

Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP/YOI Eastwood Park

**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 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.

The IMB at Eastwood Park is committed to treating all those with whom it interacts with respect and fairness considering such factors as race, colour, ethnicity, religion, belief, national origin, sex, age, marital status, gender reassignment, sexual orientation or disability.

2. Description of the establishment

HMP/YOI Eastwood Park is a closed local prison for women. It is situated midway between Gloucester and Bristol, near the village of Falfield in South Gloucestershire.

Eastwood Park's operational capacity (the maximum number of prisoners that can be held without serious risk to safety, security, good order and the proper running of the planned regime) is currently 387¹ prisoners. This was reduced from 442 due to the temporary closure of one wing for remediation/refurbishment and the permanent closure of the first floor of another wing following fire-safety concerns. Ten cells in the Cherry Blossom Unit (CBU) have recently been included in the prison's operational capacity.

The table below shows the overall population and the breakdown of sentences:

Reporting year end: 31 October 2023	Total sentenced	Total on remand/ unsentenced	Sentenced to less than 12 months	Sentenced to between 12 months and 4 years	Sentenced to 4 years or more
2023 (387)	242	106	48	71	73
2022 (377)	246	94	46	72	73

There are currently 13 prisoners serving indeterminate sentences (these do not have a set release date but there will be a minimum time to be served, which is set by the court), the same as in 2022. The number of recalls (when a prisoner is returned to prison if they have been released on licence or parole and have broken the rules of their probation conditions), at 36, is slightly lower than the 40 recorded for the previous year.

Eastwood Park has 10 residential wings. They include a mother and baby unit (MBU), a wing dealing with prisoners with substance misuse, a wing for people with personality disorders, a wing for prisoners who are suitable for open conditions, a wing for prisoners with complex needs requiring significant mental health input (CBU) and four general population wings, plus a wing that is being refurbished.

The prison also takes remand and sentenced prisoners from local courts, covering a wide catchment area extending over south Wales, the south of England, the south west and the Midlands. Eastwood Park is the local prison for 77 courts. Around a third of its prisoners came from Wales during this reporting period.

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

References

- HMP Eastwood Park had an HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) inspection on 17-28 October 2022.
- HMIP Inspections Report: December 2022.
- The subsequent action plan was submitted on 24 February 2023.
- Report of an Independent Review of Progress by HMIP was held on 4-13 September 2023.
- The IMB was kept fully informed of the inspection at each stage, monitored some of the action plan meetings and attended discussions with HMIP on the Board's findings.

3.1 Main findings

Safety

- Positive recruitment strategies aimed to increase staff capacity (17.5% below target in January 2023). There were marked improvements towards the end of the reporting year - 5% below target in October.
- Compared to last year, self-harm had risen by 128%, with a small number of women contributing to a large proportion of incidents. A strategy to identify 'drivers' for self-harm was introduced and reasonable progress was noted by HMIP. An initiative was implemented to pilot safer razors to reduce the extent of self-inflicted cutting.
- Use of force had been used 395 times in the previous 12 months. This was considered very high in comparison with other women's prisons.
- By September 2023, good de-escalating techniques were reportedly being used effectively. Staff using body worn cameras (BWVC) had footage of 70% of incidents.

Fair and humane treatment

- An activity building opened in June 2023 providing workshops and much needed office space. They were not used to capacity.
- The CBU was completely refurbished. The bright environment, strategic review of therapeutic support and care planning resulted in an improvement for prisoners and staff.
- A high number of prisoners (approximately 40%) had been placed on Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) plans, used to support prisoners who are at risk of self-harm or suicide. Reasonable progress had been made to improve the quality of ACCTs. A robust quality assurance process took place with subsequent staff training; however, targets were not met.

Health and wellbeing

- There had been an excessive number of incidents of self-harm, as well as women with complex mental health needs. This placed pressure on the healthcare team.
- Time out of cell had been undermined by staff shortages. As the regime improved, women had time out to engage on and off the wing. Education, work, attendance at the library and gym gradually resumed.
- Prisoners who had been assessed for transfer to mental health hospital had to wait far too long for placements. In the reporting year, 46 referrals were made for transfer: 25 were transferred, 15 of whom transferred in 28 days or less (60%) and 10 transferred in excess of 28 days (40%). This was beyond the control of the prison management due to the lack of available spaces in mental health hospitals in the community.

Progression and resettlement

- There was investment in improving the physical space for social visits, which created a more welcoming and relaxing environment for children and prisoners. Social video calls continued throughout the reporting year.
- The One Women's Centre, a pilot project that aimed to co-ordinate resettlement support from different agencies, was unable to secure funding from April 2023 and ceased to function. This was unfortunate, as the project had great potential in the Board's view.
- The 'Visiting Mums' project, delivered by Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT), identified women who were at risk of losing contact with their children and offered valuable support to preserve and strengthen these vital family ties. There were credible plans for developing the Storybook Mums' provision, where prisoners can record bedtime stories on CD or DVD for their children.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- Women with mental health issues and complex needs would be better treated in the health system rather than the criminal justice system. Women with complex needs continue to have delays in transferring to a secure hospital. Are there plans to address this concern?
- Are there plans to improve probation services so that women with short sentences are not sent to prison but given community orders to prevent them losing their homes and families, as happens in many cases?
- Could additional support and funding be considered for prisoners on remand and with short sentences to offer them education and additional life skills in preparation for resettlement?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- The fluctuating staffing levels continue to have a detrimental impact on the prisoners' wellbeing and rehabilitation. Could the Prison Service reassure us that staffing concerns will be addressed when there are extreme pressures and demands put on the establishment?
- Is the expansion for HMP Eastwood Park still on course to be completed by 2025?
- HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is required to give clear guidance to all prisons to define the criteria for the Use of force. There is a need to distinguish between low-level guidance and more restraining techniques.

TO THE GOVERNOR

- The IMB noted the drive and effort made by leaders and management to respond positively to the HMCIP Report of February 2023.
- The Board is concerned about the provision for remand and short-sentence prisoners. Could this be reviewed to offer education and additional life skills in preparation for resettlement?
- When will the activities centre be fully utilised?

3.3 Response to the last report

Issue raised	Response given	Progress
<p>To the Minister We asked for progress in the development of the first residential women's centre.</p>	<p>It was confirmed that some funding had been made available.</p>	<p>It would appear that the Ministry of Justice was looking to locate a site in south Wales for a residential women's centre.</p>
<p>To the Prison Service and the Governor We were concerned that the new offender management unit and activities centre had again been delayed.</p>	<p>The project will commence in the 2021/22 financial year.</p>	<p>Building did commence in spring 2021 for completion in June 2022. Construction delays meant that this facility was not handed over until April 2023.</p>
<p>To the Prison Service We asked if there was to be a national needs' assessment of women prisoners' physical and mental health needs.</p>	<p>HMPPS told us there was a review commissioned aimed at improving health and wellbeing outcomes.</p>	<p>The review, which was originally due to report in December 2021, has been delayed. Published in November 2023.</p>
<p>To the Prison Service We drew attention to the large number of outstanding maintenance jobs, including dampness on residential unit 2.</p>	<p>Following a survey of residential unit 2, it was deemed to be unfit for habitation and was closed in July 2022. Tenders were obtained for dampness remediation and refurbishment works.</p>	<p>Funding was approved and works were due to be undertaken by January 2023. Due to delays in commencing these works, they are now not due for completion until April 2024.</p>

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

Board members observed prisoners in reception. The reception area was well tended, always clean and tidy. Staff were extremely helpful, calm and professional to those coming in. Time was taken to carefully explain all stages of the reception process and to make sure it had all been understood. The complexity of prisoners' respective needs was prioritised and, if necessary, an ACCT document was opened at that time. Due to the pressure on staffing levels at the beginning of the reporting year, inductions did not take place on a regular basis.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

At the start of the reporting period, the IMB was deeply concerned about the high number of self-harm incidents. In January, there were 502 incidents of self-harm, resulting in increased constant watches, some of which were managed in the general population. Staffing was at minimal level or below. Approximately 85% of the incidents were carried out by 19 prisoners who prolifically self-harm. The IMB Prisoners' Questionnaire, in March 2023 (see Annex B), revealed nearly 25% of participating prisoners felt unsafe and vulnerable.

In February, the number of self-harm incidents halved, which was attributable to a temporary reduction in women in the prison with complex mental health needs. By March, the regime began to normalise and self-harm numbers continued on a positive trend downwards. On 15/16 April, no self-harm incidents were recorded. There was a spike in July, of 114 incidents in a week, due to 14 prisoners who prolifically self-harmed, coupled with bullying incidents on two wings. In August, a new, improved regime was introduced, which had a positive impact, resulting in a significant reduction in self-harm.

There was a focus on establishing the drivers for self-harm, with prisoners being interviewed immediately after an incident and subsequently when more settled. The number of prisoners on ACCTs increased over the reporting year, with a peak of 52, which reflected the complex needs of the population. There was a general improvement in the quality of the ACCT documentation, but the Quality Assurance targets were not met. Whilst July saw the closure of the IMB helpline, the Samaritans continued supporting prisoners in conjunction with the Listener Scheme (where the Samaritans train prisoners to offer emotional support to fellow prisoners), which ran 24/7 whilst the restricted regime was in place. The Safer Custody Orderlies (SCOs are trusted prisoners who provide services that contribute to the running of the prison) were active and effective. The prison participated in a six month safer razor blade pilot. The incidents of cutting with razor blades declined, but the use of other methods increased.

The Board noted with sadness there were two deaths in custody during this reporting year.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

The elevated numbers of prisoners with complex mental health issues resulted in more prisoner-on-staff assaults due to non-compliance and challenging behaviour.

From January to September, there were a concerning 91 incidents of assaults on staff, of which three were serious. During one serious assault on an officer, a prisoner beneficially intervened. There were increased incidents of assault by spitting, notably in the 18-25 age cohort.

As the regime normalised and there was more time out of cell, there was an increase in prisoner-on-prisoner assaults. From January to September, there were 71 incidents, of which five were serious. The drivers for assaults were varied, including debt, drugs and bullying, according to prison management and observations by the Board. In September, Safer Custody Orderlies reported a rise in prisoner-on-prisoner bullying/fights that were not being picked up by staff, with debt being the main driver. The number of recorded prisoner fights in any month ranged from none recorded for August and September to five in May.

Strategies used to manage and reduce violence included challenge, support, and intervention plans (CSIP), a process used to support and manage prisoners who pose an increased risk of violence, along with the weekly multi-disciplinary Safety Intervention Meeting (SIM). The Early Days in Custody Project was introduced to give prisoners strategies to help them through their initial days in prison, comprising a rolling programme of quick interventions and coping mechanisms. Selected prisoners were given mediation training to help de-escalate violence. There was a drive to encourage more prisoners into education and purposeful activity to help reduce boredom and fractiousness. The mandatory use of BWVC helped de-escalate violence and protect staff.

4.4 Use of force

The instances of use of force (UoF) remained high. Last reporting year, we pointed out our concerns when there were 398 instances of UoF, and this reporting year it rose substantially, to 517. There were 48 instances of planned UoF (when all other avenues of persuasion have been exhausted), with the remaining 469 being unplanned (when staff need to intervene straightaway, because there is an immediate threat to someone's life or to the security of the prison). New measures introduced to identify the causes and help reduce instances of UoF made little impact to the overall numbers. A total of 14 prisoners were reported as having sustained injuries during an UoF incident, but none required outside hospitalisation. Eight members of staff reported receiving injuries during UoF, with one requiring outside hospitalisation.

The most common reasons for UoF were assault, fighting, non-compliance and the prevention of self-harm. A high proportion of UoF involved prisoners with mental health issues and many were attributable to a small number of prisoners. There were 38 UoF instances due to assaults on staff.

When the IMB monitored some planned and unplanned UoF incidents, the actions of staff were judged as proportionate and humane. Prisons are not equipped to deal with the level and nature of complexity arising from many of these cases. The IMB monitored weekly UoF meetings where BWVC and CCTV footage of incidents were reviewed. Incidents were assessed and learning points and good practice noted. Recorded incidents of good practice and de-escalation techniques were saved for training purposes.

There was an increase in the UoF incidents captured on BWVC or hand-held video cameras. Incidents recorded increased from 25% in February to over 90% in October. Staff were required to explain if footage was not available.

De-escalation training and rigid-bar handcuff (which restrict movement and can be more painful for the prisoner than other types of handcuffs) training was increased significantly.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

The IMB monitored the multi-disciplinary security group, which met monthly to review various aspects of security within Eastwood Park to maintain a safe, secure and decent custodial environment. All vehicles entering and leaving the prison were subject to intensive searches. The majority of women entering the prison were tested for drugs. Mandatory drug testing (MDT) targets were met. However, a variety of illicit drugs appeared to be available on some wings. Drug-detection dogs were deployed throughout the prison and in the visitors' centre. General correspondence to prisoners was photocopied and then distributed. In October 2023, 304 cards, photographs and letters were tested prior to issue, of which 11 verified positive for cocaine.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

Accommodation

The significant financial investment at Eastwood Park continued to improve the quality of buildings. The activity building was handed over in April 2023, opened in June 2023 and was fully operational in July 2023. The condition of the cells on the complex wing, CBU, were not fit for purpose and were completely refurbished. Following this, officers carried out weekly inspections and necessary repairs were made. Due to fire safety concerns, the first floor of residential unit 7 was closed at the beginning of November 2022. The ground floor continued to be used for prisoner accommodation. The number of outstanding minor maintenance jobs with Gov Facilities Services Limited (GFSL) remained at 181. Board members undertook random inspections of cells prepared in readiness for occupation. Those cells inspected indicated that an acceptable standard was maintained.

Clothing

The IMB received 46 applications (written representations prisoners submit to the Board) in the early part of this reporting year. As a result of ceasing the clothing voucher system, the number of applications reduced. There was a shortage of larger underwear sizes that gave rise to problems throughout the reporting year. Poor availability of chest binders (compression garments that flatten the chest to give those who identify as non-binary a more gender-neutral appearance) caused problems. Decency boxes of sanitary and toiletry supplies were installed on each wing. (See 5.8: Property)

Food

The food budget rose from £2.35/person/day to £2.70. There were 10 applications made to the IMB concerning food, with subjects ranging from special diets to the quantity and quality of food. The meals were high in carbohydrates and prisoners complained about increasing weight. From August, the hot main meals were provided in the evening, which was well received. Women were issued with pregnancy packs (containing additional food). Detox packs were stopped earlier in the year, causing concern among prisoners. General menus worked on a four-week cycle. The food-comment books were not always readily available. Specialist food was available for religious festivals and cultural celebrations. Deep-fat fryers were supplied, but the existing gas piping was not compatible with the fryers.

5.2 Segregation

Approximately 80% of segregations (where a prisoner is kept apart from the rest of the prison population) were authorised, following concerns for the safety of other people within the establishment: threats to, or assaults on, staff (59%); and threats to, or assaults on, other prisoners (27%).

If segregation for good order or discipline (GOoD; when a prisoner's behaviour endangers other people or disrupts the rest of the prison) was authorised, or cellular confinement (CC) awarded, prisoners were confined to their cells on their normal location, unless, for security or safety reasons, a wing move was indicated. Whenever possible during confinement, prisoners were allowed out of their cells for

a maximum of 1 hour per day, when the regime permitted. Some women on the wings expressed exasperation to the IMB when they were locked in whilst segregated prisoners were given their time out of cell.

In August, Eastwood Park moved to a new system where the segregating Governor decided, based on risk, whether a segregated woman would be unlocked with others. When the IMB was in the prison, they visited every segregated prisoner. The IMB was normally informed within 24 hours of a prisoner's confinement. Segregation paperwork was of an acceptable standard, and the review panels (where the prison determines if a prisoner should remain segregated) the Board observed were conducted well and with sensitivity. Segregation periods were normally between 1 and 28 days. There were no instances of more than 42 days.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key worker

Acute staff shortages made the delivery of even a restricted daily regime unreliable. This had a negative impact on prisoner-staff relationships. In May 2023, staffing was 110, with 24 vacancies. Staffing levels were at a minimum or below and so retention and recruiting of staff was a high priority. The IMB met the Governor in January 2023 to voice concerns about low staffing levels and the impact on the prisoners. The management team and operational staff did all they could with insufficient resources. Staff morale was the lowest the IMB had ever witnessed. Prisoners complained to the IMB that officers were inexperienced and the high turnover of staff meant they were unable to build trust and relationships with wing officers.

In the March IMB Questionnaire (see Annex B), a third of respondents were unhappy, stating that staff would not listen to them. The IMB received 28 applications relating to prisoner-staff relationships. There were repeated applications concerning treatment on a specific wing. The situation was resolved.

Key work quality and session numbers improved as staffing levels increased. Key work was delayed when staffing levels fell to ensure a full regime.

Throughout the reporting year, the IMB observed some excellent examples of officers handling challenging, unpredictable and violent prisoners in difficult situations with patience, humanity and compassion. In the IMB Survey, prisoners complimented several officers about their work and approachability.

5.4 Equality and diversity

As previously, there were a small number of applications relating to equality and diversity. This year, there were none on race, two on disability and access to wheelchairs, two relating to transgender issues, one about religious belief and access to services and one relating to the discrimination incident reporting form (DIRF) process.

During the year, the IMB scrutinised a sample of DIRFs. Overall, the process was timely, concerns investigated thoroughly and the response to the complainant respectful and fair. However, some DIRFs were over-time, the engagement with the complainant should have been better and there was a lack of clarity about the outcome. There were two cases where the responses to the complainants implied the complaints had been upheld, whereas it was clear from the documentation that they had not been upheld. (See 5.7)

Two checks of personal evacuation and emergency plans (PEEP) were undertaken on wings. On both occasions, the list of PEEP prisoners on the wing did not match the plans available and staff were unable to find the information. This could have been fatal in an emergency.

Eastwood Park followed the national policy on transgender prisoners in the prison estate. The IMB monitored meetings that were part of the decision-making process.

The quality of data available continued to be an issue, especially in being able to identify disproportionality. The capture of data on race and ethnicity was very good, but data capture on disability was too poor to rely on.

Towards the end of the reporting year, the focus on equality and diversity was being improved, with senior and middle managers taking on protected characteristics as a special focus. (It's unlawful to discriminate against people with protected characteristics, which include gender, age, race, religion, disability and sexual identity.)

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The chaplaincy team expanded with new Sikh, Buddhist and Pagan chaplains. When the regime was restricted, some prisoners were unable to attend services, as escorts were unavailable. The chaplaincy continued to provide much needed support for bereavement and other matters. They held a range of prayer, support and focus groups. Although Eid-al-Fitr was declared and notified to the prison in the agreed way by one of the Muslim chaplains, this was not passed on internally, with the result that there was confusion about the calling of Eid and catering for the festival was more ad hoc than it should have been. The notification process was changed to avoid a repetition.

At the end of the reporting year, regular Sunday services recorded 20-plus in attendance. In August, "The Stretch" group was set up by chaplaincy and the offender management unit (OMU). This was a forum where prisoners with long sentences discussed their specific concerns and needs.

5.6 Incentives schemes

January to April 2023 was challenging for both prisoners and staff in that many of the benefits of the incentives scheme could not be delivered, due to the restricted regime.

As staff numbers rose, the improved regime changes provided increased incentives scheme opportunities. There are three levels: Basic, Standard and Enhanced; and prisoners are rewarded for their behaviour with privileges. Most of the prisoners who were on Standard regime had more time out of cell and association time. They also saw the benefits of the scheme which, during the period of the restricted regime due to COVID, had virtually disappeared.

For those with Enhanced privilege status, the benefits were welcomed, as they had more time out of cell, increased association time, especially in the evenings, and a more equitable system across the prison. Evening association and access to the gym were well received. It was noted that the number of prisoners on Basic, which had previously been maintained at a low level and rarely exceeded five cases, had

increased to closer to 10 cases at any one time. The IMB received few applications regarding the incentives scheme.

5.7 Complaints

During the reporting year, the IMB monitored complaints on a number of occasions. A sample of over 10% of complaints was reviewed over several months. The following observations were fed back to senior managers in Eastwood Park. Nearly all complaints were dealt with inside the time limit. However, a lot of response letters were dated on the final day of the time limit, which was not a guarantee that prisoners would receive the responses within the limit. This improved when staffing levels improved. On some occasions, the response to the prisoner was unclear as to whether their complaint was upheld or not. The tone of the response letters was mostly respectful, clearly worded and helpful. This has improved since we first began to look at complaints. In many cases, the prisoners were spoken to face-to-face by the reviewer. There were examples of good practice, where the reviewer clearly took a problem-solving approach.

5.8 Property

The management and delivery of property, including clothing, to the prisoners worked well. During the reporting year, the IMB received 46 applications compared to 121 last year. New leadership and the end of the clothing voucher system, plus processes and attention to detail, turned around this area, in the Board's view. The processing of property worked efficiently. Of the applications received, many were due to impatience whilst a parcel was processed and lack of understanding of what items were allowed or not allowed and questions regarding property swaps. (See 5.1: Clothing).

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

Since October 2022 Practice Plus Group has been the primary provider, working in partnership with Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust (AWP), which was responsible for the delivery of mental health services and psycho-social substance misuse services, inclusive of the drug recovery community. This was known as Eastwood Park healthcare and included primary healthcare, social care, mental health and substance misuse services, dental, optical, audiology and X-ray services. Routine screening and vaccinations were not affected by Covid restrictions and were administered in line with the community. Prisoners were screened on admission and during their time at prison. During August 2023, the healthcare service and the prison undertook a high intensity test and treat programme for hepatitis C. The total number completed was 98.3% tested and a proportion of patients also started on treatment within 24 hours of testing.

There were 71 applications to the IMB for the reporting period. The main queries were waiting times to see GP/dental services and delays in receiving prescribed medication after reception. The IMB has not been generally concerned about waiting times for appointments.

6.2 Physical healthcare

There was a GP on site Monday to Thursday, from 8.30am to 9pm. There was no cover for Friday, Saturday and Sunday, which caused problems with prescribing medication. Pathways (the surgery) was open from 8.30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. All women, including those of no fixed abode (NFA), were released with medication and registered with a GP before leaving the prison.

Healthcare experienced extremely challenging issues this reporting period, with two deaths in custody (DIC) and a high-level of self-harm incidents. Healthcare staff were given reflective supervision to support them processing the after-effects of serious incidents and DICs.

6.2.1 Perinatal care and mother and baby unit

There were between three and seven mothers and babies on the MBU at any one time during the reporting year. Women were screened through reception and offered support when necessary. There was a total of 38 women in the perinatal cohort in October 2023. There were regular multidisciplinary planning and review meetings with staff and outside agencies. They aimed to identify and address gaps in services and ensure women and babies were safely cared for. A pregnancy contingency exercise was completed for an unexpected birth of a child in a larger wing of the prison. There was a positive outcome, with some minor lessons to be learned. There was a management focus on all wing officers to know which women in their care were pregnant and the appropriate response.

There were few IMB applications. However, one significant incident highlighted a poor-quality pregnancy test and the wider emotional and psychological harm a false positive caused for the woman involved. Those test kits were no longer used.

6.3 Mental health

Significant numbers of women with serious mental health issues were remanded to the prison. On occasions, those with the most serious mental health issues who refused medical treatment were placed in the CBU. The IMB had serious concerns about the conditions of the cells for these prisoners.

During the reporting year, there was determined progress to drive improvements to the material conditions of cells and shared spaces. There was a rigorous process for referrals and care planning whilst on the unit and active management attention to the detail of women's experiences and actions which made a difference to them.

Staff received better training and support, with therapeutic supervision available on a regular basis.

By October 2023, the environment and regime had improved considerably, and the unit had a much clearer purpose, with far more defensible admissions criteria.

There was a drive to assess and make referrals to specialist hospital provision as quickly as possible, but this was impeded by the shortage of hospital beds at various levels of security.

The commissioning team reviewed all referrals to NHS trusts. Between November 2022 and the end of October 2023, there were 46 referrals:

- 21 (46%) did not proceed to transfer
- 25 transferred, of which:
 - 15 were transferred in 28 days or less (60%) – 28 days is the statutory target.
 - 10 transferred in excess of 28 days (40%).

Recently, HMCIP suggested that about 40% of referrals were placed within the statutory guideline. The IMB agrees with HMCIP that there are better processes for monitoring, escalating and challenging health authorities over delays. But the prison mental health team does not control the community beds they need, and there is evidently a national shortage of provision. (See 6.7: Soft skills).

6.4 Social care

In October, there were 14 individual social care cases. Hospital beds and aids were provided as required. Some prisoners had up to three visits a day for support with washing dressing and practical care. Social care cases were discussed at the Safety Intervention Meeting (SIM) and Diversity and Equality Action Team (DEAT) meetings and the Governor overseeing Healthcare was informed.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

Time out of cell was extremely limited from October 2022 until January 2023, due to restricted staff numbers and a consistently high number of constant supervision and bed watches (where a prisoner is admitted to hospital for a least one night and is constantly observed for security purposes). Operational Stability Payment (OSP) and some detached duty was put in place to increase staff numbers and maximise the

regime. In January 2023, a new regime was put into practice that increased education, work, video social visits and other tasks. As staffing levels increased, a near normal regime returned, with a new core day being launched. This dramatically increased unlock time for women across the establishment. It also introduced unlock for women with Enhanced level status during the evening period. In August 2023 a new staff profile, shift pattern and full Regime Management Plan (RMP) was launched. When escorts (where a prisoner is escorted by security staff to attend hospital) were required in conjunction with constant supervisions and bed watches, the regime was curtailed. The regime was recorded daily and presented at the morning meeting to track and maximise outcomes.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

Many of the prisoners had complex health needs, often associated with the use of illicit drugs. They had access to the drug recovery community (DRC), an abstinence programme, that works with service users and their key workers prior to acceptance onto the programme. On completion, service users accessed support while on the outreach programme. Funding was provided by the Welsh Assembly and NHS England to treat prisoners who were dependent on the opioid Buprenorphine (a medicine used to treat dependence on opioid drugs). An autumn monthly total for releases and referrals to community providers showed: 45 released, 31 referred to structured providers, 10 referred to recovery support and four declined community referrals. September's random MDTs showed 5.26% positive for Buprenorphine (a synthetic opioid), and suspicion MDTs revealed 50% positive for Spice (a synthetic cannabinoid), Pregabalin (medication for epilepsy treatment but often used by people with substance-misuse problems) and Buprenorphine.

6.7 Soft skills

'Rubies', a group for women aged over 50, was very popular, met regularly and was well attended. They pursued various sewing and knitting activities, as well as peer discussions on issues related to older women prisoners. Health, mobility and sharing cells were popular topics. Due to building needs, the group lost its base room and associated equipment. There were ongoing requests for this facility to be expanded.

In addition, women were offered a greater range of positive activities: making music (Changing Tunes), art therapy, therapy dog visits, craft activities and visits to the gym and the library. These sessions were also available to women on CBU. (See 6.3: Mental health)

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

HMCIP Inspectors (HMCIP 2022/1.25) reported that low numbers of staff restricted the availability of escorts, resulting in 30% prisoner contact with education and activities. Education and activities took place from March 2023, when the regime facilitated. The Nomis tracking system (an internal computer system that records a prisoner's personal details, age group, length of sentence, movements, etc) was used to collate daily attendance data. This rapidly increased to 85% attendance.

Courses delivered included English entry, Levels 1 and 2 (pass rate of 91.5%); Maths entry, Levels 1 and 2 (pass rate of 89%); and Essential Digital Skills (pass rate of 95%).

From April 2023 there was a rise in the number of prisoners who arrived with very poor literacy skills (64, previously 34). Staff in education worked hard to deliver diagnostic screening and extend reading strategies.

In the reporting year, there were 56 distance learners, of which 24 completed their courses, 12 were in the process and the remainder had been released or transferred. There were three Open University learners. These distance learners had access to secure laptops.

The library was open, but prisoners' attendance was restricted by lack of operational staff. This slowly increased to around 64% of the prison population.

7.2 Vocational training, work

The new activities building opened in June 2023, offered classroom space for the theory components of the vocational courses and relieved pressure on education classrooms. Additional vocational short courses were explored:

Delivered vocational accredited courses (2023) achieved pass rates as follows: industrial cleaning (100%), hospitality, catering and food preparation (94%), IT user skills (100%) and nail art (ongoing). Success rates were very high for those completing courses, but transfer and/or release interrupted learning. Accreditation was being pursued for additional courses.

The Busy Bean Café operated in the visits' centre, providing training in catering, stock control and management skills.

A charity based in Bath (First Impressions) visited the prison monthly to help the women choose clothes for ROTL (Release on Temporary Licence) interviews and to practise interview techniques.

7.3 Offender management, progression

Earlier in the reporting year, low staff numbers restricted the number of key work sessions to below 10% of the target. From spring, there was a senior management team-led initiative to improve the coverage. There were occasions when over 90% of sessions in a day were completed. Having improved the coverage, the prison was beginning to focus on the quality of the sessions.

There were relatively few applications relating to offender management (15) and no specific trends.

In the reporting year, a total of 20 women had ROTL work placements. They were in construction companies, a conference centre, a recycling centre and one as a prison driver. Six women gained full time employment in their placements on release.

There were a couple of examples of prisoners being frustrated by the length of time it took to agree the ROTL.

In previous years we had reported on issues with the efficiency of the Home Detention Curfew (HDC) process. This year, only one prisoner raised an issue and that was about the decision rather than the process.

(See 5.3: Staff and prisoner relationships; and 7.2 Vocational training, work)

7.4 Family contact

Visits in-person and via video returned to normal levels during the year. Capacity built up to 12 visits per session, and two sessions on each of five afternoons a week. The visits' hall was re-carpeted. Sessional workers from Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT) supported the visits.

About 6% of applications to the IMB related to family contact directly, but there were some issues this reporting year with the national online booking system. The Visiting Mums scheme for Welsh prisoners continues to provide valuable support to maintain and develop family relationships. This did not extend to English prisoners.

PACT had some gaps and changes in staffing over the reporting year, reducing levels of support. However, the full-time social worker based in the prison offered advice and intensive support, when necessary, to mothers involved in family court proceedings concerning their children. PACT planned 11 Family Days (these are more relaxed and have fewer restrictions than regular social visits) throughout the year.

Some all-day contacts in the prison were supervised, to develop stronger mother-children's relationships, with a view to reunification post-release. ROTL enabled mothers to spend time with children in their family prior to release.

7.5 Resettlement planning

Finding accommodation for release continued to be the biggest challenge for the resettlement teams at Eastwood Park. During the reporting year, there was some short-term project funding that provided a tenancy course and two part-time housing specialists in the community. However, for short-term prisoners, including those on remand, there were very few options.

The absence of reliable and consistent data on the housing status of those released continued to frustrate the IMB's attempts to measure progress. Early in the reporting year, there was a plan to appoint a strategic housing specialist in the prison, but this was delayed due to recruitment issues and they eventually started in August. In addition, a strategic housing plan that was mentioned early in the year had still not been agreed by the end of the reporting year.

There was little progress in establishing help and advice on debt issues. From the Board's observations, Job Centre Plus continued to provide a good service in relation to benefits prior to release.

The One Woman Centre, officially opened in December 2022, aimed to replicate the aims of a community-based, one-stop shop for women within the prison. The project was popular amongst prisoners and women said how helpful it had been in helping them turn their lives around. Sadly, the funding, once again, was short term and the centre had to close in March 2023.

There were few interventions that focused specifically on reducing reoffending.

The Nelson Trust, PACT and a range of other community organisations continued to provide vital services, although uncertainties with funding were always in the background.

The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	14
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	9
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	11
Total number of visits to the establishment	391

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	37	53
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	6	6
C	Equality	7	6
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	13	13
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	43	25
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	13	8
F	Food and kitchens	17	10
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	66	71
H1	Property within the establishment	121	46
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	5	0
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	6	8
I	Sentence management, including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	12	15
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	45	28
K	Transfers	0	2
L	Miscellaneous	6	8
	Total number of applications	397	299

Annex A

List of service providers

- Building Maintenance: Gov Facilities Services Ltd
- Healthcare and pharmacy: Pathways, Inspire Better Health, Hanham Secure Health, Practice Plus Group
- Mental Health: Nexus, Avon and Wiltshire Partnership
- Social Care: South Gloucestershire Local Authority
- Substance misuse programme: Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust
- Education Provider: Weston College
- Escort contractor: Serco
- Visitors' centre: PACT
- Probation: HMPPS
- Library: South Gloucester Council
- Nelson Trust: commissioned rehabilitative services

Annex B

IMB Prisoners' Questionnaire, March 2023



Independent Monitoring Board,
HM Prison Eastwood Park,
Falfield,
Wotton-under-Edge,
South Gloucestershire.
GL12 8DB.

March 2023

We value your opinion and ask you to complete this survey which is being sent to all residents at Eastwood Park. Your reply will be anonymous. It would be helpful to know your Wing.

Should you have difficulty reading this, ask a friend to help.

I live on Residential Unit

Tick your answers:

1. How safe do you feel right now?



2. Can you talk to wing staff and do they listen to you?



3. Do you get enough time out of cell for exercise?



4. Are you getting to drug services/behaviour programmes (if you need them)?



5. Are you able to get distraction packs/education/library books?



6. Are you getting to meds/healthcare (if you need them)?



7. Do you have enough clothing/laundry/showers?



8. Have you enough to eat?



9. Can you get your post/telephone?



10. Have you access to virtual visits?



Write anything else you would like to say:

If you need to make an App to the IMB complete our yellow form and post in the IMB black box.



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