



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

**For reporting year  
1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023**

**Published November 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 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 Brinsford is situated north of Wolverhampton, in the West Midlands. It holds both remand and sentenced young men, between 18 and 25 years of age, with a temporary increase to 29-year-olds, to support population pressures. The majority are young adults, with an increasing number of category C adult men. In 2021, Brinsford changed from a category C prison to a resettlement prison. This meant a change in those residing at Brinsford from prisoners serving prison sentences up to four years to those with 16 months of the sentence left to serve.

Prisoners are housed in five two-storey residential blocks, with two wings on each block. Each wing has some single and some double cells. All cells have in-cell sanitation, but shower facilities are provided elsewhere on the wing hub (other than on residential block 5, which has in-cell showers).

The wing which was the first night centre two years ago has been used for other purposes to support the prison during the pandemic and recovery afterwards, including an isolation wing and an area for category D prisoners who were awaiting transfer. However, it is planned that it will be used to house those prisoners on release on temporary licence (ROTL).

Other residential blocks provide a variety of functions, including support for those prisoners who require extra help in the development and progression unit on residence one. The care and separation unit (CSU) is a 16-bed unit in a separate block.

The contract for providing healthcare services is held by Practice Plus Group, formerly Care UK, which has provided a good service throughout the reporting period. GP services are provided on a contract basis and include an out-of-hours service. Some prisoners have serious mental and behavioural issues, requiring both psychiatric and psychological support, which is provided by the healthcare trust.

The establishment is fully operational and can accommodate 577 prisoners when all cells are to be used, however there was a reduced operational capacity of 539 to support the delivery of a major project to upgrade the cell call system<sup>1</sup>. During the reporting period, the numbers in residence fluctuated considerably, for various reasons.

On average the population is made up of 66.6% of young adults, 18 to 22 years, and 33.4% of adults, this of course can change daily.

Education and training facilities are provided by Novus and helped and supported by partner agencies PACT Family Services, Department for Work and Pensions, Information Advice & Guidance, Shannon Trust, Samaritans, Trailblazers, Kinetic Youth, Maverick Sounds, The Invested Man, Ernest Young, Staffordshire Library, Nacro, CF03 PACT Inside Job.

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

### **3. Key Points**

#### **3.1 Background to the report**

This report presents the findings of the Board for the period 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023.

In the last report the IMB reported that:

- The education contract did not meet the needs of the prison for most of the time. In this reporting year the Board hasn't seen any significant improvement.
- The way the contract has been written makes it very hard to challenge.
- Throughout the reporting year, the IMB has raised concerns over the education and the contract being fit for purpose.
- At the beginning of the reporting year the number of activity places was far too low, which meant that many prisoners were unemployed. This has increased throughout the year but prisoners still remain working part-time, however this doesn't reflect life working in the community.
- The choice of purposeful activity is limited, often there is a waiting list for prisoners to join their choice of placement.
- There is a lack of vocational training to prepare prisoners for work when leaving prison and which could have been a factor in motivating prisoners to work.
- There remains an ongoing problem throughout the prison service, in relocating prisoners with mental health problems to more suitable treatment centres. Healthcare and prison staff do an excellent job, but it takes too long to find a bed elsewhere for those prisoners assessed as requiring one. This has not improved during the reporting period and the number of prisoners in custody with mental health issues is still too high.

#### **3.2 Main findings**

##### **How safe is the prison?**

- In the judgement of the Board, Brinsford remains a safe prison, and this is evidenced through the low levels of self-harm and overall violence compared to similar establishments.
- As noted in previous reports, there continue to be ongoing incidents of violence, self-harm, and substance misuse. However, it should be noted substance misuse is substantially lower than in comparable prisons.

- There remains a minority of prisoners who self-harm, but credit must go to staff who work hard with these individuals to improve their situation.
- The prison does not just rely on medication for these prisoners but has used a more holistic approach to supporting them. The overall level of self-harm has continued to be a priority, and good progress has been made to ensure that the levels do not return to previous levels. There are a few prisoners who still self-harm, even after the best efforts of staff, and we feel that they often need specialist support probably in another establishment.
- Violent incidents have increased this year. The increase of violence towards staff is of particular concern to the Board.
- Non-associates issues make it difficult to place prisoners in the safest location, and these become more evident when there is an increase in transfers in from the same prison over a short period.

### **How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?**

The Board feels strongly that the prisoners are treated well and fairly.

### **How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?**

The Board believes that the healthcare needs of the prisoners are well met by Practice Plus Group. The in-patient care is good, all patients are admitted on clinical need. The Board has witnessed good care by the professionals during the reporting year

### **How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?**

- This has been mentioned in previous reports and above, there are many deficiencies in rehabilitative work and preparations for release. In the latter of the reporting year a number of vacancies have increased but the value of the activity has not. There has been a lot of talk and initiatives to introduce more vocational work, yet this has not materialised.
- Family contact is encouraged, also family conferences with troublesome prisoners have happened which is encouraging to both family and prisoners. Online contact introduced during Covid-19 has continued which is invaluable for those far from home and for whom face-to-face contact has not been possible.
- The work by the charity 'The Invested man', has been incredible, we recognise the work that has gone into this, turning the 'mind set' of the young men around.

### **3.3 Main areas for development**

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

- The contract for the supply and fitting of the new boilers throughout the prison was wholly inadequate. This contract failed to cover the flushing out of the old pipes and failed to fit individual thermostats to units, all adding further costs to the original price. And all at a cost to the public.
- Further controls are required to the boilers to combat surge protection and to stop the failure to reset across all boilers.
- On occasions during the winter units were without any form of heating. This is not acceptable. Prisoners were provided with extra blankets, but this was not good enough.
- The education contract is not up to standard, the curriculum and standards of teaching is poor.
- When will the Ministry of Justice write adequate contracts that at least favour the prison and not the contractors?
- The length of time prisoners remain on remand before appearing in court continues to be too long. Prisoners are being released into the community following sentencing at court without attending any programmes to examine their offending.
- There is a long-standing leak in the reception area. The Board has been aware of the leak for two years, if not longer, but it continues to be a major problem. Many hours are spent cleaning up the stained and smelly water as is trying to secure money for the work to be completed. In the meantime, money is spent on small repairs, 'sticking plaster' which regularly fails.
- Estates have had a contractor in to look at this problem and submit a price, which has required the Area Property Operations Manager (APOM) to submit a bid for the repairs. Why is it taking so long for monies to be made available for essential work to be carried out?

#### ***TO THE PRISON SERVICE***

- The roof over reception is and has been leaking for years, dirty smelly water is always covering the floor of the property room however Brinsford cannot secure the funds to replace the roof. In the meantime, short quick fixes are made which are expensive and unproductive.

- The New heating system has many flaws, caused by an inadequate contract between suppliers & fitters and the MOJ. It has cost further thousands of pounds onto the original cost, all paid for by the public purse.
- The education contract is still not fit for purpose. It has always proved very difficult to hold the provider to account, to ensure that the prison gets good education provision. As mentioned in last year's report, any new contracts need to be much tighter in what must be provided and how prisons can be compensated for services not provided. Not enough is done to motivate or support prisoners to attend regularly or consistently.
- What are you doing about the poorly written contracts? Such as Education and the fitting of the new heating system?
- It takes a long time to get any money to pay for essential work, above and beyond the Governor's budget, what can you do to speed the process up?
- Activity places are limited and some are not purposeful; for example, prisoners find tea packing boring and unfulfilling resulting in arguments and fighting through lack of engagement.
- It is important that every prisoner has the opportunity to work or to be in education which will help them on their release into the community.
- The Board recognises that there has been one successful prisoner on ROTL, however for a resettlement prison this is insufficient.
- The prison is not fully equipped to be a resettlement prison, there isn't enough training in worthwhile projects for those soon to be released.
- Forklift truck training is popular but there are only three places available at any one time. For a population in excess of 500 men this is insufficient.
- The loss of property within the establishment or on transfer is a perennial problem. A national bar code system might alleviate the losses.

### ***TO THE GOVERNOR***

- In last year's report it was stated that more places are needed in both education and work-based activities. We have seen the strides you have made in making this happen, but the Board still feels that there are significant short falls in meaningful activities.



- It was reported in last year's report that key worker scheme needed to be improved in its quality and in particular in the numbers completed. The Board is pleased that latterly these numbers have increased dramatically, however, when staff shortages occur, often these posts are withdrawn.
- The Board recognises that the senior leadership team are enthusiastic, talented and energised to take forward your ideas to improve prisoner outcomes; however the messages did not reach the officers who carry out these management decisions, or they failed to carry out the directions.
- It is unfortunate that so many of the senior leadership team move from Brinsford. It is often for their own personal reasons, but it unsettles the team.
- Following the complete lockdown of the prison during the pandemic, the Board feels some officers became lax in fulfilling their duties, and many lacked the experience of a busy active prison and took the easy option where possible.
- This year the standards coaching team were brought in to train and upskill officers, they also gave them the confidence to challenge prisoners. They have been instrumental in getting officers out of their comfort zone. We eagerly wait to see the improvements becoming part of the daily routine.
- The Board is fully aware of the difficult culture within Brinsford and fully aware of the attempts you have made to change it, to no avail. Improved supervision by middle managers and having experience in other establishments might be helpful.
- Gang culture remains a problem that causes friction between prisoners and is often a cause of premeditated violence. In addition, prisoners new to the establishment are joining gangs as they feel there is safety in numbers.
- Challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs) are a good deterrent when they are working properly. Sadly, the Board recognises that they are often seen as less important as other processes & strategies such as assessment, care in custody and teamwork documents (ACCTs). Often the work involved is not completed within a timely manner. Some managers are totally on board with the principles of CSIPs, and are very capable.
- CSIPs are designed so that all interested agencies work together to find the triggers and reasons for the problems and to work together to solve the issues. Often this doesn't happen. Perhaps it could be policy driven.

## **Evidence sections 4 – 7**

### **4. Safety**

In general, Brinsford has a reasonable record in this area. The senior leadership team continues to strive for higher standards. The safety department are working hard to improve the situation by providing more targeted support and training for all staff.

In a recent survey 16% of prisoners said they felt unsafe at Brinsford and that is comparable to other prisons.

The Board note that there are a lot more prisoners than there was in the last reporting year. An estimate of up to one hundred increase in prisoner numbers due to population pressures on the estate. Therefore the violence numbers are likely have proportionally increased.

Monthly meetings take place that are well attended, and any issues of concern are discussed. IMB members are invited to attend the meetings and do have opportunities to raise any issues of concern.

In-cell fires used to be a problem but now they are very rare and staff are well trained to deal with them if they occur. There were 8 fires recorded in the reporting year. There are still a few false alarms often caused by prisoners vaping.

#### **4.1 Reception and induction**

Prisoners are received at reception, where there is a body scanner, and are treated well. Prisoners are always searched, and some contraband is found. A nurse checks all new arrivals and those with specific vulnerabilities are identified. An induction leaflet has been produced (with various linguistic translations) and induction proceeds immediately in reception and then on the induction wing. In particular, 'education induction' is carried out here. The Board has not received any complaints in this area, and prisoners questioned have expressed satisfaction. Some of the holding rooms in reception are in need of refurbishment to make them more welcoming to new arrivals.

#### **4.2 Suicide, self-harm and deaths in custody**

There have been no suicides or deaths in custody in the reporting period. The number of incidents of self-harm is very similar to last year at around 27 per month on average. Staff continually work to help those vulnerable to self-harming and healthcare provide good support to those involved.

Many of the incidents have been caused by the same prisoners regularly self-harming.

Overall, during the year 125 individuals were recorded as self-harming with 333 incidents logged. In the last 2 years self-harm has reduced by 16% and is lower than comparable prisons. Cutting remains the most common form of self-harm.

### **4.3 Violence**

Incidents of violence between prisoners has increased through the reporting period. This is possibly as a result of more movement to work and education.

There were 476 incidents of violence in the reporting period and 46 were assaults on staff; 13 of those were serious.

Gang culture is the major problem that causes group violence, and the prison does make every effort to keep groups apart where possible, but this is not always possible in areas of work and education.

CSIPs have had an impact on those that need help but not so much on the gang related violence which is proving much harder to correct. CSIP is a useful tool and it is not always given the high profile it needs. The prison is are moving to provide better training for staff on CSIPs so they don't just see it as a programme for violent prisoners. Not all prisoners involved in violence are referred to the CSIP programme. Care leavers remain well represented as perpetrators of violence. Mediation is used and there is evidence of lots of good de-escalation techniques to prevent the need for use of force. This needs to be a prison priority.

### **Self-isolation**

This has seen quite a considerable increase in the current reporting period, rising from 32 instances last year to 50 this year, most of these being attributed to association problems.

Those who choose to isolate themselves from others are well cared for and well monitored. They are regularly visited by healthcare, chaplains, and others to ascertain their risk. Staff on the wings are aware of those isolating and do their best to provide time out of cell and time for showers etc. when it is safe.

### **4.4 Prisoners with specific vulnerabilities**

These prisoners have been very well looked after in the Development and Progression Unit on Res 1 and, when needed, in healthcare.

Healthcare has done some excellent work in helping prisoners cope with their circumstances. Dedicated officers and healthcare staff work hard with inpatients with some excellent progress made.

There are still prisoners with severe mental illness who need treatment elsewhere and they can be waiting a very long time to get a bed in a secure hospital.  
(See section 6.4)

#### **4.5 Use of force**

The use of force using PAVA has increased again this year. Last year PAVA was drawn 28 times, whilst the figure for this reporting period was 72. The Board is satisfied that PAVA use was justified in most cases and fairly used but sometimes it is used a little too readily by inexperienced staff. The quality of the paperwork has improved since last year. However, there is still a certain amount to be done in this field. It has proved that PAVA can quickly de-escalate group violence and prevent injuries. Those affected by PAVA are checked by medical staff.

The use of batons has decreased with 18 used last year and only 3 reported this year. It is possible that PAVA is now the first line of defence in a violent incident. Body worn cameras, (BWC), have been updated but they are not always used as they need to be, the recording of incidents is essential. Training is being offered to other staff such as education in the use of BWCs.

There are meetings held that review the use of force, but they do not seem to be very effective.

#### **4.6 Substance misuse**

The prison is making some progress in preventing drugs from entering the establishment, largely through better screening both at the gate, and by totally photocopying mail. However, the latter has had a certain disadvantage because prisoners are no longer able to receive coloured pictures from their children (and sometimes the printing is badly done) which can lead to some disgruntlement. Areas that might have a drug problem are identified and then targeted with thorough cell searching. Some of those who might be dealing drugs in the prison are dealt with quickly and effectively and punished accordingly.

The use of sniffer dogs and CCTV in social visits has been largely successful and several incidents of visitors detected with illicit substances has shown that increased vigilance is having an impact.

Visitors to the prison at the gate will be having an impact, it remains a constant problem, illicit substances do still get into Brinsford. Visitors are searched and walk through the metal detector.

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

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

There are six residential units with most cells in need of refurbishment, as are a number of other areas. There are several side rooms across the prison, including within residential units, which could be put to better use rather than being left empty or used for storing various items which makes them appear scruffy.

Issues are reported and dealt with, albeit often slowly. Some repairs relying on outside contractors, for example faulty or damaged phones, continue to be dealt with slowly; five phones need to be 'in need of repair' before the British Telecom (BT) technician is called out. There are also concerns about the costs and timeliness of repairs or other work carried out by Amey.

Residential Unit 6 was opened in April as the prison's incentivised substance free living unit. The nineteen prisoners living in this unit have access to more time out of cell and can make use of additional facilities including a music room, gym equipment and kitchen. Prisoners housed in the unit speak positively about this new facility. Although the in-cell toilet has a privacy curtain it is not ideal. Ventilation in the cells was an issue during the higher temperatures during late spring but this was rectified within a reasonable time frame.

Showers in Residence 1 have been refurbished and the prison is waiting for the approval of funding to refurbish those in Residence 2. Prisoners access shower facilities during association time. However, prisoners working in the grounds during the afternoon have voiced concerns about not being able to shower until the next day. This has been raised with the Governor and as part of a new trial regime across Residences 1 to 4 prisoners will be able to use the landing showers on return from work. Furthermore, full time workers are unlocked for an evening association, introduced during this reporting period, which means that they may access showers in addition to exercise. A bid has been submitted for all showers to be refurbished site wide.

Faulty windows are an issue across the prison. Some windows open and some do not, leading to varying levels of comfort or discomfort within the cell (especially during extremes of temperature). An audit of the windows throughout the prison was conducted in April 2022 and repairs are ongoing. The windows are sealed units and vents provide ventilation, the effectiveness of these vary.

During the last reporting period boilers were replaced site-wide at major capital cost and investment in the prison. The work was incomplete at the end of the contract, causing areas to be without heating and further expense to the prison and the public purse to deal with the issues of heating exchanges and flushing out pipes. During the winter extra blankets were distributed to help keep the prisoners warm at night.

The thermostats have not been replaced, meaning the heating is either on full or off, leaving some units freezing whilst others are far too hot. This should have been covered within the contract between MOJ and the contractors.

A rolling programme to upgrade cell lighting and cell bells was started last year. Residence 1, Residence 6 and Healthcare have been completed at the time of writing this report and works on Residence 3 are well underway.

A considerable amount of repainting of various areas has been completed, including Healthcare and the CSU. Amey resumed the training of prisoners, which has meant a better standard of painting across the prison.

The refurbishment of stairwells and staff kitchens areas in each of the Residential Units has now been completed. The stairs in main stairwell leading to the upper corridor have been refurbished but the walls and ceiling are in need of painting as the walls are badly stained and some paint is peeling making for a very scruffy appearance.

Notice and information boards in each of the residential units provide key and helpful information for prisoners and duty staff, though in Residence 3 the boards are no longer being updated.

There are concerns about the number of items in some cells, including stock piling of some food items, for example milk. There is litter in many of the window cages, mostly on the ground floor but some above ground too which is an eyesore.

During the last reporting period kettles were allocated as part of cell property. There have been some issues raised by prisoners about this. Some prisoners do not wish to inherit a kettle which has been used for purposes other than for boiling water. During part of this reporting period there was a shortage of kettles with some cells without a kettle. This has been largely rectified by the purchase of more kettles and the kettle being part of the cell inventory.

All prisoners' cells have in-cell phones. These provide invaluable contact for prisoners with their families. Social video calls continue to be used by some prisoners rather than face-to-face social visits and these are particularly helpful for those visitors living at distance.

The Visitors' Room continues to be a warm and welcoming environment with a good range of food and drink items available. There are four themed family days a year, recently there was a Hawaiian theme with a BBQ with a sand pit, toys and face painting for the children. These events are well-received. It was also good to learn that the family visits officer facilitated the visit of a mother with her autistic child without hesitation and making reasonable adjustments to make this happen.

The provision of the Care Leavers' flat was not ready for use as scheduled for April of this year, but it should be up and running by the beginning of September.

As of April, Brinsford no longer subscribes to the national resource known as Wayout TV (see also 7.1): the reasons given for this being that the number of prisoners watching this and/or reading messages was low and thus did not justify the cost of renewing the subscription. The Prisoner Council and wing forums continue to communicate key messages and thus the impact of no longer having access to Wayout TV should be minimal.

There have been several issues with regard to in-house laundry. Prisoners do not trust the system to return their personal laundry and often wash and dry it within their cell. Each prisoner has a laundry bag which they fill and zip up, however, the system in place for using tagged, rather than named laundry bags, is not being properly used across the prison and there has been an increase in items 'going missing'. Laundry is washed, dried, folded and returned the same day. A dosing system is used for washing powder and conditioner, which saves on waste and is safer for the prisoners as they are not able to access these materials. Twelve prisoners work in the laundry on a two-week rota.

Issues have been reported across most Residential Units regarding prison property. Several prisoners have raised a problem with the IMB of not having access to clean bedding and towels for a number of weeks and this is unacceptable. Bedding, towels and prison items including joggers are sent to another prison for laundering. There is a full laundry service within Brinsford which could cater for bedding and towels, which might reduce the loss. Shortages of items can also be attributed to prisoners retaining more items than they should.

Exercise yards for Residential Units have exercise equipment for the prisoners with Residence 5, the enhanced unit, having a more generous provision including a tennis court and Residence 6 having access to their own gym equipment.

When kitchens were visited, they appeared to be clean and tidy; the kitchen has a five-star rating from the Food Standards Agency, South Staffordshire dated June 2020. Meals are an important part of the prisoner's day, and the collection of food adds to time out of cells. All prisoners working in the kitchens work to level 2 food hygiene and prisoners on serveries work to level 1.

Only on Residence 6 and the enhanced Residence 5 can prisoners eat communally. Faulty seating has been replaced during the course of the year but continues to be damaged by prisoners from time to time.

There are five options to choose from at lunch and supper and a hot option is available at each mealtime. Soup is usually offered either at lunch or supper each day. Fresh fruit is usually available though not always on the counter and thus prisoners need to request it. The appointment of a new Catering Manager has done much to resolve issues about the quality of food on offer and portion control, with clear signage behind serveries, even though sometimes the prisoners state that they do not get enough to eat.

Cereals, tea and coffee brew packs and milk are available on each servery at lunchtime and at suppertime, where prisoners collect what they want for breakfast the following day. Breakfast items being issued the day before is not ideal as some prisoners will choose to eat them in the evening, which results in a lengthy stretch of time without the provision of food, other than from a prisoner's own canteen supplies, before lunch.

Lunch is sometimes served and completed before 12 noon. Adjustments to the regime with regard to the movement of prisoners from various activities back to wings for meals have been made and once embedded this issue may be resolved.

Religious dietary requirements are met, such as the provision of halal food and the use of heated containers during the period of Ramadan. Other celebration days are also acknowledged with the provision of a special meal or treats.

In March 2023 flasks for hot water were made available in CSU thus allowing prisoners to access hot drinks throughout the day.

The prison food allowance increased by around 50 pence per prisoner per day, however the increased cost of food is still an area of concern.

## **5.2 Segregation**

There are 16 cells in the Care and Separation Unit (CSU), with four being anti-ligature cells located downstairs, while the CSU office is located upstairs. In addition, four cells have grilles for drainage located on the corridor side of the cell doors, should there be a risk of flooding by a prisoner: below these grills there is debris, which is unhygienic and restricts the flow of water, and which need to be included in a rolling programme of cleaning.

The communal areas and cells are largely clean and free of graffiti; the latter is quickly removed when it appears. Much of the CSU has been repainted. Curtains are not always provided and there are issues in some cells with the method of securing curtains to the windows. It has also been observed that not all prisoners are always provided with an in-cell phone until they have had their segregation review or adjudication: there are several cells with damaged ports which does not help matters. Prisoners usually have access to radios but occasionally stock is low as the model of radio supplied is not very robust and is easily damaged.

Continued use is made, as appropriate, of a period of 'cooling off' in residential units, reducing the need for prisoners to be segregated, as opposed to those of a more serious nature requiring segregation in the CSU. Only 1 prisoner was detained in the CSU for more than 42 days at one time: all the appropriate paperwork was in order. During the period of this report, of those prisoners in the CSU the average percentage of white prisoners was 32% and 68% were Black, Asian or minority ethnic. This is a reasonable reflection of the prison population.

Towards the latter half of this reporting period saw an increase in the number of bed-blockers with 2 prisoners refusing to move on to a Residential Unit citing gang and/or debt related issues as the reason.

The introduction of a new regime to CSU has been positive, prisoners are now woken up, offered showers; there seems to be a greater participation between staff and prisoners located in the CSU. This also allows the opportunity for the prisoners to be get out of the cells for longer periods of time. The officers and prisoners have a good rapport and more willing to participate and talk on a one-to-one basis.



The exercise area has been developed together with Gym staff; Officers are able to give them workouts which they can do with the minimum amount of equipment. These are printed out and placed on the wall for all prisoners located within the CSU.

The unit has gone from strength to strength whilst working in difficult circumstances and with some very challenging individuals.

The IMB recognizes this as being a good initiative.

Some prisoners receive input from the education staff but for most the regime is 'basic' incentive level, and many prisoners choose not to access education. Provision by the education provider while in the CSU is poor and when prisoners have asked for education it is not always followed up. May 2023 saw the launch of the unit's 'Learning and Development Room' replacing the tea packing activity which had been introduced in June 2022. There are 8 Chrome Books in the room each preloaded with a large number of non-accredited courses, including business, employability, personal and social development, food safety, transport and logistics and healthy lifestyles plus a number of academic games e.g. word searches, crosswords and also videos. Many prisoners have already benefitted from this provision. It is hoped that some accredited courses may be acquired soon.

There is a good range of fiction and non-fiction literature available on the landing. Radios are readily available should a prisoner wish to have one. Each prisoner has 45 minutes' a day exercise and a shower.

The exercise yard is not particularly welcoming, though there is a covered area which provides some protection from the elements and the lower wall is painted white, which is better than bare brickwork. There is a notice board with some suggested circuit type exercises which individuals may do whilst in the exercise yard. There is a marked set of goals, but a ball is invariably not available for prisoners to use. This area is in need of improvement.

Relationships between staff and prisoners has been observed to be good or very good. Staff demonstrate a very good level of knowledge of those assigned to their care. Reintegration planning appears to be good with most prisoners returning to residential units within five or six days.

There was continuity of staff on duty during the reporting period, which had a positive impact on the quality of care provided to prisoners.

### **5.3 Staff-prisoner relationships**

The IMB has observed that most of the staff demonstrate a very good level of knowledge of the prisoners in their care. Staff and prisoner interactions observed are largely respectful of one another. However, in a few instances have been reported that some staff in some units are less helpful and less welcoming towards prisoners and to members of the IMB.

Brinsford had the second-best staff retention rate in the Cat C resettlement comparator group during this reporting period. However, staff absences were higher than the previous year. Brinsford's staff absence rates for July 2022 – June 2023

were an average of 10.99 days per staff member, the group comparator average rate was 14.40. There have been occasions where staff absences have impacted regime delivery, but these are managed effectively through the regime management plan (RMP) where time on units and access to domestics and exercise are prioritised over activities.

Much is being done for staff wellbeing across the prison, including a 'care room' for time out for staff, 'couch to 5k' running challenge, provision of bikes for staff to hire during lunch breaks, 'champion women in the workplace' forums and wellbeing days for staff.

The key worker programme continues to be an area of concern. There has been some progress in delivery, with 1 in 5 young adults receiving a key worker session weekly. Since April 2023 remand prisoners were identified as a priority group for a number of reasons:

- Remand prisoners have limited support through the offender manager in custody (OMIC) model – no prison offender manager, community offender manager, resettlement support etc.
- Some of Brinsford's young adults have been on remand for a significant period of time owing to the court backlogs.

The key worker programme is of great importance to staff-prisoner relationships and pivotal to the continuity of pastoral support for the prisoners. The senior leadership team endeavors to prioritise this with a clear plan going forward, but staff absences continue to impact on the frequency of sessions.

## **5.4 Equality and diversity**

There is a strategic equality policy with monthly equality meetings. The equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) Group has made significant improvements in the quality of reporting and use of data to identify areas for improvement and planning. In October Brinsford saw the appointment of a Neurodiversity Support Manager in-line with other prisons in England and Wales. A programme of recruitment of Equalities Reps for each wing is underway and Neurodiversity Champions have been introduced. Equalities Reps are made known to their peers and staff by wearing a purple tee shirt.

Quarterly forums on each of the protected characteristic have been in place for two years and information from these forums is invaluable and feeds directly into EDI meetings where actions and/or solutions are applied. There is evidence of planning to ensure all protected characteristics are covered.

There has been an average of 55 foreign national prisoners over the reporting period. In June there were 54 foreign national prisoners from 29 different countries with an unlock roll of 556, this equated to 9.75% of the population. Albanian prisoners continue to account for the highest proportion of foreign nationals in Brinsford. There is support for foreign nationals, such as education, including teaching English as a second language, (ESOL). Those who have received their authority to detain notification (IS91) for deportation are held beyond the end of their

sentence and continue to be treated as prisoners. Unfortunately, they do not benefit from the same levels of freedom as they would receive if they were in an immigration removal centre. An Immigration Officer visits HMP Brinsford, in person, every 4-6 weeks to meet with foreign national prisoners. In addition, there are numerous video-link interactions between those visits, the number of which is determined by tasking requirements.

Sometimes the behaviour of foreign nationals is poor as they often hope for further custodial sentence to remain in UK. They are of greater risk of suicide and self-harm for the same reasons. They often have a greater incentive to work as family often cannot send money into prison for them, and they are often among Brinsford's poorest prisoners.

Additional support for foreign nationals at Brinsford includes forums, which have been held with both staff and prisoners. The consensus is that there is a positive experience through reception and induction, but there is a need to improve the international PIN (authorised telephone) numbers process. Foreign nationals are treated fairly and have access to social video calls.

Foreign nationals have access to literature: each month the library has a printout of foreign nationals and checks the shelves and if the library discovers a shortfall, they order suitable literature from the Stafford Prison Library Service.

There were many national events and celebrations celebrated at Brinsford with awareness being raised through some colourful posters in key areas within the prison, including displays in the library. These included, for example, Neurodiversity Celebration Week, Transgender Day of Visibility and LGBTQ+ Pride Month. In addition, there have been various forums to raise awareness including a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Forum.

Opportunities to celebrate religious festivals are embraced; for example, Eid was celebrated in April with a celebration curry dish available to all prisoners regardless of their faith. Approximately 140 prisoners observed Ramadan during this reporting period.

Brinsford's disability lead is part-way through setting up a special educational needs (SEN) champion on all residential units to champion SEN disability. This role helps to support prisoners and raise awareness of SEN. Rapid screening of prisoners on arrival is picking up more declared disabilities: 66% of prisoners have a SEN disability. Information is often, initially first picked up in reception and shared with staff as appropriate through C-Nomis.

Maverick Sounds have been working in Brinsford this year. They provide a music programme that supports young adults to develop their writing skills and vocabulary and recite lyrics to beats. The primary purpose is to encourage young adults to express themselves through music which they connect with and consider an important part of their culture. It's also about challenging stereotypes and challenging attitudes, thinking and behaviours associated with offending. As of May 2023, they have worked with approximately 50 young adults. Feedback from staff and others

has been positive not only for the young adults involved but helping to improve relationships between staff and young adults.

In March 2023 new signage was put in place across the prison with coloured symbols for units to assist those with neurodiverse challenges.

Brinsford averages the submission of two to three discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs) each month which is on par with comparative prisons. During this reporting period a total of 29, DIRFS were submitted of which 18 were submitted by prisoners. Of the 18 DIRFs submitted by prisoners, 7 were upheld, 6 not upheld, 3 withdrawn and 2 retained on file and of these DIRFS 15 were related to race, 2 disability and 1 sexual orientation.

DIRFS are externally scrutinised by Zahid Mubarek Trust (ZMT) with high quality investigations reported.

## **5.5 Faith and pastoral support**

Brinsford's multi-faith centre is managed by the senior chaplain. She and her team are proactive in supporting prisoners and they make a significant contribution to the positive atmosphere in Brinsford. The chaplaincy delivers a range of religious instruction and behaviour classes and is actively integrated into the prison. Numbers attending corporate worship has continued to improve during this period of reporting.

The team includes chaplains from Buddhist, Catholic, Free Church, Hindu, Jehovah's Witness, Jewish, Mormon, Muslim, Pagan, Rastafarian and Sikh traditions, and, when a prisoner requests support from another faith group, efforts are made to arrange this.

The multi-faith centre is a welcoming, calm and supportive environment. Notice boards are well-organised with a clear programme of worship advertised alongside useful help information, such as bereavement support, Prayer Line (a seven-days a week freeline for prayer requests, from 9am to 8pm) etc. The chaplaincy team journal is kept up to date and contains useful information about the prisoners regarding bereavement concerns, those on ACCTs etc.

Opportunities to celebrate special events, such as Eid, are embraced as far as this can be done in prison.

Prisoners are supported by the chaplaincy and other specialist staff, such as the disabilities nurse, during times of personal stress. For example, there is help when a prisoner needs bereavement support or support during access to an online funeral.

In line with their statutory duties, the chaplains have made daily visits to the segregation unit. They have provided faith-based learning materials and given one-to-one support, and have invited prisoners to attend services, if safety requirements are not compromised.

The chaplaincy team is a vital and integrated part of the pastoral provision of Brinsford. The Board values the support of staff, in particular the senior leadership

team (SLT). The senior chaplain is a member of the SLT, which demonstrates the value placed on this provision.

## **5.6 Incentives schemes**

The incentives scheme is used to foster good behaviour and tackle poor behaviour and breaches of prison rules. On entry, prisoners are placed on standard level. If they are transferred from another prison, they retain their status from the originating establishment. Prisoner induction includes information on incentives, privileges and expectations about the standard of behaviour. Individual officers can issue warnings and an immediate downgrade may be used for serious incidents.

## **5.7 Complaints**

Brinsford follows the complaints policy framework. A senior manager has ownership of the quality assurance process for prisoner complaints. Every month a member of the IMB meets the governor with responsibility for overseeing complaints to scrutinise a random sample of these complaints. The findings from this audit, together with recommendations, are reported and discussed at senior leadership team meetings.

There is a clear set of procedures for dealing with prisoners' complaints, which are made known to the prisoners during induction. Complaint forms are available throughout the establishment in areas frequently accessed by prisoners, such as association areas, and are clearly advertised. For those who might struggle to complete a written complaint, there is support from officers on the wing, but where this is a confidential COMP 2 complaint, which may be about staff behaviour, this is not ideal.

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

Arrangements are in place for complaints to be considered during weekends and on public holidays. Complaints are answered in line with the timeline requirements set out in the complaints policy framework, which is within five working days of the complaint being logged (or 10 working days if it is about a member of staff) and from Monday to Friday, but not bank holidays. Interim replies are given within that timeframe if it is not possible to give a full reply. The interim reply gives some indication of when a full reply may be expected. Most of the complaints received at Brinsford are related to property.

### Complaints by significant themes

	<b>April 2020 to March 2021 (%)</b>	<b>March 2021 to April 2022 (%)</b>	<b>July 2022 to June 2023 (%)</b>
Property	36.5	35	30
Residential	25	21	24.5
OASys / OMU	9.5	11	10.5
Letters	4	1.5	2.9
Visits	4	3.8	6
Bullying	1	0.8	0.2
Food	0	0.6	1.4
<b>Total complaints</b>	<b>412</b>	<b>720</b>	<b>621</b>

There has been a decrease in the number of total complaints during this period of reporting which may be explained by more time out of cells and an increase in activities combined with other improvements made within the prison. An increase in the number of complaints concerning letters may be owing to originals being photocopied, with the photocopy then handed over to prisoners. The slight increase in complaints about food does not match observations made by the IMB in and around the prison. It is worth noting that the increase in the cost of food items purchased by prisoners through their canteen may in part explain this slight increase as they may not be able to purchase as many items as previously and so increasingly rely on food provided by the prison to 'fill them up'. The decrease in the number of complaints about property is encouraging though this area continues to generate the most complaints.

### Complaints by location

	<b>April 2020 to March 2021 (%)</b>	<b>March 2021 to April 2022 (%)</b>	<b>July 2022 to June 2023 (%)</b>
<b>Res 1</b>	29	22	17
<b>Res 2</b>	14	20	28
<b>Res 3</b>	22	23	26
<b>Res 4</b>	26	22	17
<b>Res 5</b>	9	8	6
<b>Healthcare</b>	/	/	0.3
<b>CSU</b>	/	1	1.3
<b>First Night</b>	/	/	0.3
<b>External</b>	/	4	4.1

## Complaints by age range

	April 2020 to March 2021 (%)	March 2021 to April 2022 (%)	July 2022 to June 2023 (%)
18- to 21-year-olds	75	79	75
22- to 29-year-olds	21	19	25
30- to 39-year-olds	0.7	0.4	0
40- to 49-year-olds	0.7	0.4	0
50- to 59-year-olds	1.6	1	0

- 89% of complaints were dealt with early or within five days (2021-2022: 89%)
- 49% of complaints were made by white British men (2021-2022: 45%)

## 5.8 Property

Prisoner access to personal belongings, including sentimental items such as photos, is vital in maintaining morale and good mental health in prison with the challenges that such an environment entails. They have so little that it is completely understandable when prisoners become upset or angry when personal items go missing.

Most complaints at Brinsford were related to property, though slightly lower than the previous reporting year. Improvements in laundry arrangements may in part be responsible for the slightly lower percentage during this reporting period.

Common themes regarding property are:

- Belongings too often go missing or arrive late during transfer between prisons, which is sometimes owing to differences in property allowances. Excess property cannot be sent to family and so may be misplaced or lost in storage.
- Not knowing what has/is happening to property; has it arrived in the establishment/where is it?
- The time taken to issue people with their property from reception.
- Missing property.

In response to complaints about property, the following points were observed:

- Issuing property in a timely manner has sometimes been delayed by the need for items to be searched by the dog team prior to issuing property. Staff absences added to delays.
- Large bags of property are not always correctly stored in the rear of the property room.

## **6. Health and wellbeing**

### **6.1 Healthcare: general**

Practice Plus Group is responsible for the provision and delivery of medical services in out-patients and in-patients within Brinsford. There are 10 dedicated cells, including one for constant watch, for in-care provision. Facilities include a waiting room with television, consulting rooms and opticians and dental facilities provided by J. Hear and Partners.

Brinsford is unusual in having in-patient facilities and accepts prisoners to this unit from other establishments; as a result Brinsford cares for many more patients with mental Health issues than other establishments.

The number of patients in healthcare is not normally the same at any given time. Patients could remain on the unit for a couple of months as it is a rolling number; some patients are waiting for an external hospital bed and others are assessed, given medication, and once improved are returned to their respective residential house block.

The unit is well decorated and exudes a positive atmosphere. However, during staff shortages there can be long periods of lock down due to there being only one officer within the residential care unit.

There have been occasions when prisoners miss their prescribed (controlled) medication in a morning due to early movement from the wing to an activity. All prisoners arriving at the facility are interviewed by a nurse within the reception area.

The IMB recognises the skill in the officers working with prisoners who are suffering from a mental health illness. We believe that it is important to staff this unit with officers who are trained and show empathy to these patients.

### **6.2 Physical healthcare**

Nursing staff and officers continue to provide good support for prisoners with clear indications of integrated management between clinics and residential patients. There is an emphasis on care and support to ensure prompt return to the normal prison regime. However, where there are longer term ongoing issues, significant care and attention is paid to those who remain within the unit.

The number of constant watch prisoners is not significant, although those with significant mental health issues are sometimes kept on the unit beyond a reasonable and appropriate period due to a lack of space in a more suitable establishment. During this time officers show care, compassion, and attention to the needs of these prisoners.



Requests for medical attention from prisoners are handled efficiently. Triage occurs without delay and then Healthcare issue an information slip to prisoners covering an appointment if needed. Daily lists of prisoners who need to attend the surgery are sent to each residential unit a day before an appointment is due.

Non-attendance at appointments remains a concern; this can be caused by a lack of officers to move prisoners to healthcare from the residential units. However, the main reason is prisoners declining to attend in favour of association or gym.

Prisoners sometimes complain about the time it takes to see a doctor, but this is driven by unrealistic expectations most of the time with no instances of medical neglect. When occasionally investigating (unfounded) claims of neglect, it has been found that records of applications for and completion of treatment have been thorough.

During the reporting year an outbreak of several cases of scabies was diagnosed within the establishment, with evidence identifying the source from prisoners on transfer into Brinsford. This was quickly identified and treated promptly, isolating those with the condition and therefore reducing the spread. Laundry of clothing, bedding and other contact items were regularly cleaned, avoiding re-infection & cross contamination. The infection has been eradicated from the prison.

### **6.3 Mental health**

There are long term concerns over the management of prisoners with diagnosed mental health issues and whilst every care is taken to facilitate them within the system, there remains a concern over the length of time which is needed to transfer them to more appropriate specialist facilities due to a lack of bed capacity in these establishments.

Healthcare remains focused on assisting prisoners who self-isolate and the “team around the prisoner” is compassionate and supportive within the facilities available.

There is an increased focus on the management of substance abuse and the Drug Awareness Review Boards are to be established again soon. Indicative (not quantitative) voluntary drug tests are being implemented soon.

### **6.4 Social care**

Social care is conducted adequately at the prison. Outside agencies, like Barnardo's, provide support and training to staff about care leavers and similar issues, such as awareness of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

A neurodiversity support manager is now in place, dealing with all aspects of support to prisoners who demonstrate neurodivergent conditions. All prisoners have access to the Samaritans and other prisoners who have been trained as Listeners.

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

Regular exercise is available for each prisoner if they choose.

There is outside facility for fresh air and exercise for in-patients and an association room with games and television. Those on 24-hour watch will often be escorted around the gardens for exercise. In exceptional circumstances an individual may have gym sessions but dependent upon circumstances and staff availability, this is not a concern at this time.

There are too many community study days and staff shortages which impact on the regimes, leaving prisoners locked in their cells for the whole day. The Board recognizes that these are to facilitate training – a back log through the pandemic and mandatory safety critical training.

## **6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation**

There is an increased focus on the management of substance abuse and the Drug Awareness Review Boards are to be established again soon. Indicative (not quantitative) voluntary drug tests are being implemented soon, a simple on-the-spot test. This could allow prisoners to have enhanced benefits as appropriate.

## **6.7 Soft skills**

A restructuring of education and training is underway sited at the Acorn centre where prisoners have an increased availability of chosen activities to include training and social skills. There is also an initiative to develop a more integrated approach to helping with rehabilitation and preparing prisoners for release.

## **7. Progression and resettlement**

### **7.1 Education, library**

#### **Education:**

Over the last two reporting periods, the Governor has shared with the Board various plans to prioritise and revamp what the prisoner experiences at education and work throughout their time at Brinsford. The same can be said for the current reporting period. Given Brinsford's status as a resettlement prison, this is crucial, and has been keenly anticipated by the Board. Frustratingly, there has been little improvement.

Novus continues to hold the contract as education provider. Education provision has been inconsistent and poor. This is owing to a combination of vacancies amongst Novus tutors, and a shortage of prison staff to facilitate movement of prisoners to education and patrol the area. Both staff and prisoners complain that classes are cancelled at short notice, without adequate reason. This is regrettable as it does not take a lot for young prisoners to become despondent and disengage.

There are not enough spaces for all prisoners to attend education, and even then not all available spaces are allocated. Despite the prison having three locations for learning, owing to Education staff shortages, only one location is utilised for education. It is frustrating to walk through empty classrooms while prisoners are locked behind their cell.

Prisoners are escorted to classes by officers. Arrival and departure times has been a significant issue. Classes begin at 9am yet prisoners trickle in, with occasions where some have arrived as early as 8.10am, and others as late as 9.30am. There have also been occasions where officers arrive to escort prisoners back to their cell well before the class has finished.

This reduces the prisoners' learning time and can disturb those prisoners still learning. In practical classes, prisoners miss out on learning to clear away, or finish a task. These are important aspects of a course, and particularly significant where the course is preparing the prisoner for employment upon release, as it leaves gaps in their knowledge.

Several prisoners do not want education and refuse to attend. This is dealt with through the incentives scheme, however the Board questions how effective this is. When the board has enquired, prisoners state that they are told they will receive a negative entry but are not challenged beyond this. If, after multiple negative entries, the prisoner's status drops from standard to basic, they do not consider it a detriment as there is little difference between the two, for example both basic and standard prisoners have a television in their cell. The board recognizes that the prison ethos is to maintain positive behaviour through effective reward and reinforcement rather than by removing televisions.

While prisoners have completed English and Maths qualifications, there are a number who prefer practical based learning. These prisoners resent being allocated

to English and Maths and many refuse to attend. Practical courses on offer are popular, particularly Forklift Truck Operations, Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) and Hospitality. It is not rare for prisoners to keenly chase a place on these courses.

Towards the end of this reporting period, payment prisoners receive for attending education has increased to align with wages paid to prisoners that work. This is to deter prisoners from choosing work over education because of higher pay. It is too soon to see what impact this has had.

Aside from functional English courses, there are no programmes or support that develop prisoners' reading skills. The Shannon Trust reading scheme runs but with limited impact. Some prisoners have been trained as mentors; however they are concentrated on one residential unit. This limits the scope of their support as limited movements make it difficult to mentor prisoners on other units.

A large proportion of the population are remand prisoners. The Board is pleased to see English and Maths courses are still available for this cohort as it gives them a purposeful way to spend, what can often be a lengthy period in custody. It would be good to see the provision expand to include other courses.

Education provision in the Care and Separation Unit (CSU) has improved. There is now a dedicated room for education within the unit where prisoners can access a selection of courses. This now means prisoners can spend time on the unit purposefully. This has been officer led and the Board commends the officer for their commitment to ensuring prisoners have access to education while in the unit. Courses are unaccredited which can deter prisoners when they become aware of this. The prison is looking at this.

It has been raised in previous reports, and continues to be the case, that education staff do not attend Good Order or Discipline (GOOD) reviews. This is a missed opportunity to engage the prisoner in purposeful activity. Often the Board sits in reviews where prisoners express an interest in learning. Practical courses are most popular. Having a member of education staff present would allow the interest to be acted upon there and then, making it more likely to be maintained.

### **Library:**

The library at Brinsford is part of the Staffordshire County Library Services and is well-resourced. It is an inviting space, with a series of small tables to encourage small gatherings to sit together or, where preferred, solitary reading.

The library is inclusive and offers reading material to cater for all prisoners, regardless of language spoken. Library staff continue to monitor the nationalities present amongst the population at Brinsford and adapt library stock accordingly. Following their initial creation in March 2020, the library continues to provide distraction packs for prisoners to complete in-cell. Despite raising this in previous reports, distraction packs continue to only be available in English. While the packs do contain colouring, which is not language dependent and so can be completed for

prisoners who are not fluent in English, it would be good to see provision that caters specifically for foreign prisoners.

Visits to the library are timetabled to allow each residential unit an opportunity to attend. Prisoners are dependent on wing staff to escort them to the library. Post-Covid, the regime opened up again with the library able to resume its accommodation of larger groups of prisoners at a time (typically 14-16). Some staff have not been comfortable with escorting such numbers.

There have been occasions where officers will only take 2-4 prisoners, towards the end of the reporting period the average was 6-7. This has impacted library access as fewer prisoners can attend in any one slot.

Staff shortages have been an issue during this reporting period. At these times, regime is restricted and one of the first things to be stopped is library access. This has caused frustration amongst prisoners, with complaints made to the Board. There has been a continued effort to embed library attendance within the induction process for prisoners who are new to Brinsford. There have been months where rather than attend the library in person, prisoners have instead been issued with an introduction letter. While a letter is better than nothing, engagement with the library and reading is fostered to a greater degree by visiting in person.

Throughout this year, the library has offered multiple initiatives aimed at developing reading and literacy. This is vital given that there are no stand-alone educational courses offered that focus solely on teaching reading skills.

Themed poetry competitions were held for Valentine's Day, Mother's Day and Father's Day. Creative writing combined with an element of family contact effectively engages prisoners.

## **7.2 Vocational training, work**

There are limited work opportunities and not enough spaces to offer full-time work to all prisoners. Not all spaces are allocated, and many prisoners spend their time locked in their cell sleeping or watching television.

Prisoners allocated to tea-packing complain that the work is boring and tedious. The room where it takes place is small and stuffy and prisoners gain little skills from doing this work that will be of benefit to them upon release. It does not motivate them to spend time out of their cell or develop themselves.

The Employment Lead has made great advancements in securing links with employers. Brinsford has hosted multiple employment days at Brinsford, which employers have attended, and offered prisoners employment upon release. Employers cover the construction and hospitality trade and link well with qualifications that the prison offers, for example Forklift Truck operation, Construction Skills Certification Scheme, Hospitality and Catering. The number of prisoners released with employment has increased from last year.

Construction qualifications tend to have an expiry date. Placement on courses is timed so that course completion is close to the prisoner's release date, and so optimising the time their qualification is valid for in the community. The reasoning behind this is sound, however prisoners with many months left to serve are aimlessly passing time waiting for their time on the course to come around.

The Board believes more practical based learning should be offered. Prisoners are more willing to engage with this style of learning, and it can offer a pathway to employment upon release. Teaching vacancies have impacted the offering of practical courses.

The prison has a spacious and well-equipped hub for painting, decorating, and carpentry, which is taught on a multi-skills course rather than by individual teachers but a vacancy for a tutor has meant these courses have only run for part of the year.

Prisoners would benefit more from an alternative course.

The gym is popular amongst prisoners and delivers a selection of courses, including First Aid, and Fitness Instructing. Qualifications are either level 1 or 2 and are accredited, so provide pathways to progression on release. It is disappointing the prison does not have any employment links in the fitness industry as this would allow prisoners to develop their learning and explore post-release employment opportunities.

During the reporting period there has been one prisoner released on temporary licence (ROTL) and this led to an offer of employment upon release. Multiple employers are willing to offer ROTL opportunities, and prisoners have been put forward, however they have not been successful due to either failed security checks, or difficulties in planning transport from prison to the placement. This is regrettable as ROTL increases the chance of securing employment upon release and reduces the risk of reoffending. ROTL opportunities are there but the prison needs to be more proactive in facilitating them.

### **7.3 Offender management, progression**

The offender management unit (OMU) is well led. Staff work hard with the resources they have. The lack of key work is placing more demand on prison offender managers (POMs) which is unrealistic to fulfil. Prisoners have complained that they are not aware of dates and/or key information regarding their sentence, for example home detention curfew (HDC). This could have been discussed in a key work session. As it does not happen, prisoners chase their POM for the information and become anxious when they do not get contact or information quickly.

The unit does not have the resources to fully support foreign national prisoners and so the governor has allocated an officer who, when not operational, is dedicated to this work. This role includes conducting interviews and taking statements where typically the prisoner speaks no/little English.

Many of the documents provided by the Home Office are not made available in other languages, for example Romanian, or Vietnamese, making the officer's job difficult.

He relies on Google Translate to translate, as it's perceived that the phone translation service is difficult to use. Relying on Google Translate carries risks, as meanings may become lost, and prisoners must sign documents to say they have received them, when it may be that they haven't fully understood what they are being asked.

Documents are important and have implications for the prisoner, so it is vital that they understand what they are signing. To be clear, this is not a criticism of Brinsford, but of the Home Office.

With secured funding, a Care Leavers' Flat is being built within the prison. It is intended to replicate a home environment where prisoners can learn essential skills in cooking, cleaning, ironing, and general home maintenance. This is crucial for care experienced prisoners, who tend to struggle to demonstrate an ability to live independently to secure independent accommodation upon release.

The initiative will improve prisoners' prospects of being able to satisfy this criterion. The flat has been slow to progress and at the time of reporting, remains incomplete. It is anticipated this will be completed by autumn.

A significant number of prisoners at Brinsford are gang affiliated. The perception amongst staff that gang members must be kept separate to avoid outbreaks of violence has limited prisoners' access to education and activities. The Board reported on this in its last report.

There continues to be no programme offered at Brinsford to directly address community related issues, which is regrettable as the demographic of the population, and incidents of violence, justify such an intervention. Although there are programmes which address identity and thinking processes, they are group courses, and gang-related offending is better addressed on a one-to-one basis. Currently, the rehabilitative needs of gang-affiliated prisoners are not being met.

The Identity Matters programme has been developed by HMPPS specifically for prisoners convicted of gang-related offences and is delivered on a one-to-one basis. It has not been offered at Brinsford as the eligibility requirements for the course are excessively stringent.

Facilitating the Identity Matters programme at Brinsford would improve outcomes for gang-affiliated prisoners by providing an opportunity for them to reconsider their behaviour and decision-making in an environment that, by virtue of being one to one, is conducive to open and honest engagement. The programme's focus on gang-related offending can reduce the risk of reoffending and prepare for release.

The prison has links with external partners whose programmes have had a positive impact. The Maverick Sounds project has delivered its music-based programme where prisoners have learnt alternative ways of communicating while still allowing them to express themselves.

Music is used as a vehicle to express emotions positively, develop vocabulary and rethink mindsets. 60 prisoners have completed the programme and a number are keen to participate when it is next delivered.

Ernst and Young LLP Outreach have collaborated with Invested Man and their 5-week resettlement programme was delivered to a group of 12 prisoners. Through a series of workshops, prisoners worked on identity, positive thinking, decision making and change.

The programme culminated in a showcase event which the Board attended. Prisoners gave moving accounts of how the programme has helped and supported them in repivoting themselves to avoid reoffending. Since the programme, 5 prisoners have gone on to mentor children in a pupil referral unit, and a further prisoner has gone to work with Invested Man upon his release.

#### **7.4 Family contact**

Each cell has a telephone installed. They have proved to be invaluable as they have allowed communication to remain open between prisoners and their family. Delays in processing prisoner requests to add contacts to a PIN account have been a source of frustration and the Board has received complaints about this. There have been occasions where prisoners have requested to have a family member added, waited several weeks with no update, and become anxious about missing speaking to a loved one on their birthday/special occasion.

Brinsford continues to offer in-person social visits, supplemented by online social video calls. In-person social visits remain the most popular choice, and family members travel from as far as London to attend visits.

The visiting area is bright and inviting and offers refreshments. It has been wonderful to see prisoners with their families, often including young children and babies, during visits.

The prison hosts regular family days, supported by the Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT). These events allow prisoners longer with their loved ones than they get on a social visit and prisoners often appear uplifted afterwards.

Senior members of staff understand the importance of family relationships and their potential influence on reducing reoffending. Contact with family, and strengthening and supporting relationships is a priority. To this end, the prison has supported the parents and partners of prisoners in Brinsford through putting them in contact with the Family Engagement Worker.

One young mother struggled to cope while her partner was in prison. This was exacerbated by her living over a hundred miles away. Through the prison's referral, she was able to access support with her mental health, access other services, and became less isolated. This preserved the relationship between her and her partner.

The library has continued to play an important role in facilitating family contact through running Storybook Dads, SWAPs, Making It Up and birthday and Christmas card-making. Of these, Storybook Dads remains the most popular with 39 recordings being done between July 2022 and June 2023.



## **7.5 Resettlement planning**

During the last reporting period, a new system to enable prisoners to navigate their journey through Brinsford was planned, but never fully launched. Unfortunately, it has not gained any further traction. The plan consisted of a series of colour coded pathways, with a different colour for each cohort (for example red for remand prisoners).

The lack of progress is frustrating as the plans are something that will help prisoners by making them aware of support and opportunities available to them. There has rarely been an issue with prisoners being released to approved accommodation, or access to a bank account. The prison is typically amongst the top performers in its comparator group. However, a significant number of the population have transferred from other establishments and difficulties arise when these prisoners have weeks left of their sentence and no accommodation or bank account in place. The dedicated pre-release team work hard to support prisoners but are subject to external time scales for processing bank accounts and can encounter delay.

## 8. The work of the IMB

The Board carries out its role in the following ways:

- Two members are on rota every week of the year and they visit all areas of the prison as often as they can during that week. A written rota report is then produced.
- Board members aim to attend every segregation review, which must take place within 72 hours of a prisoner being segregated, and any decisions taken that are not within the agreed framework will be challenged.
- There are eight boxes around the prison where prisoners can post a written application to see a Board member, who will then visit the prisoner and follow up any issues that arise from their enquiries. Board members always do their best to resolve the difficulty.
- Members attend meetings as observers and report back to the rest of the Board at monthly meetings.
- Board members have a good working relationship with the senior managers and can approach members of staff for information when required.
- Monthly Board meetings take place and are attended by the Governor or, in her absence, another governor, so that issues of concern can be discussed and information on future developments can be shared.
- The Board has a good mix of experienced members and some who are recently appointed. New members shadow the more experienced members until it is felt that they can complete the task on their own. Training is provided at meetings and can be given by experienced members or other prison staff.
- The Board endeavours to visit other prisons and other IMBs and attend quarterly regional meetings with other IMBs in the area.

## Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	16
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	9
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	8
Total number of visits to the establishment	294
Total number of segregation reviews attended	163

## Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	4	10
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	1	4
C	Equality	0	2
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	10	6
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	5	16
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	1	4
F	Food and kitchens	2	2
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	6	6
H1	Property within the establishment	3	5
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	8	10
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	5	1
I	Sentence management, including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	4	9
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	7	11
K	Transfers	4	6
L	Miscellaneous	1	0
	Total number of applications	<b>61</b>	<b>92</b>



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