



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMYOI Werrington

**For reporting year
1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023**

Published February 2024



Contents

	Page
Introductory sections 1 – 3	
1. Statutory role of the IMB	3
2. Description of the establishment	4
3. Key points	6
Evidence sections 4 – 8	
4. Safety	8
5. Fair and humane treatment	10
6. Health and wellbeing	12
7. Education and training	13
8. Progression towards transfer or release	15
The work of the IMB	
Board statistics	16
Applications to the IMB	16

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

Introductory sections 1 – 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

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

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

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

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

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

2. Description of the establishment

HMYOI Werrington is a former industrial school in Staffordshire dating from 1868. Some of the original buildings are still in use, but accommodation is provided in more modern purpose-designed buildings. These are grouped into two units: Doulton and Denby. Doulton houses two wings, A and B; Denby houses C wing and the Welfare And Development Enhancement unit (WADE). Living accommodation is provided on A and B on two floors (landings), while C wing has the WADE rooms on the ground floor and Diamond and Induction rooms on the first floor. The layout reflects the adult estate; it is not child-friendly. Every young person is accommodated in a single occupancy room with an in-room toilet and phone socket. Toilet areas are screened from the observation window in the door by an approximately four-foot high partition. Rooms on B wing now have showers in the rooms and new, purpose-built furniture. A-wing rooms share three individual showers on each landing; redecoration and a more child-friendly environment has been created.

The WADE unit is used for young people who require greater support. In addition, two rooms are maintained to accommodate young people in need of separation for good order or disciplinary (GOoD) reasons (when they behave in a way that prison staff think would endanger other people or cause problems for the rest of the prison). When a young person is removed from regular accommodation, it is done under YOI Rule 49 (GOoD, as above, or for their own protection) or Rule 58 (while waiting to attend a disciplinary hearing for allegedly breaking prison rules), unless it is to the WADE unit. Young people separated under Rules 49 or 58 are now accommodated on A or B wings. The total capacity is 118¹ young people (boys aged 15 to 18 years), but for the first half of the reporting year the occupancy has been little more than about 50%, with an increase to 75% in the second half.

The three wings, A, B and C, each have a youth club room, with gaming activities, and a small exercise yard, which can be accessed by the young people during association (free time). There is an additional youth club in a separate building, away from the residential wings. A and B wings each have one outreach room allowing education or other activities, such as resettlement practitioner consultation, to take place.

Most education takes place in the old buildings, although the well-equipped gym, which has had showers fitted this year, is used for health education. There is a modern, well-equipped health centre. There is also a sports field, but poor drainage sometimes prevents use. During the reporting period, a multi-purpose Outdoor sports court has been built.

The rest of the original buildings are used for a chapel, the Vibe (a more relaxed classroom environment in which some education takes place) and for administration. The chapel was accommodated in ageing buildings, which have been extensively refurbished, allowing them to be used for different activities, and the Safeguarding building has been rebuilt. A new Board room has been built near to the kitchen block and the Barista has been upgraded and the library moved into this area.

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.

Construction has commenced on a new private housing estate to the west of the establishment boundary, which initially shared the prison drive.

The following areas of Werrington YOI are operated by external organisations:

- Education and purposeful activity: Novus (contract ended 30 November 2022); People Plus (from 1 December 2022) and a charity, Kinetic Youth
- Physical healthcare: Practice Plus Group
- Dental health: Time for Teeth
- Mental health/substance misuse support: Inclusion, which is run by the Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
- Estate management: Amey
- Moorlands Dog Rescue: Restart Dog Project ended on 31 August 2023

3. Key points

3.1 Main findings

Safety

- There were improvements in Conflict Resolution and Reducing Reoffending.
- Due to the number of serious incidents at height (IAH), which include young people on the netting, climbing over bars or on the roof, concerns were escalated to the Youth Custody Service (YCS) Executive Director in June 2023.
- There was a slight reduction in the total number of violent incidents, but it remains unstable.

Fair and humane treatment

- It has been reported to the Board that management shows it cares for the wellbeing of the young people.
- Time out of room has improved slightly but is still inadequate, especially at the weekends.

Health and wellbeing

- These continued to be good: the needs of the young people were met by the providers of physical and mental health.
- Confidential conversations are often impossible because young people cannot be unlocked and cannot be accommodated in a separate room where they can talk freely.

Education and training

- Educational provision is still inadequate due to curriculum and facilities' limitations, restricted regime, violence and "keep apart" (boys who are not allowed to mix in case they fight).
- The main library was closed for more than the reporting year, with a very limited service provided on the wings.

Progression towards transfer or release

- The resettlement process continues to be impressive, with practitioners working towards a positive discharge and transfer for young people.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- Is it safe to keep together a third of the establishment's population who are over 18 years old with two-thirds who are under 18?

TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

- Why was there no adequate social work cover for the maternity leave of a social worker and the sick leave of the senior social worker?

- With the increase in the cost of living, why hasn't the "Looked After Children" (a young person who was in the care of their local authority before custody) allowance been increased?
- Why has it taken so long to find a librarian to manage the long-closed library?

TO THE YOUTH CUSTODY SERVICE

- Why is there no nationally agreed, simple, annual data set available to assist in monitoring educational provision?
- Why is there such limited provision for supporting young people working towards GCSEs and other, higher qualifications within the education contract?

TO THE GOVERNOR

- Is there confidence that People Plus can meet the learning and curriculum needs of young people, including those who are above 18 years old?
- How can young people's hours out of room be returned to the previous healthy pre-pandemic levels so there is an increase in purposeful activity?
- What more can be done to enhance safety to ensure the reduction of young people making protective weapons?
- How can young people develop more positive relationships with the staff they see most of?
- How can the progress of a placement on the WADE unit of a young person who is not on Rule 49 be evaluated when no data can be found?

3.3 Response to the last report

Issue raised	Response given	Progress
Cost-effectiveness of Werrington YOI.	Nil.	N/A
Time out of room.	It would improve.	Limited
Officer-young person relationship.	It would improve.	Mixed
Officers' self-confidence.	The Youth Justice degree would improve self-esteem.	Limited
Werrington's profile as a school more than a prison.	Governor agreed and referred to a new contract.	None
Ability of the IMB to monitor R49 review process.	Agreed online monitoring by IMB could continue.	Poor

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

The Board was happy with the first night reception process for most of the reporting period. However, it was changed, with a wider range of officers profiled for reception, many of whom had no experience of it.

The induction of young people is of greater concern to the Board because of the lack of continuity, due to staffing and building and regime change. The Board is concerned that young people, probably new to custody, may get even less time out of room and less fresh air than those on the main wings.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

The Board was pleased to report a slight reduction in cases of self-harm to 36, and this was with an increase in occupancy. There were no recorded incidents of self-harm resulting in hospital attendance. There was a reduction in the number of Assessment of Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) plans (used to support prisoners who are at risk of self-harm and suicide), from 66 last year to 58 this year. However, in the reporting period, the Board continued to struggle to monitor ACCT plans and Rule 49 reviews (which consider authorising continued separation), because of timings and locations being changed at the last minute. This has been the case for several years and has been brought to the attention of the Deputy Governor at weekly meetings. As a result, Rule 49 reviews have had to be monitored online by the Board, with most Governors submitting them for Board monitoring.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

There has been a welcome reduction in the total number of violent incidents. The Board is pleased that the number of young person-on-young person assaults has reduced by almost a third. This is, amongst varied other strategies, due to an improvement in Conflict Resolution and Reducing Reoffending:

- 228 incidents, down from 273 in the previous year
- 113 assaults on staff, down from 134 (resulting in 10 staff requiring hospital attendance)
- 121 young person-on-young person assaults, down from 158 (of which 34 young people required hospital attendance).

However, there was an increase in fights, from 38 in the last reporting year, to 53 this year. There were 179 weapon finds, a large decrease, impacted by the new weapon reduction strategy. There was a total of 35 incidents of self-isolation, an increase on the previous year, when this figure was 28, agreed in last year's report.

The Board became alarmed by the number of serious incidents requiring assistance from the National Tactical Response Group (a specialist unit that deals with serious incidents), the majority being IAHs (with some even requiring specialist dogs and pyrotechnics - explosive devices that produce a flash of light and loud noise to temporarily distract prisoners). This culminated in June 2023, when the numbers peaked so sharply that the Board communicated with the IMB National Chair who forwarded these grave concerns to the Executive Director of the YCS.

4.4 Young people with specific vulnerabilities

The Board is pleased to note that, in the reporting year, 59% of an average population of 72 young people were supported by an Educational Healthcare Plan (EHCP) but is aware that not every young person with additional learning needs or special educational needs is given the support of an EHCP. The Board is also pleased that a new post has been created of Neurodiversity Support Manager in the latter part of the reporting period to address the needs of this large group of young people.

4.5 Use of force

It is commendable that the use of force has only increased by 2 in the reporting year. Some of these lasted an average time of more than five minutes. The Board notes that there has been a reduction in the number of PITs (pain-inducing techniques), from 7 to 4. In the reporting period, there has been a reduction in the number of trained negotiators from 6 to 4.

4.6 Substance misuse

Again, the Board has concerns, as the number of referrals to the substance misuse practitioner has increased to 141 from 110 in the previous reporting year. This is the third consecutive increase, year on year, and is reflective of problems out in the YOI community. However, the illicit use of drugs (cannabis only) in the establishment is not considered a problem by the prison.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

The Board is pleased to report some improvement in the time out of room for the young people. However, it is still poor, especially at the weekends. This is neither fair nor humane for young people.

Showers, now in the majority of rooms, telephones, furniture and laptops have all improved the humane treatment of young people. Improved wing furniture, an arcade room and some child-friendly decorations have also helped. However, all the wings and the grounds continue to look forbidding and institutionalised. The function of the WADE unit remains unclear: last year it was often used for accommodating young people with challenging behaviour. The Board has been told that its new title and function became the Respite and Reintegration unit towards the end of the reporting period; progress has yet to be found. The data for the number of young people on Rule 49 accommodated on the WADE unit is available but, unfortunately, the data for other children is not.

Young people continued to wear their own clothing, which enhanced their self-esteem. The food remained generally good, but the small breakfast portions were sometimes criticised by the young people.

5.2 Separation

During the reporting period there were 164 young people on Rule 49. However, there were 35 incidents of self-separation/isolation, an increase of 7 on the 28 of the previous year. This was a cause of concern for the Board, when self-isolated young people told us they did not feel safe or did not want to be involved in trouble. Those who self-isolated were monitored by the Board on a weekly basis.

The Board was pleased to note that the establishment has continued to maintain the brevity of time on Rule 49. There have been times when there has been no record of Healthcare or Governor visits but, otherwise, separated young people were regularly seen by other prison staff.

5.3 Staff and young people relationships

Sadly, the Board has rarely witnessed protracted conversations and/or warm communication between young people and officers. It continued to be difficult to see how meaningful communication through conversations could be achieved through locked doors. The only area where positive staff-young people relationships were observed by the Board on a daily basis was on the WADE unit.

The weekly student council was started but not continued, thus resulting in young people's voices not always being heard.

The Board was sorry to see the lack of visible progress in the implementation of Integrated Care (Secure Stairs) throughout the establishment.

5.4 Equality and diversity

The Board feels that those with protected characteristics (including, among others, race, religion, gender and sexual orientation, which it's unlawful to discriminate against) were let down because of a lack of governance. The fact that there were 64

DIRFS (Discrimination Incident Reporting Forms) in the reporting period reflects the real need for care of minority groups. Due to promotion and protracted sick leave, there was no effective management of Equality and Diversity in post in the last part of the reporting year.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The Board continues to admire the energy and compassion of this inclusive department. There was evidence of good pastoral care for young people who were experiencing bereavement and family problems. The chaplaincy has introduced a programme called “The Big Stretch” for young people serving life sentences, in which they met ex-offenders and other speakers. The department also provided social groups and activities for the young people.

5.6 Rewards and sanctions

The incentives scheme was revised at the end of the reporting year and is regularly reviewed. Young people were rewarded with laptops, Xboxes and TVs, but it was the removal of the televisions that hurt them most and highlighted the consequences of poor behaviour once demoted to the lowest level of the incentive scheme. However, many of the applications (young people’s written representations) to the Board reveal the young people’s misunderstanding of this system.

5.7 Complaints

The complaints process is used well, which suggests it has the young people’s confidence. In the reporting year, there were 303 complaints submitted by young people, 78 of which were upheld. Property and clothing were the main upheld complaints.

5.8 Property

During the reporting period, the distribution of young people’s property has increased to twice weekly, which has made it a more effective system.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

The Board continues to commend the work of physical, dental and mental health care departments.

6.2 Physical healthcare

The department is proactive in promoting preventative care in areas such as sexual health screening, for example.

6.3 Mental healthcare

The Board is aware of the continued and necessary presence at most Rule 49 reviews of a member of the mental healthcare team. The Board shares the concern of this team in not always being able to have face-to-face interactions with the young people.

6.4 Social care

This department has suffered from poor staffing in the reporting year, due to a maternity leave and long-term sick leave. The local authority provided some agency cover, but the resulting workload has had a significant impact on the remaining social worker. This was especially worrying, as it occurred during a year of disruption, violence and the extended stay of 18- and 19-year-old prisoners who are officially young adults.

The lack of staff in safeguarding/social work also led to poor oversight of child-protection paperwork. This may well have had damaging consequences for the most vulnerable young people.

6.5 Time out of room, regime

The Board has observed, and is pleased, that time out of room has slightly increased over the reporting year, although evenings and weekends remain unacceptably low. The continuing programme of providing of in-room showers has given the young people increased privacy and respect, but has lowered the total time out of room. The regime changed several times during the reporting year, but these alterations were not communicated consistently to the young people, which was an ongoing source of confusion and frustration for them.

6.6 Soft skills

The opportunities for improving such soft skills as leadership, participation and empathy were sadly lacking in the reporting period. Young people could not use the student councils for communicating their feeling and views, as in the previous year, as they were discontinued. The Restart dog-training project no longer exists.

However, Kinetic Youth (a charity that helps young people improve their lives) continued to provide a youth worker service to the young people and group work, which included a weekend provision. One Governor arranged talks on weapon use to foster confidence in an environment where fear abounds. This was also to show the dangerous impact of weapon use.

7. Education and training

7.1 Education

The Board recognises the delivery of education as one of the most important resettlement aspects of a YOI. Members of the Board regularly monitor classes and talk to young people and teachers.

A full HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) and Ofsted inspection in January 2022 rated education inadequate. The contract, with Novus for many years, was given to People Plus in December 2022, but the Board continued to rate education as very poor.

The education department is located in the oldest part of Werrington YOI. In the administrative area, it is a rabbit warren of small offices. Classrooms are drab and uninspiring. The Board has complained about this for many years.

This year the Board was pleased to see a return to full-time education following the pandemic, with young people attending classes both mornings and afternoons. The prison has tried hard but failed to sufficiently reduce “keep apart”, which has impacted on effective delivery of education.

In addition to functional English and maths, young people can choose useful vocational pathways, but there is very limited pathway for young people seeking academic challenge. A total of 247 qualifications were achieved in the reporting period, the majority of which were entry level or level 1. Results in Functional English were good, with a pass rate of 92% across all levels. Far fewer young people were entered for Functional Maths; even then, the pass rate was lower, at 62%.

The Board understands the challenges in delivering a wide-based curriculum to a very diverse and ever-changing group of young people. It believes the following issues still need addressing:

- **Meaningful education data:** this has been very difficult to obtain for several years, despite many requests from the Board.
- **Engagement:** a new and welcome policy to discourage young people from opting out of lessons has yet to be evaluated.
- **Continuity:** another new but unevaluated policy has allowed young people who are temporarily separated to remain on their allocated pathway.
- **Route movements:** the process of getting classes to and from education is risk-based to take accounts of “keep apart”; it is time-consuming and significantly reduces learning time. Free flow to education has yet to be achieved.
- **Separated young people:** provision of wing-based education is inadequate, sporadic and with insufficient face-to-face delivery.
- **Allocations:** figures for February to July 2023 indicate that 42% of young people do not receive their first or second choice of pathways, a source of frustration and consequent poor behaviour.
- **Behaviour:** low-level poor behaviour, such as swearing and inappropriate comments, are not always challenged by teachers or prison staff.

- **Class cancellations:** too many classes were cancelled because of the unavailability of prison or education staff: between February and July 23, the cancellation rate was 17%.
- **Security:** teaching staff do not always wear body-worn video cameras or radios. Some teaching staff tell the Board they do not always feel secure and that support from prison staff is too far away, even though classrooms are usually checked for safety.
- **More able young people:** whilst many of the boys have been out of mainstream education for some time, a number can achieve at a higher level. Support for these young people is extremely limited and lack of it can affect their life chances. In a recent case, a young person had hoped to complete a BTEC business course and the IMB was asked to assist him. The full response received from a senior education manager was: “We can’t deliver the BTEC here, because business studies as a course isn’t available at Werrington. At present, he is doing the painting and decorating course again.”

7.2 Library

The Board is very disappointed that young people cannot access books other than the tattered few on the wings. The situation has been ongoing for two years.

7.3 Vocational training

The Board is very disappointed that the Restart dog-training project has been cancelled. This was due to a serious incident in which the young people involved destroyed the training cabin. In the Board’s view, the lack of qualifications and the fact that, in the end, there was only one dog also explains why People Plus discontinued this valuable course last summer.

The Board is satisfied with the variety of vocational classes, however.

8. Progression towards transfer or release

8.1 Case management and progression

As last year, the Board commends the work of this team. Resettlement has continued to forge ahead and, working with HSBC, has set up bank accounts for young people prior to discharge. Prison money can now be transferred into the new account.

8.2 Family contact

The Board understands and commends the prison's emphasis on maintaining family contact with young people of 15-18 years old. The family-engagement manager continues to be effective in promoting interaction between young people and their family. Social video calls have decreased as the number of face-to-face visits has increased.

8.3 Resettlement planning

There has been improvement in the work with young people serving longer sentences. Groups are set up to meet with these prisoners before transfer: they communicate through supervised video and letters to young people about life in the adult estate and what to expect.

A total of 10 young people undertook 59 episodes of ROTL (Released on Temporary License) in the reporting year.

The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	12
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	6
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	7
Total number of visits to the establishment	269

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	0	9
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives schemes, sanctions	3	7
C	Equality	5	0
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	4	8
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	2	2
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	0	1
F	Food and kitchens	0	0
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	0	1
H1	Property within this establishment	3	2
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	1	0
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	0	1
I	Sentence management, including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	0	0
J	Staff-prisoner concerns, including bullying	9	12
K	Transfers	0	0
L	Miscellaneous	3	15
	Total number of applications	30	58



This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications>

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at imb@justice.gov.uk.