



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Ford

**For reporting year
1 November 2022 to 31 October 2023**

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Introductory sections 1 – 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

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

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

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

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

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

2. Description of the establishment

2.1 HMP Ford is a category D open prison. The main aim of the prison is rehabilitation and resettlement. Subject to the requirements of their sentence plan, men are encouraged to take up courses in education, vocational training and full-time work in the community.

2.2 Ford has a current operational capacity of 389¹ adult men, which was reduced from 544 in 2021, when the huts in B wing were closed. Prisoners at Ford are considered trustworthy in open conditions and include both men coming to the end of long sentences and those serving shorter sentences. The expansion project at Ford, which will take the capacity up to 779 men, has yet to receive planning permission.

2.3 Ford was converted to an open prison in 1960 from a former Fleet Air Arm station and is situated in West Sussex, two miles from the coast and three miles south of Arundel. It covers an area of 110 acres, bisected by a busy class B public road. Ford railway station is a mile away.

2.4 The accommodation, all of which is now single occupancy, is comprised of a brick-built block with 214 single rooms (A wing), two other brick-built accommodation units with 55 rooms, and 120 outdoor accommodation pods. All the brick-built accommodation has shared washing and toilet facilities, while each pod has its own facilities. There is accommodation for 15 prisoners with some degree of disability.

2.5 Prisoners have access to a well-equipped gymnasium and outdoor exercise equipment.

2.6 On-site academic education is provided by Milton Keynes College and vocational training by Chichester College. Both are supplemented by prison staff.

2.7 The Chichester College Ford Campus School of Construction provides practical qualifications and training to prepare prisoners for work both before and after release. Other on-site opportunities for prisoners to work or be trained include those at DHL (distribution warehouse for prisoners' 'canteen'), waste management, bicycle refurbishing and some IT facilities. The prison runs engineering and horticulture workshops and has amalgamated a number of other workshops into the Chichester College Ford Campus School of Construction. Land based activities supply local municipal planting, as well as providing HMP Ford and other prisons with plants. The prisoner-run café/gift shop, Serving Thyme, continues to be popular with the local community.

2.8 Voluntary organisations providing support to prisoners include the Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT), Samaritans, Shannon Trust, Sycamore Tree, the Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association (SSAFA) and several other veterans' support organisations.

2.9 The prison infrastructure is maintained by Gov Facility Services Limited.

2.10 The principal health services are provided by Practice Plus Group.

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 Background to the report

This report covers the 12-month period ending 31 October 2023 and tracks improvement and deterioration from year to year. This is not a one-off snapshot assessment of the prison.

The prison was inspected in April 2023 by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons. The inspection report was largely positive and, whilst raising concerns in a number of areas, we agreed with its conclusion that “The Governor and his team have done an excellent job in reinvigorating Ford, inspiring staff and making jail a positive and purposeful place”.

3.2 Main findings

Safety

The IMB believes that the prison provides a safe environment, with prisoners being treated with respect and processes followed as required.

We do note, however, that a high number of prisoners are still returned to closed conditions, although that number reduced from 167 in 2022 to 132 in this reporting year (4.4.3). We note that of the seven prisoners who arrived at Ford under the new Temporary Presumptive Recategorisation Scheme (TPRS), five were returned to closed conditions within a short period of time, raising questions about its efficacy. (4.4.4)

The induction process has been revamped during the year and is expected to have a positive impact on the success of the all-important transition for the men from closed to open conditions. (4.1.4)

Fair and humane treatment

From the Board’s observations, the Governors and staff at HMP Ford treat prisoners in a fair and humane manner and they should be commended for this. Genuine grievances are dealt with in a balanced way and the number of complaints remains at a low level.

However, these positive comments are balanced by our increasing concerns (made for several years now) about the obvious deterioration in the building infrastructure, specifically A wing. The continuing failure to adequately maintain the prison estate to a level that is acceptable leads us to question what actually needs to happen before the wing and other areas in the prison have a reasonable level of refurbishment? (5.1.4)

It is important to note that the general state of dilapidation of the estate makes it much harder to create a sense of cleanliness, but the Board has been pleased to note the focus of the new Governor on this aspect of life at Ford. (5.1.6 and 4.6.1)

It is also disappointing to note that even when improvements are made, the delivery of the works is slow and the provision of temporary facilities totally inadequate, such as the outdoor showers and toilets, for example, which were unfit for purpose. (5.1.5)

Health and wellbeing

From the Board's observations, the healthcare department provides a very effective service to the prison population. (6.1) The department is well resourced and focused on meeting prisoners’ wide-ranging needs through a co-ordinated approach, working well with the other teams, notably those dealing with substance misuse and wellbeing.

The chaplaincy team continues to provide an excellent service, both religious and pastoral. (5.5)

The provision of a gym and wider exercise opportunities has been less than optimal this year due to staffing issues (both resource levels and flexibility), which have taken a long time to resolve. But the Board understands that solutions have been found, which should make a difference going forward. (6.5.1)

Progression and resettlement

The reducing reoffending team is also to be congratulated on its efforts and success in finding meaningful work opportunities for prisoners during their time at Ford, with an increased focus on building relationships with potential long-term employers, including post-release. On a normal day, over 125 prisoners are working or in education outside of the prison, similar to the previous year. (7.3.1)

The wider team, including the prison employment lead (PEL), has bought a positive focus to work post-release, which is reflected in the numbers of men who are in employment six months after release (7.3.2). We welcome the appointment of neurodiversity support manager to the team. (7.2.5)

This positive report needs to be balanced by the continuing problems that arose due to the lack of external support from the Probation Service (7.4.2), and also the impact on prisoner engagement of staff shortages for extended periods during the year in the on-site workshops such as land based activities and engineering. (7.3.5)

3.3 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- The Governor and his team are rightly to be congratulated on the positive HMIP report in April 2023. There is much to build on and Ford now needs the resource and support of the MoJ and HMPPS to ensure that its objectives as a resettlement prison are fully met.
- Last year, the Board reported on issues with outside probation that are affecting some men's access to ROTL. The situation has not improved, although the problems/delays in communication are now mostly affecting the large proportion of prisoners who will return to their London home area. (7.3.2)
- Together with IMBs throughout the country, we continue to stress that sentences of imprisonment for public protection (IPPs) are inhumane and should be removed from existing prisoners. There were three prisoners serving IPP sentences in Ford at the end of the reporting year (and seven in the previous year). (7.4.7)

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- The Governor and his team are rightly to be congratulated on the positive HMIP report in April 2023. There is much to build on and Ford now needs the resource and support of the MoJ and HMPPS to ensure that its objectives as a resettlement prison are fully met.
- The length of time that it is taking to break ground on the new build project is an ongoing disappointment. In addition, it is concerning that there seems to be little, if any, planning for the impact of the significant increase in prisoner numbers (beyond

the previous 544 capacity to 779) on other parts of the prison, such as the gym/sports facilities and reception, for example. (5.1.3)

- There has been some welcome refurbishment of the shower/toilet facilities on several corridors. However, the continuing failure to adequately maintain the prison estate to an acceptable level leads us to question what actually needs to happen before a full refurbishment plan is drawn up and executed for A, R and Q wings, in particular. The Board is concerned that the health and safety of prisoners and staff is at risk of being compromised without such action. (5.1.4)
- The Reception area at Ford is cramped, with limited space for necessary but time-consuming searches. There are no electronic security scanners, which we understand are available in other prisons and would, we note, be a positive addition to the fight against illicit drugs and mobile phones. (4.1.1)
- Last year, the Board reported on issues with outside probation that are affecting some men's access to ROTL. The situation has not improved, although the problems/delays in communication are now mostly affecting the large proportion of prisoners with a London address. (7.3.2)
- The Board commented last year on issues with access to appropriate accommodation for some men on release, notably the shortage of approved premises. In spite of the significant efforts of the staff at Ford, this shortage continues to negatively impact the success of prisoner releases. (7.6.2)
- There continues to be a high number of complaints, resulting from the failure to safely transfer the personal property of prisoners between prisons. The 2022 Prisoners Property Policy Framework does not appear to have made any noticeable improvement and we are concerned that certain prisons (not HMP Ford) are particularly poor in this very important area. (5.7.1)
- There is, we understand, a Memorandum of Understanding between the Management Board of the Independent Monitoring Boards and HMPPS regarding the proper provision of a clerk to support the efficient and effective function of the Board. For some years, HMP Ford has not been allocated the hours to provide this support, which is an exception around the prison estate. Whilst this is disappointing, more importantly, it frustrates the work of our volunteer Board.

TO THE GOVERNOR

- The Governor and his team are rightly to be congratulated on the positive HMIP report in April 2023. There is much to build on and a combination of the resource and support of the MoJ and HMPPS, as well as the leadership of the Governor and his team, will help Ford to meet its principal objective of improving prisoner outcomes as they leave the prison system.
- Through the reporting period, the Board notes that there has been a more motivated Governor and staff team, which has made a noticeable difference in the day-to-day life of the prison. We support the Governor's commitment to this all-important work, whilst always positioning prisoner outcomes at the heart of any change.

- It is pleasing to report on the successful refurbishment of the showers and toilets on D and E wings during the year. Whilst the delivery of the works was slow, we were more concerned that the provision of temporary outdoor shower and toilet facilities was unfit for purpose. Any plans for further such works should address this as a matter of priority. (5.1.5)
- Ford is a huge (110 acre) site that contains a number of unused and almost derelict buildings and land. Apart from the potentially missed opportunity from not making better use of the land, this also contributes to a lack of cleanliness around the estate. We are pleased that the new Governor has made this a priority, given the negative impact this can have on the prevailing attitudes at Ford. (4.6.1)
- We note that for a period of over six months, the external supplier, CXK, did not provide the contracted level of resource to deliver the all-important Personal Learning Plans for prisoners. The Board believes that when a contractor doesn't deliver, a more robust response is needed. (7.2.3)
- Staff resourcing issues and inflexibility have meant that the excellent outdoor facilities at Ford are significantly underused, particularly during the all-important weekends. The Board is pleased to note the steps being taken at the end of the year to address this. (6.5.1)

3.4 Response to the last report

Main issues raised in the 2021-2022 report	Progress
To the Minister Probation shortages: it is concerning to report that the worsening situation in the Probation Service significantly hampers Ford to deliver on its resettlement mandate.	The lack of Probation Service support is still a problem, in particular in the London area.
To the Prison Service The most serious issue for Ford during the year has been the high number of unsuitable prisoners arriving at Ford. The reversal of the progress on the plan to replace B wing and the health centre, with completion now pushed out to 2025, from the original 2023, is a good example of the uncertainty in committing funding for both day-to-day and, most particularly, capital projects. We note that there does not appear to have been any movement nationally to meet the recommendations set out in the national property framework.	High numbers of similar prisoners continue to arrive at Ford. The major expansion project has seen modest progress, and the completion date of 2025 is still subject to some uncertainty. Little to no movement in the practical application of the national property framework. Complaints about missing property on transfers between prisons remain unacceptably high.

To the Governor

Board commends the investment made to support a more motivated staff team. There is more still to do and we support the Governor's ongoing commitment to this all-important work.

It is disappointing to find that the new domestic quality washing machines in the Pods (small, separate, self-contained housing units) are not sufficiently robust to stand up to what is, in effect, an institutional workload.

The benefits of this investment were evident in and around the prison.

This is still an issue, with no medium-term solution in place, which requires proper funding and a longer-term approach from the Prison Service.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

The prison has an established Safer Custody function and holds a multidisciplinary Safer Custody meeting once a month, involving Healthcare, Integrated Substance Misuse Services, Security, Chaplaincy and Safer Custody. There are six Safer Custody orderlies.

4.1 Reception and Induction

4.1.1 The reception area is a cramped space, taking new prisoners on arrival and dealing with all prisoners leaving on Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) for work/education or other reasons, such as home visits. There can be 120+ movements out and then in again on any given day, most of which will be early morning and late afternoon, as men leave to go to work and then return. At busy times, the reception area can be crowded. There are no electronic security scanners so all searches on men returning to the prison must be carried out in the reception area. If a full body search is required, there are two private cubicles, but only one is functional, due to poor design. This area is barely sufficient for the current numbers, but there appear to be no plans to enlarge it for the increased numbers.

4.1.2 It should also be noted that this cramped reception area is the only alternative location for segregation. During the year, this area was required to be used as cells, due to a radon issue in the cell block, and it proved to be very unsatisfactory.

4.1.3 Personal phones and other equipment or belongings needed whilst out on ROTL cannot be taken into the prison and are thus stored in individual lockers. Replacement lockers with phone chargers were expected in two previous years, but did not materialise. A number of the current lockers do not have keys/spare keys and so may not be in use, which would present a problem when the current prisoner capacity is increased.

4.1.4 Men who are new to Ford are housed in a single block and are supported by two Induction orderlies with a full week induction programme, which includes introduction to the working day and key functions and facilities. They also meet key staff, functional heads and the IMB. The Board has followed up with individuals randomly throughout the year and is pleased to hear that new men feel welcomed and looked after on their arrival. The Board is also pleased to see that the induction programme has been extended further during October, to ensure that time is used to best effect, as there was some down time during the week. Induction is being further developed to include work ethics and related skills, and the Board will monitor this in the coming year.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

4.2.1 There were no deaths in custody and no instances of self-harm.

4.2.2 There were five Assessment Care in Custody Teamwork (ACCT) documents opened during the reporting year, which are used to support prisoners who are at risk of self-harm and suicide. Paperwork is maintained and available for inspection and the Board considers that HMP Ford is able to provide support and care for those on ACCT plans.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction and bullying

4.3.1 There were no cases of prisoner-to-prisoner violence and no cases of violence to staff.

4.3.2 Although there appears to be limited violence within Ford, prisoners have reported concerns regarding bullying, associated with debt, to the Board. There are also issues associated with prisoners making charges for services; one example being barber services, with men being charged for haircuts in cash or goods such as tinned tuna. There is no prison barber or barber facilities and whilst a lot of men can get a haircut when out on ROTL or purchase clippers from the canteen, there is a substantial minority (particularly those who are retired or disabled) who are disadvantaged. The Prison is aware of this, but the Board has not been assured of any resolution.

4.4 Use of force, absconds/failure to return/returns to closed conditions

4.4.1 Use of force occurred five times in the year. However, it should be noted that the use of force in Ford usually refers to the use of restraints during escort to the cells, with no other measures being used this year.

4.4.2 During the reporting year, two prisoners absconded and there were eight failures to return. These were investigated by the prison and were found to be caused by a number of mostly unconnected reasons.

During the year, nine men were arrested whilst on ROTL, including one for a serious crime (whilst outside the prison.) The Board noted that each of these incidents was reviewed to consider if the prison could have foreseen the risk, and no specific points were identified.

4.4.3 A total of 132 prisoners were Returned to Closed (RTC) conditions in the IMB reporting year, which compares to 167 in the same period last year. Men were returned for a number of reasons, ranging from issues arising from direct intelligence reports, perceived increased risk of abscond following Mandatory Drug Testing (MDT) or other matters associated with adjudication (a disciplinary hearing where a prisoner is alleged to have broken prison rules), use of illicit substances and overseas prisoners due for removal.

4.4.4 Under the Temporary Prisoner Release Scheme (TPRS), seven prisoners were transferred to Ford, of which five were subsequently Returned to Closed.

4.5 Preventing Illicit Items

4.5.1 As Ford is an open prison with facilities on either side of a public road, a number of challenges arise in relation to keeping men safe. Illicit items can be brought into the prison, which places men at risk of the impact of illicit drugs, bullying and debt. As identified above, there is no electronic security scanner equipment at Ford to search men.

4.5.2 The main accommodation areas are enclosed by fencing and the gate (they are open during the daytime), but the men move across the road, where there is easy access by the public. CCTV and close monitoring of the accommodation area mean that illicit items are now rarely thrown over the fence. However, many illicit items do come into the prison, as demonstrated by the 1,028 items found through searches in the reporting year (see the table, below). The majority were mobile-phone related, as well as a large number of drugs and drug related finds. We also note a number of miscellaneous items, including unauthorised food, toiletries and clothing. Some items, such as food, can be used as currency and can be seen as of significant interest.

Finds	Number
Phone/phone-related	394
Drugs/drugs-related	178
Alcohol	21
Weapons	4
Tools	5
Cash	34
Other, miscellaneous	392
Total	1,028

4.5.3 The number of men out at work and in education every day creates opportunities for trafficking, but searches when they return rarely find anything of note. During the reporting year, there has been an increased search focus on the daytime movement of the men from the more open elements of the prison.

4.5.4 In the 12 months to October 2023, there have been 619 MDTs carried out, of which 107 (17.3%) were positive, compared with the same period last year, when 530 were carried out, of which 96 (18.1%) were positive.

4.6 Health and safety

4.6.1 The Prison has a shared senior Health and Safety (H&S) Officer alongside a full-time on-site adviser. Regular H&S inspections are undertaken, and a risk register managed and maintained. During the year, the main risks were identified as:

- D and E wings' temporary showers and toilets were completely unfit for purpose and not liked by the men. This encouraged men to use showers/toilets in other blocks, contrary to the prison regime which, in turn, created unnecessary antagonism between the men. This is another example of the impact of the failure to properly maintain the prison estate in a timely and effective manner.
- The Board continues to note the state of dilapidation of the estate and the impact this has on general cleanliness. The Board has been pleased to note the new Governor's concerted effort in dealing with this matter.
- The fire doors on the residential wings are regularly subjected to vandalism in order to warn of the arrival of prison officers. This means there is a real risk to life if a fire were to break out, particularly given the general reluctance of men and prison officers to evacuate when a fire alarm goes off – which the Board has witnessed.

4.6.2 The Board continue to have concerns around the health and safety of men in C1, the only wing that has been partly adapted for prisoners with some form of disability. The showers and toilets have been upgraded, but the emergency pull-call facilities in one of the shower areas do not appear adequate, in that they are not available in the shower. Also, it was noted that very soon after completion, the newly installed disabled shower chair collapsed with a man on it. The quality and robustness of this long-awaited upgrade did not meet the intended needs.

4.6.3 There are also concerns for men's health and safety in the main kitchen. There is a litany of issues, many relating to the age of the facility and equipment. These include the long-term failure of the drainage system, which backs up when all the doors are closed, as the positive-negative air flow has never worked properly. This results in flooding which, in turn, creates slip and trip hazards, as well as rusting of equipment.

4.6.4 In the early part of the year, the prison identified high levels of radon in the Offender Management Unit (OMU) buildings and cell block. This resulted in some disruption, although the situation appeared to be well managed.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

5.1.1 At the year end, the prisoner capacity was 389, of which 214 were housed in the brick-built A wing, 55 in two separate brick accommodation units and 120 in outdoor accommodation pods. The pods were deployed when a large part of the prison was condemned and they have now been in place for over two years. We understand that 40 of the pods are being removed in March 2024 to make room for the major prison-expansion programme.

5.1.2 The prison does not have any accommodation specifically designed for disabled people, but one landing (C1) and eight pods have some modifications to support those with physical needs. It is, however, concerning to note that the alarm system in the pods is not suitably connected, so they are unable to be fully utilised.

5.1.3 The redevelopment plans for the site, with significantly increased accommodation and a new health centre, have been in development for some years. After several false starts, and two changes of Governor, the Board is relieved that a 2025 completion date is now being talked about. As planning permission has not been granted and discussions are ongoing as of December 2023, this date cannot be relied on.

5.1.4 We have reported for several years that the accommodation in A wing and the two brick billets, in particular, was tired and difficult to maintain and keep clean. This reflects the continuing deterioration of old buildings, which have had minimal investment over the years. Infrastructure repairs and upgrades are slow and laborious. Equipment has to exceed end of life and fail entirely to warrant replacement but, in any event, there does not appear to be any planning for this. So, with long lead times, this results in local problems when an item does eventually fail beyond repair.

We previously commented that B wing was replaced at very short notice and only when it was finally condemned as a fire hazard at very short notice. The Board is concerned that, in the same way, A wing will continue to deteriorate without the proper level of refurbishment and investment.

5.1.5 We were pleased that the delayed D and E wings' showers were finally refurbished, but this took many months longer than planned. There appears to be a pattern of long lead times and a lack of urgency once issues are managed outside of the prison itself. During the refurbishment, the prisoners had to use portable showers and temporary toilets located outside. Although the showers were clean, the water temperature was intermittent and the showers were blocked with standing water for several weeks. This meant that the men resorted to using showers in other wings, thus putting pressure on those facilities. The temporary toilets, of the kind usually seen on building sites, were not fit for purpose. They were often dirty, unlit and cold. See also 4.6.1.

5.1.6 The Board notes that there is a large number of buildings and land areas on the workshops side of the prison site that are either unused or have fallen into disrepair. This is unsightly, but more importantly a failure to use the assets that Ford has available for the benefit of the men.

5.1.7 Reports to the IMB show that, from the end-users' viewpoint, the quality and quantity of food is generally acceptable/good. It is a challenge to provide nourishing and varied food on such a low daily budget of £2.19. The Board was pleased to see that the daily budget was increased during this reporting year to £2.82. However, it would appear that there is still little or no qualitative oversight nationally. We have mentioned this in

previous reports. This situation has an impact on the men, in that it affects their welfare, morale and wellbeing.

5.1.8 The Board has observed that the kitchen staff provide special meals for religious and cultural days and holidays, which are justifiably popular and appreciated. Many men continue to take 'cook packs', which they supplement with canteen purchases to create their own evening meals back in their billets.

5.1.9 The Board was pleased to see that the prison sourced new picnic-style tables for the dining hall and the areas outside. Over time, this should encourage the men to socialise at meal times, although the early days are not that promising. The tables have proved quite useful for board games, too.

5.1.10 On a positive note, the Board is pleased to note an increased rigour in checking the cleaning and general tidiness of the wings, with the responsibility for oversight residing with the orderly officers. All members of the cleaning team now have recognised cleaning qualifications, have been given a small pay rise and have moved to all live together, thus raising their profile and pride in their jobs. The kitchens in the accommodation units are equipped with better-quality microwaves and some now have grill machines. Sadly, this equipment does go missing sometimes and some of the men may overuse or take less care of the equipment than is helpful. However, others encourage people to take care.

5.1.11 We also note that the previous issues with laundry equipment and availability in A wing are, to all intents and purposes, resolved, although problems are now arising in the newer pod accommodation. The domestic-quality washing machines are particularly problematic, in that they are not the most robust machines so, not surprisingly, they are now regularly failing due to what is, in effect, institutional usage. This causes extreme frustration for the men.

Failure of personal laundry impacts on the men's wellbeing and also places an unnecessary burden for men at work, with potential consequences on the way they present to the working world. The Board notes the plans to open a laundry facility in A wing, which could go some way to providing a more robust solution.

5.1.12 Delivery company DHL provides the canteen service at Ford, from where prisoners can buy a wide range of products. In previous years, we have commented on the high prices charged when compared to shops outside and this continues to be the case, with little or no interest nationally to address this perceived unfairness.

5.2 Segregation

5.2.1 As an open prison, HMP Ford does not have a segregation block. Instead, it has four cell accommodation units where prisoners are awaiting adjudications and/or with the possibility of being returned to closed conditions. This is adequate and the prisoners are rarely held overnight. Whilst there are no facilities for outside exercise, in the unlikely event that they were to be held for longer periods, arrangements would be made for supervised exercise.

5.2.2 The treatment of the prisoners has been observed as fair and consistent. They are told where they are going and why, and are visited by healthcare before they leave. The IMB is informed, as a matter of course, when a prisoner is admitted to the cells and, wherever possible, members visit. No issues of note have arisen.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

5.3.1 In the Board's judgement, the prison continues to work hard on communications with the men. The OMU weekly drop-in sessions and the offender consultative committee (OCC) are good examples of this. Approximately 37% of the men are out of the prison at work or college during the day and the prison has a generally relaxed atmosphere. The Board notes that the shortage of outside probation staff is still having an adverse effect on the men's expectations. This was highlighted last year and remains the case.

5.3.2 The OCC at Ford has regular meetings with the Governor, as well as with senior staff and prisoners, and they provide a forum and drop-in sessions for ensuring the good working of the prison. The Board notes that there are charitable activities that encourage engagement and positive activities around major national fundraising days, such as the Macmillan coffee morning, which provide a level of positive interaction between the men and the staff. The staff-prisoner quiz nights have proven very popular. Notice boards are regularly updated with information.

5.4 Equality and diversity

5.4.1 The level of diversity and inclusion monitoring by the Board has not revealed discrepancies in any areas and is an accurate reflection of the prison.

5.4.2 The Board notes that there has been a significant drop in the number of Discrimination Incident Reporting Forms (DIRFs) submitted this year, with a total of two compared with 26 submitted in the last reporting year.

5.4.3 We noted in 5.1.8 that, as in other years, events and special meals were in place for Black History Month, Eid and Ramadan. The OCC was involved in putting on quizzes for the men, which were popular. See 5.3.2.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

5.5.1 As reflected in previous reports, it is the Board's view that the chaplaincy provides an excellent service, with five employed chaplains supported by seven sessional chaplains and five volunteer chaplains to minister to any faith needed by the prison population. The chaplaincy team is available six days a week and the Board particularly notes the excellent level of support the chaplaincy team has offered to individuals who have suffered bereavement or have sickness within their wider family.

5.5.2 The Board notes that a drumming group and a choir continue to attract members. Outreach services and connections to community groups and projects, such as Restorative Justice, Sycamore Tree and Cruse, continue to be actively pursued. The regular meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous, hosted by the substance abuse team at Healthcare, are held in the meeting room in the chaplaincy. Although not strictly a chaplaincy issue, this encourages the feeling of community, with more people using the chapel areas.

5.5.3 Whilst the previously successful Ford Forward Project has regrettably been closed, due to a lack of funding, a new umbrella group, Community Chaplaincies, is focused on providing resettlement support on release by targeting specific geographical areas where prisoners wish to live on release. These are Sussex Pathways, Footprints (Hampshire), New Foundations (Hampshire to Devon), Change for Good (London area), and New Leaf (West Midlands).

5.5.4 A wide variety of faiths is catered for, including Church of England, Catholic, Muslim, Church of Scotland and Free Church, as well as Rastafarian, Pagan, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish and Sikh, when needed. We note that the multifaith room, although fully set up, is still a temporary facility and is awaiting replacement as part of the redevelopment of the prison.

5.5.5 The number of prisoners at HMP Ford who are under 30 years of age has increased. The Board is pleased to note the efforts of the chaplaincy staff to promote other activities that encourage prisoners to regard the chaplaincy itself as part of the community, such as the musical group, with some learning to play a musical instrument for the first time.

5.5.6 The prisoner-staff choir meets weekly. They sing at the Christmas carol service, which is another great contribution to the sense of community.

5.6 Incentives schemes

5.6.1 The majority (around 90%) of the prisoners are on an enhanced regime (the highest level of the incentive scheme, which grants more privileges), as would be expected in an open prison. Generally, some 10% of the population will be on standard regime, usually only temporarily after an adjudication. There was only one short spell of basic regime for one prisoner during the year.

5.6.2 Any changes in incentives levels include discussion with the prisoner. They are regularly reviewed by a custodial manager and monitored by the diversity and inclusion team to check the ethnicity and faith percentages in each category.

5.7 Complaints

5.7.1 From our observations, the prison has a good system for monitoring complaints. Internal complaints are dealt with in good time and external complaints are systematically chased by the business hub when they are late in responding. As in previous years, the focus of a majority of complaints are issues with property, almost all involving other prisons, with HMP Rochester being particularly poor in this regard. In early November 2023, there were a total of 13 complaints open and just six were overdue.

5.8 Property

5.8.1 As in the past few years, we yet again note that there does not appear to have been any movement nationally to meet the recommendations set out in the Prisoners' Property Policy Framework.

5.8.2 Improvements cannot come from an individual prison. If the National Property Framework recommendations had been even partly implemented, the ongoing problems would have started to subside.

5.8.3 At Ford, in the Board's view, individual officers in reception go above and beyond to help trace possessions from sending prisons and advise new arrivals about how to initiate chase-ups. This is to be commended, but it does not take the place of an official policy working smoothly.

6. Health and wellbeing

The feedback from prisoners and staff is mostly positive and this is readily understood by the Board. The range and quality of services offered is impressive, and the delivery highly commendable.

6.1 Healthcare general

6.1.1 When observed by the Board, all new prisoners attended a healthcare/wellbeing induction during their first Friday. Here, medical needs are discussed, along with the process for obtaining prescribed medication.

6.1.2 All prisoners wishing to see a healthcare professional complete an application form, ticking off which one of the following is sought: nurse, dentist, optician, mental health (wellbeing), substance misuse (wellbeing), doctor, physiotherapist, podiatrist, HCA smoking cessation and weight management, and occupational therapist.

6.1.3 The resultant appointment slips are sent in good time. However, the percentage of those who fail to attend (FTA) has remained stubbornly high throughout this reporting period.

6.1.4 This is due to prisoners not cancelling appointments that clash with outside work and/or Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL)/Resettlement Overnight Release (ROR)/Resettlement Day Release (RDR).

6.1.5 For the month of September 2023, there were 1,405 appointments, with 203 FTAs (14.5%). Across the services provided, the highest FTA numbers were:

Area	Numbers missed	% FTA
Mental-health group therapies	16 out of 56	28.6
Advanced nurse practitioner	16 out of 79	20.3
Healthcare assistant	31 out of 159	19.5
General practitioner	19 out of 114	16.7
Dental clinic	15 out of 100	15.0
Nurse	47 out of 334	14.1
Mental-health practitioner	20 out of 151	13.2

6.1.6 Staffing levels have remained good throughout this reporting period and prisoner feedback forms have reported high levels of satisfaction with services received.

6.1.7 The Healthcare centre was subject to a Care Quality Commission inspection in May 2023, which it passed, with no adverse findings.

6.1.8 During this reporting period, the centre has struggled to retain the services of orderlies (trusted prisoners who take on work to provide services that contribute to the running of the prison).

6.2 Primary healthcare

6.2.1 During this reporting period, the centre has introduced a number of new initiatives, such as getting prisoners' vaccinations up to date (including those missed during childhood), and a process of cardiac assessment for all new prisoners as an additional preventive measure.

6.3 Mental health

6.3.1 The new neurodiversity support manager appears to be focused on the early identification of learning difficulties, but will also support those men with various neurodiverse needs. Currently, about 18% of prisoners fall into this category. See also 7.2.5.

6.4 Social care

6.4.1 The occupational therapist (OT) attends the prison twice weekly. During this reporting period, they were focused on assisting and supporting plans for some longer-term prisoners with physical needs who were preparing for release. This was achieved by suitable care in the community options on release being sought and used.

6.4.2 In addition, the OT seeks to prevent any issues escalating, including attending prisoners' places of work to resolve problems and, thereby, continuing their employment.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

6.5.1 Prisoners get three supervised gym sessions a week, have permanent outdoor gym equipment that can be used throughout the day, plus an indoor community hall where table top games can be played. During this reporting period, unlike previous years, there was a noticeable lack of outdoor group-sporting activities for prisoners, e.g. tennis, cricket and football. This was mostly due to unfilled vacancies for the role of suitably qualified staff to supervise these activities. There was some progress in recruiting new staff towards the end of the reporting year and it is positive that Ford is the first prison in the country to be trialling unsupervised football.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

6.6.1 During this reporting period, prisoners have been able to attend a number of active fellowship and support groups, including Alcoholics/Gamblers/Narcotics Anonymous. It is good to note that there is an integrated approach to treating drug/alcohol and mental health issues.

6.7 Health and wellbeing preparation for release

6.7.1 Prisoners appear to have good access to health and dental care, etc. It's important to help them continue to look after their health when they are released and the healthcare team do all they can to aid this. On being notified of a forthcoming prisoner's release, a pre-release check-list is completed, which includes:

- up-to-date blood pressure and weight readings
- finding out the prisoner's release address
- if not already registered with a local GP, providing them with a registration form and a list of local GPs
- a letter for the GP with the prison's healthcare centre contact details
- a printout summary of the prisoner's medical notes to give to the local GP
- a supply of at least two weeks' worth of medication to reduce any concerns about running out of medication until their first appointment with the local GP.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 General

At the end of the reporting year, there were 387 prisoners in Ford (capacity is 389). The table below sets out a typical day's split of activities these prisoners carry out. In summary, 195 prisoners were needed to run the prison, as kitchen staff, cleaners, orderlies, stores operatives, etc. Of the remaining 192, over 50 were engaged in training and education and 129 were involved with external work.

	Number	%
<i>Internal activities</i>		
Running the prison	195	50
On induction	8	2
Retired/ill health	2	Less than 1
English and maths courses	17	4
Chichester College of Construction, on-site workshops and DHL	18	5
<i>External training, education and employment</i>		
External work	129	33
Training/education/college	18	5
Total	387	100

7.2 Education, library

7.2.1 What is now better understood is the significant number of prisoners who arrive at Ford with a low level of maths and English literacy. Between 65% and 75% of prisoners are assessed as being below Level 2, i.e., below a GCSE C grade. In addition, only 44% of men arriving at Ford were in paid work before they entered the prison system. Together, these factors make Ford's role, which should be preparing men for release, much harder. It is the role of the closed estate to meet the basic education needs such as English and maths.

7.2.2 The provision at Ford of these core courses was rated good by HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) in its April 2023 report. We are pleased to report that 2023 has been a year of positive change and investment in education, much of which is intended to deliver a more joined-up approach and a greater focus on the men's successful resettlement on release. The Board is particularly encouraged by the leadership being shown in this key area of prison life and it is hoped that the evidence in 2024 will show a positive impact. The need for better measurement of this impact is a key component of the planning.

7.2.3 The all-important education induction is now two hours, with a clearer focus on Personal Learning Plans (PLPs). These provide a positive opportunity to agree a schedule of education activities for each prisoner. It was, therefore, disappointing to see a lack of resource being provided by the new contractor, CXK, for a period of over six months, exacerbated by the contractor not seeming to be held accountable for this. This resulted in significant delays in both creating PLPs, as well as holding the follow-up meetings. We were encouraged to hear of an intention to digitise the PLPs, which will promote a more joined-up approach to each prisoner's journey through Ford.

7.2.4 To simplify the offer and provide a better structure for the PLPs, education is being structured along three different pathways:

- induction and early days (up to 12 weeks)
- mainstream
- release and re-settlement.

All are important, but we note that the third one has the potential to make a real difference to the success of the release of prisoners.

7.2.5 The new neurodiversity support manager appears to be having an immediate impact, for example, picking up learning difficulties early on and so enabling appropriate personalised interventions to be put in place.

7.2.6 We note that the approach and commitment to education, including attendance at workshops, is undermined by appointments, such as the gym or healthcare, for example, being scheduled when the prisoners are in those sessions. It would be better if these could be scheduled in the many hours of downtime and so the Board is encouraged by plans to do just this.

7.2.7 The library is a well-resourced and popular facility at Ford.

7.3 Vocational training, work

7.3.1 One of the most important contributors to reducing reoffending is enabling prisoners to get paid work outside the prison. The experience and skills developed are invaluable and prisoners finish their sentence with cash in the bank. A third of the prisoners at Ford work outside of the prison daily – this figure was 129 at the reporting year end.

7.3.2 The new Prisoner Employment Lead (PEL) is starting to have a positive effect running jobs fairs that bring in local and national employers to engage with prisoners. The Board has observed that they have been very well attended and successful. The PEL was also instrumental in developing the idea of each prisoner having a Leaving Pack, with all paperwork they need post-release being in one place.

7.3.3 The Board, again, commends the staff at HMP Ford for their efforts and success in engaging with employers to offer jobs that improve the chances of employment after release. The high cost of travel, which prisoners have to bear, has meant some prisoners opting to work locally rather than in the area where they will go on release. Prisoners have expressed frustration at the difficulty in accessing self-sourced work (currently only three).

7.3.4 Chichester College School of Construction continues to be a real asset for Ford, offering qualifications in carpentry, painting and decorating, and bricklaying. One ex-prisoner has been working as a paid tutor in this area for a number of years, while a second man became a carpentry tutor prior to release.

7.3.5 There have been staff shortages in the on-site workshops, specifically waste management, land based activities and engineering, before the arrival of the second tutor. This has resulted in prisoners not being fully employed, which does not help to develop their work ethic. The workshops are:

- Engineering, which now has a second tutor and is offering a City & Guilds (C&G) Level 2 Welding course, as well as engaging with local engineering firms.
- Waste management, which currently does not offer any formal qualifications but plans to offer a WAMITAB (Waste Management Industry Training and Advisory Board) Level 1 Award in Waste and Recycling.
- The bicycle workshop, which offers a C&G Level 2 Cycle Mechanics qualification.

- Land based activities, which maintain the grounds, grow plants for Ford, other prisons and Government organisations. A shortage of staff has meant fewer prisoners employed. The infrastructure (water, heating and buildings) is very fragile. There is a lot of work to do to get the operation up to standard after a period of severe neglect. There is a full-time Chichester College horticultural tutor.

7.3.6 A new cleaning course has opened at Ford, which is offering WAMITAB qualifications. All prison cleaners now have to complete the course and their wages have been increased.

7.3.7 The Training kitchen has been closed since Covid and still remains closed.

7.3.8 Ford also offers paid working opportunities that are located on site:

- DHL runs a warehouse on site supplying several prisons. It is very disappointing that, despite being a large national company, DHL offers no formal qualifications and has never offered employment to Ford prisoners on release.
- An on-site café, Serving Thyme, employs prisoners who have achieved barista qualifications at Ford. It is open to the public and is very popular with locals.
- Inpress Plastics has a workshop on site, as well as a local factory that employs prisoners pre- and post-release.

7.3.9 Employment after release is considered in two ways:

- In the year to date, of the 130 men who were released, 39 (30%) were in work six weeks later
- Between April and October 2023, of the 93 men who reached the six-month post-release point, 71 (76%) were available for work; and, of those, 45 (63%) were in work. The target for this is 41%.

These numbers are not fully reliable depending, as they do, on reports from the overstretched probation services.

7.4 Offender management, progression

7.4.1 The Offender Assessment System (OASys) is used at Ford as the basis for sentence planning and is updated as prisoner needs are identified or change.

7.4.2 Unfortunately, as reported in previous years, problems continue in obtaining timely responses from community offender managers (COMs) and from police forces regarding background and other necessary checks prior to ROTL (release on temporary licence), ROR (resettlement overnight release), RDR (resettlement day release) and ETE (education, training and employment). These delays result in additional work for the OMU team in issuing reminders and chasing replies. It is a particular problem in London, where many Ford prisoners live on release. The situation has not improved since last year. The delays are a major source of frustration for prisoners.

7.4.3 From the Board's observations, flexibility and teamworking have enabled the OMU to cope with both absences through sickness and gaps whilst vacancies for probation officers are filled. By the end of the reporting year, there was one vacancy for a senior probation post which, it was anticipated, would be filled early in the new reporting year.

7.4.4 Last year the OMU reorganised to introduce the structure set out in the OMIC (Offender Management in Custody) model, with separate heads of offender management services and offender management delivery. In the Board's view, the new arrangements have worked well in the current reporting year.

The OMU holds weekly drop-in sessions where men can see their prison offender managers (POMs) without an appointment. This facility is popular with prisoners and has meant that there have been very few complaints from prisoners that they do not receive the contact they need. It is pleasing to note that HMIP reference this as best practice for other prisons.

7.4.5 Sentence plans are usually created by a previous prison prior to transfer to Ford. However, sentence plans are updated at Ford to address changing prisoner needs, usually with the addition of ROTL. Prisoners have a copy of their sentence plans and further copies are available when the original is misplaced.

7.4.6 Prisoners will normally have completed offender behaviour programmes prior to transfer to Ford. Nevertheless, the substance misuse and psychology teams at Ford run a variety of courses and interventions to address substance misuse and many psychological issues (e.g., stress, anxiety, emotional regulation, mood, sleeplessness and anger management), all of which can lead to offending behaviour. The psychology team is also a trauma-informed service (this acknowledges the need to understand a patient's life experiences in order to deliver effective care), which is beneficial.

Staff throughout the prison co-operate to identify prisoners with needs and ensure that the appropriate facilities and courses are offered. In the case of substance misuse, there is a monitoring system to ensure that prisoners do attend the necessary courses.

7.4.7 The prison has had both IPP (Indeterminate for Public Protection) and Lifers throughout the year. In October 2023, there were three IPP prisoners and 19 prisoners completing life sentences. Both categories receive enhanced-behaviour monitoring and additional psychological support. Two of the IPP prisoners will come to the end of their original sentences shortly and the third is 15 years over his original tariff.

Together with IMBs throughout the country, we continue to stress that IPP sentences are inhumane and should be removed from existing prisoners.

7.4.8 Preparation for parole takes place at Ford to ensure that prisoners have a full understanding of the process and that they are offered practical and emotional support throughout, particularly during the reconsideration period. During the reporting year, 16 parole hearings were scheduled, at which 14 led to the release of the prisoner.

7.4.9 As a category D prison, the safe use of ROTL, ROR and RDR are key to Ford being successful.

The reducing reoffending team deals regularly with prisoners who have a poor work ethic that leads some to fail in their work placement. Also, the general behaviour of some prisoners occasionally causes employers to withdraw from the prison's employment scheme. To address these problems, in October 2023 the reducing reoffending team introduced courses to better prepare prisoners to address the shortfalls in life skills and work ethic that cause these problems.

Some prisoners find that the Prisoner Earning Act deduction of 40% of earnings (levy), plus the increased cost of food and transport out of prison, mean that there can be little or, in some cases, no incentive to work. Prisoners can and, indeed, do apply successfully for the levy to be reduced by the Governor where appropriate.

Notwithstanding these substantial difficulties, the reducing reoffending team has succeeded in attracting new employers to replace those who have left and, for most of the reporting year, had between 120 and 130 prisoners regularly attending outside work. The Prison is to be congratulated on its success in this respect.

7.5 Family contact

7.5.1 The prison holds family days at key dates in the year, which are well received, and the normal social visits' system runs smoothly when they have been observed by the Board. There is consistent disappointment amongst many prisoners who arrive from the closed estate where they had in-cell phones. On arrival, they have to adjust to the situation at Ford, where there are phones in each wing/group of pods.

7.6 Resettlement planning

7.6.1 In previous years, POMS and Probation Officers have striven to minimise the number of prisoners who leave Ford without accommodation, which was challenging as various "through the gate" accommodation-finding facilities had ceased to be available. Usually, one prisoner a month, or sometimes two, left without accommodation. In this reporting year, six prisoners left without accommodation between 1 November 2022 and 28 February 2023. Between 1 March and 31 October, there were none.

During the reporting year, Ford began to receive access to accommodation funding from the Community Accommodation Service Tier 3 (CAS3; which provides temporary accommodation for up to 84 nights for homeless prisoner-leavers) and, occasionally, the long-planned assistance from a resettlement worker at Lewes Prison. In addition, the OMU reorganised systems to identify potential accommodation problems earlier in the release-planning process. All of these factors led to the success in finding accommodation for prisoners during the last eight months of the reporting year.

7.6.2 Where possible, particular care is taken to source accommodation close to a planned place of employment. However, as in the past, men have been unable to take up planned employment because they are accommodated too far away.

8. The work of the IMB

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	11

NB: three members of the Board are resigning in December 2023. Recruiting new members through the National Campaign in the autumn of 2023 is a priority.

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	1	1
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	5	3
C	Equality	0	1
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	1	1
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	3	0
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	0	1
F	Food and kitchens	3	0
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	2	1
H1	Property within the establishment	0	0
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	9	17
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	1	1
I	Sentence management, including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	12	11
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	1	0
K	Transfers	0	0
L	Miscellaneous	1	2
	Total number of applications	39	39



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