



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP & YOI Stoke Heath

**For reporting year
01 May 2022 – 30 April 2023**

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All IMB annual reports are published on www.imb.org.uk

Introductory sections 1 - 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

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

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

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

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

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

2. Description of the establishment

HMP/YOI Stoke Heath, in Market Drayton, Shropshire, is a closed category C adult male and young adult training and resettlement prison holding adults aged 21 and over and sentenced young adults aged 18 to 21. The prison has a baseline certified normal accommodation of 662¹ (the number of prisoners that can be held without overcrowding), with an operational capacity for 782 adult men (the number of prisoners that can be held whilst maintaining control, security and the proper operation of planned regime), of whom, at the close of the reporting period: The prison has a baseline certified normal accommodation of 662² (the number of prisoners that can be held without overcrowding), with an operational capacity for 782 adult men (the number of prisoners that can be held whilst maintaining control, security and the proper operation of planned regime), of whom, at the close of the reporting period:

- 75 care experienced offenders were residing at HMP/YOI Stoke Heath, which equates to 10% of the total population
- 41.33% were aged from 18 – 25
- 60% of offenders were from CPA9 (geographical area in which the prison is allocated prisoners. A 10% decrease on last year
- 49.3% offenders were due to be released in the next 12 months
- the average length of stay was 18.2 months. The comparable figure in 2021-22 was 17.5 months
- 39 prisoners were on life sentences
- 38 prisoners were on an indeterminate sentence for public protection purposes

The prison has a variety of accommodation, much of it added over the years to the older original prison, built in the early 1960s. There are eight residential wings, one designated for drug treatment, one for induction and longer-term prisoners, and one as a progression unit for release on temporary licence (ROTL).

Each wing has in-cell sanitation and a shower block. Single-cell accommodation is provided in 446 cells, and two-prisoner accommodation in 168 cells. The segregation and re-integration unit has 16 cells and an additional two holding cells.

The Clive unit, with capacity for 16 prisoners, sits just outside the prison and offers resettlement opportunities for category D prisoners who are allowed full-time employment or can attend further education.

There are several service providers supporting the work of HMP/YOI Stoke Heath and many are referred to in detailed sections of this report. Their skills provide

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

access to physical and mental health care, education, substance misuse, family visits and advice when leaving prison.

Charitable organisations, e.g. PACT, Barnardo's, Yellow Ribbon and the Samaritans provide a wide range of additional training, support and advice, and local businesses provide employment for the category D prisoners who reside in the Clive unit.

3. Key points

3.1 Main findings

Safety

- Reflecting the generally safe environment in the prison, the regime is structured and well-ordered with low levels of violent behaviour.
- Self-harm incidents increased by 8% and near misses (very near self-harm fatalities) have doubled.
- There is a noticeable increase in illicit items, especially drugs.

Fair and humane treatment

- The Board observed healthy respect and interaction between prisoners and staff. However, the key worker scheme is not working as planned and needs improvement.
- Staffing shortages and lack of work opportunities/purposeful activity has meant prisoners are spending more time in their cells.
- Prisoner property is still a major source of complaints.

Health and wellbeing

- The healthcare needs of prisoners were generally being met. However, the waiting time for dental health appointments was too long.
- Prisoners were getting limited – but safe – mental healthcare support but planned interventions for severe and enduring mental health issues were lacking
- The introduction of weekly multi-disciplined team meetings to assess need for a 24-hour inpatient secure mental healthcare bed is real progress.

Progression and resettlement

- The lack of courses to meet prisoners' needs mean that some prisoners found it hard to progress their sentences.
- Education and work opportunities are still inadequate with barely half of prisoners engaged in these activities.
- The number of prisoners without accommodation on release has risen.
- Keeping in touch with their families has proved difficult for some prisoners.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

It would be encouraging if men in resettlement prisons could be actively engaged in resettlement activities, i.e. they should spend less time in their cells and more in purposeful work and training for vocational qualifications.

Can the minister provide a clear statement of what society expects from resettlement prisons, together with a list of clear, challenging, measurable targets?

Can the overall HMPPS budget be increased to enable prisoner wages to rise in line with inflation so that they can afford everyday essentials and have less chance of getting into debt?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

There appears to be a casual, cavalier attitude to prisoners' property when they are transferred between prisons. Property is by far the largest complaint from prisoners in 2022-23.

Can the prison service provide a clear policy on transference of property between prisons and ensure that it is enacted?

Can the process for prisoners to rejoin their community upon release be reviewed, to ensure all prisoners are offered accommodation upon release?

TO THE GOVERNOR

Can the key worker role to support offender managers in their work for all prisoners be made a priority in the future?

Can the prison be creative in finding more places for prisoners to be trained or employed and spend less time in their cells?

Can there be a clear plan of action to address the poor performance of education and training to rehabilitate prisoners back into the community?

Can prison complaints be answered clearly in a timely manner, by the right person and at the appropriate level?

3.3 Response to the last report

TO THE MINISTER

1. Issue raised in last year's report

Increase funding and prioritise appropriate, high quality and employer-driven vocational activity, training and qualifications to help reduce reoffending.

Progress

The new employment hub has opened up more opportunities for prisoners. It has also been the catalyst for more skill based opportunities. A proposed new facility for cereal packaging has been financed by the prison service and will increase the number of places for employment. However, more work places are needed to give prisoners more time out of cells and to acquire the skills needed upon release.

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

2. Issue raised in last year's report

Basic maths and English qualifications should be achieved earlier in prisoners' sentences to allow more focus on vocational training and qualifications at resettlement prisons such as HMP/YOI Stoke Heath.

Progress

Basic maths and English qualifications are still a requirement before prisoners can undertake a vocational activity. However, the level of prisoners' capabilities on entry to HMP/YOI Stoke Heath has not changed.

3. Issue raised in last year's report

Prisoners coming to HMP/YOI Stoke Heath should be accompanied by a completed offender assessment (OASys) which includes sentence plan objectives assessing the risk of harm, risk of reoffending and educational needs.

Progress

Despite being short staffed, the offender management unit has been working hard to reduce the back log of OASys reports, now standing at 38 (5%) of the prison population. Largely, this is due to transfer of prisoners without an OASys, which is the building block for their sentence progression.

TO THE GOVERNOR

4. Issue raised in last year's report

The prison should continue to furnish prisoners with the skills that are currently in demand in the workplace. This should include working more

closely with industry to encourage training within the prison and meaningful employment on release.

Progress

The newly formed employment hub has opened more opportunities for prisoners, such as cable laying and traffic management. It is encouraging to note that most prisoners in the category D Clive unit are in employment; however, the prison is still a long way from equipping prisoners with the right skills for the current employment market.

5. Issue raised in last year's report

A full key worker scheme should be restored to give the prisoners the best chance of success.

Progress

There has been little improvement to the key worker programme during the year. However, in recent months, there has been a commitment to safeguard more key worker contact with prisoners.

6. Issue raised in last year's report

The prison should continue to prioritise the replacement of the heating and hot water system, to start early in 2023.

Progress

There has been no progress.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

The late arrivals of prisoners from other establishments continue to be an issue for reception. This appears to be due to prison transport being directed to other establishments before HMP/YOI Stoke Heath because of its rural location. This has led to frustration amongst staff and prisoners.

The full body scanner continues to provide a helpful means of identifying illicit items and plays an important part in keeping the prison safe.

Induction on the wing is undertaken by designated red band prisoners (trusted prisoners with additional responsibilities) and staff. The times for these sessions are variable, making it difficult for the Board to monitor effectively.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

Deaths and Suicide

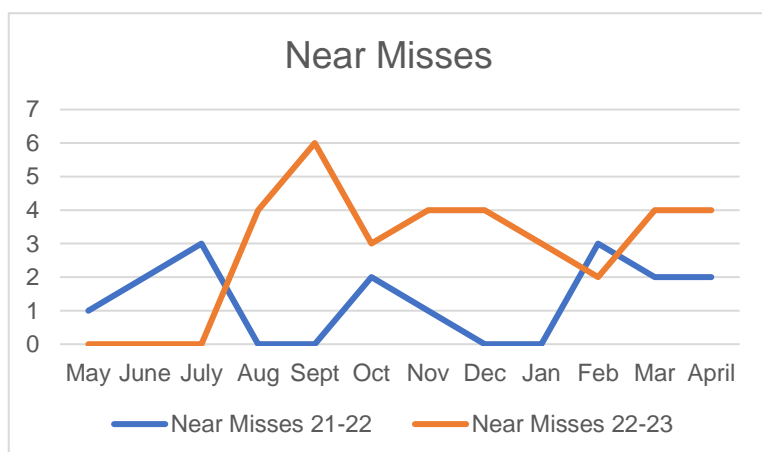
There have been four deaths in custody during the year, including two deaths shortly after leaving custody.

There were two deaths in the prison in the last 12 months. One death was apparently self-inflicted, (facts still to be established) and the other prisoner died from natural causes in hospital.

Of the two prisoners who died within 14 days of release, one died of natural causes, the other was apparently self-inflicted.

Near misses, those incidents where there was a real risk of serious injury or death, have more than doubled from 16 last year to 34 in 2022-23 (see Figure 1). Some of this increase is understood to be as a result of stricter reporting decisions by the governor responsible.

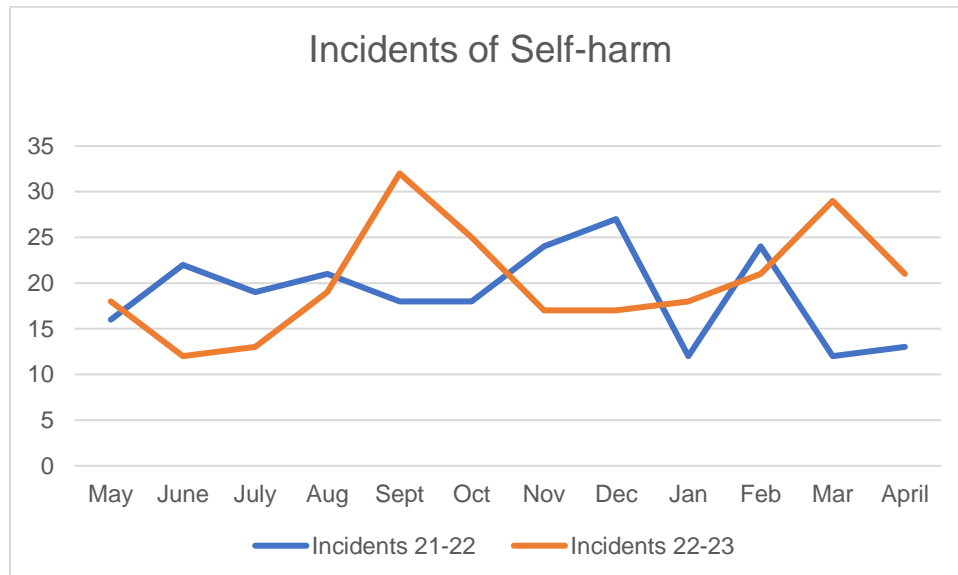
Figure 1. Near misses for 2021-22 and 2022-23



Self-harm

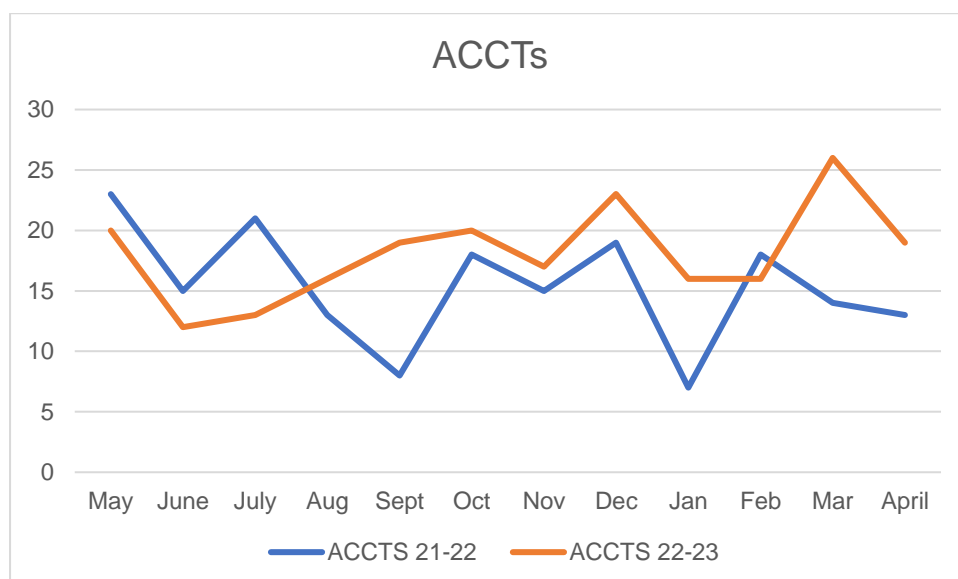
Self-harm has shown an increase with two pronounced peaks which may be related to an influx of prisoners from the north-west. Figure 2 shows a reported 246 (8%) increase in self-harm from last year.

Figure 2. Incidents of self-harm 2022-23



The Board is satisfied that those at risk are proactively identified and actively supported through informal contacts and the structured ACCT (assessment, care in custody and teamwork) process (see Figure 3). The number of ACCTs opened has increased 15% to 217.

Figure 3. ACCTs documented 2021-22 and 2022-23

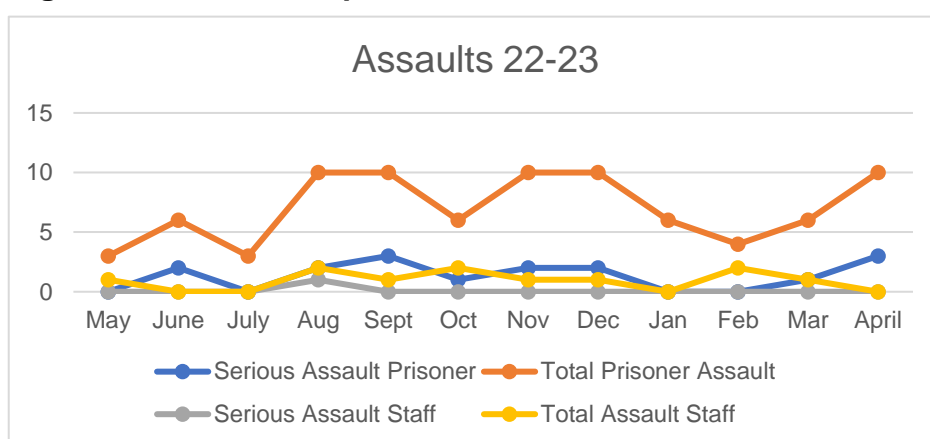


4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

There were 17 serious assaults, one more than in the previous 12 months. The total assaults by prisoners increased from 85 to 95. The Board, whilst disappointed to see this rise, still considers the overall level of violence to be low and continues to reflect the positive, safe environment promoted in the prison. However, there does seem to be a gently rising trend (see Figure 4) which, together with other indicators, is a cause for concern.

Regular reviews of incidents, trends and action plans are undertaken through the monthly Safer Prisons Meeting which the Board attends monitors where possible. Prisoner representatives are consulted and encouraged to assist spreading the no violence message.

Figure 4. Assaults on prisoners and assaults on staff 2022-23

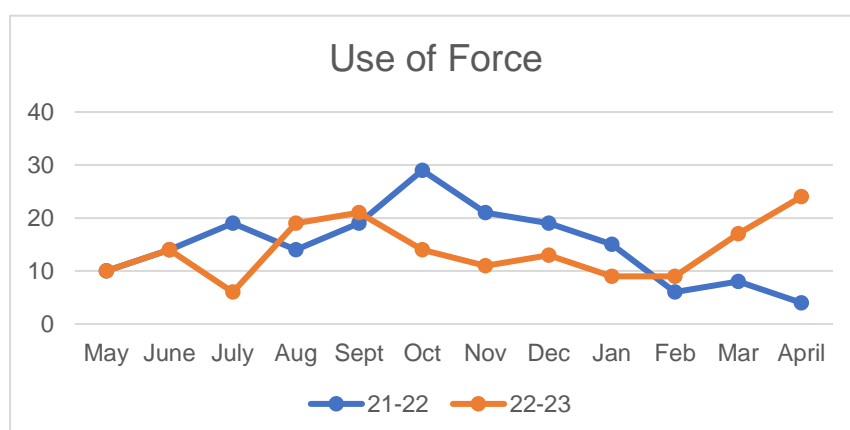


Source: Safer Custody July 2023

4.4 Use of force

The positive position reported last year has broadly continued. Overall, the number of incidents has fallen by 6% to 167. However, a rise in the last two months has been a cause for concern (see Figure 5). This rise appears to be due to a significant influx of prisoners from other areas, particularly the North West, and an associated increase in illicit substance ingress and use. This is a key current focus for the safer prisons team.

Figure 5. Use of force 2022-23



The use of batons and PAVA (pepper spray) is minimal. There was one instance of drawing of a baton and one use of PAVA in 12 months. The National Intervention Team also recorded one use of PAVA during a serious incident of barricade.

The use of body worn cameras has increased over the year and drawing and wearing the cameras is now mandatory. The Board has been able to view recordings when necessary. However, the use of body worn cameras and quality of footage during incidents still falls short of best practice.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

Daily reports made available to the Board demonstrate a noticeable increase in the use of illicit items, especially drugs and intoxicating substances. New prisoners, mail and visits are possibly the main sources.

Reducing drugs and intoxicating substances is clearly a challenge for the prison. These substances are harmful to users and have a disruptive impact on the regime.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, food, clothing

The prison recognises the value of providing a decent living space. Cells are regularly redecorated and communal areas on the wings have been observed by the Board to be kept clean, bright and in good repair.

Conditions in the 168 double cells are very basic with a double bunk bed, a washbasin and a toilet that is only screened by a curtain. There is little space for two people to manoeuvre and these cells can be very warm in summer and very cold in winter.

In the prison MPQL (monitoring prisoners' quality of life) survey in 2022, numerous prisoners spoke of the frustrations and tensions of being locked up for long periods of time. The Board questions if it is decent or indeed humane for a prisoner to be locked up for long periods. The recommendation is for 10 hours out of cell on weekdays.

HMP/YOI Stoke Heath facilities for people with disabilities are inadequate. For example, there is restricted access in healthcare and education. This should be rectified.

Heating residential areas has been an ongoing challenge for several years, but this work has still not started and will be delayed. However, it is disappointing that greener technology to reduce the reliance of fossil fuels is not being instigated.

In-cell telephony has been installed and is working well. Prisoners also have a laptop computer, so that they can access limited online information, contact internal departments, select meals and place orders for goods from the prison shop. The potential for use of laptops in education and training is large and their introduction has been very positive for the prisoners' wellbeing.

The main kitchen at HMP/YOI Stoke Heath has retained its 5-star rating from Shropshire Council's environmental health inspection. However, the ovens in the kitchen are subject to breakdown and this restricts the choice of food available. All diets and religious festivals are catered for. The food produced is reported to the Board to be adequate but unexciting. In the recent prisoner survey, 71% of prisoners thought the food was quite bad or very bad and a similar number thought that they didn't have enough to eat.

The prison MPQL survey in November 2022 highlighted considerable frustration at the level of pay for employment. Prison service order (PSO) 4460 has not been updated in line with inflation. Prisoners who receive money from outside have a massive advantage over those that do not. There is a risk that this can lead to a two-tier economy and an increase in debt for some.

5.2 Segregation

There has been an increase in referrals to the SRU (segregation and reintegration unit) following body scans which have shown up items that cannot be accounted for. This trend has increased with the arrival of more prisoners from outside the midlands.

SRU staff at all levels have demonstrated a commitment to reintegration and the IMB has witnessed several examples of good practice. These include friendly and respectful interactions between staff and prisoners, as well as courteous and effective responses to challenging behaviour.

There have been instances of wing staff maintaining constructive relationships with men in the SRU, helping them address the issues which led to their segregation and supporting them through the phased and tailored return to their wings.

Governors have been observed to have conducted reviews and adjudications with a high degree of professionalism. When possible, prisoners are fully involved in the process of identifying the steps which will enable them to make progress and return to the wing.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

IMB members have observed many instances of good practice and constructive contact between members of staff and prisoners.

Those wings which are staffed by experienced, skilled officers show a calm, purposeful regime where men know where they stand, and conflicts are promptly and effectively de-escalated.

National trends and shortages have resulted in an influx of prisoners from other parts of the country. Many understandably request a transfer to a prison closer to home and family. This has increased the pressure on OM's (offender managers), who are already coping with staff shortages. It is concerning that prisoners have repeatedly reported difficulties contacting their OM's about transfer applications, sentence plans, progression and preparing for release.

The key worker scheme has not been adequately resourced since before Covid-19. A key worker is a member of prison staff whose responsibility it is to support a prisoner throughout his custodial period. During periods of staff shortage, the key worker contact time has been one of the first activities to be cut. The IMB regards the key worker role to be of great importance and as such has been a major source of concern.

HMP/YOI Stoke Heath is fortunate to have its full quota of officers. However, 26% are regarded as non-effective, being on detached duty to other prisons or absent because of sickness, etc. There have been 60 new officers (19% of staff) against 30 (10% of staff) leaving in the last 12 months.

5.4 Equality and diversity

The awarding of rewards and sanctions appears to correspond broadly with the ethnic composition of the prison population, though there is some evidence in the prison's collated statistics that white prisoners are more likely to be given popular jobs and roles. This will be monitored over the next 12 months.

There are examples of very good practice, e.g. involving the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in identifying and addressing problems, such as literacy and access to services and support.

Prisoner neurodiversity is being better acknowledged with new specialist support. Measures have been set up which will help to recognise the differing ways in which men may perceive and interpret experiences and the ways they express their emotions and needs. A supportive environment for neurodivergent prisoners has been established on one wing to allow for an effective pace of integration to the wider prison regime. Results so far show a large drop in self-harm and the need for discipline within this group.

There has been little specific provision to support older prisoners in dealing with the emotional challenges of ageing or to help young prisoners handle the impulsive, violent, and self-defeating responses which are sometimes their default settings. Some groups of prisoners, e.g. the very old, very young or those having indeterminate prison sentences, are not represented or their needs provided for sufficiently within the prison.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

Chaplaincy at HMP/YOI Stoke Heath is very busy with worship, meetings and pastoral work. They are working to recruit Pagan, Rastafarian and Buddhist Ministers but in the meantime chaplaincy tries to facilitate meetings every three or four weeks with these groups. They ensure all religious festivals and events are held and catered for.

A new six-week bereavement course has been running and has been valued by men taking part. Chaplains have been putting on extra courses to accommodate bereaved prisoners.

Pastoral and bereavement support is given to prisoners of all denominations. Where possible, prisoners are allowed to attend outside funerals or to attend virtually. The chaplaincy also helps to facilitate calls with terminally ill family members.

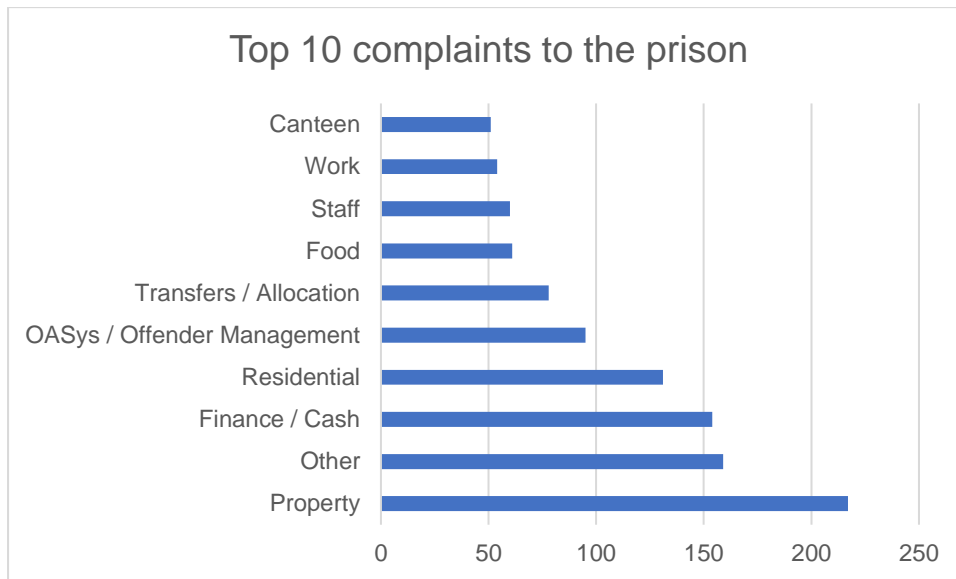
5.6 Incentive scheme

Prisoners are incentivised to progress through good behaviour and improving their employability when their sentence finishes. The population at HMP/YOI Stoke Heath is around 50% at standard and 50% at the enhanced level of the incentives scheme. The latter getting many more privileges. Only a small group of prisoners is on basic regime. Prisoners on basic and standard are reviewed regularly.

5.7 Complaints

Most prison complaints during this period concerned property (see Figure 6). The Board is still concerned about the quality and timeliness of some of the prison's replies to complaints. Prisoners have in some cases waited for many weeks before receiving answers which when received were incomplete and/or unhelpful.

Figure 6. Complaints received at HMP/YOI Stoke Heath 2022-23



5.8 Property

This continues to be a major cause of concern and frustration to prisoners. Men serving longer sentences build up possessions which cannot be stored in their cells safely and must be kept in storage. Prisoners have reported finding it challenging to visit reception to sort out what they can keep, store or send home.

By far the greatest number of property complaints result from loss of property following transfers from other prisons. Prisoners have few possessions allowed in their cells and these are highly valued. Where property cannot be moved with the prisoner it should be sent on within a few days, not weeks or even months later.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare General

Evidenced by the small number of complaints and applications, communication is good. Complaints average five per month, the main themes around dental waiting times and opiate medications are resolved face to face with the head of healthcare or relevant member of staff. Healthwatch (who provide leadership, guidance, support and advice to local healthcare organisations) reports that, when compared with other prisons, they have significantly fewer complaints from HMP/YOI Stoke Heath.

Following a health needs assessment by NHS England, to bring HMP/YOI Stoke Heath in line with all other local category C prisons that also do not have night cover due to having no remand prisoners, night cover was removed. The head of healthcare reports that this has had very little, if any, impact on prisoner health and wellbeing. The money previously allocated to night cover was invested into three additional posts (i) service user and health promotional lead; (ii) a pharmacy technician; and (iii) an additional admin worker.

Healthcare meetings take place regularly between the Governor and the head of healthcare. The healthcare forum with HAWCs (health and wellbeing champions - prisoners) led by the health and wellbeing coordinator take place weekly throughout the year. The healthcare team also holds a multi-disciplinary safer prescribing meeting, attended by senior nurses from all areas, GP and psychiatrist, weekly.

Access to healthcare for people with disabilities needs to be improved – access is via a lift and often the lift is broken.

The healthcare contract with Shropshire Community Health NHS Trust has been extended until April 2026.

6.2 Physical Healthcare

Prisoners can see a doctor within 24 hours or a nurse within seven days. However, the waiting time for dental health appointments is 20 weeks. To try to resolve this, the head of healthcare has submitted a bid for additional dentistry. When the dental team is on site, patients requiring emergency treatment are seen on that day. If an emergency arises and dentistry is not available, the patient is sent to A & E on the same day.

Operation Safeguard (a contingency plan to reduce prison over-crowding) is influencing healthcare. Due to prison population pressures, prisoners are coming to HMP/YOI Stoke Heath in a shorter turnaround, sometimes with only very short sentences, and this means that healthcare staff must do all pre-release work in a very short period of time; this has a marked effect on both clinic and admin time. Receptions are also coming in quite late in the day (sometimes not until 18:30/19:00 hours) impacting on nursing shifts which should end at 19:30 hours.

The number of prisoners going to external hospital appointments has increased by 65%. This is due to the residual Covid-19 backlog and the sheer number of transfers-in having not been seen whilst in local prisons before they are sent to HMP/YOI Stoke Heath. However, the number of days of bed watches has decreased significantly (90%), 20 days/month in 2021-22 to two days/month in 2022-23.

Management and care of prisoners with long-term conditions has improved significantly with the recruitment of a practice nurse. During their inspection early in 2023, HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) highlighted this care as best practice.

To ensure continuity of care, work continues to provide pre-release clinics to prisoners to register them with a community GP on release.

6.3 Mental Health

Primary mental health clinics (first line treatments normally accessed via GP surgeries) continue as normal but, due to staff shortages, less frequently. Unfortunately, owing to the North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare Trust (with whom the secondary mental health service is a sub-contract) being under 'contract performance' by Shropshire Community Healthcare NHS Trust, prisoners are getting limited – but safe – mental healthcare support. One to one nursing appointments and psychiatry appointments are not affected but planned interventions (such as cognitive behaviour and other group sessions) for severe and enduring mental health issues are lacking. There is no occupational therapy worker – this position has been out to advert several times with no uptake.

During the year, the five transfers to 24-hour inpatient secure mental healthcare at HMP Birmingham have been relatively well managed. With NHS England commissioner involvement, there is now a weekly multi-disciplinary team meeting with HMP Birmingham to assess anyone who may need a bed. This is real progress, waiting times are reduced and the process is much easier than previously.

Learning disability work is robust and recognised as best practice by HMIP, with care plans being recorded on Nomis to support the effective management of those with identified needs, thus supporting officers to manage day to day engagement more effectively.

6.4 Social Care

Throughout the year there has been very little social care referral or need. However, work is under way to improve the memorandum of understanding between the prison and Shropshire Council.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

Work is currently underway to reprofile the prison and utilise a new core day. This will be of benefit as the existing profile is not fit for purpose in respect of enabling healthcare. Medication times are not part of the existing core day and healthcare staff are often disrupted by roll checks during medication times. Weekend regimes also present issues, particularly around controlled drug dispensing. Poor management and coordination of those attending healthcare can lead to disruption.

Healthcare wishes to utilise weekends more effectively for clinics and this should be included in the new profile and core day.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

At any one time approximately 100 prisoners receive active clinical team intervention to manage addiction. Forward Trust provides psychosocial work both individually and in structured groups - their caseloads are often more than 300. Alcoholics Anonymous run groups alongside the Forward Trust.

To help prisoners to stay drug-free, a new initiative – Incentivised Substance-Free Living – was introduced in December 2022. Prisoners who wish to live in an environment away from drugs and intoxicating substances can apply to transfer to a unit that has this positive culture.

6.7 Soft skills

The new health promotion and service lead has developed over 50 groups, targeted health promotion and health and wellbeing mini clinics led by prisoners (but coordinated jointly with healthcare).

Work continues with the gym on healthy man/social prescribing with a number of significant successes. A patient was able to come off diabetic medication because of his work in the gym and better education and management of his diabetes from the practice nurse. Libre monitors (blood glucose monitors) have also been introduced to help better monitoring of diabetic patients. Patients are losing weight and overall health is improved due to better linked-up working.

HAWCs identify vulnerable individuals on the wings and offer routine general healthcare checks. There is a bookable mini clinic on each wing where blood pressure, BMI, weight and height can be checked and dry blood spot tests for blood-borne viruses are available. In addition, mental health referrals can be made. This initiative is positive for prisoners and healthcare in recognising health risks at an earlier stage.

Three HAWCs have put together a ten-minute film about the importance of health and wellbeing champions within the prison explaining how they have helped other prisoners and benefited themselves. The film has been put forward for an award.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

The Board has had concerns about the provision of education for some years. Prior to the pandemic, the prisons service contracts department issued Novus with a Notice to Improve (NTI).

About 60% of prisoners have substantial development needs in maths and English. The most recent Ofsted report in January 2023 found education at HMP/YOI Stoke Heath was inadequate. Matters of particular concern are the inadequate qualities of management as well as education provision.

Ofsted highlighted that there were not enough full-time activity places for the prison population and that unemployment rates were unacceptably high.

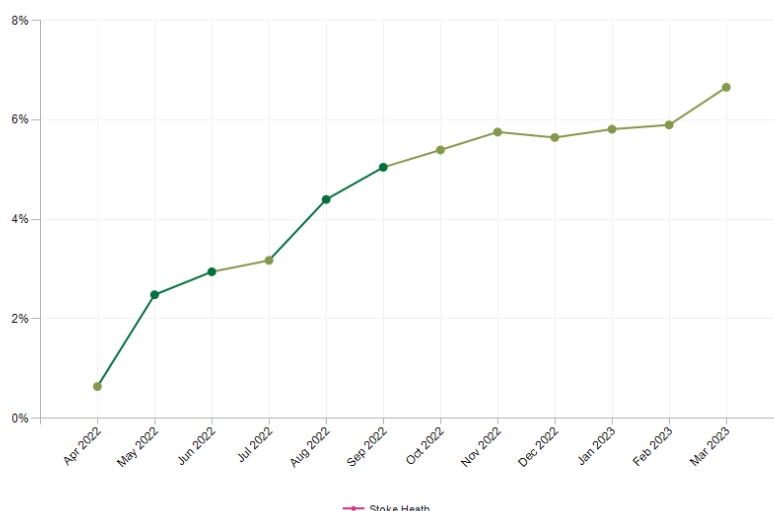
Leaders had not established a curriculum that raised the English and maths skills of approximately two-thirds of prisoners who had substantial development needs. There were too few English and maths education sessions to meet demand.

There have been difficulties in recruiting teachers and instructors so that some courses, in what was already a limited curriculum offer, did not run or were late starting.

Figure 7 shows how HMP/YOI Stoke Heath prisoners have made steady progress in core subjects such as maths and English over the year. This is an average performance for a category C resettlement prison.

Attendance on educational courses at 84% is above average for category C resettlement prison. Management is taking non-attendance seriously and seeks to improve this performance.

Figure 7. Progress made in Maths in English 2022-23



There are several positive initiatives in education within the prison. Some examples are:

- the development of progression pathways
- the introduction of an effective reading strategy
- the appointment of a neurodiversity officer
- the extension of the twinning arrangement with Stoke City Football Club which will provide extra resources for education alongside a programme of professional sports coaching
- radio production, where prisoners contribute to an in-house radio slot and contribute to the national prison radio with a selection of interviews and music

Library

The library is a most valued asset in the prison. 70% of the prison population are members and there are over a 1000 visits per month. It has a good stock of books for reading and research. The Shannon Trust/Turning Pages supports reading and maths for beginners and most days 12 men attend these services with mentored support.

7.2 Vocational training, work

HMP/YOI Stoke Heath has several core training areas. Welding and fabrication offer useful skills for employment outside prison. Recycling and gardening which help reduce waste and provide attractive grounds in the prison, although too many prisoners are underemployed in this work. Tailoring makes clothing for the prison estate. Whilst this offers purposeful activity and produces cheap clothing for the prison, it does not provide a skill that prisoners wish to take up when released from HMP/YOI Stoke Heath.

A new recycling programme is being planned to reuse and recover items that might go to landfill. This will reduce waste by repairing and salvaging wherever possible. It aims to save money, provide meaningful employment, and promote positive attitudes towards the environment.

There has been some encouragement to attract academies that are sponsored by local companies through the newly formed employment hub. Courses are available in construction – Health and Safety and Construction Skills Certification Scheme, traffic management, valeting; car wrapping; industrial cleaning; warehousing and hospitality and catering. More courses are being rolled out subject to staffing.

Prison statistics show employment six weeks after release at only 16%, with a high of 20% in November 2022. This is significantly lower than comparable prisons.

The new employment hub has started to make some progress with local employer events in the prison who are taking on suitable prisoners on release. Events in 2022 from Marstons, Green King, Timpsons and a construction federation. Potential employers are offering training courses such as cable laying and traffic management. These are to be commended and it is to be hoped that the prison can build on their success.

7.3 Offender management, progression

Some prisoners need to demonstrate they have attended courses as part of their progression but HMP/YOI Stoke Heath does not offer enough courses that are specified in offenders' sentence plans. The prison should offer three accredited programmes: the Thinking Skills Programme (TSP), New Me Strengths (NMS; a medium-intensity course for prisoners with learning difficulties) and Becoming New Me Plus (BNM+; a high-intensity intervention for the same cohort). However, few of these courses have been made available to prisoners.

Other prisoners who had been involved in domestic violence needed to attend courses as part of their sentence, but neither the Building Better Relationships course nor the Kaizen Interpersonal Violence programme are available at HMP/YOI Stoke Heath. Such courses should be provided in house or prisoners need to be transferred to prisons where these courses are available. However, due to prison population pressures, transfers are a challenge and alternative methods of training, such as distance learning, need to be explored.

7.4 Family contact

Family contact has improved with new phone technology in cells. However, social visits and family days have become more difficult for some families and especially those living outside the West Midlands. As confirmed by the HMIP report early in 2023, half of prisoners had not had a social visit in the preceding six months.

Video technology allows greater contact with families, but a shortage of video capability and restricted timing of video slots mean that many prisoners are not able to have sufficient contact time with their families. More slots need to be offered, particularly at weekends and in the evenings.

Family days offered by the prison are very popular with the prisoners and they would welcome more days to have contact with their families.

7.5 Resettlement planning

The IMB would like to see a higher proportion of prisoners leaving HMP/YOI Stoke Heath with accommodation upon release. We note that a newly established pre-release team and regional housing specialist to support commissioning services for prisoners released back in the community may help improve finding suitable accommodation.

The MOJ has introduced a complex consortium of prison offender managers (POMs), community offender managers (COMs) and the external service provider Nacro (National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders). Nacro relies on referrals to find appropriate accommodation. On average, over the year 86% of prisoners have accommodation on their first night after release, although there was a low point when Nacro were first appointed when the figure fell to 79%. Accommodation figures on release have been much higher in previous years when the prison had overall responsibility.

8. The work of the IMB

The number of Board members at HMP/YOI Stoke Heath is currently fewer than recommended. However, the prison has been monitored effectively with the assistance of three probationary members. The Board has trialled the new IT system Kahootz to communicate, store and analyse information.

Like many Boards, it has been challenging to recruit new members and the time every member gives, is greatly valued.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	14
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	09
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	06
Total number of visits to the establishment	433

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	7	19
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	10	12
C	Equality	11	5
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	11	16
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	7	14
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	20	24
F	Food and kitchens	5	13
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	54	23
H1	Property within the establishment	25	27
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	36	28
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	2	14
I	Sentence management, including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	57	37
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	49	79
K	Transfers	31	54
L	Miscellaneous	33	38
	Total number of applications	358	403



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