



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Aylesbury

**For reporting year
1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023**

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Contents

Introductory sections 1 – 3	Page
1. Statutory role of the IMB	3
2. Description of establishment	3
3. Key points	5
 Evidence sections 4 – 7	
4. Safety	11
5. Fair and humane treatment	15
6. Health and wellbeing	20
7. Progression and resettlement	24
 The work of the IMB	
Board statistics	29
Applications to the IMB	30
 Annex A	
Graphs and tables	31

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Introductory sections 1 – 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

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

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

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

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

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

2. Description of the establishment

HMP Aylesbury began this reporting year categorised as a Young Offender Institution (YOI) taking 18-to 21-year-old prisoners. Around this time, it started to take Category C prisoners and on 1 October 2022 became a category C prison with an age cap of 40 years.

The prison has a mixture of buildings, from Victorian to early 21st century. The seven residential units are of differing sizes and ages. There has been a recent modernisation programme in some wings. The wings are generally kept clean and orderly.

The care and separation unit (CSU) – or segregation unit ('seg') – is 10 years old. A modern healthcare building, including the reception unit, is also 10 years old. There is a modern, well-equipped gym.

Gov Facility Services Limited (GFSL) holds the contract for maintenance of the prison. At the start of the year Practice Plus provided the healthcare. On 1 October 2022 Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust took over the healthcare contract.

The prison is not designed as a resettlement prison but 65 prisoners left custody directly from Aylesbury in this reporting year.

New prisoners arrived throughout this year. From October 2022 only category C prisoners, over 21 years of age and up to 40, arrived. Gradually the young population, 18 to 21 years of age, was moved out.

The total number of prisoners held ranged from 370 at the start of the year to 386 (full occupancy: 402 prisoners)¹. Target staffing levels stayed the same.

All the cells are designed for single occupancy. The accommodation is kept clean and infrastructure usually functions reasonably well. Heating is not even across the accommodation. Cells in the Seg are often reported as cold during the winter months.

The preparation for the prison to change from a youth offenders institution (YOI) to a category C prison was seriously inadequate. The prison was set up as a high security environment for young men of 18 to 21 years of age facing long sentences. The new population of older prisoners, many experienced in prison life, and often with medium length sentences, (minimum of 16 months to serve), require and expect a quite different regime. The staff had minimal opportunity to retrain to deal with this different cohort. The contracts let for the provision of education and for health were let on the basis that the service users would be between 18 – 21 years old. The lack of purposeful activity was woeful. Activity spaces available fell way below what is needed to ensure prisoners could be out of their cells, as required, morning and afternoon 4.5 days a week.

The senior management team stayed stable through the year; staffing at other levels did not. Throughout the year the shortage of officers in all bands impacted negatively on the regime in the prison and as a consequence on the lives of all the prisoners. The shortage of staff made the shift to C from YOI particularly challenging. The shortage of Operational Service Grade staff (OSGs are staff at a junior level) at the start of the reporting year, which had a further deleterious effect on overall staffing, was largely resolved by the end of the reporting year.

The day-to-day regime at Aylesbury did not meet category C standards, leading many prisoners and their families to make complaints. This was also picked up strongly in HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) report of 22 November 2022, published 14 March 2023. Changes made to the regime in January 2023 attempted to tackle this problem. The regime was split 50/50, making the best use of the limited spaces available for purposeful activity.

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

3. Key points

3.1 Main findings

Safety

Prisoners often report feeling unsafe, particularly in their early days in Aylesbury. Some have heard negative reports about Aylesbury or have 'non-associates' (other prisoners they have to avoid for safety reasons, including gang affiliations or previous incidents) at Aylesbury. Lack of clarity about next steps after induction causes anxiety.

With the change of population from young offenders to category C prisoners, we saw a welcome decline in violence. Self-harm did not diminish. There was an increase in drugs and trading of prescription medicines. This led to some prisoners being in debt and threatened.

We saw a more systematic approach to safety from the middle of the year. There was more in-depth analysis of incidents of violence with learning points identified and used to train staff. Post-incident conversations rarely took place.

Fair and humane treatment

The prison is orderly. There is a reasonable sense of fairness and humane treatment. But the prison did not develop a more open and fair regime quickly enough, which would support strong staff-prisoner relationships. The older, category C population, needed a new culture to be embedded fast. Staff took time to adapt their approach to prisoners. Thirty-year-olds do not react well to being treated like 18-year-olds.

Key working was reintroduced in January 2023. This is positive and is being monitored closely. However, the IMB frequently found that new prisoners did not know who their key worker was for several weeks, and only saw the benefits after regular meetings with their key worker.

Many prisoners in Aylesbury are a long way from their families. Many of these prisoners have young children or relatives who are unwell. We have had many complaints about this throughout the year. As an individual prison Aylesbury has limited control over prisoner moves, but staff have to manage the numerous complaints and anxieties that arise from this.

Health and wellbeing

Sustained health and wellbeing requires activity. From April to September of this reporting year many prisoners were in their cells for up to 23 hours a day. In the second half of the year the prison made much greater efforts to provide activity for prisoners, introducing a split regime to make best use of available activity.

The older prisoners have complex health needs. The health provider from October 2022 won the contract on the basis that they would be treating a population of 18 to

21-year-olds. The provider had to make a steep transition and did not do this smoothly. For three months health services were patchy and sometimes chaotic.

The older population use more prescription drugs. More staff time is now spent preventing drugs being traded. Aylesbury also experienced a spike in drug use, including new psychoactive drugs.

Progression and resettlement

There is not enough out-of-cell activity, and much of the activity is of poor quality and undemanding. This means that prisoners are not gaining practical, social or intellectual skills to aid their progression and resettlement.

The Offender Management Unit (OMU) ran with only 50% of prison offender managers against plan during much of the year. OMU staff were overstretched. This was made worse by inexperienced staff on the wings sometimes not being able to answer prisoners' basic questions about their sentence, sentence plans, next steps in custody and release.

Aylesbury is not a resettlement prison. It is not staffed or resourced to support prisoners leaving custody. Despite this, 65 prisoners were released from Aylesbury in this period. This is unacceptable. Efforts are made to put the essential services in place for these prisoners on release, but the lack of proper preparation caused some prisoners great anxiety and impacted their mental health.

We saw staff in individual departments celebrating prisoner achievements, but this has not been embedded across the prison and there is much more opportunity to recognise prisoners' achievements in a public and systematic way.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

Courageously champion sentencing reform, establishing more appropriate penalties for law breakers. Prisons are under-resourced and over-capacity, thus cannot deliver their own stated objectives. Reducing the number of people sent to prison, and reducing term lengths, is necessary to deliver a prison system that can achieve its own aims within current resourcing constraints.

Deliver a robust, imaginative and flexible new recruitment strategy across the prison estate, backed by the resources needed to increase and sustain higher staffing levels.

Look at the regime in prisons through a 21st century lens. There is a widening gap between normal life and prison life. Modernise ambitiously. Prioritise post-release welfare and employment planning through greater use of technology for prisoners and by building stronger links between prisons, external agencies and employers in the community.

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

Improve forward planning, consultation and support to senior staff when prisons are required to house new categories of prisoner.

Change the established prioritisation of access to Programmes. Currently Programmes are only open to those within 2 years, or less, of release or parole. Include those within six months of potential re-categorisation. This would capitalise on, and reward, the strong motivation of many prisoners to keep the rules and make progress to achieve a D categorisation.

Aim to locate prisoners near family or those with whom they have supportive emotional and practical ties. Prioritise locating prisoners close to their children. Speed up approved compassionate moves to allow prisoners to be closer to sick relatives.

All prisons releasing prisoners should focus on resettlement and reintegration as their priority. Prisons that are not designated for release, or resourced to support release, such as training establishments, should not be expected to release prisoners. It is both unsafe and counterproductive if they do.

TO THE GOVERNOR

Maintain the recent improvements in the regime capitalising on the forthcoming improvements in workshop provision and innovate further through wider engagement with third sector partners.

Make consistent and visible celebration of prisoner successes a core part of the Aylesbury culture.

Actively monitor and hold accountable third-party contractors to ensure value for money and the best service delivery for Aylesbury, particularly in relation to health and education contracts which are so vital to positive outcomes.

3.3 Response to last report

Issue raised	Response given	Progress
Minister		
Deliver a robust, imaginative and flexible new recruitment strategy across the prison estate, backed by the resources needed to increase and sustain higher staffing levels.	The minister reports on a strong national recruitment drive, but suggests that retention is possibly a greater issue for the prison service than recruitment. He also mentions the benefit to Aylesbury of the First Deployment Scheme.	We have not seen benefits of the national recruitment drive in Aylesbury. There has been no sustained increase in staffing levels at officer level. There has been an improvement in OSG numbers through local recruitment. Aylesbury's management team makes positive attempts to retain staff.
Despite current uncertainties in public finances, fight to	The minister mentions the commitment, in the	We have seen no evidence of improved

secure investment in the reduction of reoffending to meet the ambition of the Prison Strategy White Paper (December 2021). (The 2021-22 spending review specifies £500 million over the next three years will be allocated to this area.) Keep access to quality education, and skills development, at the heart of this investment.	Prison Strategy White Paper 2021 to an improved prison education service. The pilot to introduce new heads of Education, Skills and Work has been completed. The minister adds further details about the future, including issuing curriculum guidance to all governors.	funding to support reduction in reoffending during the reporting year. The Introduction of new heads of Education, Skills and Work has not changed the offer to prisoners in Aylesbury.
Reduce the number of seriously mentally ill people being held in prison; ensure a greater number of emergency mental health beds are available for prisoners in extreme need.	The minister alerts us to the publication in June 2022 of the mental health bill to reform the Mental Health Act of 1983. This includes reforms to support people in the criminal justice system. This should speed up access to specialist care and treatment as required.	It is still a significant effort for staff at Aylesbury to find suitable places for prisoners with mental health needs.
HMPPS		
Improve forward planning, consultation and support to senior staff when prisons are required to house new categories of prisoner.	HMPPS comment that the decision to increase the age limit at HMP Aylesbury was taken in accordance with their governance principles. No mention is made of proper consultation with the senior staff at Aylesbury.	Progress in transforming to a category C prison was slow. Towards the end of the reporting year, it picked up. After the HMIP report of 22.11.22-09.12.22, published 14 March 2023 some more resources were made available to support necessary changes. Up until that point there seemed scant attention or resources focused on Aylesbury, by HMPPS, despite the major change that had been imposed on the prison and staff.
Set tough targets, and appropriate penalties, in third party contracts for education, training and vocational skills	HMPPS note that new challenging targets have been set for all education providers for	The quality and regularity of education at Aylesbury remains erratic.

delivery. Maintain business-like contract management to optimise delivery.	the contract extension which will take prisons up to the new prison education service contract in 2025. This includes an increase in financial penalties for failings. Further changes have been made in the contract space.	Aylesbury's HMIP report published in March 2023 includes a section from OFSTED which marks all aspects of the provision as inadequate at that time.
Systematically tackle low levels of staffing. Reconsider the value of local recruitment to lower bands in the prison service.	HMPPS describes the refreshed approach to recruitment including new methods of outreach and advertising at national and the local level. HMPPS also mentions the use of the First Deployment arrangement as the minister does above.	Unfortunately, the lack of staff in Aylesbury, throughout the reporting year limited almost all the attempts to improve the regime for prisoners.
Re-establish the key worker scheme to ensure prisoners have specific individual officers allocated to them, who will take time to mentor and provide guidance.	HMPPS state that key-working will be reintroduced in Aylesbury if staffing and the regime allow.	Key-working was reintroduced around December 2022.
Governor		
Set out a clear vision for the prison which puts improvement in prisoner outcomes first; build on the strong interdepartmental co-operation existing in the prison to realise this vision.	This was referred to in the HMIP report published 14 March 2023. No direct response given to IMB.	IMB not aware of such a vision. Aylesbury's response to the recent HMIP inspection would come closest to this, together with the 22-23 Aylesbury HMP/YOI delivery plan.
Embed a greater ethos of celebrating success and sharing positive behaviours and outcomes for prisoners through communications and activities with staff and prisoners alike.	No direct response given to IMB but a few changes made.	Early in the reporting year the prisoner newsletter carried some announcements about prisoner successes and achievements, but this did not last. Scant acknowledgements in some departments.
Respond to the changing prisoner population in Aylesbury. Put in place a	This was referred to in the HMIP report published 14 March	Picked up in the 22-23 Aylesbury HMP/YOI delivery plan. A Governor

comprehensive strategy to ensure that the needs of category C prisoners are met appropriately alongside the slightly different needs of the young offenders. Is there a greater role for third sector agencies to help with this?	2023. No direct response given to IMB.	was appointed as Transition Manager by the Executive Director, Public Sector Prisons South in September 2022, working with Aylesbury's Senior Leadership Team. This role will end mid-2023. Some relevant changes were delivered slowly through the reporting year, e.g. a split regime was introduced in January 2023.
Improve the quality and quantity of purposeful activities and workshops.	This was referred to in the HMIP report published 14 March 2023. No direct response given to IMB.	Construction workshop reopened and trainer employed. Two other workshops added capacity. Plans for more significant improvements are in development.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

Prisoners arrive and leave via secure vans. New prisoners are brought into the Reception suite where they and their property are searched. Airport-style scanners are used for both people and property. An amnesty is offered for any illicit items that are detected and handed over to staff.

Healthcare meets with and check each of the prisoners arriving that day. Once the reception process is completed, prisoners are moved to reception cells on G wing where they stay for the first few nights. They are then located to cells on other wings around the prison and join the general population.

All prisoners are interviewed and a summary of the interview is circulated to those departments which deliver elements of induction, with the reminder that induction should be undertaken swiftly. Information such as dependants, general health, support from family and friends, stated ability to read and write is included. The IMB find these short descriptions helpful.

Departments including Education, Chaplaincy and IMB then visit prisoners in the first few days of their stay at Aylesbury and introduce themselves and their services and carry out any assessments necessary. Once departments complete their inductions, a shared spreadsheet is updated to confirm this. The prison experienced much higher numbers of arrivals and departures this year than in recent years. This put pressure on staff responsible for inductions. There were times in the reporting year when inductions were badly delayed.

Thorough induction is important in the early days, but IMB members noticed that much of what is said during induction may not be retained by prisoners. Arriving in a new environment, uncertain, having to adapt fast, can make it hard to absorb information. On arrival prisoners may not even know where they are geographically located in relation to home, and this may be preoccupying them. Prisoners often say that they have not signed up for a class or similar because they have not heard about it. If essential information about the regime, and opportunities available in the prison, is confined to induction, then this can leave prisoners reliant on hearsay from other prisoners. Further repetition is needed using other means than written notices.

The movement of prisoners rarely seems to work smoothly. The problem is reported to be with the transport provider, Serco, and the 'despatching' prisons. Movement numbers are often lower and later than originally expected.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

There was one death in custody in the reporting year. The prisoner was found unresponsive in his cell and, sadly, all attempts to revive him were unsuccessful. The prisoner had been in Aylesbury less than a month. The cause of death is still unknown.

The Prisons & Probation Ombudsman's (PPO) investigations into deaths in custody were completed. An inquest concluded that one death was suicide, while the inquest into another death in custody will held be later in 2023.

There were no cases of apparent homicide during the reporting year.

The number of incidents of self-harm is broadly in line with the two previous years, despite the increase in population from, roughly 220 to 390 over in this period. The transition from YOI to category C seems to be showing a decrease in incidents of self-harm per capita. Those who self-harm are only a small proportion of the population; frequent self-harmers have a disproportionate impact on annual data. The data is available at the end of this report.

Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) is used to support prisoners who are feeling low or suicidal. Version 6 of the process is currently in force. ACCT documents are audited regularly by ACCT Reviewers, and training in the process is available. The process seems to work reasonably well. Whilst paperwork is not always completed to the required standard, prison staff can usually give a good summary of the condition of a specific prisoner.

The multidisciplinary weekly Safety Intervention Meeting (SIM) supports the wing staff by reviewing ACCTs and self-harm and by identifying additional activities and actions to support prisoners encountering problems. However, anecdotally, incidents of self-harm tend to follow negative interactions with wing staff, e.g. refusal to provide an extra vape capsule. These can be difficult to manage via meetings like SIM.

All cells in Aylesbury are single occupancy. Each has a phone. Prisoners can make calls to their registered friends and family and some other services like the Samaritans. Prisoners pay for all their calls except those to support services, like the Samaritans, which are free.

The prison has regenerated its Listener service. Listeners are peer support volunteers, trained by the Samaritans. This is still a little under-used. There are usually two Listeners on each wing and a rota of available Listeners. If a duty Listener is called for by a prisoner on another wing, they need to be escorted to that wing by an officer: yet another aspect of prison life dependent upon the numbers of available officers.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

There were 206 violent incidents in the reporting year, up from 135 incidents the year before. The peak in May-June would account for that. Data is available at the end of this report.

Of these, 57 were staff assaults, against 56 the year before. Serious staff assaults were down from 14 to 2, a significant improvement. The number of prisoners assaulted was 152, up from 132 the previous year. The number of serious assaults fell from 17 to 6.

The violent incidents were analysed by time of day, day of week, location and ethnicity and religion of the participants, none of which yielded much in the way of a pattern. The suspicion is that debt within the prison and gang issues outside of it were the most significant contributors.

The prison has implemented the Challenge, Support and Intervention Plan (CSIP) as a means of helping prisoners who have a tendency towards violence. This plan, reviewed weekly at the SIM, brings multidisciplinary teams together on individual cases and anecdotally seems to help prisoners become more controlled in their daily

life. However, the prison has not published any statistics to support this for the last three or four years.

Wing staff have been observed to be vigilant for signs of bullying and offenders are usually quickly moved to another wing, when available. The Security team tries to minimise gang activity, tracking non-associates and advising on where prisoners could be safely moved to. This remains a complex picture: prisoners are often not open about the identity of others with whom they might be in conflict.

Prisoners often report feeling unsafe when they are told that they are to come to Aylesbury, possibly because it has a reputation from its previous role in the Long-Term and High Security Estate (LTHSE). There is also concern amongst the prisoners that it has not fully transitioned to its new role as a category C training prison and that the regime is too strict.

It is unusual for Aylesbury to have more than one or two self-isolators at any one time. Self-isolators tend to fall into two broad categories. There are those that are so unhappy and/or feel so unsafe about being in Aylesbury that they really do not want to come out of their cells. Over time they can usually be persuaded to come out, to take showers, collect food and gradually engage with the regime. Generally, the wing staff, supported by Health, Psychology, Mental Health and other departments, can establish reasonable participation. The other category tends to be older, more mature and content with their own company, who make a deliberate choice not to participate in wing life. Although wing staff will try to engage them, the prisoners largely keep themselves to themselves. They will only participate in activities which interest them.

4.4 Use of force

The number of use of force incidents reduced during the year, from 219 in the first three months (April to June 2022) to 59 in the final three months (January to March 2023). The decrease is due to the move to being a category C prison with a higher proportion of older prisoners.

The use of PAVA incapacitant spray (a synthetic pepper spray) also decreased, peaking at 13 uses in June 2022. It was not used at all in the final three months of the year.

Body worn cameras were not used from July 2022 until a new system was installed in December 2022. This gap meant that any allegation of excessive use of force made by a prisoner to the IMB was hard to follow up thoroughly. The new system is working well and body worn cameras are now used in nearly all incidents. Three senior prison staff do a weekly review of footage from body worn cameras and CCTV recordings of all incidents.

The Board noted that whilst body worn camera footage is now available for most incidents, it does not always capture the whole incident. Staff do not always switch their camera on at the start of an incident if it escalates quickly and unexpectedly. This limits its use in determining what actually happened.

There were three incidents where the prison was supported by national tactical response groups. Two involved prisoners on the netting and the other involved a prisoner on the roof in the yard.

The prison holds a monthly use of force meeting to review data and identify learning. An IMB member monitored most meetings. Prisoner representatives are invited to the meetings. However, on several occasions, there were insufficient staff to bring them to the meeting. The IMB saw good engagement with the prisoners, with prison staff seeking and listening to their views and being open and honest about areas for improvement.

Data on the age, ethnicity, religion, disability status and sexual orientation of prisoners involved in use of force incidents is reviewed at the meetings. There is no comparison with the breakdown of the general population of the prison, so it is difficult to see whether any groups are disproportionately involved. There is no data presented regarding prisoners with known learning difficulties or known neurodiversity.

The prison does not collect data on de-escalation techniques, but it did seek prisoners' views on whether de-escalation was used. This was in the Post Incident Review form, which prisoners were asked to complete after incidents to get their views on whether the use of force was justified and proportionate. These were discontinued in the second half of the year due to a combination of lack of engagement from prisoners and lack of staff resources. The prison intends to re-introduce a shorter questionnaire.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

At the gate, where staff and visitors enter the prison, there is a walk-through metal detector and during the year a new airport-style baggage scanner was installed. There is also a new baggage scanner in reception, where all arriving prisoners' property is scanned. All staff were trained and/or retrained in appropriate search techniques.

There has been a big increase in 'throw-overs' (where prohibited items are thrown over the walls of the prison from outside) during the year due to the lifting of lockdown measures and the change in the prison population. The packages mainly contain mobile phones and controlled substances. The number of packages found by staff has increased but finds from cell searches, and in other locations, suggest a significant proportion is still reaching prisoners. The drug found most frequently was cannabis but as the year went on Spice was discovered, which was a worrying development.

The prison carries out intelligence-led drug tests and cell searches, for example when a prisoner appears to be under the influence of drugs. The Board saw the regular use of dogs in cell searches and in patrols around the prison. A Board member also observed searching of visitors as they came in on a visit. This was thorough.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

Accommodation

During the previous reporting year, wings A, E and C were refurbished, and showers on wings B and D improved. The showers on wings F and G were refurbished in previous years. The net result of this is that the wings are now all in a comparable state and most of the physical problems have been dealt with. The prison maintains a 'clean and decent' environment and there are sufficient prisoners tasked as cleaners and painters to keep the wings tidy.

The capacity of the prison is 402 prisoners and all are housed in small, single-occupancy cells. Each cell has a single bed, storage, W.C and washbasin. There is a telephone in each cell.

Inside temperatures are uneven. Due to the age of the infrastructure some cells are hard to heat, particularly in the seg.

The buildings are maintained by Gov Facility Services Limited (GFSL). This is an 'in-house' maintenance service rather than the previous outsourced service. In general, the service seems adequate.

Clothing

The IMB hears about clothing almost only in association with the rules about parcels sent by family or friends. Prisoners prefer the clothes sent to them by family or friends to those they can order. Prisoners can have one parcel from home within 28 days of sentencing: then only one a year, on their birthday.

Food

We heard few complaints about food in Aylesbury, but this year we began to hear complaints about size of portions and fairness of distribution. The IMB observed the hot meal being served on different wings a number of times. Prisoners did not always use the regulation sized plate or bowl. This led to some discrepancies in portion size. An IMB member reported that on at least one occasion, when a wing was left with an inadequate portion for a prisoner last in line, staff immediately returned to the kitchen to collect a suitable replacement.

The quantity of food is sufficient but does not appear generous. The per capita budget was not raised any time during the year, despite significant food price inflation. In some other prisons local discretionary funding has been used to increase the per capita allowance. The kitchen provides a two-course hot meal in the evening, cereal-based breakfast and a lunchtime baguette with fruit or cake. The IMB is regularly assured, by the Governor, that this meets basic nutritional guidelines.

In previous years, there have been issues with the food flasks used for those fasting in Ramadan. This year the flasks were upgraded and the hot meal for the whole prison had been moved from lunchtime to the evening. Both these changes contributed to a complaint-free Ramadan.

Apart from quantity, the issue that causes most dissatisfaction regarding food is the ordering system. Prisoners are issued a menu sheet a week in advance that has to be handed to the wing staff by Wednesday, in order for the food to be ordered for the

following Monday. If the menu sheet is not handed in in time, then the prisoner gets a default selection, generally vegetarian. This is not always popular.

5.2 Segregation

The segregation (seg) unit is clean, orderly and well run. Members frequently observed the professionalism of staff on the unit and staff-prisoner relationships are generally good. The cases of individual prisoners held on the seg are reviewed regularly and considerable effort is made by management to get prisoners back to a normal wing regime as soon as is safe and practical. The IMB monitor the seg systematically and attend the regular prisoner Good Order or Discipline (GOoD) reviews when possible. The reviews monitored by IMB members were conducted fairly, often with good humour.

Prisoners can be held in the segregation unit for their safety or safety of others. This is often because they have 'non-associates' on the wings. These prisoners can be hard to move, despite the best efforts of staff to find suitable wing accommodation. If it proves impossible to find safe wing accommodation, then officers seek a place in another prison or on a specialist unit. The stated standard time for transfers is 28 days. This was regularly exceeded. Severe capacity issues across the whole prison service and lack of available transport both contributed to long delays for prisoners waiting to move. Occasionally the prison resorted to arranging its own transport for prisoners. This was expensive and gave already busy staff more to do.

It is not recommended for prisoners on an ACCT to be placed in segregation. There were very few occasions when this happened. When it did, staff were observed to have maintained ACCT observations diligently. Some prisoners prefer being in the unit, as they feel safer there than on the wings. This includes some neurodiverse prisoners, and prisoners close to release who want their last weeks to go smoothly.

Average stay on the seg through the year was 10 days. A few individuals were there much longer than this, but their cases were managed with care.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

The transition from YOI to category C prison was severely under-planned. It placed strain on staff prisoner relationships. Staffing levels remained concerningly low, at an average of 60%, restricting all daily activity. The IMB received many complaints that the regime was insufficiently distinct from category B conditions. The regime change in early 2023, when the activity schedule was split into two parallel parts, increased the overall number of those who were able to go out to work or education in a day but reduced the time out of cells for many prisoners. This increased frustration amongst those who had previously worked full time.

With 47% of staff having joined the prison service within the last two years, there is a lack of experience in managing difficult or confrontational situations. There are staff training mornings twice monthly.

The IMB was pleased to observe that keywork was reintroduced in January 2023, after a three-year pause, and by the end of this reporting period, there were approximately 40 sessions being held weekly.

Keyworkers and sessions are allocated by OMU, with a combination of on-and off-wing keyworkers. The frequency of keyworker sessions is irregular due to staffing shortages, and currently there is no training provided for keyworkers. Training could improve consistency and effectiveness of the sessions. Many of the prisoners the IMB spoke to could not identify their keyworker. Prisoners with keyworkers who are off the wing often reported difficulties in contacting them. Those in the segregation unit held on cellular confinement retained their normal keyworker, which meant that they seldom saw keyworkers whilst in segregation. Those in the segregation unit on GOoD were assigned a new keyworker who was based in the segregation unit.

Quality assurance processes are being developed by OMU to ensure a consistent approach, both in the quality of the keywork sessions and the reporting of outcomes. This is still in an early phase of roll out, but there are positive steps being taken to review and improve the sessions on a quarterly basis. The first such review took place in March: it considered how well sessions are recorded on the National Offender Management Information system (NOMIS) and looked for evidence of a positive relationship being developed between keyworker and prisoner, and clear goals being set.

5.4 Equality and diversity

The transition to a category C prison has had a significant impact on the demographics of the population. At the beginning of the reporting period, the population at Aylesbury was made up of 93% young individuals (aged 18-24) and the oldest prisoner was 29. By the end of the reporting period, the population was made up of 54% young adults, and the oldest age was 39. Prisoners with a recorded disability during that time increased from 18% of the population to 30%. Planning has been underway for accepting prisoners over 40, and understanding any access requirements that this may give rise to.

The Equality Action Team (EAT), made up of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), meet quarterly to review and discuss the data relating to diversity and inclusion. Black, white Gypsy and Irish Traveller ethnic group prisoners were disproportionately represented in adjudications in this reporting period. This overrepresentation was reduced when proven adjudications were considered, with around half of adjudications against black prisoners dismissed compared to an average of around 42% for other ethnicities, indicating a difference in approach between officers and those overseeing adjudications. This could be a result of inappropriate use of adjudications in place of the Incentive Scheme and should be monitored further.

There were a number of religious festivals celebrated throughout the year and other markers of wider diversity. The provision for Ramadan in 2023 was particularly well received across the prison. This year, insulated boxes were delivered in the afternoon containing food to be consumed after sundown. Prisoners reported that this arrangement worked well, and that the quality of the food was improved from previous years.

The IMB invited two prisoner equality and diversity representatives to speak at a Board meeting mid-year. Both were trained and supported by the Zahid Mubarek Trust (a charity that aims to tackle racial disparities in the criminal justice system). They were clear that their training had benefitted them personally, but they were less certain about the effectiveness of their role on the wing. Their efforts were thwarted because staff numbers limited their time out of cell, reducing their opportunity to

interact with other prisoners and discuss equality and diversity problems as they arose.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The Chaplaincy is an active team, well integrated into the life of the prison. Chaplaincy hold weekly Friday prayers for Muslim prisoners and services for Roman Catholic and Church of England prisoners. They also lead the celebration of festivals for a wide range of faiths through the provision of information, events and special meals. They have marked Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Pagan, Rastafarian, Hindu and Sikh festivals.

Chaplaincy support prisoners at ACCT reviews and in GOoD reviews and help arrange compassionate transfers for prisoners who want to move closer to family, for example, due to serious illness. They offer pastoral support daily, including for those who are bereaved. They are seeking to engage a dedicated weekly volunteer to offer bereavement support.

This year they have contributed to the organisation of the successful family days and took an active role in the preparations for Ramadan.

5.6 Incentives schemes

Early in 2022 the prison launched a revised incentives policy. This was based on a modified points-based system. The policy is intended to be transparent and avoid bias. It adopts the three levels specified in HMPPS guidance: 'basic', 'standard' and 'enhanced', with 'standard' considered normal good behaviour.

The core of the policy is to encourage prisoners' involvement in activities – education, workshops, other prison jobs, such as wing cleaning, and programmes – as well consistent good behaviour.

With the younger prisoners on 'basic', the system provided meaningful incentives to move up to 'standard', where they had access to more privileges, such as a television in the cell. But the differential between 'standard' and 'enhanced' appeared not to be great enough to motivate many of them to attain and maintain 'enhanced' status. Roughly 50% were on 'standard' at any one time. As the population changed through the year, this changed. Improvement in general behaviour meant that nearer 70% were on 'enhanced'.

5.7 Complaints

With the new population, the number of complaints received by the prison rose significantly. Records show that complaints to the prison more than doubled per month as the older population moved in. This was still increasing at the end of the reporting period.

Written applications to the IMB also doubled in number over the year. The largest increase was in the area of sentence management, including recategorisation, which went up 5 times, and other large increases were seen in property, health and transfers.

In the first half of the year IMB members received a marked increase in verbal applications and in verbal complaints made in passing to IMB members.

5.8 Property

Prisoner property is one of the most frequent issues that prison authorities, and the IMB, deal with. It is tedious and repetitive. Property is moved by private providers on contract to the prison service. If dealt with properly, this is an avoidable problem. A prisoner may have left their previous prison without property or with only some of their property, very occasionally they have all of it with them. Any outstanding property may be sent later or may not. The timescales are variable too. It may arrive the next day, the next week or not at all. It is a major source of complaints by prisoners. When a large number of prisoners arrive in a week, despite volumetric control, there have been more than 90 property bags to be searched and logged. This takes a considerable amount of staff time.

Like arrivals, prisoners leaving Aylesbury also go through Reception. They generally collect their in-person property from their cells in supplied plastic bags to which their stored property is added. This is all checked against their property cards. Their property may move with them or there may be insufficient space in the transport. This way, the problems for a prisoner on the move frequently start again.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

This was a difficult year for healthcare. In addition to the change in prisoner profile, a new healthcare provider, Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust (CNWLFT), took over on 1 October 2022. The trust had submitted their bid to meet the needs of prisoners aged 18-21 and learned of the change of population only one week before their start date. There was no time to re-evaluate their proposed provision and staff profile.

This resulted in a chaotic start, with significant staff shortages from day one and a heavy reliance on agency staff. There were also significant IT problems. This had an impact on the delivery of the service, making it unsafe at times. Complaints made directly to healthcare went unanswered and applications made to the IMB about healthcare were almost impossible to resolve. An example of the sort of applications the IMB handled associated with poor healthcare: one young prisoner, diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes, was not provided with the consistent care his condition required. The health team did not respond to numerous requests from the IMB to provide the prisoner with more information about his condition and with more consistent monitoring. At one point the prisoner needed an urgent visit to the local hospital when his condition worsened.

By the end of this reporting year a new head of healthcare was in place, with several initiatives to better explain healthcare services to prisoners on arrival in the establishment; more face-to-face meetings to discuss concerns and complaints; and with staff going onto the wings to have regular conversations with prisoners.

Prisoners often had quicker access to healthcare than the outside population. A GP service was provided for one full day and two half days each week; a dentist was in the prison every Friday; and an optician called in. The prison also had psychologists on site and a visiting agency psychiatrist.

There were regular meetings, generally monthly, between the prison and healthcare, chaired by one of the governors.

6.2 Physical healthcare

Because of the change of service provider, figures for the full reporting year are not available; however, since the trust (CNWLFT) took over the contract on 1 October 2022, 32 prisoners were taken to hospital for an overnight stay, up to 31 March 2023; and 193 went to hospital appointments outside the prison. As escorts were required for these visits (two or three officers, depending on the perceived risk), appointments were restricted to one escort visit in the morning and one in the afternoon.

One prisoner who had been in the prison for about a year was admitted to hospital with tuberculosis and stayed there for several months. Two officers had to remain with him at all times. A risk assessment carried out by the UK Health Security Agency considered the risk of infection to others in the prison to be low. A mobile

tuberculosis health screening unit visited the prison and offered screening to all staff and prisoners who had been exposed to the affected prisoner. He was discharged in February, returned to the prison and continued to have follow-up appointments with an external clinic.

Since 1 October there have been 927 appointments with the on-site GP and 260 appointments with the on-site dentist.

Since the change in cohort from YOI to adult category C, there has been a significant reduction in prisoners requiring treatment following a violent incident. At the same time, there is a greater need to manage long-term health conditions. Clinics have been set up to deal with these, including hypertension, diabetes, epilepsy and asthma.

Two hundred and sixty-three prisoners have medication in possession (IP) in their cells. Controlled drugs could only be given in the healthcare setting, for example attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) medication, codeine-based painkillers, gabapentin (used to treat nerve pain and epilepsy) and injections for psychosis.

The most used medications in the prison were paracetamol, ibuprofen, and sertraline, an antidepressant.

6.3.1 Mental health

There are several agencies involved in mental wellbeing, working together to decide where a particular prisoner would be best supported. In addition to the psychologists and agency psychiatrist, the CNWLFT provided a speech and language therapist and an art therapist.

Figures from CNWLFT show that since November 2022 there have been 199 referrals for help with mental health issues, and since January 2023, all new arrivals have received Early Days in Custody screening.

Figures for the whole reporting year, from 1 April 2022 through to 31 March 2023, show 184 prisoners were given medication to help with their sleep; but the first line of treatment was always education and sleep hygiene advice.

No prisoners required transfer out of the prison to specialist mental health units. However, the IMB monitored closely the life of at least two prisoners whose mental health was so poor that they chose to remain withdrawn and found it hard to participate in any elements of the regime except perhaps collecting their hot meal daily and occasionally showering.

6.3.2 Pathways

One of the specialist facilities at the prison is called Pathways. It offers a therapeutic approach for offenders with personality disorders. Pathways is an NHS-commissioned facility financed by Barnet, Enfield and Haringey NHS and HMPPS. There are 20 staff in Pathways, including psychologists, as well as trained officers who can be called to other prisons in the area to assist with serious incidents.

Throughout the year Pathways operated with an officer and a member of clinical staff short, so it was never working at full capacity.

The Pathways department offers a variety of therapies, including art therapy, music therapy and a sensory garden created and maintained by prisoners. Courses offered included anger management, mentalisation-based therapy introduction, social skills, one-to-one psychological therapy, art therapy and music production. Many of these are certificated and recorded as part of a prisoner's ongoing profile.

Prisoners often form strong bonds with Pathway team members they are working with. If a prisoner is not ready to visit the Pathways centre regularly but needs access to the service, staff will visit them on the wing. The IMB commends the fact that staff check up on prisoners after they have left Aylesbury for other prisons.

6.4 Social care

There was no local authority sourced social care at Aylesbury April 22-March 23.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

The prison should provide sufficient purposeful activity for all prisoners to be out of their cells, learning or working, for a total of nine sessions a week, which is every weekday morning and afternoon except Friday afternoon. As the prison filled with category C prisoners, fewer of whom would be going to education, and as Covid-19 restrictions receded, the shortage of purposeful activity in the prison became glaringly obvious. Prisoners raised this with the IMB repeatedly. Family members of prisoners also raised it with the IMB when they came into contact. The lack of activity, the time spent locked up and the inadequate quality of the activities available became a source of regular and lasting complaint.

The prison was given no time to plan for the different cohort and no investment was made available to make the physical changes needed to meet category C requirements. It was only after the HMIP inspection of November 2022 that significant change began to happen.

In January 2023, the regime was split, with the aim of ensuring that prisoners would be out of their cell for a minimum of half of the nine sessions in a week. This began to improve things. A transition manager was appointed for six months. His task was 'to plan' the transition from YOI to category C, with purposeful activity being one of the most crucial needs. It is hard to avoid pointing out that planning is usually done before the event and not after. The plans created have released investment of approximately £500,000 from HMPPS, but the effects of this were not seen in the reporting year.

In common with other prisons, 'structured on wing activity' (SOWA) replaced 'association' as Covid retreated. As SOWA was planned and introduced, enhancements to available activities on the wings were promised. The result was poor. Pool tables were delivered only suitable for small children. These did not last long. There was a short-lived introduction of some electronic games, which seemed to disappear fast. In the end, the provisions for SOWA ended up indistinguishable from old fashioned association, with the addition of some popular exercise bikes. The category C prisoners consistently complained. Some further changes are now expected.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

The prison recognises that the change to a category C means more prisoners are likely to need support overcoming drug and alcohol problems. Drug use amongst youth offenders primarily involved cannabis. Category C prisoners use a greater range of substances and have more ingrained addiction.

The new contract for support services, which began on 1 October 2023, was based on the needs of a YOI. The prison has requested more staff to provide professional support in this area, and an increase is expected early in 2023-24. On average, 66 prisoners were receiving support each month. The change to category C did not result in a noticeable increase in the number receiving support as would be expected. This may be due to a high number of prisoners who were receiving support transferring out of the prison before the monthly count.

All prisoners are offered support with substance misuse as part of the induction process. The main support offered is in-cell workbooks that prisoners complete by themselves. This is followed by a discussion with a support worker exploring what the prisoner learnt from completing the workbook. Given the serious impact on the prisoners' lives of drug and alcohol misuse, this seems to the IMB as a less than adequate approach in most cases.

Face-to-face awareness sessions and a relapse prevention programme are planned to start early in 2023-24, which are likely to be more effective. Peer supporters are being recruited to help with running the programmes and offering support to new prisoners. This should encourage more engagement from prisoners needing help. It will also give the peer supporters valuable skills and could help embed their own recovery.

Aylesbury does not have the facilities to offer opioid substitution treatments, so does not admit any prisoners who are dependent on opiates.

6.7 Soft skills

In the year, there were lamentably few opportunities designed to support the development of soft skills. And there is no evident plan to improve this. However, there were two positive examples.

Twinning with Wycombe Wanderers Foundation, the charity arm of Wycombe Wanderers Football Club (WWFC), is providing the structure for a leadership and coaching qualification from The Football Association. The qualification can lead to prisoners being able to coach once released. Staff on both sides of the partnership report the project to be successful so far.

Thirty-eight prisoners were engaged in the project this year, supported by two coaches from WWFC. The cohort is drawn from all wings. The prisoners develop knowledge, focus and social maturity as they deliver coaching sessions for each other. The IMB noted the benefits for some participating individuals. Behaviour and positive engagement with the regime both improved.

Amongst the education courses on offer at Milton Keynes College (MKC) was a barista skills course. Plans to extend the skills taught to include customer service and the management of a small hospitality outlet never came to fruition.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1.1 Education

Milton Keynes College provides education at Aylesbury. The education block is fit for purpose, tidy and spacious. The change to category C prisoners required MKC, together with the Aylesbury's learning and skills manager, to make speedy adjustments to the education offer. The planning for this went ahead well but reliable delivery was difficult to establish. The greatest hindrance encountered by MKC is recruitment and retention of good teaching staff. This makes course quality inconsistent and impacts on efforts to widen courses available.

The MKC management has been stable through the year, helping to maintain focus on changes needed. Wider interest in, or support for, education in other layers of management is seldom evident. It is difficult to see that delivery of the education contract in Aylesbury prison by MKC gets sufficient scrutiny.

For the third year running we mention that there is almost no attention given to prisoner achievements across the prison. Whilst the education team names a learner of the month, and occasionally family or visitors have joined in celebrations, this is not known about outside the education block. Qualifications gained are not noted at staff meetings or in newsletters. Shannon Trust (a charity that supports disadvantaged people to learn to read) mentors are in place but any noticeable emphasis on reading came only after the 'Inadequate' OFSTED result achieved in the inspection of December 2022.

The support for prisoners taking more advanced education through distance learning is exceptionally strong. At any one time there are over 30 prisoners on advanced courses. They are supported actively by a skilled member of the MKC team. She helps prisoners to maintain motivation, and navigate the many difficulties encountered when studying in prison. Courses include Open University Degrees, Higher Education Diplomas and A Levels. The range of subjects includes Business Management, Environmental Management and Creating and Starting a Digital Business.

Participation in education, beyond the lowest levels, attracts only the lowest level of local pay rates. For prisoners, this sets a perverse incentive to take the most basic unskilled task in the prison in place of improving their life chances for the longer term.

The IMB welcomes cooperation with third sector bodies to help widen the education offer. The partnership with Hackney Music Development Trust added much-needed opportunities to develop artistic creativity.

7.1.2 Library

The library is run by a professional librarian employed by MKC. It is well stocked, kept clean and is welcoming. Library use is inconsistent and often disappointingly low. The timetable was changed frequently to try to ensure better use, but the librarian was not always included in these discussions. Rotas gave time for each wing, as well as prisoners in workshops, to visit the library. Too often we found the library completely empty when we checked. Wing staff sometimes forgot the wing slot despite timetables posted in wing offices. Frequently we were told that there

were too few staff to escort prisoners to the library. Only a few workshop staff ensured regular library use.

Outreach from the library was encouraged by MKC management, but what this entails beyond delivering books to wings is not clear. The small libraries on wings, originally funded by a third sector donor, have deteriorated or disappeared over the year and refreshment would be valuable.

The librarian made a successful bid for specialist funds from the NHS to support health education in the prison. Disappointingly, this success was not given visibility by MKC, or the wider prison, through public congratulations or similar mechanisms. The actual project will not be realised until later in 2023.

Data regarding library use shows an average of 204 visits made per month. Two writers' events, well chosen and organised, attracted, respectively, only three and six participants each.

Despite the welcome re-introduction of the Shannon Trust last year, literacy was given no evident prioritisation in the library or across the prison.

7.2 Vocational training, work

The prison should provide sufficient purposeful activity for all prisoners to be out of their cells, learning or working for sessions a week – see paragraph 6.5.

Too little activity is one problem. The poor quality of work and vocational training is the other. The quality and variety of vocational training and work in Aylesbury remains lamentable. It is dull, undemanding and almost completely unmechanised. It could reasonably be characterised as 30 years behind the modern world. It bears little relationship to the type of work prisoners seek on release.

A list of the workshops with the number of spaces available in each is available at the end of this report.

There is regular work on the wings: for example, cleaning and serving food, and orderly roles in most departments.

Only two workshops provided more demanding and more appropriate training. Both are run by experienced third sector agencies. Life Cycle run the bicycle workshop. They are a not-for-profit organisation supporting cycling and prison-based bicycle refurbishment. Prisoners worked purposefully in this workshop, producing refurbished bicycles. They gained a range of skills and they could work towards City & Guilds accreditation (Levels 1 and 2).

The multiskills workshop is run by GreenSkills Partnership under contract to HMPPS. The GreenSkills trainer engaged prisoners in building and associated skills, which they enjoyed and could imagine developing further for employment after prison. Prisoners could also gain accredited practical qualifications.

7.3.1 Offender management

Staffing in the OMU continued to be low, running at an average of 60%. New management in the unit improved its overall functioning. There was an existing backlog in the Offender Assessment System (OASys) for prisoners, and as new prisoners arrived regularly through the year without OASys completed, this needed

to be tackled. An external agency was successfully used to tackle the backlog. It was reported that the quality of these completed OASys was not always as good as it might have been if done in house.

Prisoners almost always knew who their offender manager was. They highly valued the contact they had with them and the support they felt they got from them. But the contact seldom felt sufficient. From the staff perspective, there is always a need to prioritise prisoners nearing release.

The IMB received numerous applications requesting help with fixing an appointment with OMU officers. Prisoners often made the same request in GOoD reviews. Sometimes, prisoners think of OMU officers as a source of information. This information could come equally well, or better, from regular contact with a key worker or from wing staff.

7.3.2 Psychology

Psychology is a strong team in Aylesbury. Departmental staff systematically engaged with the most vulnerable prisoners, both short and long term. They focused on protection and improvement in their lives, and professionally informed the treatment of all prisoners. During this time, Psychology, Pathways and Programmes continued to deliver, and treatment manage accredited and validated interventions. We discuss these in both 6.3.2 Pathways, and 7.3.3 Programmes.

Psychology regularly planned and provided training to staff in a number of areas, such as acquired brain injury and improved key working. The psychology team also worked with other departments on CSIP plans for prisoners considered most in need of such support. They completed plans and went to prisoners' reviews, helping to manage the risk of violence. Team members produced plans for those most at risk of self-harm and suicide. They went to ACCT reviews of prisoners whose cases were the most complex.

As planned, the psychology team joined the South Central area psychology services in October of the reporting year. This meant that they then worked across the region and not solely with prisoners in Aylesbury. Simultaneously, the change in the Aylesbury prisoner population meant that the intensive psychological work with individual prisoners diminished. The psychology team then spent more time on case file reviews, preparing paperwork for categorisation and parole panels. Whilst essential work, this is more often desk based. The reduction in time working face to face with prisoners was less professionally engaging for some of the staff.

7.3.3 Programmes

The Programmes team works with prisoners who have to meet certain goals in their sentence plan. The team is made up of 15 full-time equivalent staff. Unusually within the prison, it runs with a full complement of staff but simultaneously suffers from a high staff turnover, so training of new staff can mean that course delivery is held up. The team is dynamic and pragmatic. It has responded positively to the challenges presented by the changed prisoner profile in Aylesbury. The number of spaces available for Kaizen (a behaviour programme for prisoners who are assessed as

high risk), Thinking Skills and Identity Matters have been increased by judiciously increasing group sizes.

The prison does not offer programmes designed specifically for perpetrators of domestic or sexual violence. In some cases, this has meant that those types of prisoners have been moved to other, more suitable, prisons.

The Programmes unit only has sufficient capacity to offer places to prisoners within two years or less of release. This meets HMPPS guidelines. The team cannot offer places to prisoners in advance of categorisation reviews or general sentence plan progression. Prioritisation is rigorous. Staff from the Programmes team see each prisoner who applies to go on a programme, but frequently they have to break the bad news that no place is available for that prisoner, and nor will it be, until much closer to release. This can be demotivating for prisoners looking to improve their own position.

7.4 Family contact

The new population of category C prisoners frequently have partners and children with whom they want to maintain contact. Distance from family is a recurring theme in conversations the IMB have with prisoners. In their induction interviews, newly arrived prisoners frequently ask if they can appeal against the move out of their home area which has landed them in Aylesbury. Any appeal to be moved closer to home and family is a slow, uncertain process. With the right paperwork proving the case, a compassionate move can be applied for and agreed. This does not mean that it will happen. As mentioned elsewhere in this report, with the whole prison system full to capacity, the movement of prisoners has become extremely difficult. The IMB are aware of two prisoners, both with pressing compassionate cases, who were not moved closer to family for much of the whole reporting year. Both showed signs of deteriorating mental health and mounting frustration. One of the two was allowed on an escorted visit to see his unwell relative in hospital.

Four popular, well-planned, family days were run in the reporting year. These were arranged in spaces suitable for young children, such as the gym, or multifaith room. Food was provided, games laid out, and, for the most part, prison staff attended out of uniform. Prisoners need to be three months free of adjudications to apply to invite their families.

The charity Prisoner Advice and Care Trust (PACT) runs the visitor centre outside the prison. This is equipped for visitors to drop in before a visit. They also run the café in the visits hall. The PACT manager ran some forums, face to face and virtual, which families could join. An IMB member monitored two forums. The issues raised were unsurprising: the lack of decent employment and opportunities for developing useful skills, and the distance from home. Social video calls were available when staffing allowed.

The increase in young children visiting has raised a safety concern. The visits hall is not designed well for children to remain safe at all times. There is a play corner with toys, but there is no physical barrier, even a low one, to protect children if any unrest erupts in the hall. PACT and the IMB have both raised this concern but have seen no change as yet.

In-cell telephony throughout the jail enables prisoners to keep in touch with family and an approved list of others.

7.5 Resettlement planning

Sixty-five prisoners were released from Aylesbury in the reporting year. Aylesbury is not a resettlement prison. It is not resourced or staffed to provide more than the most basic preparation for release. The prison was no better resourced to assist with resettlement this year than it was last. Yet even more prisoners were released from Aylesbury this year than last.

Preparing prisoners to seek employment on release depended almost entirely on a few representatives of third sector agencies. The single employment coach for the whole prison is an employee of the Forward Trust, a charity that supports people to break the cycle of crime and addiction. Alongside him, there was just one custodial case manager from the CF03 programme (which helps people to prepare for release), who can help with absolute basics, such as the opening of a bank account, or securing much-needed photo ID for the prisoner.

As a prisoner approaches his release date, responsibility for his ongoing sentence plan and any external probation arrangements required, moves from the probation staff employed within Aylesbury to probation staff in the community (Community Offender Manager/COM). This transition is seldom smooth. We have been called by prisoners not knowing who their COM will be or having no opportunity to speak to a COM until less than a week before release. This adds considerable anxiety to individual prisoners before release and undermines the chances of smooth resettlement.

One brave attempt was made at a careers day mid-year. The prison had invited suitable employers. Those that came were experienced and varied. Some travelled more than two hours to be represented. The IMB monitored the event. No more than three prisoners turned up in the morning, with five or six later in the day. Prisoners had not been prepared before attending. None came ready to ask good questions or make any meaningful links. Links with local employers led to three job offers for released prisoners in the year.

8. The work of the IMB

The change in population brought new challenges for our team of monitors. Many of the older prisoners are properly demanding of the prison system in respect of their needs and rights. This includes asking IMB members to help with applications, following up on complaints and resolving wider frustrations.

The number of applications to the IMB doubled in the reporting year compared with the previous year.

The team was well below full complement but we managed regular monitoring. Our monitoring is well organised. Using an electronically shared matrix, we ensure that over the course of a month all active parts of the prison are visited regularly. Early in the year we had difficulties monitoring the provision of health and medical services and at the same time we received many complaints about this area. To build some trust and understand better what was happening in that part of the prison, one of our team made this the focus of their monitoring over several months. This has been helpful.

We made 237 visits to the prison in the year compared with 168 in 2021-22, when Covid protocols were still in place.

We ran two recruitment exercises in the year. Two new monitors joined us after the first; one is now a full member of the team but unfortunately the timing was not good for the other. She resigned. Five were recommended after the second recruitment exercise, just before the end of the reporting year. We look forward to them joining the team once they have cleared security vetting.

Board statistics

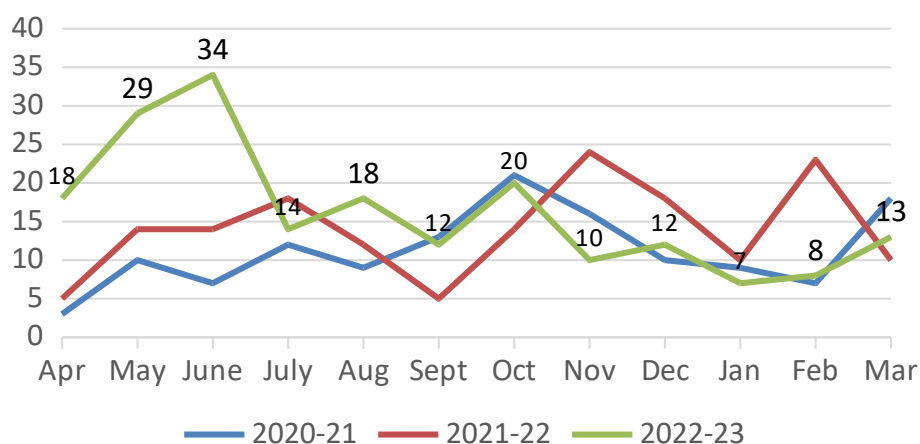
Recommended complement of Board members	12
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	7
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	7
Total number of visits to the establishment	237
Total number of segregation reviews attended	c.180

Applications to the IMB

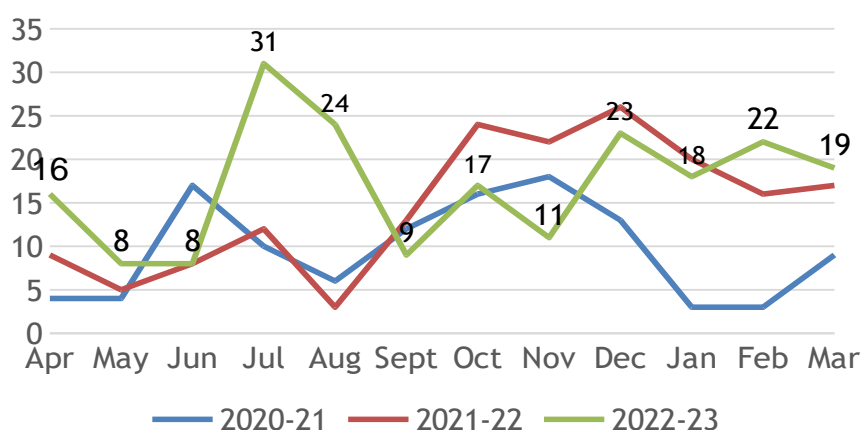
Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	6	4
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	8	9
C	Equality	1	0
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	11	8
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	17	7
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	2	2
F	Food and kitchens	3	2
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	3	20
H1	Property within the establishment	6	11
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	5	19
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	1	5
I	Sentence management, including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	7	38
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	11	32
K	Transfers	11	42
L	Miscellaneous	3	7
	Total number of applications	95	206

Annex A: graphs and tables

Self-harm data (with reference to section 4.2)



Violent incidents data (with reference to section 4.3)



Workshops with the number of spaces available in each (with reference to section 7.2)

Workshops	Spaces in each
Bicycles, repair and renovation	10
Bicycles with Life Cycle	6
Laundry	12 (half of the year run at 6 due to broken down boiler)
Paper document collation	12
Gardens	20
Signs printing	10
Recycling and Estates	20
Launderette	6
Kitchen	16
Multiskills, including painting and decorating	8



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