



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Forest Bank

**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

HMP/YOI Forest Bank is a privately run category B male prison (for those who do not require maximum security but for whom escape still needs to be made very difficult) in Manchester, which has been operated by Sodexo for over 20 years. Currently designated a reception and resettlement prison, it can hold up to 1470 men and young adults¹. The prison has three primary purposes: to receive those recently remanded in custody and hold them until their court appearances are concluded; to hold those who are serving short prison sentences; and to hold those requiring resettlement support as their release date approaches. Convicted men with time to serve would be expected to be allocated to training establishments elsewhere.

The establishment was originally opened in 2000, so the buildings are relatively modern in design and construction. There are eight residential house blocks with a total of 16 wings. There is a care and separation unit (CSU) that can house up to 25 residents. Until April 2023, the healthcare centre offered inpatient services, but it has now been classed as an outpatient centre, with the wing repurposed as a residential block. Other areas of the prison include an education centre with classrooms, a library and a computer suite. Facilities also include a chapel, a sports hall and an all-weather sports pitch. There is an industries wing comprising separate workshops, a reception centre, a visits' hall, an administration block and kitchens.

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

3. Key points

3.1 Main findings

Safety

- Over the reporting period, self-harm increased by 13%, levels of violence reduced by 5% and the use of force reduced by 14% when compared with the last report.
- Illicit items and contraband remain an issue at the prison, with more actions to be taken by the prison to address this finding.

Fair and humane treatment

- The Board continues to work with other IMBs to resolve property issues created by transfers between establishments. Missing property within the prison is also an ongoing issue, with prisoners regularly complaining to the Board that property goes missing when they are moved from their wing to the segregation unit (also known as the care and separation unit or CSU).
- It has been a concern to members of the Board that the segregation unit is sometimes used for long periods when a prisoner has severe mental health issues and it is not safe to house them elsewhere. This is often due to a long wait for transfers to NHS establishments, which appears to be an issue across the prison and healthcare sectors.
- The prison is now, for the first time, fully functioning as a reception prison. This function was not fully embedded pre- and during Covid. As such, pre-Covid comparisons are not like for like. Bed-watches (when a prisoner is admitted to hospital for a least one night and requires constant observation for security purposes) and external escorts (when a prisoner is escorted by security staff to attend hospital) are also certainly a factor, in the Board's view, and are associated with the new function of the prison. For example, in the quarter July to September 2023, the prison provided 12,000 bed-watch hours.
- Temporary Presumptive Recategorisation Scheme (TPRS) is an urgent measure designed to facilitate the presumptive recategorisation of prisoners from category C (who are considered low risk but cannot be trusted in an open prison) to category D (who present a low risk and can be reasonably trusted in open conditions) to make the best use of the prison estate. The introduction required immediate action planning. The roll out of the scheme began in March 2023 and was phased. It began in northwest and northeast prisons, with Forest Bank being one of the 10 prisons identified to 'go live' during phase 1. Prison Directors were instructed to prioritise this work to ensure that as many eligible category C prisoners as possible could be recategorised as category D and transferred to the appropriate establishment to create more space in reception prisons. Since its introduction in March 2023, Forest Bank has assessed over 170 prisoners using the criteria provided in the TPRS guidance, which is a resource-intensive process.

- End of Custody Supervised License (ECSL) is an administrative and operational scheme that enables the release of eligible prisoners up to 18 days in advance of their conditional release date. ECSL uses compassionate release powers to release prisoners and create essential prison capacity. The immediate objective was to reduce occupancy in the Reception prisons, Forest Bank being one. The scheme commenced on the 17 October 2023 and Forest Bank was one of 21 establishments identified to implement the scheme from the start. The prison has been running the scheme ever since which, again, is a very resource-intensive process across both the prison and the probation service. Since October, the prison has assessed 187 prisoners for release on ECSL and released 112 prisoners on ECSL.
- Operation Safeguard is the formal arrangement whereby police cells are made available to the Ministry of Justice to accommodate prisoners who cannot be held in prison. In May 2023, Operation Safeguard prisoners arrived in reception prisons before any current prisoners were moved to court, discharged or moved via inter-prison transfer. This essentially meant that Forest Bank temporarily held numbers above operational capacity.

Health and wellbeing

- The prison has undergone a change in healthcare provider, which appears positive, with prisoners able to access health and dental services in a professional and timely manner. Additionally, I wing (formerly healthcare) allows prisoners with additional needs to be supported in a smaller, quieter unit.

Progression and resettlement

- There has been a concerted effort in purposeful activity. However, average hours per week are still only 15.89 per prisoner – an increase of 0.25% from the last reporting period.
- In reference to education and training, the prison is not immune to the pressures that most reception and resettlement establishments experience, including length of prisoner stay, lack of prisoner engagement and limited opportunities to partner with external businesses.
- For prisoners who do engage in the prison education and industry opportunities offered, benefits can be seen. The education and vocational departments are well organised, and staff should be commended on their work. Although remand prisoners (those who are held in custody while they wait for their trial or sentencing) are not required to work or attend education, they receive the same curriculum offer as sentenced prisoners and are encouraged to get involved in work or education.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

What progress has been made to ensure prisoners in need of secure mental health facilities are transferred in a reasonable time frame?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

What further support can be given to assist the prison in managing the onward movement of prisoners who intentionally disrupt transfers and are not accepted on the normal transport of the receiving establishment?

TO THE GOVERNOR

Meaningful out of cell time remains a concern: what actions is the senior leadership team undertaking to address this?

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

With the prison's change of purpose now established, it can expect up to 30 new prisoners (both remanded and sentenced) daily from across the Northwest court system. All incoming prisoners pass through the reception area. New prisoners follow a thorough reception process before being situated on E wing.

The Director has stated the prison is allowed to retain several sentenced prisoners in order to act as Listeners (prisoners trained by the Samaritans to provide peer support), Insiders and other roles vital to the running of the prison. However, they are not exempt from transfers of prisoners.

E wing was established as an early days' centre, where first-time prisoners are inducted over a five-day timetable and repeat prisoners receive a fast-track, two-day version carried out by staff, Insiders, Listeners and members of the chaplaincy before they are settled into residential units.

Induction handbooks for non-English speaking foreign national prisoners, which are kept up to date in the ten most requested languages, can be printed by staff in reception as prisoners arrive. In addition to this, all prisoners and staff have access to the telephone language service, Big Word.

During the reporting period, the reception area has undergone cosmetic upgrades and the area is clean and well maintained. There is also a contraband amnesty bin, allowing all incoming prisoners to dispose of illicit items without further action being taken.

Overall, the reception area is operated well, with experienced, dedicated staff. However, it is impacted negatively when prisoners refuse to transfer willingly and require the agreement of the transport provider and receiving establishment to accept them under these circumstances. Reception is also affected by late evening and weekend arrivals.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

The safer custody team consists of a suicide and self-harm (SASH) training team leader, use of force co-ordinator, violence reduction lead and an analyst. The team reports to the head of safety and wellbeing. Self-harm has increased by 13% over the reporting period compared with the previous year; however, 14% of all self-harm is directly related to prisoners seeking to disrupt transfers.

The head of safer custody or the Director chairs a weekly safety intervention meeting (SIM) where managers proactively review the needs of the more complex cases and try to reduce the causes of both self-harm and violence.

Assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documents, which are used to support prisoners who are at risk of self-harm and suicide, continue to be operated throughout the establishment and daily figures are published on operational reports,

by wing. Both operational and non-operational staff are fully trained on how to open, comment and complete an ACCT book during their Sodexo induction.

ACCT reviews are undertaken on a weekly basis, where a determination will be made if the prisoners should remain on an ACCT book. This is chaired by a case co-ordinator and is attended by a representative from the mental health team, chaplaincy, family team and recovery and programmes teams.

Case co-ordinators receive training from the HMPPS in order to carry out these duties.

The safer custody team recruited and trained ten Listeners over the reporting period. There are plans to recruit an additional 15, due to undertake training in 2024, which would bring the total number of Listeners to 25 by the end of the reporting period. Several informal feedback sessions were held with the Samaritans-trained Listeners, who suggested the prison could improve on promoting their role. In response to this, the prison will ensure additional information is provided via the kiosks (a self-service computer system that allows prisoners to manage their daily affairs) on each wing for prisoners.

Summary of self-harm incidents:

- Over the reporting period, 130 reports of self-harm incidents were linked to preventing a prison transfer.
- Out of 956 incidents of self-harm, 543 have self-harmed more than once.
- Several prisoners have self-harmed consistently during their time in the prison over the reporting period.

Prisoner example	Number of self-harm incidents
Prisoner A	34
Prisoner B	33
Prisoner C	30
Prisoner D	27
Prisoner E	26

There were, regrettably, six deaths in custody during the reporting period. Four of these are currently being reviewed by the coroner, two of which were, apparently, due to natural causes.

Table 1: Levels of self-harm

2021-22	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Total
	76	89	83	70	61	78	75	85	130	104	65	49	965
2022-23	Nov-22	Dec-22	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	Total
	43	91	89	74	67	87	101	128	114	110	117	69	1090
% change	-43%	2%	7%	6%	10%	12%	35%	51%	-12%	6%	80%	41%	13%

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

Levels of violence remain high at Forest Bank, although they have fallen by 5% compared with the last reporting year.

Weekly safety intervention meetings (SIM) continue to oversee violence management interventions and address violent behaviour within custody. Safer custody also oversees the process of challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs) for the most violent prisoners, who are allocated a responsible manager who operates to a review timetable and agrees to any further actions.

The prison has a violence reduction policy through several different programmes and a new safeguarding policy for adult prisoners, including a referral process if required. The prison's CSIP self-assessment has now been signed off for successful CSIP implementation by HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). There is also a weapons amnesty, where a secure depository is circulated around the facility to remove dangerous and illicit weapons.

The prison has an established young adults' wing with selected staff and support services aimed at addressing the needs of this group. In addition to the above measures, an incentives scheme has been re-introduced.

The safer custody team has recruited two violence reduction representatives from the current population, with an additional number planned to be recruited over the next reporting period. These representatives have received informal training by the safer custody team and will work with fellow prisoners to address violence reduction.

Table 2: Levels of violence

2021-22	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Total
	47	59	52	52	52	53	53	62	50	79	68	53	680
2022-23	Nov-22	Dec-22	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	Total
	47	53	71	64	63	46	60	50	42	54	47	50	647
% Change	0%	-10%	37%	23%	21%	-13%	13%	-19%	-16%	-32%	-31%	-6%	-5%

4.4 Use of force

The trends for the use of force (UoF) are monitored by the safer custody team. Use of force was down 14% over the reporting period compared with the previous year.

A weekly use of force review meeting with other departments checks that the force used is lawful and compliant with policies. It also provides recognition for staff and identifies key learning points.

The roll out of the use of rigid-bar handcuffs (which restrict movement and can be more painful for prisoners than other types of handcuff) and training for all operational staff has been completed and the use of handcuffs is now recorded as UoF. There is an appointed UoF co-ordinator who monitors all relevant activity and provides support to staff, from initiation to completion of the paperwork. All UoF activity is recorded on the daily operational log.

Table 3: Levels of the use of force

2021-22	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Total
	123	113	91	97	110	91	90	66	76	97	62	88	1104
2022-23	Nov-22	Dec-22	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	Total
	76	58	98	66	78	95	120	91	45	83	70	70	950
% Change	-38%	-49%	8%	-32%	-29%	4%	33%	38%	-41%	-14%	13%	-20%	-14%

4.5 Preventing illicit items

The prison continues to take a proactive stance against contraband, focusing on the supply of drugs and illicit items, organised crime and staff corruption.

An intelligence-based approach is taken to address the rise in contraband and illicit items found to be smuggled into the prison by visitors and members of staff. All staff members are supported and trained in anti-corruption, as well as in professional standards. During their Sodexo induction, external operators given access to the prison and operational and non-operational staff are trained and encouraged to confidentially report any concerns over illicit items or staff corruption using intelligence reports.

Various measures have been introduced to improve the overall security and good order of the prison. The prison has installed additional netting over the exercise yards up to the roof, making it harder for associates of prisoners to throw over contraband from the adjoining parkland in which the prison sits. This follows the first set of measures taken of fitting new, improved windows, making it significantly harder for prisoners to retrieve 'throwovers'. On occasion, the prison will undertake sniffer dog operations at times in conjunction with Greater Manchester Police.

The Board would like to commend the Director and the senior leadership team for the action taken to reduce the frequency of 'throwovers' and drones used to drop illicit items into the prison from outside. However, contraband and illicit items appear to still be entering the prison through other avenues.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

The main residential section of the prison comprises wings A to F, in addition to wings G and H, also known as the Eden Unit. All wings have undergone some work throughout the reporting year to raise the standards of decency and help prevent access to contraband.

The windows on G and H wings have been updated and the showers on all wings have been refurbished to include built-in privacy screens and new air-extraction units. The laundry rooms on each wing have been updated to include extra drying facilities. Overall, the communal areas on wings are found to be generally clean and tidy when monitored by the IMB. The prison employed a selection of prisoners in the role of decency peer support workers to maintain the upkeep of the wings in the previous reporting year, which seemed to work well. However, the rate of prisoner churn means that servicing these, together with other critical posts, is a challenge. Where standalone posts are not filled, the work is wrapped into that of the wing orderlies (trusted prisoners who take on work to provide services that contribute to the running of the prison).

Prisoners can choose to eat communally or in their cells. The IMB received three applications about concerns relating to kitchens and food in this reporting period. This was a decrease from six applications in the previous reporting period. Kitchens are monitored regularly by the IMB, as are wing serveries. The prison displays all nutritional information about food for all individuals, including staff. This information can be accessed on the wing digital kiosks and is available on the printed menu in the dining area. Menus are now changed seasonally, aiming to provide balance and diversity to meal choices. Menus are influenced by the results of prisoner surveys. The allowance for food for each prisoner has increased slightly to allow for the increase in the cost of supplies. The kitchens support a diverse range of religious and cultural festivals, as well as providing several daily choices for vegetarians, vegans and for religious and special dietary requirements.

Prisoners who come into custody with no belongings can be given prison-issue clothing. All prisoners can request underwear and socks at any time. In addition, prisoners can buy clothing through the kiosk at any time.

5.2 Segregation

The care and segregation unit (CSU) comprises 27 cells, with an additional constant observation cell, a meeting room and two specialist cells. There are two showers, a wing servery and two designated exercise yards. When the Board has observed the CSU, it is usually found to be clean, tidy and well managed. The showers have been part of the refurbishment programme and now have a privacy cubicle. Rounds are carried out daily by managers, chaplaincy and the health department, which includes doctors, nurses and mental health support staff. The Board observes adjudications (a disciplinary hearing when a prisoner is alleged to have broken prison rules) and Good Order or Discipline (GOoD) reviews (where the prison determines if the prisoner should remain segregated) and can report, in its experience, that

procedures are usually carried out correctly. The focus around prisoner decency is rightly continued to the CSU. Each day, prisoners have time to clean their cells, use the phone, shower and exercise, although the exercise yard is very small, bare and has no equipment.

From observations, the Board believes there is a trend where men reside on the unit because they want to be transferred out of the establishment due to not wanting to reside on the wings at Forest Bank. This causes 'bed blocking' on the CSU, because it is very difficult to get a prisoner transferred to another establishment whilst they are on segregation. It has been a concern to Board members that the CSU is sometimes used to house a prisoner with severe mental health issues for long periods when it is not safe to house them elsewhere. This is often due to a long wait for transfer to an NHS establishment, which appears to be an issue across the prison and healthcare sectors. Many prisoners tell the Board that they value the staff in CSU and they feel they are treated well and with respect.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

The staff-prisoner relationship continues to be positive overall: prisoners appear to have good relationships with gym staff, chaplaincy, kitchen and workshop staff. The prison has a 'key worker' scheme, whereby a prisoner is allocated a key worker and has sessions with them regularly. Each session should take place weekly for 45 minutes. The time frame includes supporting the prisoner in several areas, including self-harm, relationships, mental health and education and includes a write-up. However, when the Board asked several prisoners about key work, they either could not identify who their key worker was or could not recall their last session.

The establishment has a target of 969 key work sessions to complete each week; however, on average, only 30% are completed, which equates to 290 sessions.

Priority groups include anyone on an open assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) book (used to support prisoners who are at risk of self-harm and suicide), those post closure of an ACCT, those residing on CSU, those residing on I wing (formerly healthcare inpatients), IPP (Imprisonment for Public Protection) prisoners, prisoners with four weeks left to serve, those on a CSIPs, TACT prisoners (those convicted of terrorism) and sentenced young offenders.

5.4 Equality and diversity

The Diversity and Inclusion Action Team (DIAT), with its dedicated manager, has continued to make all staff and prisoners aware of Sodexo's policy on diversity and inclusion. It also works hard, in the Board's view, to ensure that any individual's special needs, such as getting reading glasses, a hearing aid or accessible transport, is catered for.

During the reporting period, DIAT had monthly awareness themes across the prison for numerous communities, including LGBTQ+, transgender, International Women's Day, stress, Gypsy, Roma and Travellers, the over 50s, learning disabilities and black history. It also holds a one-to-one surgery, often daily, with prisoners who request it. As a result, 83 prisoners were placed on Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs), which provides people who cannot get themselves out of a building

unaided with the necessary information and assistance to be able to manage their escape to a place of safety. Prisoners with self-declared learning difficulties were subsequently referred to the education team for further support. The team works closely with the co-ordinator for foreign national prisoners. Overall, 1,204 prisoners declared either on induction or during the reporting year that they wanted to be flagged as needing support. There was a total of 100 Discrimination Incident Report Forms (DIRFs) handed in by prisoners. This was up from 47 in the previous reporting year.

The prison has a dedicated foreign national prisoner co-ordinator who, in the Board's view, provides good support and runs a fortnightly surgery alongside immigration officers from the Home Office. Interpretation services were used, as well as bilingual staff, for example, for key work sessions. However, some prisoners struggled with everyday tasks, such as making applications through the kiosk. Social video calling facilities for foreign national prisoners were available, but the uptake was low, even though the prison had made significant efforts to advertise the service in different languages.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The chaplaincy team at Forest Bank continues to deliver its services to the prisoners and staff as stated in the prison service instructions (PSIs) and prison service orders (PSOs) to a remarkably high standard, in the Board's view.

All statutory duties have been carried out (seeing new inductions, completing CSU and healthcare rounds daily). This is in addition to visiting all prisoners on ACCT books at least once a week and visiting all prisoners two to three weeks prior to their release date, ensuring they are prepared for release and, in some cases, referring them to outside agencies and partners for support with various services.

The chaplaincy team also responds to a daily average of 40 applications from prisoners requesting to see a chaplain for several reasons. This is one of the main duties of chaplains and takes a sizeable portion of their time. It is considered vital to the wellbeing of the residents, as it resolves many problems and eventually helps reduce violence and frustration amongst residents.

Corporate worship and religious classes are all well attended and well-liked by prisoners. The chaplaincy continues to collaborate with the Samaritans and has facilitated the training of new Listeners. The chaplaincy continues to collaborate with community organisations delivering various support for prisoners. These include: The Message Trust, The Prison Fellowship, The Phoenix Trust (Yoga), Alcoholics Anonymous, The Lighthouse Church and Mothers' Union.

In addition, the chaplaincy has signed an SLA (service level agreement) with Cruse Bereavement Services, which has resulted in a bereavement counsellor coming into the prison weekly for one-to-one sessions with prisoners. This service was much needed and is becoming popular, with up to 30 prisoners on the waiting list.

The chaplaincy continues to receive weekly resources from chaplaincy HQ faith advisors, which are distributed weekly to residents according to their faith, and specific faith broadcasts on national prison radio and Wayout TV.

Funeral escorts and visiting dying relatives have also resumed as to pre-Covid levels: prisoners are now able to attend funerals and visit dying relatives, provided they are security cleared and risk assessed.

The chaplaincy team continues to be positively involved with staff and residents' morale, and is an integral part of the work conducted at Forest Bank.

5.6 Complaints

There has been, during the reporting period, a total number of 3,360 formal complaints from prisoners. This total is made up of 3,069 Comp 1s (ordinary complaints), 227 Comp 1As (appeals) and 64 confidential-access complaints. This compares with last year's figures of a total of 3,512 complaints, made up of 3,147 Comp 1s, 257 Comp 1As and 81 confidential-access complaints.

5.7 Property

Property parcels are delivered in person at the prison and prisoners have a 28-day window to receive property when they first arrive at the establishment. After this, the window closes and prisoners can refresh their property by exchanging like-for-like items. Prisoners are also entitled to apply for seasonal property every 12 months. Prisoners can request property or ask for any property-related support via the kiosks on the wings. During the reporting period, staff have been detailed to get the property from the gatehouse to reception. However, due to staff pressure from the high level of court traffic (often late), this can hold up the process of issuing the property from reception to the wings.

The Board continues to work with other IMBs to resolve property issues created by transfers. Missing property within the prison is also an ongoing issue, with regular complaints from prisoners that property goes missing when they are moved from their wing to the segregation unit.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

The unit treats both physical and mental health needs. On arrival at the establishment, the prisoner receives an initial health screening, which is completed by a registered general nurse from the primary care team. This is followed by a secondary health screening, completed by a nurse, within seven days of the individual's arrival at the prison.

The healthcare provision transitioned to a new provider (Spectrum) in April 2023 for primary care and clinical substance misuse services. Non-clinical recovery is now provided by the charity, Change, Grow, Live. There is no longer a commissioned inpatient unit. This area is now called I-wing and is an operationally lead residential unit. Healthcare currently offers the following services:

- Reception and secondary screening
- Emergency care
- Primary care service
- Substance misuse service
- Triage
- Primary mental health
- Secondary mental health

Access to healthcare services has improved with the use of the kiosk, where prisoners can now self-refer to triage, vaccinations, mental health, physiotherapy, podiatry and other healthcare services. There is also a healthcare enquiries' application on the kiosk so prisoners can enquire about any outstanding appointments. Over the next reporting period, the healthcare provider plans to run regular long-term health conditions and sexual health clinics.

6.2 Physical healthcare

The healthcare team continues to offer treatment and advice through appointments booked by residents using the kiosk system. A triage system is also offered daily from Monday to Friday. There are long waiting times for external healthcare appointments, as well as for dental appointments in the prison.

6.3 Mental health

The primary mental health team continues to offer assessment and support to residents with common mental health disorders and the secondary mental health team (In-reach) continues to offer a service to address severe and long-term mental health needs.

The primary mental health team is involved in lots of operational processes to ensure compliance in ACCT review attendance, CSU safety assessments and contributions to rule 45 GOOD reviews (where a prisoner has been kept apart – segregated – from other prisoners due to disruptive behaviour), along with providing urgent assessments of high-risk mental health needs for those residents in crisis and who may self-harm. In addition to the daily provision of mental health review for those

with escalating need, the primary mental health team offers a routine triage. Part of the primary mental health provision includes the psychological wellbeing service, which provides low-intensity, psychologically informed interventions to help residents self-manage symptoms of anxiety and stress, sleep problems and common mental health issues that being in custody may cause.

Interventions are delivered face-to-face and self-help packs developed by the psychological wellbeing service, incorporating self-help material, are available, as is generic and general mental health and wellbeing support.

In addition to the case management of residents with severe and long-term mental health needs, working within the care programme approach (CPA) framework, the In-reach team provides case management for learning disabilities and other neurodivergent conditions (i.e. autism spectrum disorder and ADHD), as well as acquired brain injury. The team also has responsibility for co-ordinating hospital transfers under the Mental Health Act and remissions from care settings back into the prison estate. A high level of multi-agency working is required within the secondary mental health team, and this includes involvement in multi-agency public protection arrangements' (MAPPA) meetings, pathfinders and the prison's inter-departmental risk management meetings.

Service delivery within the integrated mental health team has continued to take place on the residential wings. The in-cell telephony is a useful facility for the mental health team to contact residents who do not necessarily require a face-to-face review. Post-Covid restrictions, once healthcare clinics are fully resumed, the primary mental health triage clinic will once again take place in healthcare rather than via in-cell telephony or on the residential wings.

There is also a visiting psychiatry service, which attends the prison on a sessional basis and input is provided to both primary and secondary mental health cases to inform treatment and risk management. These appointments take place on the residential wings.

6.4 Social care

The prison works closely with the local authority, and the new resettlement partner, Ingeus, will take over the running of the original Shelter contract. Many specialist agencies work with the staff to deliver services and it is very encouraging to note that local industries are taking a much more active role in working with the prison. The prison delivers a wide range of services that are aimed at giving the best possible outcomes for residents.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

Healthcare, now I wing, is considered a resident unit and follows the same regime as other wings in the prison.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

In terms of delivery against the agreed strategy over the reporting period, the prison has delivered the following key elements of the service for clients within the integrated substance misuse service (ISMS):

- All new receptions are seen by the ISMS team, inclusive of first night prescribing. The ISMS service offers a non-medical prescribing (NMP) provision, in addition to the first night prescribing model.
- All new substance misuse prisoners are observed twice-daily by a nurse during a stabilisation period to ensure safety and they are reviewed on the 5th and 28th day of their sentence by a clinical and psychosocial ISMS team member to enable staff to update care plans.
- Prescribed substance misuse clients are located on the substance misuse wings for continuation of care, and work on a one-to-one basis with the psychosocial team every four weeks to address their needs and work on their care plan objectives.
- Each of the four ISMS wings has a named ISMS healthcare assistant (HCA) for a single point of contact.
- Prisoners who have a positive mandatory drug test (MDT) or are reported as under the influence on the daily occurrence log are seen by the ISMS duty worker or sent a referral letter for the service.
- Mental health nurses in the ISMS team support those with complex care needs.
- Smoking cessation support is offered by the team, as are alcohol awareness sessions.
- The special interest general practitioner (GPSI) visits once weekly, reviews all substance misuse residents at the 13-week point, and reviews any complex cases.
- All ISMS prisoners are release-planned six weeks prior to release and then provided with release appointments for continuity of care on release. This also includes non-prescribed clients.
- The ISMS service has four dedicated ISMS facilitators assisting on the recovery units. They are providing group work (according to the PSI) and react to current drug trends in terms of harm reduction and relapse prevention.

6.7 Soft skills

In the Board's view, the staff within the healthcare department work hard to provide a caring, empathic atmosphere.

7. Progression and resettlement

There has been a concerted effort in purposeful activity. However, average hours per week are still only 15.89 per prisoner – an increase of 0.25% from the last reporting period.

7.1 Education, library

Forest Bank currently operates a full suite of education and library services. With the high turnover of prisoners, 80% staying less than eight weeks and 80% being transferred to other prisons, several areas have changed since the last reporting period.

- A new Head of Education Work and Skills has been appointed.
- Prisoners are screened beforehand for learning disabilities and the allocation of places was found to be very fair by the Board.
- Local pay policies have been reviewed.
- Local pay rates have increased for roles undertaken on the wings.
- Prisoners who do undertake the accredited courses are now able to continue their studies when they are transferred.
- The prison has appointed a horticulture instructor, and an arts and craft instructor will be joining the teaching staff.
- Teacher recruitment remains a challenge.

A requirement for prison employment means prisoners must pass a literacy and numeracy Entry Level 3 test. The basis of this is to ensure all health, food and safety courses can be understood. An initial assessment is conducted by the education team to ensure prisoners are in the correct class for the reading and numeracy standard. The education department also offers ESOL for foreign national prisoners. Education for vulnerable prisoners takes place on D wing, utilising purpose-built classrooms.

During the report period, 62% of prisoners had a reading age of 11 or lower on an initial assessment.

The education team encountered several challenges, not dissimilar to other reception and resettlement prisoners within the prison estate. These included an increasing number of organised gang members within the prison population, a high churn of prisoners, changes in regime and prisoner discipline. The Board commends the education team for acknowledging and resolving issues, where possible, to offer a good standard of education.

A member of the Board attended an Entry Level 3 literacy class. It was observed that this class was organised, well-run and achieved the lesson objectives.

The prison provides Open University classes for sentenced prisoners, and there is access to evening library for vulnerable prisoners. It is not unusual for the education team to provide adequate in-cell materials and support for prisoners unable to attend an education session.

A comprehensive reading strategy, launched in February 2023, has instigated early assessment of prisoners' reading skills, including those with additional needs. Reading is promoted by all staff and selected prisoners.

Suitable and diverse books, newspapers and publication stocks are kept up to date. Books can be obtained through the kiosk on each wing by those who cannot attend the library.

7.2 Vocational training, work

The average attendance over the reporting period for those prisoners working in industries was 100 prisoners daily. At the end of the reporting period, there were 140 places available.

A pre-requirement of this work is a qualification in entry level numeracy and literacy Level 3.

Within the Industries area is the employment hub, where prisoners have access to the job centre, in addition to the housing and employment teams. The aims of this area are to improve outcomes for released prisoners to capitalise on education and training achievements.

Two workshops are run daily for vulnerable prisoners. Staff are undertaking instructor level training to improve the quality of courses. The prison offers the following courses:

- Food hygiene
- Warehousing
- Recycling (co-ordinated with HMP Risley)
- Carbon literacy, with the intent to include cycle repair and refurbishment.

In conjunction with the library team, Brew, Break and Books is a reading initiative co-run with the library.

The prison provides several prison-accredited courses for prisoners:

- Level Two award in recycling
- Level One award in practical cleaning (bodily fluids, food areas, buffing)
- Level One award certificate in warehousing and storage
- Level One cleaning principles
- Level One serverly operative
- Level Two health and safety.

The prison is not immune to the pressures that most reception and resettlement establishments experience. These include length of prisoner stay, lack of prisoner engagement and limited opportunities to partner with external businesses.

For prisoners who do engage in the prison education and industry opportunities offered, benefits can be seen. In the view of the Board, the education and vocational departments are well organised, and staff should be commended on their work. Unlike sentenced prisoners, remanded prisoners are not required to enter work or education.

7.3 Offender management, progression

The role of the offender management unit (OMU) has evolved greatly, mainly since Covid:

- Prison staff deliver the initial part of a prisoner's recall pack face to face. (Recall packs are given when a prisoner released on licence or parole is returned to prison because they have broken the conditions of their community licence.)
- The legal and bail service also liaises closely with the courts in relation to bail applications.
- To prepare prisoners for transition on release, OMU facilitates regular surgeries, including Approved Premises (probation hostels) so they can ensure they meet prisoners' criteria.
- OMU also facilitates monthly cohort Spotlight/Integrated Offender Management (IOM) pre-release surgeries for prisoners due for release back to their local areas within Greater Manchester.
- Prison staff (POMs) are responsible for the completion of Offender Assessments for those assessed as posing a low or medium risk of harm to the public who have ten months or more to serve in custody. If it is less than ten months, it is the responsibility of the Community Offender Manager (COM) to complete the Offender Assessment and set sentence planning targets.
- The Thinking Skills Programme (TSP) is delivered on G and H wings once the Offender Assessment System (OASYS) has been completed. Prisoners need to be eligible for the TSP.

The OMU is staffed by 12 POMS and five probation staff, who focus on the support and risk management of all sentenced and multi-agency public protection arrangements' (MAPPA) level 2/3 prisoners. They work closely with probation services and/or the police and other stakeholders to ensure effective risk management and robust pre-release planning.

7.4 Family contact

The prison offers a robust visits' programme. New prisoners' visits account for 300 – 450 visits per month. New prisoners can book social visits within seven days of their arrival at Forest Bank. The Families Team is also a presence in the visits' centre, offering advice and information for people visiting the establishment.

The Families Team offers a range of interventions, including extended visits and initiatives aimed at promoting and maintaining relationships, where possible, such as Family Days (which bring together prisoners and their families outside of their statutory entitlement, usually in more informal settings) four times a year. The Families Team can book 'compassionate visits', usually in conjunction with the Chaplaincy Team. Storybook Dads is another session available, where prisoners can record a bedtime story for their child on CD or DVD, as long as the eligibility criteria are met.

There are plans to include a 'photo booth' in February 2024, as well as a room to be set aside for children with additional needs such as autism, to allow prisoners 'quiet time' with their children.

The Families Team is also running bite-size courses aimed at maintaining family contact. These include unaccredited courses on topics such as 'positive parenting' and 'homeward bound' sessions, which explore issues and challenges prisoners may face on returning home.

The process for gaining the relevant consent so that prisoners can participate in these programmes and courses is often slow, as all prisoners must first be risk-assessed and written consent must be obtained from the child or children's guardian or carer. Consent forms are not always returned.

7.5 Resettlement planning

Forest Bank assists resettlement planning of prisoners by providing education, employment and assistance with accommodation wherever possible. Those leaving prison are identified via the screening process, as used by the Omu.

November 2022 saw the appointment of an Employment Lead. Prisoners can request appointments with the employment hub, which are offered daily and are often fully booked, for help with finding jobs after their release.

- Ingeus is the contractor in charge of housing the prisoners
- Approximately 90% of prisoners leave the prison with accommodation on their day of release
- 4.5% of employment hub appointments are missed by prisoners.

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	17
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	11
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	13
Total number of visits to the establishment	179

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	9	1
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	2	5
C	Equality	5	0
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	14	5
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	16	13
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	7	2
F	Food and kitchens	6	3
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	57	21
H1	Property within the establishment	28	18
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	7	8
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	0	2
I	Sentence management, including HDC (Home Detention Curfew), ROTL (Release on Temporary Licence), parole, release dates, re-categorisation	1	6
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	19	10
K	Transfers	0	6
L	Miscellaneous	67	29
	Total number of applications	238	129



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