



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Birmingham

**For reporting year
01 July 2022 – 30 June 2023**

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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 Birmingham is a reception prison housing adult men, both convicted and on remand, serving both Birmingham and Wolverhampton courts. It is moving towards a population of 80% reception and 20% resettlement¹. The prison currently has an operational capacity of 997, with a certified normal accommodation of 1,054. In 2018, the operational capacity was reduced from 1,450 on the closure of three Victorian residential wings. These wings are now being refurbished. Prisoners are accommodated in nine different residential wings: five modern wings, one of which is the first night centre, one for vulnerable prisoners (VPs), and another being a drug dependency (detoxification) wing; three fully refurbished Victorian wings: one for enhanced prisoners, one for the care and separation unit (CSU); and a social care wing, for older and severely disabled prisoners. The modern side of the prison has a

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.

healthcare centre comprising two healthcare wards, and GP and dental surgeries. There are eight workshops, (one is being converted into a staff well-being centre) a gym, a library and an education suite. There is an employment hub and a multi-faith suite which also houses activities.

3.1 Main findings

The Board have observed that Birmingham Prison has continued, under strong and effective leadership, to build on the earlier successes noted in the IMB annual report last year and there is a relentless drive for prison self- evaluation and improvement.

Safety

- The prison provides a calm and ordered environment and prisoners generally report feeling safe, despite some challenging behaviours.
- HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) identified several areas of good practice relating to safety which have been cited in a recent document issued to all prisons.
- Use of force remains high.
- Body worn video (BWV) is not used consistently in incidents of use of force, although there is an improving trend.
- The HMPPS prison officer appointment process has resulted in some unsuitable appointments.

Fair and humane treatment

- Relationships between prisoners and staff have been observed to be generally good.
- Use of force and segregation is disproportionately used on black men and men of mixed or multiple ethnic backgrounds.
- Shared cells, where meals are eaten, with a toilet alongside, are not suitable living conditions.
- Heating problems and a leaking roof on P wing are annual issues during extreme temperatures and heavy rainfall. The effect of heating repairs made within the reporting period will only be known when winter conditions next set in.

Health and wellbeing

- 90 mins per day out-of-cell, for most of the year, was inadequate.
- Some outside hospital appointments were missed because there were not enough staff escorts available or on other occasions because taxi services were unreliable. The prison has put in place steps to address this issue.
- Low numbers of available staff meant that, for most of the year, purposeful activity often had to be cancelled.
- Mental health provision has been observed to be good despite over-long hours in-cell.

Progression and resettlement

- Remand prisoners can spend up to two, three, even four years in prison before sentencing or release and without access to pre-release support.
- The number of Key Worker sessions has reduced.

- Reduced staffing levels amongst the pre-release team and prison offender managers have impacted on the delivery of support to prisoners before and at the point of release.
- Purposeful activity has increased since the HMIP inspection.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- Despite reporting on this last year and the year before, Birmingham IMB observe that there has been no reduction in the length of stays on remand, which can be up to three, or even exceptionally four years. In reply to the last annual report the Minister gave certain assurances and yet there has been no measurable improvement. What steps will be taken to reduce time spent on remand? And what resettlement support will be given to men on remand?
- The board appreciates the then Minister's confirmation (letter dated 16.11.20 signed by Lucy Fraser QC MP) that the refurbishment of wings A B and C will be for single cell occupancy only. The board notes that most cells on other wings are for shared occupancy which they consider less suitable for prisoners.

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- High rates of attrition are partly attributable to the appointments process which has resulted in too many unsuitable appointments. The process excludes the local Governor from involvement in the interview. Will HMPPS review the appointments process with a view to including local Governors in the selection process and a more rigorous assessment of a candidate's suitability for the role of prison officer? (See Annex C, Graph 5 and Graph 6.)
- The board considers the ending of the trainees' apprenticeship scheme to be a retrograde step.
- What will be done to ensure the availability of enough staff and resources at HMP Birmingham to avoid restricted regimes, missed hospital appointments and quality key worker support? In June 2023, only 69.9% of all staff were available for work.
- Retaining staff is a concern particularly when experienced staff are leaving. How will HMPPS improve staff retention rates? (See Annex C, Graph 5 and Graph 6.)

TO THE GOVERNOR

- The apparent disproportionate use of force on black prisoners and prisoners of mixed or multiple ethnic backgrounds can be explained by a few repeat individual offenders. What will the Governor do to raise trust and compliance among those men resistant to the system and so reduce or remove disproportionality?
- Many prisoners have only had 90 minutes daily out of cell. How will the Governor ensure that, even at the current rate of 69% staff availability (June

2023), the regime will run and all men will have a minimum of 2 hours every weekday out-of-cell?

- Will the Governor commit to delivering key worker sessions as well as a full regime?

3.2 Response to last report

Issue raised	Response given	Progress
Minister 1.What will the minister do to reduce the backlog in court hearings and so reduce the time that men are held in prison on remand?	Magistrates' courts sentencing powers extended to free up capacity in Crown courts. Government investing £477 million and more judges being recruited over next three years	No impact on prison remand population as yet. Crown court caseload was 61,200 in August 2022, higher even than previously.
2.Will the minister publish the annual statistics of the number of detained foreign nationals held in prison beyond their sentence expiry date?	The Minister referred to www.gov.uk but this only gives data for number of FNPs and length of stays, and not data about time served beyond the expiry or completion of sentence.	No change.
Prison Service 1.In what ways can the prison service motivate men on remand into meaningful activities?	Available evidence shows that some men who have engaged with services at Birmingham have accessed employment after release from court (arranged whilst in custody).	Workers pay has increased (see below).
2.Will the prison service employ or contract to a single dedicated baggage transferring company so that parcels can be more easily tracked and located?	The new Prisoner Property Policy Framework came into effect on 5 September 2022.	The number of apps and complaints about property remain fairly constant.
3.Will the prison service increase the rate of pay to prisoners for work?	Governor in agreement.	Pay increase from £1.05 to £1.32 per session for education and workshops

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

Arriving at prison can be a daunting experience, the reception area is an ordered and calm environment offering a hot meal, shower, and free phone call. Most prisoners receive their property on the night they arrive.

Induction staff carry out interviews to assess a prisoner's safety. This includes medical needs and prior risk factors for self-harm and suicide. In the case of known gang members 'keep apart' are identified.

Prisoners move from reception to P wing. Time spent on this wing is often too long, delaying access to work. The induction process needs improvement to provide full information as early as possible.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

There was an average of 44 incidents of self-harm per month over the reporting period, with a peak in June 2023 of 66 incidents and the lowest in February with 26 incidents. Although this looks like a rising trend, on several occasions, self-harm can be accounted for by prolific individual self-harmers. For example, in June 2023, two men were responsible for 14 of the total incidents of self-harm. In September one man self-harmed 14 times.

The most frequent method of self-harm was cutting using a prison issue razor blade. Reasons given for self-harm range from mental health, bullying, dissatisfaction with medication, bereavement, not wanting to move cell, and in June delay in adding phone numbers to a prisoner's allowed list of numbers.

There have been four deaths in custody in this reporting year, three from natural causes and one is yet to be determined and is subject to the outcome of a coroner's inquest.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

Violence continues to be a significant risk for the prison with bullying, arguments and cell sharing reportedly being the main contributing factors.

The majority of violent incidents are prisoner on prisoner but every month prisoner on staff assaults are recorded also.

May 2023 had the highest number of assaults with a total of 45 incidents. This was 7% higher than the same time in the previous year.

Self-isolation figures are issued daily and, when asked, custodial managers have always been able to provide details of the individual concerned and describe how they are receiving their entitlements.

HMIP identified the prison's systematic and regular monitoring of data to identify risk and potential threats to stability as especially good practice.

4.4 Use of force

Most use of force incidents continue to be unplanned, and the total use of force is high when compared with similar prisons.

There is a rising trend in the use of force and this is an increase on the previous reporting period (see Annex C, Graph 1.)

There is a disproportionate use of force on black men and men of mixed or multiple ethnic backgrounds (see Annex C, Graph 2.) However, a significant number of these recorded incidents include men who are repeatedly involved in such incidents thus inflating the statistic.

The recent spike in May coincides with an increase in instances of men being found under the influence of drugs, mainly new psychoactive substances (NPS).

The spike also coincides with a slight increase in the amount of time out-of-cell and in purposeful activity. Thus, there have been more interactions between prisoners.

It is good to report that PAVA (an incapacitant spray) has not been used at all although it has been drawn once. The incident was caught on CCTV and BWV and no injuries incurred.

As commented upon last year, the use of body-worn video cameras has been sporadic and they are often not turned on early enough, if at all, to provide acceptable evidence. Nevertheless, the situation has shown a steady improvement from 41.1% in January to 60% in June of cameras being activated during an incident (See Annex C, Graph 3.)

Since the installation of new BWV equipment there are now enough cameras for all officers on duty to draw.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

Use of the body scanner has proved effective in both detecting and latterly deterring drug ingress. Figures show a significant fall in the number of prisoners taken from reception to the CSU after a positive scanner reading.

In 2021, 225 men were segregated following a positive body scan indication, in 2022 it was 173 men and within the July 2022 to June 2023 reporting period, 57 men (See Annex C, Graph 4.)

Drug ingress, although much lower than in recent years, remains a problem. Robust search protocols in visits have uncovered illicit items which were passed to prisoners. More difficult to detect and deter is NPS which is increasing within the prison.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

Currently three Victorian wings are closed for major refurbishment. The project which involves large numbers of contractors working on site, has been observed to be well managed. Security and safety have been well thought through and no major issues have arisen.

Water leaking from the roof of P wing is a recurring problem. The heating system during the winter months is prone to break down, this has led to an increase in prisoners' applications (written representations) to the IMB. Higher temperatures in the summer, have been a challenge. With no air conditioning, cells can become extremely hot. Fans are not routinely provided. With temperatures predicted to increase, this poses a potential health risk.

Clothing is generally well managed; a limited number of complaints were received saying that clothing sent to the laundry was not returned.

The Board have observed food to be of an acceptable standard and to cater for all dietary requirements. Religious festivals are recognised with special menus and appropriate dietary arrangements for example, for Ramadan.

5.2 Segregation

There is a downward trend in the number of men held in the CSU. This continues the trend of the previous reporting year also (See Annex C, Graph 7.) On average there are about 11 prisoners per week held in the CSU and the average stay is 9 days.

Two prisoners exceeded 42 days: one was held for 70 days and the other for 51 days. The board was satisfied with the reasons given for these long stays.

Again, this year special accommodation has not been used.

Black British men and prisoners of mixed or multiple ethnic backgrounds are apparently removed to the CSU at disproportionately higher levels (see Annex C, Graph 8.) This remains unchanged since previous reports and is a stubbornly concerning statistic. Despite wider efforts in the prison to improve cultural awareness and understanding and ongoing work to address disproportionality, the issue still stands. However, the prison maintains that a small number of prolific offenders involved in multiple incidents account for the over representation of these ethnic groups. For example, one man was taken to the CSU on seven separate occasions.

The CSU relocated in February and the capacity was reduced from 23 to 15 cells with a corresponding fall in the number of men admitted to the CSU. The unit has been observed to be well managed. Challenging behaviours are usually de-escalated, and many prisoners acknowledge the support they are given. Segregation reviews have been observed to have been well conducted, but frustratingly security is not always present to provide input on exit strategies for prisoners who have been removed from a wing for intelligence reasons.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

Prisoners often acknowledge good relationships with staff, as evidenced in the HMIP survey February 2023. Regular monitoring has observed staff often 'going the extra mile' to assist a prisoner.

However reduced staffing availability and the need for mobility of labour have sometimes impeded this level of support. Despite being technically fully staffed in June 2023, for example, only 69.9% of staff were available for duty. Mobility of labour means prison officers are often deployed to other wings. This can be perceived as a firefighting role and ownership of responsibilities is not taken. Too often when seeking information Board members are told 'Sorry, I don't work on this wing'.

Staff turnover and the loss of experienced staff has meant a reliance on inexperienced staff, who are still learning the necessary interpersonal skills required in managing such a challenging environment. This is not helped, by the reduced regime where men were out of their cell for only 90 minutes per day, meaning new staff had less opportunity to build experience in managing prisoners on a wing.

Key worker support has reduced. Officers have reported that they do not have enough time to carry out the role fully. The prison has acknowledged that key worker sessions have not been sufficient or of a good enough quality and is reviewing how best to deliver key worker support in the future. Staffing shortages have made it difficult to provide both an improved regime and key worker sessions.

As the regime has been increased in June 2023, so the number of key worker session has fallen. In June 2022 65% key worker sessions were completed whereas in June 2023 26% were completed.

Attrition rates, for operational staff within the first two years of being appointed, have been high. This has improved towards the end of the reporting period, most probably due to the approved pay increases. However, the earlier figures raise questions as to the rigour of the selection process and consequently whether a number of unsuitable appointments have been made. The Governor has no input and is not involved in the interviews. (see Annex C, Graph 4 and Graph 5.)

5.4 Equality and diversity

The Governor has been observed to have given a strong lead to equality and diversity.

Race:

There is good use of data to identify issues and disproportionality. Working on the Lammy principle of "explain or reform" issues are explored and solutions sought. Prisoner and staff forums are a means of consultation.

Prisoners are generally aware of the complaints procedure for discrimination. Checks by the Board have shown that discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs) are taken seriously and given due consideration.

Data identified a disproportionate use of force and adjudications against black men, and a disproportionate number of black men and men of mixed or multiple ethnic

backgrounds being sent to the CSU (see Annex C, Graph 2 and Graph 8). Subsequently there was a proposal to implement staff training in cultural awareness. Action has thus been taken but the impact is yet to be seen. The constant influx of new and inexperienced staff makes this training an ongoing need.

Black prisoners have reported their belief that black and ethnic minority officers are sometimes reluctant to intervene or resolve difficult situations because they are nervous of being accused of bias by other prisoners.

The GRT (Gypsy Roma Traveller) community has low numbers but a high level of need and the prison has reintroduced links with the GRT support groups in the community.

A new project with the Zahid Mubarak Trust is working with 19 prisoners with an ethnic minority background to train as equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) advocates.

Age:

HMIP identified provision for younger and older prisoners as needing improvement. Since the inspection a packing project has started on the social care wing providing some part-time morning work.

Disability:

221 men were recorded as having a disability in April 2023. There are minimal adaptations installed. One amputee requiring grab rails in the shower and toilet had to wait over one month for approval to be granted. The Board would like to see adaptations for the physically disabled in all residential areas.

There were 24 wheelchair users (April 2023), and few can access all areas of their wing. They often have to depend on other prisoners for assistance. One man complained that he had not been allowed his own adapted wheelchair and that the one provided was much harder for him to manage.

Poor communication can exacerbate problems such as in the case of an amputee being allocated to unsuitable work in the kitchen. The EDI lead advised the man not to attend and emailed the kitchen staff. The prisoner was subsequently awarded a negative incentives scheme warning for not attending. This was unfair and unnecessary in the opinion of the Board.

Most staff have been observed to be very caring and supportive of men with disabilities but there are isolated instances where it has been observed that support has been given by prisoner peers and not by prison officers. The IMB have heard it said of a minority, that "some staff look at disability as an inconvenience". This undermines the exceptional care and support given by the majority of staff.

Sexual orientation or gender reassignment:

A lot of positive work has been observed to have taken place to recognise and support people with a range of sexual orientation or gender differences. This is a strength in the prison as evidenced in positive prisoner feedback.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

There is a small but hardworking chaplaincy team representing all major faith groups, they are located in the new multi-faith centre, which is a welcoming and adaptable building. The team visit all parts of the prison regularly and are visible throughout the establishment.

A range of worship services, classes and study groups are held in the multi faith centre, and Friday Prayers are held in three locations each week in the prison due to the high number of Muslim prisoners. Well over 200 prisoners observed Ramadan this year.

The IMB receive very few complaints about chaplaincy issues but in the last few months both Sikh prisoners and the Sikh chaplain have expressed disappointment that officers are not always available to escort prisoners to Sikh prayers.

5.6 Incentives Scheme

The consistently low numbers of men on the basic level of the incentives scheme is another indicator of good relationships and positive behaviour management (see Annex C, Graph 9.)

5.7 Complaints

A total of 3603 complaints were recorded between June 2022 and May 2023.

Canteen accounted for the highest number of complaints with property coming second and residential third.

Regarding canteen complaints, closer liaison between prison staff and DHL, along with the use of body worn videos at the point of delivery, and an insistence that canteen deliveries are signed for, have reduced the number of complaints about canteen.

5.8 Property

Property continues to generate applications to the IMB. Complaints often involve missing property following a transfer, these are difficult to explore and are rarely resolved. Complaints following cell clearance have reduced and this is attributable to more rigorous attention to protocols.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

There are two main concerns. Firstly, external appointments, some urgent and serious, have been missed through no fault of the prisoners, often due to the non-availability of prison staff. The prison has now allocated an operational support grade staff member to drive men to hospital appointments when needed.

Secondly, attempts by the Board to gain additional information on a specific case raised with the Board by a prisoner in regard to the removal and management of their medication on arrival has not been successful. Therefore, the Board are concerned about the management of medication on arrival to the prison.

A common issue raised by prisoners is waiting times for many healthcare services and particularly dental care, (see Annex C, Graph 10.)

The prison x-ray machine was out of use for several months during which time there was no guarantee of an emergency x-ray even when a GP has asked for one, again due to the lack of availability of escorts. The board is informed that the x-ray machine was restored to working order in June 2023.

6.2 Physical healthcare

The IMB surveyed 94 prisoners from across the prison including physical and mental healthcare in-patients (see Annex B.) This is approximately 10% of the population. When asked, 'Could you say one good or positive thing about healthcare in the prison?' 44% did not identify anything. The second largest response at 7% was ('At least it's there'). 6% had not used healthcare and 2% made no response. 41%, therefore, did make a positive response and a total of 18% identified the quality or attributes of medical staff.

In response to the question 'Could you name one thing about healthcare that you think needs improving?' 39% identified waiting times of some kind. The two largest individual categories were 'Waiting times for dentist (18%) and 'Waiting Times' (13%). The biggest category outside waiting times was 'No improvement needed' (6%) followed by 'Staff Attitudes' (5%).

Waiting times reported by prisoners generally correspond with average times given in healthcare data. There is, however, a large discrepancy with GP appointments where men consistently say they wait several weeks, and healthcare report the average to be three days. Some healthcare data lacks clarity but is difficult to interpret by non-healthcare professionals.

Health care state that waiting times for the dentist and for psychiatry and psychology services are better than in the community.

6.3 Mental health

Mental healthcare is probably better than could be expected in the community. Having in-patient facilities on site and community psychiatric nurses (CPNs) available on wings is an advantageous provision. In the IMB survey of prisoners

across the prison, mental health in-patients were the most positive and no mental health issues were identified as needing improvement. In addition to formal services there are several peer support initiatives in the prison that help prisoners with mental health needs with the backing of the Inside Recovery team.

In the IMB survey mental health in-patients made the most positive responses in regard of their treatment and only one response in 40 categories for improvement involved mental health (an in-patient who said, 'I shouldn't be here'.)

The experience of IMB members, in attending segregation reviews, dealing with applications and in other monitoring, is that mental health provision meets the needs of prisoners.

6.4 Social care

Prisoners with disabilities or long-term conditions who also need medical care are housed in Healthcare. Prisoners with disabilities who require help with personal care, washing, dressing etc, are housed on J wing. Prisoners who need input from carers will first be referred to Social Services for a full assessment of their needs. At the time of the report six of the 27 prisoners on J wing have a social care package in place, carers are employed by Aspects Care who currently hold the contract with Birmingham City Council.

Healthcare and prison staff do not have access to a prisoner's social care plans, this issue was highlighted by HMIP in January and is still ongoing.

A vacant Occupational Therapy post has just been filled which should speed up access to specialist aids and equipment. Six men on J wing are wheelchair users.

Relationships between Social Services and the prison are good and a social worker visits regularly.

J Wing has a pleasant garden in which a number of the residents work.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

Time out of cell, has reduced since pre-Covid. For most of this reporting period 1.5 hours has been the allocated time out-of-cell. This is not compatible with fair and humane treatment. By default prisoners who choose to work get more time out of cell, however there are insufficient opportunities for purposeful activity for all. Since the HMIP inspection report the prison has committed to increasing time out of cell to a minimum of two hours per day. This change was implemented from 4th June.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

Most prisoners requiring treatment for drug and alcohol problems are housed on M wing though their treatment will start on P Wing following reception screening. The clinical and psychosocial teams are co-located, and joint working is improving. The contract for psychosocial treatment was awarded to Cranstoun in the Autumn of 2022. There is a strong focus on group work, but prisoners also have sessions with their Cranstoun key workers.

On the day of a recent visit to M wing there were 133 prisoners on Opiate Substitution Treatment (OST), consisting of 119 on Methadone and 14 on Espranor.

Prisoners who become abstinent can move to D Wing where they can continue their recovery journey and still benefit from group work and some key worker sessions. A wide range of interesting wing activities include Narcotics Anonymous, substance misuse awareness, art and drama sessions, guitar group, yoga and wellbeing, gym, chess and board games, careers advice and other related activities.

6.7 Soft skills

Each wing has a prisoner community information lead (CIL) worker. This is a highly effective role supporting men on the wings.

The Expectations Hub, Inside Job, the prison council and all prisoner representative roles provide opportunities for men to contribute to prison improvement.

The Expectations Hub is a team of prisoners who are currently carrying out an audit of HMIP expectations in order to identify areas for prison improvement.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education

The education contract is currently held by Novus and the leadership and tutors were praised in the recent Ofsted report in January 2023 as having addressed most of the shortcomings that were highlighted in the last 2018 report.

Prisoners' educational needs are screened at reception and all prisoners complete a maths and English assessment. For prisoners who struggle with literacy the Shannon Trust is available to help. Prisoners are also screened for learning difficulties, if they are identified following rapid screening then a further in-depth assessment will be made which will contribute to a personalised support plan.

The quality of teaching across all subjects was found by Ofsted to be high. The education department responds well to the needs of prisoners, for example increasing the availability of ESOL classes and opening a new classroom on N wing so that VPs can now attend classes and gain qualifications in business and customer service.

The main problem with the education department is not of their own making, namely attendance. Staffing issues within the prison and the compression of the regime have led to attendance at education being very low, indeed on one day in December an IMB member found that there were no prisoners in Education at all. Staffing is the main reason for non-attendance (see Annex C, Graph 11.) It is expected that the new profile from 4 June 2023 will remedy the situation.

Library

The quality of library provision has improved marginally since the end of the last reporting year.

Small groups of prisoners from Education now visit the library each weekday. There are also regular visits from two wings and one workshop, but these are the initiative of officers rather than management-organised events. The prison still details one or more officers to be 'runners' but library staff report that it is now three years since one was actually allocated due to lack of officers to escort prisoners (currently because of staffing shortfalls) and the lack of space in the library, group reading, and other literacy activities have not recommenced, thus removing an important rehabilitative tool. Long mooted plans to re-locate the library once more, to address the space issue, seem to be on hold. Library staff have been proactive in operating an order and delivery system taking books and other resources to the wings; an admirable initiative but hardly maximising the use of their skills.

7.2 Vocational training, work

In February 2023 HMIP identified insufficient spaces, at 55%, for education, training, or work. By June the number of men in education or work had increase to 72%.

Since the inspection a shed building workshop which has a commercial retail outlet, has been established, providing both skills and a practical outcome.

7.3 Offender management, progression

The continued backlog of court hearings has had an adverse effect on progression for both remand and prisoners awaiting sentence. Currently, about two thirds of prisoners at Birmingham are unsentenced and some can spend as long as two, three or exceptionally four years on remand. In that time men can become distanced from their life outside. Unsented prisoners have no contractual right to help with employment, housing, benefits etc. It is unacceptable that remand can continue for such lengthy periods and no support be offered.

Two men have been in custody since 2019. 32 men have been held in custody for 2 or more years and 11 of these are on trial with 21 awaiting sentencing.

Some Parole Boards have been repeatedly cancelled. In one man's case repeated failures for the Board to meet, led to a ten-month delay in a decision. This unfairly creates uncertainty and anxiety.

7.4 Family contact

The visits hall is open for visits every day, both morning and afternoon, and the atmosphere is usually friendly and relaxed. The contract for family work was given to the prison advice and care trust (PACT) in October 2022 and there were problems in recruiting staff which impacted on visits. For a while there was a backlog of prisoners requesting visits and prison staff had to step in to help book both family and legal visits. These problems are now largely resolved, although IMB members observe that there are often unused spaces in the visits hall.

The visits hall is a large space but in summer can become overly hot and stuffy.

The board agree with the HMIP recommendation for more planned family days.

In-cell phones mean that prisoners can keep in regular contact with friends and family although the IMB do receive occasional complaints about the time it takes for new phone numbers to be added to a prisoner's authorised list of dialable phone numbers.

It is a concern that social video calls, have been suspended as there are not enough staff to run this scheme. In the case of a prisoner from Liverpool, this means that he no longer has any visual family contact with his partner and children.

7.5 Resettlement planning

Resettlement services have been under-staffed. Over 100 prisoners are released each month and there is a high demand for support.

The employment hub is a positive initiative, which has brought resettlement services together in one building. It was under used for much of the year as escorting officers were not always available. However, it is now functioning well with twice weekly pre-release training sessions and it also accommodates the expectations team and Inside Job, which is a successful peer led initiative supporting prisoners into employment.

The Board continues to have concerns about the absence of support into housing for men on remand. The prison honours its duty to refer at the point of release and

housing becomes the responsibility of the court team where relevant. The Board would expect better provision for the remand cohort.

The number of men released to accommodation remains high, well above 80%. The appointment of a “strategic housing specialist” is part of a pilot which aims to refer men for support once the date of their court hearing is known as opposed to seeing men on the actual day of their court appearance. Low staffing levels are making this hard to implement. Prior to redesignation there was team of 6, now 3 staff work in this area of pre-release.

HMIP noted that there were insufficient purposeful activity places for all prisoners. However, two thirds of the population are on remand and cannot be required to work or study if they choose not to do so. Since the inspection new activities have been set up, constructing wooden garden sheds, car maintenance training, and a packaging workshop on the social care wing.

The poor internet connection in the visitor’s centre has blocked a DWP project where homeless, and drug or alcohol dependent men have applications prepared and ready to send electronically immediately on release. The lack of connectivity means the applications cannot be sent from the visitors centre.

Support with finance and benefits has been observed to be well managed.

Staffing and resource issues have been the greatest challenge to positive outcomes in the area of pre-release and resettlement.

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	16
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	10
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	8
Total number of visits to the establishment	354

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	15	10
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	9	8
C	Equality	3	7
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	10	8
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	8	34
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	13	21
F	Food and kitchens	9	14
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	25	39
H1	Property within the establishment	34	39
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	17	16
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	12	11
I	Sentence management, including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	17	28
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	25	56
K	Transfers	10	18
L	Miscellaneous	17	53
	Total number of applications	224	312

Annex A: Service providers

Buildings and maintenance: Amey

Catering: Aramark

Education: Novus

General healthcare: Birmingham and Solihull

Library: Birmingham City Council

NHS Psychology services: Birmingham and Solihull NHS Psychology and Mental Health Trust; HMPPS Psychology Service.

Psychosocial services: Cranstoun

Social care: Aspect Care, Birmingham City Council

Visits and family contact: Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT)

Annex B: Surveys

IMB Healthcare Survey

A total of 94 prisoners from across the prison were asked three questions:

1. Could you say one good or positive thing about healthcare in the prison?
2. Could you name one thing about healthcare that you think needs improving?
3. Do you think that healthcare in the prison is better, the same, or worse than healthcare out in the community?

Responses

As all figures are rounded percentages, in some cases they add up to considerably more than 100%.

1. Could you say one good or positive thing about healthcare in the prison?

Response	Overall %
Nothing good or positive	44
At least it's there	7
Not used healthcare	6
Nurses	5
Doctors	4
Respectful staff	3
Everything is good	3
Have everything I need	3
Staff	3
Receive treatment quickly	3
Good Treatment	2
Available 24 hours	2
It's OK	2
Dentist is Ok / good.	2
No response	2
Able to get a hospital appointment.	1
Staff come to wings	1
Staff believe in what they do	1
It's better than good	1
Time meds are given out	1

2. Could you name one thing about healthcare that you think needs improving?

Response	Overall %
Waiting times all categories	39
Waiting time for dentist	18
Waiting times	13
No improvement needed	6
Staff attitudes	5
Communication with patients	4
No response / don't know	4
Listening to patients	3
Not removing meds on arrival at prison	3
Not issuing meds without consultation	3
Waiting times for x-ray	2
Waiting times for GP	2
Waiting times for physio	2
Not allowing meds to be missed through being in shower or at work.	2
Get meds quickly after prescribed	2
Insufficient pain relief	2
Timing of meds / at the weekend	2
Not suggesting you buy your own meds	1
Providing meds on time	1
Meeting Urology needs	1
Waiting time for emergencies	1
Organisation of dressing provision	1
Increase amount of exercise (in-patients)	1
I shouldn't be here	1
Make sure Healthcare complaint forms are available	1
Medics should be allowed to do more	1
Whole system needs revamping	1
Improve meds procedure on transfer in	1
Improve treatment in CSU	1
Waiting times for optician	1
Everything	1
Hospital appointments	1
GP response times	1
Appointments for VPs	1
Better trained nurses	1
Consistency	1
Structure of cells in healthcare (for wheelchair users)	1
Provide meds when needed	1
Allow prisoners to keep walking stick on arrival	1
Assess needs correctly on arrival	1

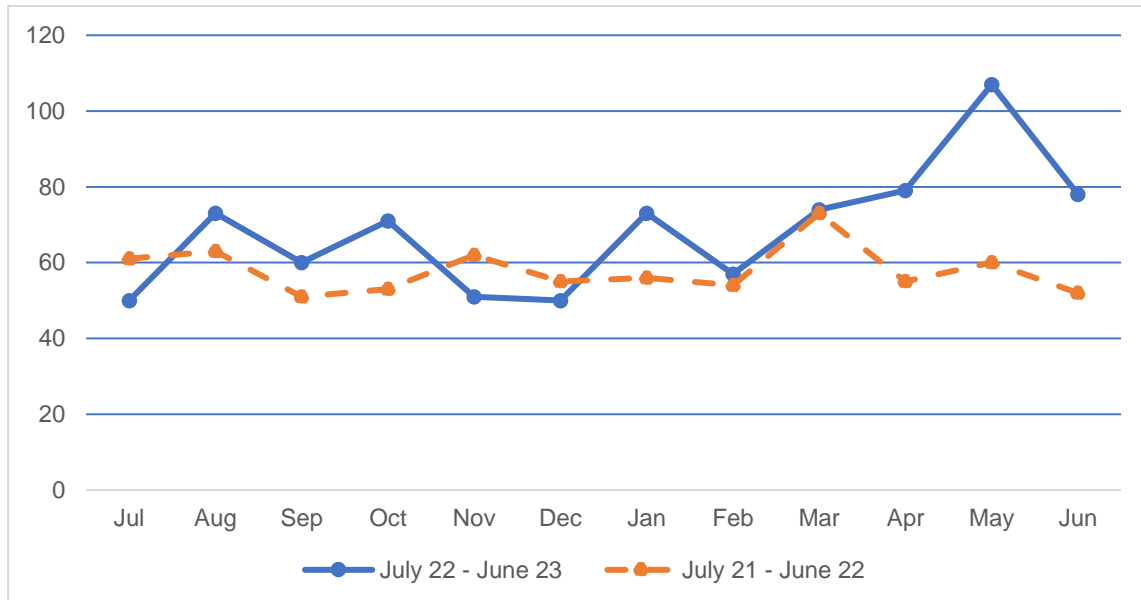
3. Do you think that healthcare in the prison is better, the same, or worse than healthcare out in the community?

	Overall %
Worse	69
Same	20
Better	6
No response	4

Annex C: Graphs

Graph 1:

Total Use of Force



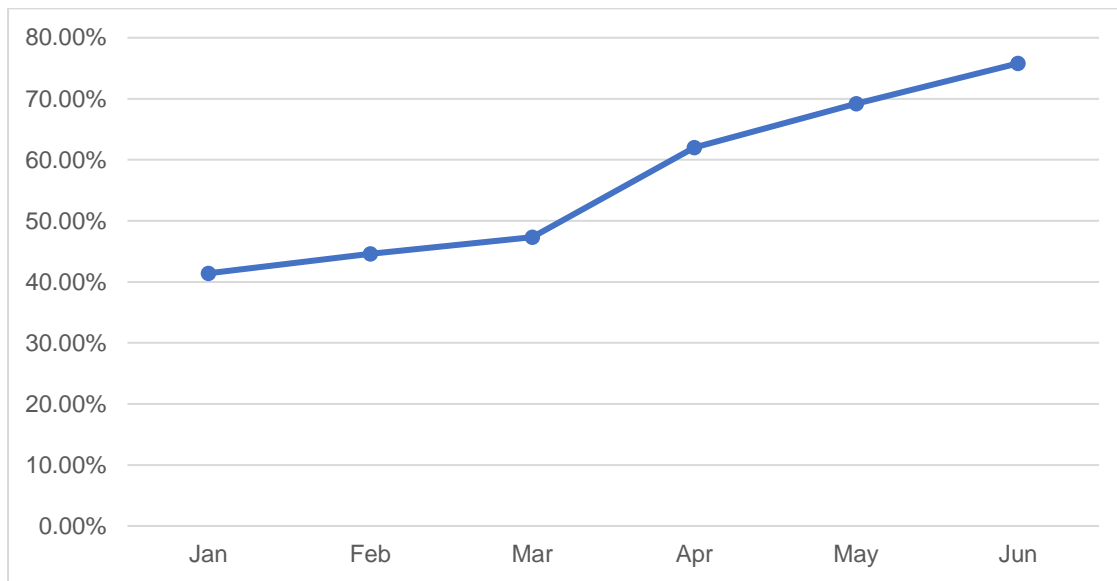
Graph 2:

Use of Force by ethnicity July 2022 – June 2023

Ethnicity	Number	% OF UoF	% Of prison population (april 2023)	Level of disproportion
Asian	119	14.5%	19%	-4.5
Black	231	28%	17%	+8
Chinese or other	19	2%	3%	-1
Mixed	61	7.5%	6%	+1.5
White British	340	41%	48%	-7
White other	52	6%	6%	0
Not stated	9	1%	1%	0
Total	831	100%	100%	

Graph 3:

Body worn camera activation rates 2023



Graph 4:

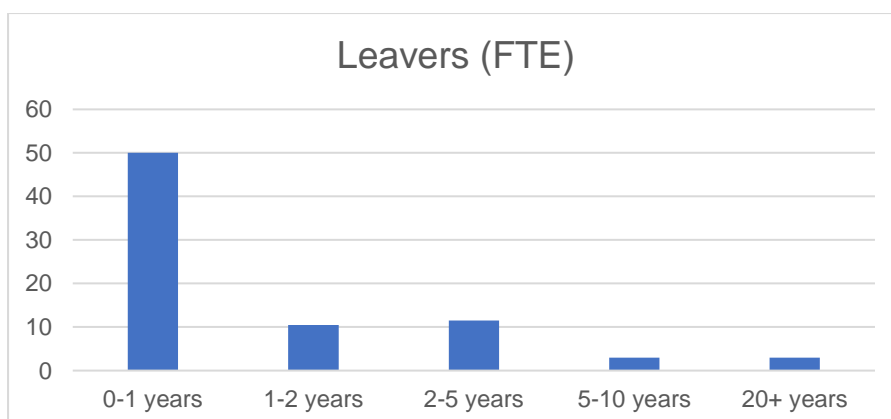
X-Ray body scanner number of tests and number of positive readings

July 2022 – June 2023

	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Tested	319	466	507	548	578	474	538	574	538	372	588	635
Positive	10	12	13	6	3	4	2	1	1	1	3	1

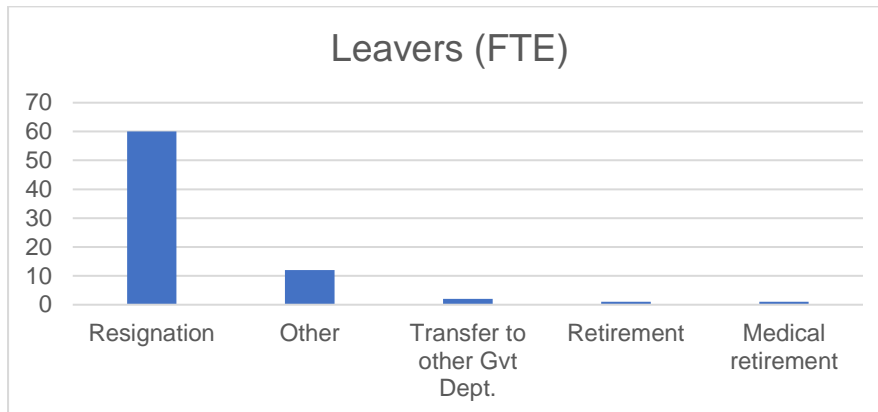
Graph 5:

Operational staff rates of attrition: July 2022 - June 2023



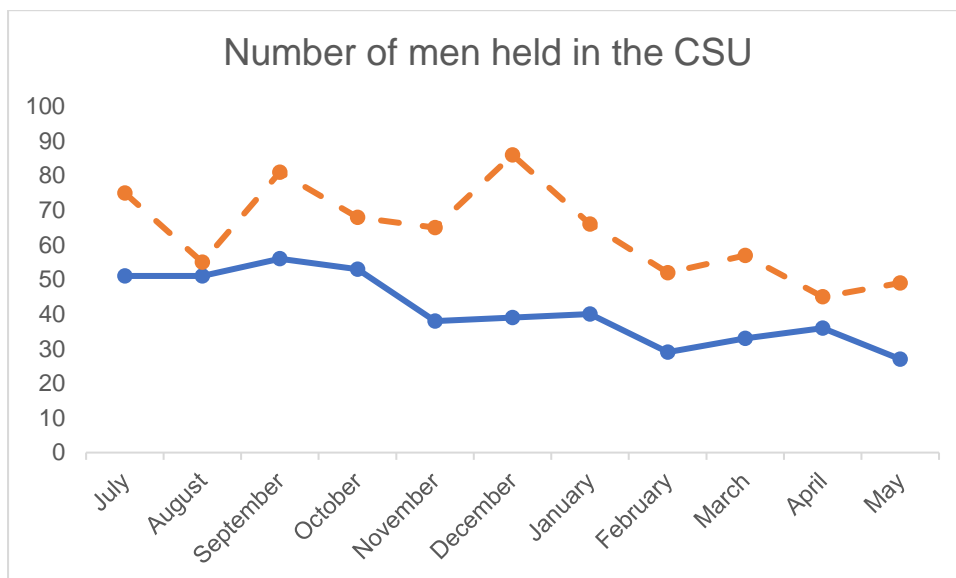
Graph 6:

Operational staff reasons for leaving: July 2022 – June 2023



Graph 7:

Prisoners held in the CSU



July 2022 – June 2023 – solid lower line

July 2021 – June 2022 – dotted upper line

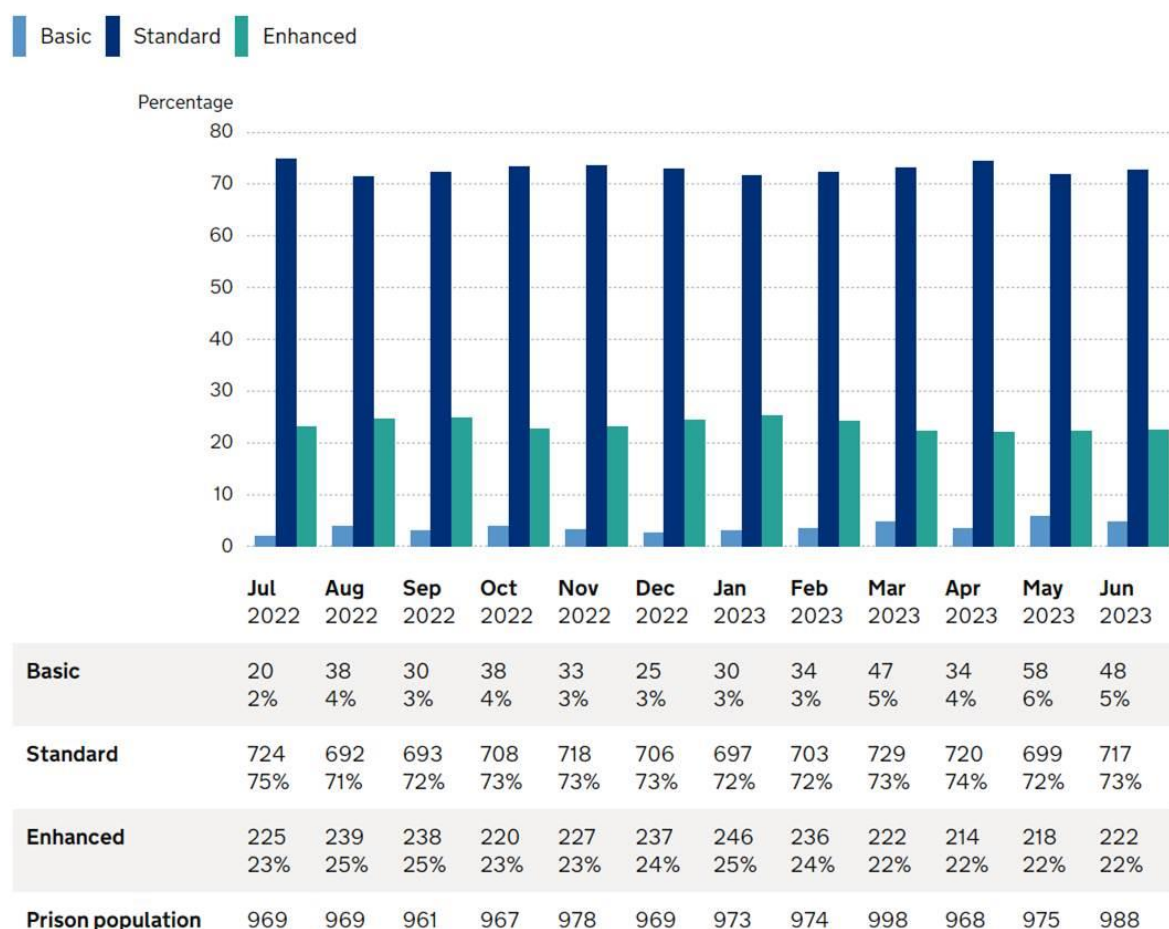
Graph 8:

Ethnicity and disproportionality of men held in the CSU July 2022 – June 2023

Ethnicity	Number held in the CSU	% of CSU population	% prison population (April 2023)	Disproportion
Asian	81	16%	19%	-3
Black	114	23%	17%	+6
Chinese or other	10	2%	3%	-1
Mixed	48	10%	6%	+4
White British	219	44%	48%	-4
White other	22	4%	6%	-2
Not stated	5	1%	1%	0
Total	499	100%	100%	

Graph 9:

IEPs



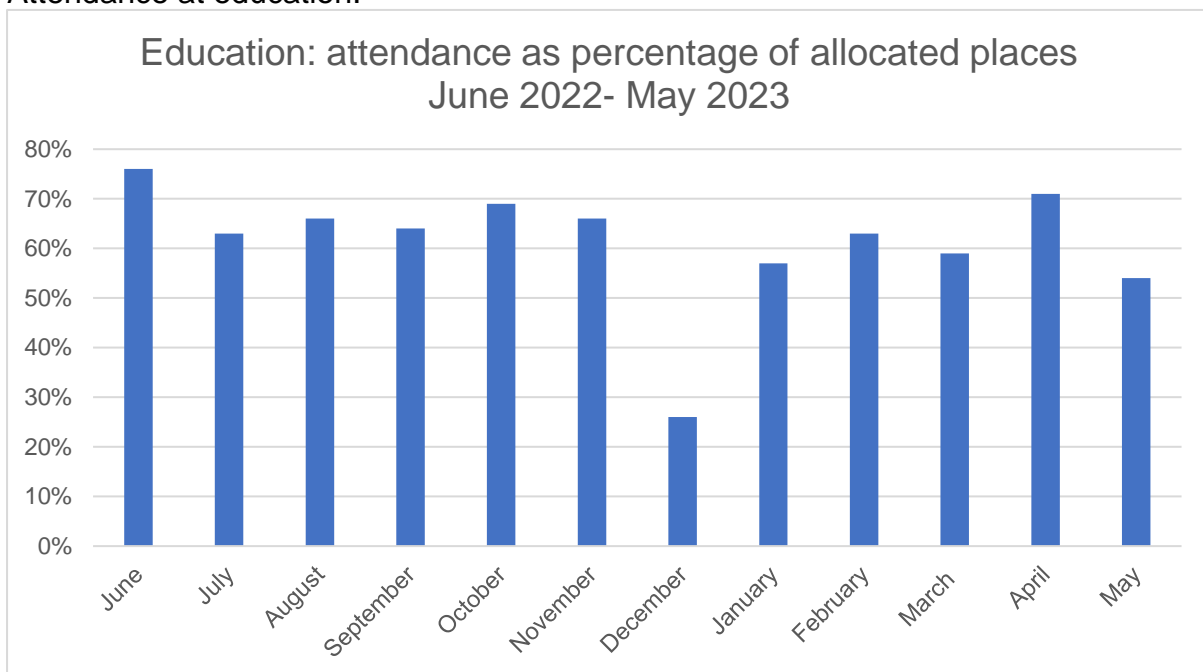
Graph 10:

Waiting times to see a dentist (23 May 2023):

Waiting lists	Average of Time waiting (weeks)
Dental - New Patient Assessment	6 weeks and 1 day
Dental – fillings, rct	14 weeks and 5 days
Dental – dental hospital	2 weeks and 6 days

Graph 11:

Attendance at education:





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