prison. This covered 75 incidents: 43 were accepted and 32 returned for adjudication in the prison.

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

The Board is concerned that prisoners remain restrained longer than necessary because officers do not check for compliance. In addition, officers show poor control over incidents by, for example, not clearing the area of other prisoners, which leaves them vulnerable to further fighting or prisoners taking over an area. The Board monitors this by observing use of force and body worn video camera (BWVC) meetings and scrutinising the minutes of these meetings. The meetings are well attended, and any

issues of concern are discussed. The Board is offered the opportunity to raise any issues of concern.

In the Board's view, use of Pava incapacitant spray is at a reasonable level. We believe it is a safe method of de-escalating violence; it does not appear to be overused and sometimes the threat of its use can diffuse an incident. Those affected by the use of Pava are checked by medical staff.

The Board is broadly satisfied that Pava's use is justified, proportionate and fair, and that the quality of the resulting paperwork is slowly improving; however, there is still a certain amount to be done in this field.

The use of batons is minimal. Sometimes, as a deterrent, they are drawn but not used. Although batons can be useful, the Board believes that it is safer for both officers and prisoners to use Pava.

Body worn video camera use has increased throughout the year. However, there are times when they are not switched on. On average, they are switched on 55-60% of the time. The Board believes this should be greater. In addition, officers are not automatically and instinctively switching them on as they approach an incident or even during a conversation that is starting to get out of hand.

Often, when BWVCs are used, it is difficult to see what is happening when officers are on the floor trying to restrain a prisoner. Despite investments in CCTV, there are still some 'blind spots' and cameras that are too far away from the incident.

A BWVC scrutiny panel is held each week to observe the use of force incidents. The Board are invited to attend as an observer. If issues are raised by Board members or officers present, these are referred back to the officer for advice and guidance; equally, when an incident has been handled well, officers are praised.

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

During the reporting year, the use of drones bringing in illicit paraphernalia increased, with prisoners removing windows from their frames to be able to reach packages.

From the Board's observations, the prison is doing all it can to try to prevent illicit items entering the prison, with enhanced gate searches and the use of sniffer dogs. However, there remains a large ingress of drugs, mobile phones and USBs. The vulnerable areas are 'throw-overs', visits by family and friends, and prisoners arriving through reception via court and other establishment. All staff and official visitors attending the prison also go through the search procedures.

Naloxone is a drug that can be given quickly to treat an opiate overdose. The target set by the drug and alcohol group (DAG) is for 30% of band 2 to band 5 operational grades to be trained in administering nasal Naloxone. This is the minimum percentage required for an establishment to have sufficient coverage of trained staff on site at any one time.

At the time of writing the report, in July 2025, the prison has 267 operational members of staff between the band 2 and band 5 grades. Therefore, 81 staff members need to be trained to achieve the 30% minimum target; they currently only have 66. However, only 22 of these have signed the training checklist. Collecting the remaining 44 signatures is a priority in July as, without the signatures, they technically only have 22 trained staff members, which puts them significantly below target. With only 22 signed checklists, Brinsford sits at only 8%. Staff seem reluctant to sign the training register.



## **5. Fair and humane treatment**

### **5.1 Accommodation, clothing, and food**

There are six residential units, with the majority of cells in the five larger units in need of refurbishment. The smaller unit 6 was refurbished during the previous reporting year. Cell toilets and sinks are in poor condition, throughout the prison but particularly in the CSU. This is exacerbated by poor cleaning regimes, which should be picked up as part of the accommodation fabric checks (AFC). Issues that are reported are dealt with too slowly; in particular, there is a repainting programme in place, but graffitied cells are not prioritised above other areas.

In addition to the six standard residential units, there are 16 cells in the care and separation unit (CSU), where prisoners are separated from the rest of the prison population, and 10 spaces in the 24/7 healthcare facility. The cells in the CSU are in particularly poor condition, especially the toilets and sinks but also the beds and the floors. The poor conditions are, to a large extent, due to prisoner damage, but the Board is seriously concerned about the failure to ensure a basic standard of accommodation for prisoners.

Despite a previous investment in new boilers, there are significant problems with the heating system. Thermostatic controls were omitted, so there is no flexible control, which means that heating is either fully on or off. There have been instances when the heating system has turned on and off of its own accord, which leads to extremes of temperature and discomfort for prisoners and staff. When the heating is on, many windows are opened to try to regulate the temperature, although there are also windows that do not function effectively, leading to varying levels of discomfort.

Shower facilities on some wings are of a very poor standard and refurbishment work has not been of a satisfactory standard. In particular, ventilation is poor, leading to a buildup of mould.

There are concerns about the cost and timeliness of repairs or other work carried out by the contracted provider, Amey. Faulty or damaged in-cell phones are also very slow to be dealt with because (BT) will only attend the site when there is a minimum of five repairs to be actioned. Consequently, some prisoners wait a disproportionate length of time for a repair. Although staff make contingency arrangements for them to access other phone services.

There have been issues with rodent infestations across the year, with external contractors dealing with issues as they arise.

From the Board's observations, prisoners have lost faith in the internal laundry service. Issues early in the reporting year resulted in lost or stolen items and, consequently, prisoners are reluctant to send items to the laundry, preferring to wash and dry them in cells. This is far from ideal, and it is a challenge for the prison to convince prisoners that the service has been revised and much greater controls are now in place.

There were no applications (prisoners' written representations to the IMB) regarding food during the reporting year. However, our observations of food service are that quality can be variable and portions insufficient. Food service has, on occasion, been observed to be poorly supervised by officers, which leads to discrepancies in portion size and items being held back. There is a 'food comment' system, to facilitate communication between the kitchen and the wings, but it is not often used, as prisoners believe that

their comments are not taken seriously. Special diets are provided for prisoners who require them, if supported by the healthcare unit.

## **5.2 Segregation, special accommodation**

There were 536 prisoners located in the CSU during the reporting year, which is an average of 10 per week. Reintegration planning appears to be good, with most prisoners returning to residential units within a week; however, 45 prisoners remained in the CSU more than 14 days and 31 of these were in the last six months of the reporting year. There were three instances where a prisoner's stay in the CSU exceeded 42 days (63 days; 56 days; and 47 days ongoing, at end of reporting year), the time limit allowed without external authorisation.

For segregation monitoring and review group (SMARG) figures, see annex C.

Compared with the previous reporting year, the number of prisoners in the CSU has fallen by 7% (536 against 579); however, when the population increase of 5% across the year is taken into account (average 543 against 539 last year), this is a more notable decrease. The ethnicity of prisoners in the CSU is broadly in line with the population, but with Asian prisoners slightly less likely to be in unit and black and white prisoners slightly more likely to be in the unit.

During the year, 10% of prisoners in the CSU have been on an assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) plan, which is used to support prisoners at risk of self-harm and suicide. This is an increase of 7%, compared with the previous year, which is a trend that needs to be monitored.

The Board has observed that relationships between staff and prisoners have been good or very good, with staff demonstrating a very good level of knowledge of those assigned to their care. Continuity of staff on duty during the reporting period has had a positive impact on the quality of care provided to prisoners, in the Board's view.

The Board observed the majority of prisoner reviews for Rule 45/Rule 49 (good order or discipline/GOoD, used if a prisoner's behaviour poses a risk to other prisoners, staff, or prison property) placement in segregation, and a healthcare professional was in attendance. Prisoners appear to be clear about the reason for their placement in segregation and which investigations are being undertaken, and they are given a timeline for their expected return to a wing location. Reviews are conducted fairly, and prisoners contribute to discussions about the next steps; however, they can often delay a return by claiming the planned move will be unsafe for them, as this will have to be investigated.

Prisoners usually have access to radios but, occasionally, stocks are low, as the wind-up and solar-charged models in use are not robust and are easily damaged. Replacement stock is costly, and orders often delayed.

During the reporting year, 316 adjudications were referred to the police for further action, of which 149 were accepted and 167 returned to the prison or the independent adjudicator for action. It is notable that there has been a huge variance in the success rate of referrals to the police across the year, which is attributed to the new appointment of a crime coordinator in January 2025.

Period	Referrals	Accepted	%	Returned	%
July-Dec 24	133	32	24%	101	76%
Jan-Jun 25	183	117	64%	66	36%
<b>Total</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>53%</b>

Referrals not accepted by the police are often due to lack of evidence and victims (prisoners and staff) refusing to support the prosecution. Adjudications within the Prison Service refer to the charges rather than the number of prisoners, as there may be multiple prisoners involved in one incident.

The age range of prisoners at the end of the reporting period was:

Age range	Number	%
Aged 18-20	333	61.1%
Aged 21-24	150	27.5%
Aged 25-29	62	11.4%

There is a significant change in the age profile of prisoners compared with the previous reporting period, when 67% were aged 18-22 and 33% were aged 23-29 years.

### 5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships

From the Board's observations, staff and prisoner relationships are generally good, and staff demonstrate a very good level of knowledge of the prisoners in their care. Staffing shortages can have a negative impact, especially if it is for prolonged periods. During the reporting year, there were 54 new starters, 35 leavers and nine staff transferring. Unfamiliar staff on a wing can inadvertently upset the balance, as they do not know prisoners and it is difficult for them to know where special arrangements exist and which prisoners should not be unlocked together.

Staff looking after the most vulnerable prisoners as patients in the 24/7 healthcare unit, are exceptional and, along with partner agencies, push for the best care possible in a system that is already overstretched and unable to meet demands.

The Board remains concerned about the level of prisoner assaults on staff. While the number has increased on the previous reporting year, it is in line with the population increase. It is pleasing to note that there is a decrease in the number of assaults classified as serious.

Year	Assaults	Classified as serious	Average population
23-24	81	8	529
24-25	96	6	545

There is some evidence that assaults on staff can be revenge assaults and carried out under duress because of debt issues, so the Board will monitor efforts to deal with debt issues.

The Board continues to be concerned about the key worker programme. It is of great importance to staff and prisoner relationships and is pivotal to the continuity of pastoral support for the prisoners. Staff absences continue to impact on the frequency of sessions and often none is carried out on many continuous days.

## **5.4 Equality and diversity**

During the reporting year, HMP/YOI Brinsford received 33 discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs); of these, 15 have been upheld, 14 were dismissed, one was withdrawn and three were re-directed to the complaints procedure.

DIRFs are sent externally to the Zahid Mubarek Trust (ZMT) charity for scrutiny and are then returned for action. Due to the low number of complaints submitted, this work isn't frequent.

At the end of the reporting year, there were 51 foreign national prisoners (9.4% of population), which is fractionally higher than the 8.7% of the previous year (46 out of population of 529). The foreign national prisoner immigration surgery occurs monthly, as well as utilising the cloud video platform (CVP) rooms to complete interviews in between. Additional support for foreign national prisoners at the prison includes forums, which have been held with both staff and prisoners. Foreign national prisoners were observed by the Board to be treated fairly and have access to social video calls.

There were many national events and celebrations marked during the year, with awareness being raised throughout the prison. These included:

- Faith festivals, including harvest festival with Bishop of Lichfield
- Black History Month events for prisoners and staff
- Baby loss awareness week
- Remembrance ceremony on 11 November for prisoners and staff
- Christmas carol service prisoners and staff
- Holocaust Remembrance Day for prisoners and staff
- LGBTQ+ quiz for staff
- Open evening for staff and families
- Regular prisoner equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) forums are held throughout the year

Opportunities to celebrate religious festivals are embraced for all faiths. Chaplaincy and catering staff facilitated preparation for Ramadan by holding meetings of wing representatives to consult on Ramadan food provision. Approximately 180 prisoners observed Ramadan and an Eid celebration for 60 prisoners was held (restricted due to non-associate issues); festival food was provided on wings to all Muslim prisoners.

The neurodiversity support manager (NSM) is supporting staff and prisoners. It is estimated that 72% of prisoners in the prison are neurodivergent. The NSM is helpful in recognising triggers and advising staff on how to manage individuals. The major problem is the lack of funding and purchasing; £1500 per annum is insufficient to purchase ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) coaching courses, training and resources.

## **5.5 Faith and pastoral support**

From the Board's observations, there is a very effective chaplaincy team, who are highly visible and supportive. They make daily visits to the segregation unit, in line with their statutory duties, and provide one-to-one support across the prison where requested. The on-site team facilitates weekly services for Christian, Hindu, Sikh, Latter Day Saint and Muslim faiths. Access to a Buddhist, Jehovah's Witness, Jewish, Pagan and Rastafarian chaplaincy is brought in when required and a range of faith-based artefacts are available on site to support these faiths.

The chaplaincy team seems to be an integrated part of the wider prison staff, attending meetings and providing valuable input regarding vulnerable prisoners they have dealings with. A chaplaincy volunteer visits all self-isolating prisoners and those on open ACCT (assessment, care in custody and teamwork) plans on a weekly basis.

## **5.6 Incentives schemes**

The incentives scheme policy is under review, to ensure that there are clear differentials between the basic (bottom), standard (middle) and enhanced (top) levels. In particular, the line between basic and standard had been blurred, as television sets were not consistently removed as part of the adjudication process. The Board welcomes this review, as incentivising good behaviour is essential to prison stability and published incentives must be achievable.

Prisoners achieving enhanced status are entitled to additional social visits and an additional £10 per week canteen spend, and they can order an X-Box. Some enhanced prisoners have complained that they are unable to book the additional social visits they are entitled to due to lack of capacity in the visiting hall. This frustration is compounded when there is non-attendance by visitors who fail to cancel their booking, leaving spaces unused.

Residential block 5 is nominated as the incentivised substance free living (ISFL) wing. Prisoners located there are either on the incentives scheme's enhanced level or are working towards the top status (at the end of the reporting year, 86% were enhanced) and must be in full-time work. In addition to the usual privileges for enhanced status, prisoners on this wing get additional association each evening, Monday to Thursday and Friday afternoon, and 9am-5pm Saturday and Sunday. This includes access to the exercise yard, tennis court, association room (for pool, table tennis), exercise machines and barbering, as well as being allowed to use the microwave and air fryer.

## **5.7 Complaints**

The prison follows the Complaints Policy Framework, as re-issued in November 2020, which all staff are advised to read.

A senior manager is responsible for the quality assurance process for prisoner complaints. Every month, a member of the IMB team meets with the Governor who is responsible for overseeing complaints, to scrutinise a random sample of these complaints. The findings from this audit, together with recommendations, are reported and discussed at senior management team meetings.

There is a clear set of procedures for dealing with prisoners' complaints, which are made known to the prisoners during the induction process. Complaint forms are available throughout the establishment, in areas frequently accessed by prisoners, such as association spaces, and are clearly advertised. If prisoners struggle to complete a written complaint, there is support from officers on the wing. But this is not ideal if the complaint is confidential (Comp 2) and may concern staff behaviour.

Prisoners who have difficulty with written communication may submit a complaint verbally, with time frames as per written complaints. Prisoners whose first language is not English may submit a complaint in their primary language, if they so wish. The prison's intranet has complaint forms in 19 languages and may be printed as required.

Arrangements are in place for complaints to be considered during weekends and on public holidays. Complaints are answered in line with the timeline requirements set out

in the Complaints Policy Framework, which is within five working days (not including Bank Holidays) of the complaint being logged (or 10 working days if the complaint is about a member of staff). Interim replies are given within that time frame if it is not possible to give a full reply. The interim reply gives some indication of when a full reply may be expected. Most of the complaints received at Brinsford are related to property.

A total of 530 complaints were received during the reporting year; 204 (39%) related to property, which covered:

- Items missing from the laundry
- Items missing from clothing parcels
- Property not being sent on transfer from another establishment
- Items missing from cells

Compensation of £2,743.74 for property issues was paid to prisoners during the year.

Out of 12 months of complaints, 120 (23%) were assurance checked by the Board. All those checked complied with the timescale for responding. The following concerns were raised when assurance checked:

- 3 responses did not record the date on the response (the business hub does record the date received back on a tracker)
- 2 responses were felt to be not fully resolved
- 4 responses were felt not to have an adequate response
- 1 was missing the respondent's name from the response

Any concerns picked up have been escalated to the business hub manager to address accordingly. A best-practice template has been shared with middle managers on how to respond to complaints and nothing of real concern was noted of those checked. The number of property complaints continues to be addressed at both establishment and regional level, with functional heads tasked to look at processes in order to alleviate issues in the future.

## 5.8 Property

Although the prison received 204 complaints regarding property (39% of total), there has been a significant fall in the number of IMB applications received relating to property:

Application	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
Property in establishment	5	23	8
Property during transfer	10	11	1

Whilst it is pleasing that property complaints are being dealt with without reference to the Board, we are still concerned that transferring prisoners' items from other prisons is too slow, unreliable and inconsistent. There often seems to be space on the transport vans for the extra bags; however, the transport provider will only take a maximum of three bags per prisoner, which causes the delays. The items are lost either at the previous prison or not recorded as having arrived at the new establishment. A barcode system for transported property would solve a large number of problems, in the Board's view. The

contract needs to be updated to expect more efficient transfer of property and the use of modern technology to link property to prisoners, regardless of the prison location.

Of the eight IMB applications regarding 'in-establishment' property, 50% relate to issues with new clothing parcel procedures.

## **6. Health and wellbeing**

### **6.1 Healthcare general**

Practice Plus Group (PPG) provides access to 24/7 primary care healthcare services, alongside the Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust, which provides access to mental health and substance misuse services.

The Board commends PPG staff for their teamwork and expertise in managing patients with challenging behavior, especially after a recent unexpected death in custody. PPG offers round-the-clock care to prisoners from any facility.

Referrals for 24/7 healthcare support for physical or mental health concerns are made through a written referral, via the West Midlands regional 24/7 resource process, managed by the team at HMP Birmingham, on a weekly basis and reviewed during a scheduled call. If the team determines that the individual meets the criteria, a bed is assigned within the region, such as Brinsford, Dovegate or Birmingham. Patients are returned to the transferring prison once their condition stabilises.

Alternatively, a referral for a community acute mental health bed is completed, and the individual remains admitted until a bed becomes available. When they are considered suitable for discharge from the mental health facility, they return to their original prison. Individuals return to Brinsford only if they were previously housed there.

The national guidelines stipulate that the PPG contract has a 28-day period to transfer a patient from prison to a mental health facility for intensive treatment. However, timely transfers are often challenging, as community patients may occupy available beds, resulting in delays. Some prisoners have waited 80 and 96 days - well beyond the agreed 28 days - for a bed.

Prisoners should not be placed in the healthcare centre for behaviour issues, although the Prison Service is increasingly doing so when it proves difficult to manage a prisoner on a residential unit.

The healthcare department includes consulting rooms for the doctor, dentist and optician, as well as a treatment room for blood tests, ECGs, or electrocardiogram (a test that records the electrical activity of the heart to check its rate and rhythm, wound care and other procedures. The waiting area is small, clean and comfortable, and has a television.

The 24/7 healthcare unit offers 10 single cells (each with a bed, sink and toilet), two constant watch cells, and one Listeners' cell. Initially, there was only one constant watch cell, but a second was added during the year. These cells are intended for individuals at risk of self-harm or suicide, although they have sometimes housed disruptive prisoners who disturb clinically ill patients. A constant watch cell on the CSU should be considered to prevent prisoners' misbehavior disturbing mentally unwell patients.

The Healthcare Unit have access to a shower room, an association room with a TV, sofas, a pool table, board games and an outdoor area with benches, although no fitness equipment is available.

The shower room, although condemned, remains in use. With no windows, it relies on weak extraction fans for ventilation. Mould returns on the walls and ceiling, even after repainting, and the damp, decayed back wall is just concealed with wood. The door lacks ventilation, and significant investment is needed to restore standards.



A GP visits three times a week - Monday, Wednesday and Friday, to conduct surgery and to check on prisoners in the CSU, completing CSU rounds during each visit. A psychiatrist conducts weekly visits and sees patients referred by the inclusion team. Additionally, the psychiatrist provides outreach services to the CSU and relevant wings, as necessary.

Healthcare services operate in a manner similar to doctors' surgeries in the community. Patients are typically assigned appointment times within a two-week period. Nurses review all applications to differentiate between urgent and non-urgent cases.

Subcontracted clinics experience delays due to ongoing inaccurate roll reconciliation. Movement may be paused for as long as 45 minutes, resulting in paid clinic time not being used and prisoners unable to attend appointments with opticians, dentists, physiotherapists and podiatrists. This contributes to increased waiting times, particularly for clinics that occur less often. Prisoners face longer waits for the optician or dentist, leading to frustration and anger for a situation beyond their control.

The roll reconciliation system has been changed, taking place twice daily, and officers are becoming more familiar with this process, resulting in improved counting accuracy.

Non-attendance at appointments is an ongoing issue and sometimes is due to insufficient staff to move prisoners. The healthcare centre records the reasons for absence, which sometimes include patients choosing not to attend due to personal preferences such as staying in bed or visiting the gym. There are no apparent sanctions for this behaviour.

The unit typically relies on consistent officers who build rapport and trust with prisoners. Replacing them with ad hoc staff is counterproductive.

Lockdowns, community days and staff shortages affect the regime in the healthcare centre. When three officers are needed to unlock a prisoner, staff availability may not always allow the regime to run as planned.

Prisoners who are unwell may decline showers or association when staff are available but later request them when staff are not present.

The Board is of the view that prisoners who are unwell or neurodivergent require increased staff interaction, greater opportunities for socialisation and more opportunities to leave their cells than those on a standard regime. However, lockdowns and staffing shortages restrict these provisions. For example, in August of last year, the healthcare centre was under lockdown, with only one uniformed staff member present in the centre for 99.25 out of 310 hours. Lockdowns are a regular occurrence.

## **6.2 Physical healthcare**

PPG seldom encounters chronic or multiple illnesses typical of adult prisons, given its age profile. Occasionally, prisoners recovering from injuries, surgery or illness are cared for in the 24/7 healthcare unit, with routine nurse checks.

The healthcare centre has a health and wellbeing nurse who focuses on chronic illnesses such as diabetes, asthma and epilepsy. Another nurse manages HIV and hepatitis B and C, and coordinates with the Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust blood borne viruses (BBVs) clinics for sexual health. Wellman clinics are led by nurses and healthcare assistants (HCAs).

### **6.3 Mental health**

Prisoners in the healthcare centre are assessed by a psychiatrist and may be referred for an NHS community bed, although some remain on the unit for observation or treatment. The service agreement targets transfer within 28 days, but national mental health bed shortages often cause delays. In the latter part of the year, one patient waited 96 days beyond the target and another 80 days, leading to a decline in their mental health.

There are not enough beds nationwide, causing seriously ill prisoners to wait too long for treatment. The Board is concerned that keeping these prisoners at Brinsford too long harms their recovery and wellbeing and places a huge burden on staff.

From the Board's observations, prisoners were treated respectfully but received little in the way of treatment. Mental health care, including psychiatry, is provided by the Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust Inclusion Team. However, the Board is seriously concerned about delays in acute mental health interventions from secondary care.

From the Board's observations, prisoners have been very well looked after in residential unit 6, and the healthcare centre has done some excellent work in helping prisoners cope with their circumstances. Praise should be given to the officers who work in the healthcare centre, as they are often supporting and managing prisoners with particularly challenging behaviour and needs. However, there are often more prisoners needing help than there are cells on the unit.

### **6.4 Social care**

The number of prisoners needing social care is low, owing to the age profile. Social care was needed only to remind the patient to shower, not for personal assistance. The reasons included neurodiversity and, at times, poor life skills. Board members noted that staff instruct prisoners in the use of cutlery and promote regular hygiene practices, such as showering. Additional time may be necessary for direct interaction with prisoners outside their cells.

The Board would like to see more purposeful activity in healthcare centre. While processes exist, facilitation has sometimes been limited because of staffing levels in the 24/7 healthcare unit.

### **6.5 Time out of cell and regime**

Outdoor exercise equipment is not provided for healthcare centre prisoners, in line with the establishment's policy to prioritise reintegrating individuals back into the standard regime. Gym sessions may be permitted in certain cases, subject to individual circumstances and staff availability, but these are frequently cancelled. An association room is available and includes a pool table, reading corner and board games.

Prisoners on the normal regime are allocated 45 minutes out of their cells each day, with recently added additional time when collecting breakfast. Individuals participating in work or education programmes spend part of their day outside their cells. Generally, the prison operates with part-time work opportunities. When not in work or education, prisoners have time for 'domestics', such as showering, phoning family and friends and socialising.

## **6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation**

Some prisoners continue to use illegal substances, primarily psychoactive substances such as spice (a synthetic cannabinoid), and are occasionally found to be under the influence. The proportion of such cases is low compared to other prisons but fluctuates over time. Healthcare staff have previously noted possible under-reporting, as they are not always called to assess affected patients, resulting in discrepancies between healthcare and prison data.

During the reporting year, residential unit 5 changed from an enhanced unit to an incentivised substance free living unit. Residents participate in substance-abuse rehabilitation and are regularly tested. If they have three positive tests, they are removed. The unit provides slightly increased freedom, so prisoners are generally reluctant to leave.

At the end of the reporting year, four prisoners were on opioid substitutes. Alcohol-detox services are available at Brinsford but seem to be used infrequently. Staff are trained to assess alcohol dependency, with the integrated substance misuse services (ISMS) central hub offering specialist support and prescribing.

## **6.7 Soft skills**

Education is responsible for producing in-cell work and the mental health/inclusion team provides distraction packs for patients, where required. The patient engagement lead (PEL) and clinical lead work with the mental health team to provide in-cell work for in patients where required.

Prisoners in the healthcare unit who are unable to engage in in-cell activities have no options, as neither PEL nor education offers quizzes, puzzles, or in-cell distraction packs for those who would be able to participate. Some work was completed around activities' scheduling and this was in place and commended by HMIP; however, it has been hampered by HMPPS staffing levels, which has impacted officers' availability to unlock prisoner. There appears to be no joint working between education and the healthcare centre.

## **7. Progression and resettlement**

### **7.1 Education**

The Board continues to be concerned about many of the issues we raised in our previous report.

Brinsford has the advantage of having two large education blocks, Hawthorn and Rowan, however this capacity is not maximised. Despite there being multiple empty classrooms, indicating that there is space for more prisoners to be in education, the prison has not purchased enough spaces for every prisoner to be in full-time education. The detriment to prisoners of having only a limited number of spaces is further compounded by them not being optimally utilised. Allocation figures show that classes are not always allocated to their full capacity. The Board sees many classes with only a handful of students. The reasons for this vary from 'keep apart' (generally prisoners who are gang affiliated and cannot mix with opposing gang members due to the risk of violence), to prisoners not wanting to attend. In this respect, the Incentives Policy Framework fails as it does not sufficiently motivate prisoners to attend education and/or behave whilst there.

Hawthorn has closed multiple times, due to staff shortages, which has meant prisoners could not be escorted to education. There have also been instances where prisoners have lost learning time due to issues with the roll count, which have delayed their arrival at class. This is an ongoing issue.

The Board has spoken to prisoners who are not in education but express a desire to be. It has taken an enquiry from the Board, asking what the plan is for these prisoners, for this to be noticed and prisoners to then be allocated education classes.

Completing courses in basic Maths and English continues to be prioritised. The industries manager has worked hard to embed elements of these skills within practical courses such as horticulture and, where instructors have supported it, prisoners have engaged with this.

Similarly, prisoners seem to engage well with Maverick Sounds, a music-based programme, delivered by an external provider and including an element of Maths learning. Prisoners describe it as 'the best course in the prison'. From this, it seems that prisoners will engage with Maths and English learning, provided it is delivered in a practical way. Many prisoners are resistant to learning Maths and English in the traditional classroom environment.

Completing Maths and English is incentivised as a means to move onto other courses; however, prisoners become bored in lessons they are compelled to attend and disengage, resulting in the poor numbers for education. During the reporting period, 117 prisoners were enrolled on the Maths course, yet only 59 achieved the qualification. Similarly, 109 were enrolled on the English course, but only 68 achieved the qualification. The current approach to delivering basic Maths and English education is not working and needs to change, in the Board's view.

Prisoners have said that they want more practical learning. The popularity and completion rates for the forklift truck, RMF (which offers training in construction, logistics and hospitality) and CSCS (construction skills certification scheme) courses demonstrate this. During the reporting period, 145 prisoners were enrolled on the CSCS course and 136 achieved the qualification. Similarly, 41 were enrolled on the forklift truck course and 39 achieved the qualification. Only three prisoners can attend the forklift truck course at

any one time; it lasts three weeks, so there is a long waiting list. In the meantime, prisoners are bored. The potential positive impact of this course, through giving prisoners purposeful activity and an opportunity to earn a qualification that can lead to employment on release is significant yet not maximised, and this is regrettable.

There is a large, well equipped multi-skills workshop within Rowan, which has been redundant since the tutor left over two years ago. Efforts were made to fill the vacancy, but tutors can earn more in the community, so the vacancy was not filled and the workshop has become a storage space. This is regrettable, given the unmet demand for practical learning. There was a proposal for the space to be refurbished to accommodate forklift truck and CSCS training, but this has not come to fruition.

Due to population pressures, particularly in the north west, Brinsford has had an influx of older prisoners. Many of these men are anxious about being so far from their loved ones and are dissatisfied with the education on offer. They complain to the IMB that they are bored at Brinsford, become despondent and then disengage with purposeful activity. The curriculum on offer does not seem to meet the needs of the cohort of prisoners Brinsford now holds.

Information displayed around the prison is outdated. Noticeboards feature information about Way2Learn courses that have not been offered at Brinsford for over a year. By neglecting these spaces, an opportunity is missed to share details with prisoners about new projects and courses; it also gives the impression that learning is not a priority.

Brinsford's neurodiversity support manager (NSM) is passionate about helping neurodivergent prisoners. He strives to achieve this by engaging with prisoners, and upskilling staff to develop their awareness of best practice when working with neurodivergent men. It is estimated that 72% of prisoners in Brinsford have neurodiverse needs, so this resource is vital and its inception in 2024 was welcomed.

However, for it to be optimally effective, much more funding is needed. The current annual budget of £1500 is insufficient and does not allow the manager to fully achieve his task of training staff in neurodiversity. A total of 90% of this budget was spent on an autism reality experience, provided by Training 2 Care UK. This training event allowed staff to experience what it may be like to have autism, so that they can better understand how a prisoner with autism experiences prison. This is an effective resource, although funding only covered the training for 24 staff, meaning a large portion of the staff team is untrained. Furthermore, this training only covered one of the many neurodivergent conditions that prisoners live with.

The scope and success of the NSM's role is curtailed by insufficient funding. In the Board's view, the government needs to be more ambitious in its allocation of resources for supporting neurodivergent within the custodial estate.

## **7.2 Library**

The library continues to be a well-resourced, inviting environment. As in previous years, a number of initiatives and competitions have been run to encourage and develop skills in reading and writing.

Staff shortages have continued to be an issue. At these times, regime is restricted and one of the first things to be stopped is library access. This has caused frustration amongst prisoners. The Board has raised this with senior leadership team (SLT), which acknowledges that the situation is not ideal. Unfortunately, the prison has not identified a

workable solution to this. This issue has been reported in the last two reports, and no progress has been made. This is regrettable.

Visits to the library as part of the induction process are hit and miss. Again, this is a recurring issue.

Each association area has a book stand with books; however, the selection on offer is unlikely to cater for the tastes of young adults. Many of the books are old and cover topics such as types of wildflowers, period novels and beekeeping. Prisoners state that they would not read many of the books on offer and, instead, use the library, when it is open, to choose a genre of book they are more interested in.

### **7.3 Vocational training**

Similar to education, there are not enough spaces to accommodate full-time work for every prisoner. This means there are prisoners who lack opportunity to spend their sentence purposefully. The high number of prisoners not engaged with education and/or work has been raised in previous reports and remains an area about which the Board continues to be a concern.

Drone drops by organised crime gangs into Brinsford had a large impact on prisoner work-based risk assessments, which then affected activity allocations. There were concerns by the industries manager that decisions made were excessively risk averse; that prisoners who could safely attend were not allowed to do so because of their risk assessment; and that this was unduly impacting numbers negatively. The task of risk assessing was reallocated, which seemed to resolve the issue.

The prison offers pathways in construction, hospitality and warehousing, with courses that are linked to each pathway. Prisoners select a pathway, depending on their post-release employment goals, then work towards gaining qualifications and information in support of this. This works very well on the construction pathway, as the forklift truck, RMF and CSCS qualifications, which are offered as part of this, are requirements for employment. The employment lead has developed positive links with a range of employers in the construction industry, which are the main source of post-release employment offers.

In contrast, there are areas that do not work well with any pathway, such as, for example, horticulture. At the time of writing the report, in July 2025, discussions are underway to reconsider how all the activities offered at Brinsford can be linked to a pathway. This is necessary to allow a clear path of progression to be identified and to give prisoners structure and a sense of purpose to their activities.

A further missed opportunity is the barbering room. This year, over £1000 was spent refurbishing the barbering classroom, although there is now no money to employ a teacher for this. This is a waste of funds and space.

The prison has hosted at least seven themed employment events during the reporting period, covering a range of industries, from hospitality and catering to construction and cleaning. Large companies, including Greggs, Sodexo, Marstons, Greene King, Wates, GMI, Taylor Woodrow, McDermott, McGinley, Fortem, Ceva Logistics and OCS attend these events to inform prisoners about, and, in some cases, interview them for, employment opportunities on release.

A total of 15 prisoners were released with a firm written offer of employment on release. This figure is small when considered against the size of the overall population at

Brinsford. There are some missed opportunities to further diversify the areas covered by employment events.

The gym is popular amongst prisoners and delivers a selection of courses, including First Aid and Fitness Instructing. Qualifications are either Level 1 or 2, and are accredited so can provide pathways to progression on release. It was raised in previous reports, and continues to be the case, that the prison does not have any employment links with the fitness industry. This is regrettable, in the Board's view, as it would allow prisoners to apply their learning and explore post-release employment opportunities in what is a growing market.

#### **7.4 Case management and progression**

The number of remanded prisoners, and the length of time some have spent on remand, remains high. This is believed to be due to the delays in the court system. Non-convicted prisoners are not eligible for offending behaviour programmes. If a remand prisoner becomes convicted, and the time spent on remand is equal to or exceeds the sentence imposed (meaning it has been served), the consequence of this is that the prisoner leaves prison without having had any of his offending behaviour addressed. This raises concern over the likelihood that the prisoner will re-offend.

The Thinking Skills Programme (TSP) continues to be the only one offered at Brinsford and has low attendance. Over the reporting period, 48 prisoners began the course, with 41 completing it. With an average population of over 500 prisoners, this figure is concerning for the Board, as it suggests that less than 10% of prisoners have accessed an accredited intervention to address offending behaviour. This, coupled with the lack of key work, which is documented elsewhere in this report (section 5.3), demonstrates how the system is failing these young men by not providing sufficient interventions and opportunities to support their progression away from offending. Research has shown that the process of male maturity does not end at 18 but continues into their 20s. The time these young adults spend in custody should afford them support and input to help them mature into men with a positive self-identity and improved decision-making skills that will lead them away from offending behaviour.

Not all prison officers appreciate the benefit and opportunities that programmes can provide a prisoner with and so do not encourage attendance. This may indicate a training need. As the main point of face-to-face contact with the prisoners, these officers can influence prisoner engagement, as they can share information about the programme and its benefits with the prisoner.

There continue to be prisoners transferred to Brinsford who have not completed programmes that are a requirement of their sentence plan. These programmes are not offered at Brinsford. Prisoners complain that the non-completion is detrimental to their eligibility for placement at a category D (open) establishment, home detention curfew (HDC) or parole. Non-completion of programmes such as Kaizen, which is for prisoners considered to be at high risk, mean that during their time in custody, the prisoner's propensity for violence is not addressed. This means that the opportunity to rehabilitate and reduce the risk of offending, using an accredited and evidence-based intervention, is missed. The Board is particularly concerned about this, given the number of gang members Brinsford has.

The care leavers' flat opened early in 2024. It is a modern, well-equipped and inviting space. It serves to replicate a home environment, where prisoners can develop essential skills in cooking, cleaning, ironing and general home maintenance. This is crucial for

care-experienced prisoners, who tend to struggle to demonstrate an ability to live independently, which is a requirement for securing independent accommodation on release. The initiative is intended to improve prisoners' prospects of being able to satisfy this criteria.

An external organisation, the Rees Foundation, attends Brinsford monthly and provides support and guidance to care-experienced prisoners. The charity has run various sessions, including positive connections, knowing your rights, and accessing your records.

The space has been well used beyond this. The families of prisoners have been invited to attend the flat and become involved in ACCT and CSIP reviews. In addition, there have been 'baby bonding' events, whereby prisoners are able to meet their newborn child for the first time and have a photo taken.

## **7.5 Family contact**

The visits centre is a warm and welcoming space. It has recently been refurbished with new sofas and chairs. The addition of a small coffee shop, where visitors can pre-order drinks and snacks for themselves and the prisoner they are visiting, helps to make the visit a pleasant experience.

Brinsford has hosted regular family days (which bring together prisoners and their families outside of their statutory entitlement to social visits, usually in more informal settings), supported by the charity, Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT). These events have included Halloween, Christmas, Hawaiian and BBQ themes. Staff who host on the day do not wear uniforms and use their skills in things like face painting to engage with the children who are visiting. To the credit of staff, each family day has been a success.

Population pressures have caused Brinsford to receive prisoners who do not live within the local area. The distance between 'home' and prison for these prisoners has made it difficult for family and friends to visit. This is particularly the case here visitors have health difficulties. The Board has spoken to multiple young prisoners who have not had any social visits during their time at Brinsford because of this. These young men report that they feel lonely and isolated and worry about their family and the impact on them of not being able to visit. The Board questions what factors are taken into account when prisoners are transferred between establishments and whether family ties are considered.

Many prisoners have experiences of other prisons and naturally compare facilities at Brinsford to those at other establishments. These prisoners have expressed frustration at only being able to top up phone credit and order canteen once a week. Other establishments have kiosks and/or devices that are used for canteen and phone credit and can be accessed more frequently. Prisoners struggle to understand why Brinsford does not have this. In this sense, Brinsford is behind with the times.

## **7.6 Resettlement planning**

The SDS 40 (standard determinate sentence) early release scheme, which allowed eligible prisoners to be released after serving 40% of their sentence instead of the usual 50%, created a magnitude of work for the offender management unit (OMU) staff, who, in the Board's view, deserve praise for their efforts to complete this. Over 289 recalculations had to be done, with each taking around an hour to complete. Unfortunately, the timescale of SDS 40 meant that sentence recalculations had to be prioritized, which impacted the availability of OMU to complete its usual workload.



Prisoners who were awaiting information on issues such as parole and category D progress experienced delays. One prisoner had his parole hearing in August and missed the 28-day period to appeal his outcome, because he had received no reply from the OMU.

This is not a criticism of the prison, as it worked hard with the resources it had. In the Board's view, the government could have better ensured that the prison is equipped with sufficient resources to roll out significant changes such as the early release scheme.

The prison employment lead hosted a resettlement fair in November, where 11 employability and housing providers offered advice and support to prisoners. The event was run over a full day, with prisoners being invited to either a morning or afternoon session. This was done to accommodate 'keep apart's'. Prisoners within 16 weeks of their release date were invited to attend. Thirty prisoners attended in the morning and ten in the afternoon. More prisoners were anticipated and the low numbers were attributed to escort staff not bringing prisoners to the event. This is disappointing. Feedback from prisoners who did attend was very positive. Two prisoners said they had received information about accommodation options that were helpful and they intended to remain in touch with the organisation.

## 8. The work of the IMB

The Board is disappointed that there are insufficient members to monitor the prison as they would like. It is unfortunate that members of the public are unaware of the role of IMB and the important work carried out as part of the National Prevention Mechanism and as a result applications to join are few. Retention is very difficult, due to the amount of work and the time commitment required of the IMB.

The Board carries out its role in the following ways:

- One member is on rota each week of the year and they visit all areas of the prison as often as they can during that week. A written rota report is then produced.
- Board members aim to observe most of the segregation reviews, which must take place within 72 hours of a prisoner being segregated, and any decisions taken, that are not within the agreed framework, will be challenged.
- There are eight boxes around the prison where prisoners can post a written application to see a Board member, who will then visit the prisoner and follow up any issues that arise from their enquiries. Board members always do their best to resolve the difficulty. Board members will also take verbal applications.
- Unfortunately, due to having so few members, we are not able to observe many meetings. However, when we are able to do so, we report back to the rest of the Board at monthly meetings.
- Board members have good working relationships with the senior managers and can approach members of staff for information when required.
- Monthly Board meetings take place and are attended by the Governor or, in his absence, another Governor, so that issues of concern can be discussed and information on future developments can be shared.
- The Board has a good number of experienced members.
- New members shadow the more experienced members until it is felt that they can complete the task on their own and they are safe. Training is provided at meetings and can be given by experienced members or other prison staff.
- The Board endeavors to visit other prisons and other IMBs and attend quarterly regional meetings with other IMBs in the area.

### Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	15
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	7
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	5
Total number of visits to the establishment	227

## Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	11	6
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives schemes, sanctions	8	3
C	Equality	3	2
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	5	7
E1	Letters, visits, phones, public protection, restrictions	14	10
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	4	3
F	Food and kitchens	2	0
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	19	4
H1	Property within the establishment	23	8
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	11	1
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	3	9
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence), parole, release dates, re-categorisation	24	17
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	13	8
K	Transfers	14	16
L	Miscellaneous	12	4
	Total number of applications	<b>166</b>	<b>98</b>

## **Annex A**

### **Contracted service providers**

- Practice Plus Group: healthcare provider
- GEO Amey: transport provider between prisons and courts
- DHL: ordering and delivery of canteen items
- Novus: education provider
- Staffordshire County Council: library services
- Nacro: resettlement services, including pre-release team, Ingeus, housing, banking and drivers' licences
- Maverick Sounds: music
- Prison Advice and Care Trust: family support services
- Shannon Trust: reading scheme

## Annex B

### Previous years' use of force figures for comparison

	2023-24	2024-25		2023-24	2024-25	
<b>Assaults</b>	484	528	<b>Self-harm</b>			
<b>serious</b>	22	34	<b>Individuals who self-harm</b>	159	149	
<b>On staff</b>	81	96	<b>Incidents</b>	436	513	
<b>Serious on staff</b>	8	6	<b>Dual-harmers</b>	79	88	
<b>On prisoner</b>	17	443	<b>First time</b>	99	78	
<b>Serious on prisoner</b>	17	29				
	<b>2023-24</b>	<b>2024-25</b>		<b>2023-24</b>	<b>2024-25</b>	
<b>Disorder</b>			<b>Finds</b>	426	679	
<b>Incidents at height</b>	27	51	<b>Drugs</b>	92	185	
<b>Barricade</b>	5	4	<b>Phones</b>	69	116	
<b>Indiscipline</b>	5	7	<b>Weapons</b>	242	263	
<b>hostage</b>	1	0	<b>Alcohol</b>	23	27	
<b>Fire</b>	21	56				

## Annex C

### Segregation monitoring and review group (SMARG) figures

MONT H	No. of prison- ers	To- tal of day s	Av days	Num- ber of 42+	Ethnic- ity	Asia n	Blac k	Mixe d	Whit e		Not know n	Ac- cts in CS U	Post- clo- sure accts in the CSU
Jul 24	30	130	4.33	0		2	11	4	12		1	5	5
Aug 24	43	312	7.25	0		3	9	0	31		0	5	3
Sep 24	29	196	6.75	0		4	4	4	17		0	2	2
Oct 24	67	338	5.04	0		10	9	10	38		0	6	7
Nov 24	40	173	4.32	0		8	7	4	21		0	4	3
Dec 24	53	242	4.56	0		7	5	5	35		1	3	1
Jan 25	43	333	7.74	1 (63)		8	12	4	19		0	9	4
Feb 25	44	285	6.47	0		3	11	7	23		0	5	1
Mar 25	68	475	6.98	1 (56)		11	15	8	34		0	5	3
Apr 25	32	274	8.56	0		1	6	3	20		0	4	4
May 25	42	321	7.64	0		8	13	6	15		0	4	1
Jun 25	45	476	10.57	1 (47) & still locat- ed in CSU		6	12	5	22		0	2	3
Year total	536	355 5	6.63 year aver- age			73	114	60	287		2	54	37
Seg Ethnic %						13.6 1	21.2 6	11.1 9	53.5 4		0.37		
Prison aver- age ethnic %						15.9 4	17.7 9	11.8 9	51.5 8		2.8		



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