

# **Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Wormwood Scrubs**

**For reporting year  
1 June 2022 to 31 May 2023**

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# Contents

<b>Introductory sections</b>	<b>Page</b>
1. Statutory role of the IMB	3
2. Description of the establishment	4
3. Key points	5
 <b>Evidence sections</b>	
4. Safety	9
5. Fair and humane treatment	14
6. Health and wellbeing	20
7. Progression and resettlement	23
 <b>The work of the IMB</b>	
8. Board statistics	27
9. Applications to the IMB	28
 <b>Annex A</b>	
List of service providers	29

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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, of 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 Wormwood Scrubs is a category B public sector local and designated resettlement male prison mainly built between 1875 and 1891. Located in a densely populated area of Hammersmith in London, the prison backs onto the large open area of Wormwood Scrubs and is vulnerable to attempts to deliver banned substances and items to the prison by means of drones and items being thrown over the walls.

The prison accepts sentenced prisoners and prisoners remanded to custody (usually those held in prison until the time of their trial or subsequent sentence hearing) over the age of 21 and young remand adults aged 18-21. Young adults are placed on all wings. As a resettlement prison, HMP Wormwood Scrubs also accepts prisoners for the last 12 weeks of their sentence. Approximately 30%<sup>1</sup> of prisoners are foreign nationals. Many prisoners stay for relatively short periods and may leave and return repeatedly. The proportion of remand prisoners can be as high as 70%.

Although classified as a local prison, under temporary arrangements put into place more than two years ago, HMP Wormwood Scrubs receives prisoners from St Albans Crown Court and prisoners redirected from HMP Bedford as well as from the local area. This has resulted in prisoners being held further away from their families, and long transit times from court.

The prison has five main residential wings, with only D and E wings having single cell accommodation. Most prisoners are housed in double cells originally built for one occupant. The Conibeere unit accommodates prisoners requiring assessment and support with substance-abuse issues. There is a residential healthcare unit (H3). The prison also has a segregation unit (where prisoners are kept apart from the rest of the population).

The number of prisoners being held increased over the reporting year due to an increase in operational capacity (a figure set centrally as 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) in December 2022, and pressures in the wider prison and criminal justice systems. By the end of the reporting year the prison was consistently near capacity.

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

### **3. Key points**

#### **3.1 Main findings**

##### **Safety**

- The prison became increasingly short of space over the reporting year due to an increase in operational capacity and population pressures on the wider prison estate.
- The prison managed increasing numbers of vulnerable prisoners, prisoners with complex and serious mental and physical health needs and prisoners who presented a high risk of violence to other prisoners and to staff.
- Pressure on resources and acute and chronic staffing shortages impacted the prison in many areas.
- While figures for recorded violence, self-harm and drug misuse remained consistently lower than comparator prisons, by the end of the reporting year they were trending up, reflecting increased pressures within the prison and the wider prison estate.

##### **Fair and humane treatment**

- The antiquated structure of the prison, and the need to safely accommodate increased numbers of prisoners with complex health needs and requirements stretched the prison's resources in many areas.
- Although by the end of the reporting year initiatives were under way to improve the availability of opportunities for work, education, and other activities for more prisoners, progress was slow and by the end of the reporting year many prisoners not in employment were still spending 22 or more hours a day locked in their cell.

##### **Health and wellbeing**

- Staff shortages resulted in the cancellation of medical appointments, although the position had improved since the last reporting year.
- Staff shortages and staff turnover adversely impacted the provision of an effective mental health service.
- Staff shortages and staff turnover adversely impacted the provision of therapeutic services, support, and interventions to many vulnerable prisoners.
- Staff shortages and staff turnover adversely affected drug and rehabilitation services and increased waiting lists for help.
- Waiting times for referral for routine mental health assessments increased.
- Waiting times for transfers to suitable hospital accommodation were still unacceptable.
- The prison was unable to suitably accommodate an increase in the number of elderly and mobility-impaired prisoners, particularly wheelchair users.

### **Progression and resettlement.**

- By the end of the year the prison had taken steps to improve the number and range of prisoners engaged in suitable and varied work, education, and training, but many prisoners were still unemployed and many had limited and inconsistent access to the library, training and education off the wing.
- Staff shortages adversely affected probation services and prisoners' access to timely assistance.
- 'Through the gate' support for prisoners leaving custody remained patchy due to staff shortages and gaps in provision.

### **3.2 Main areas for development**

#### **TO THE MINISTER**

- What resources will the Minister make immediately available to this prison to mitigate the impacts of the increase in population?
- What resources will the Minister make immediately available to this prison to improve the fabric of the prison?
- Can the Minister provide confirmation that adequate funding for Citizens Advice will be provided in future years?
- What plans are in place to co-ordinate with the Department of Health and Social Care to ensure there is adequate provision for those prisoners with acute mental health needs?

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

- What can be done to improve recruitment, turnover and retention of staff?
- The Prisoners' Property Policy Framework does not appear to have prevented prisoners' property being lost or improved their chances of finding it. What is the prison service doing now to improve the management of prisoners' property and the accountability of the prison service and its suppliers for property they have lost?
- Will permanent funding be made available to secure a co-ordinator for foreign national prisoners following what appears to have been a successful trial?
- What can be done to ensure that there are sufficient suitably accessible places for wheelchair users within the London prison estate?
- When will refurbishment of the antiquated cell bell system take place?

#### **TO THE GOVERNOR**

- What action can be taken to address the disproportionate number of black prisoners being segregated and recorded as involved in a disproportionate number of use of force incidents?

- What action can be taken to address the disproportionately high number of recorded violent incidents involving younger prisoners?
- Staff shortages are often given as a reason for cancelling out of cell activities. What action can be taken to address 'on the day' staff shortages more effectively?
- What are the plans for improving the daily regime for prisoners, including time out of cell and access to activities?

### 3.3 Response to the last report

Issue raised	Response given	Progress
<b>To the Minister</b>		
There is a need for extra funds to enable Citizens Advice to operate more frequently in the prison.	Citizens Advice resumed service last summer for one day a week. External funding has been secured for Citizens Advice to provide a service three days a week from April 2023.	The service is still not able to meet demand. Funding and the future of provision are not secure.
There is a need for more rapid transfer of people with serious mental illness to appropriate mental health settings, and to put in place sufficient funds to enable this to happen.	In June 2022, the Government published the draft Mental Health Bill which includes a statutory 28-day time limit for the transfer of patients from prison to mental health hospital. A data input portal implemented from April 2021 enables providers to submit transfer and admission data.	Some prisoners still waited over 100 days for a transfer.
<b>To the Prison Service</b>		
When can we expect proper regard to be given to prisoners' property, and a barcoding system to be introduced to assist in management of this perennial issue?	The newly published Prisoners' Property Policy Framework came into effect on 5 September 2022. The introduction of digitally recorded Person Escort Records, including property tags, will assist with investigation for property that is lost in transit with Prisoner Escort and Custody Services'	None apparent.

	suppliers. Digital handling of property continues to be explored but it was not possible to include this in the new framework.	
When can we expect more stringent guidance on cell clearance?	Local arrangements are in place to ensure cell clearances are carried out effectively.	None apparent: property still frequently goes missing.
<b>To the Governor</b>		
Can the Governor please address the lack of data and monitoring in relation to how much time individual prisoners are spending out of cell on a particular day, so that the HMPPS (HM Prison and Probation Service) benchmark might be achieved?	Most prisoners should be spending a minimum of one hour and 15 minutes out of cell a day unless the regime is curtailed. Wings hold records of times out of cell.	The HMPPS benchmark is still not being achieved.
A disproportionate number of use of force incidents involve black prisoners. What action, outside of the collection of data, is being taken to address this issue?	A safety information meeting reviews and considers the data.	The disproportion remains.



## **Evidence sections 4 – 7**

### **4. Safety**

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

The prison has continued to implement positive changes to reception and induction procedures, risk assessments and documentation after a cluster of deaths in custody noted in earlier reports and following recommendations by the Prisons & Probation Ombudsman (PPO). Risk assessments on entry are now supported by a first night interview and good support from Listeners (prisoners trained by the Samaritans to offer support to fellow prisoners) and peers.

Operation Safeguard was activated in London on 6 March 2023. Despite being introduced as a temporary arrangement, it was still in force at the end of the reporting year. Under the scheme the prison was included in a rota to take prisoners who would be locked out into police custody but had been assessed as being at significant risk of self-harm or suicide. By definition a vulnerable group, these prisoners often arrive late and pose a considerable challenge for the prison.

The First Night Centre (FNC) is used for the early stages of induction. The induction process is generally regarded by prisoners who have spoken to the Board as supportive, and worthwhile improvements have been made to make it more accessible to prisoners with translation or other needs. The induction handbook given to prisoners was last revised during the pandemic and is now very out of date.

Prisoners report that induction processes work reasonably well, but experienced prisoners complain about a lack of time out of cell on the induction wing compared to other prisons, and the Board frequently receives complaints about missing and delayed property.

The FNC is also used for prisoners who are hard to locate elsewhere in the prison because they are high-risk, have gang issues or have another need for a single cell, such as a disability. The Board has commented before that the FNC is not intended for long-term accommodation and the regime is very limited, with little or no access to fresh air, but there is now such pressure on FNC places due to the number of prisoners coming into the prison that 'lodgers' are likely to be less frequent.

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

The Board notes with sadness that there were three deaths in custody during this reporting year, one apparently self-inflicted and two apparently due to natural causes.

Recorded self-harm (mostly cuts and scratches) increased over the reporting year by more than 22% (408 last year to 498 this year). The increase may be partly attributable to the increased number of prisoners and to multiple incidents by prolific self-harmers (defined as more than five incidents in one month). In the reporting year overall, 265 prisoners were involved (243 last year). In November 2022, 52 of 62 incidents recorded involved 13 individuals. As last year, the spikes were in the October to March winter months.

The number of Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) documents (used to support prisoners at risk of self-harm or suicide) opened this reporting year increased to 762 (724 last reporting year; 608 the year before). On healthcare advice, prisoners on remand for murder are now seen as particularly vulnerable, especially if young, and healthcare encourages the opening of ACCTs on such prisoners on entry; some of the increase may reflect greater awareness by staff.

A monthly multidisciplinary safer custody meeting that includes residential managers and Listeners is chaired by the Governing Governor. The head of safety also attends a bi-monthly local Safeguarding Adults Board chaired by Hammersmith and Fulham Council.

The safer custody meetings review fluctuations in the figures. A sharp spike in March 2023 was attributed to population pressures and to prisoners feeling they had less attention from staff stretched by managing a prison nearing capacity. The Board has previously raised concerns about reports of cell call bells going unanswered for long periods and of dismissive responses from some staff. Complaints have become more frequent over the reporting year. Efforts have been made by the prison to monitor cell call bell response times, but the Board has been told that the antiquated bell system makes data collection very difficult.

Listeners and Samaritans, who train prisoners to be Listeners and provide a separate service by phone, are well-supported and valued in the prison. Listeners are now available in the FNC and reception, as well as on the residential wings. They also attend the prisoner forum. Calls to Listeners continued their decline from pandemic levels but calls to the Samaritans increased, probably linked to the availability of in-cell phones and privacy for calls, peaking in June to November, before levelling out between January and May 2023.

Listeners are visible out and about on the wings and clearly take pride in their role. The main concerns logged by Listeners were about mental health and family and, more recently, issues with staff-prisoner relationships and lack of regime, a reflection of increasing pressures within the prison over the reporting year.

In November 2022 a regional review found that a significant number of unemployed prisoners were spending only one hour and 15 minutes out of their cell a day, with just over four hours a day out for those able to access part-time employment.

By the end of the reporting period, initiatives were under way to improve the numbers of prisoners in work and to open up the regime with new workshops, more access to the library and educational activities, but progress has been slow. At the end of the reporting year, many prisoners were still locked up for 22 hours or more each day, with limited and inconsistent access to work, education and socialisation away from the wing.

As in previous reports, the Board echoes the concerns of HM Inspector of Prisons (HMIP) about the adverse impacts of limited time out of cell on aspects of safety, such as mental health and wider wellbeing. Lack of contact with others inevitably limits opportunities for positive relationships, choices and behaviour, as well as for negative aspects. As in previous reporting years, the Board remains particularly concerned about the effects of isolation on the wellbeing of younger prisoners and other vulnerable groups, although all prisoners are affected by this. The Board hopes

to be able to report increased time out of cell and access to worthwhile activities targeted to their needs for more prisoners in the next reporting year.

#### **4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation**

Most of the useful charity and third-party run safety intervention initiatives identified by the Board in previous reports did not survive the pandemic, including the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) funding for mediation by Belong. The prison has been negotiating with HMPPS to try to secure further funding. As the Board has previously reported, funding for worthwhile schemes seems to be perennially fragile.

Over the reporting year, the average monthly prisoner population was 1,190, higher than during the same period last year. In the second half of the reporting year, the prison was consistently near its increased operational capacity.

The impact of an increasing population was exacerbated by many coinciding pressures, including shortages of both prison and healthcare staff. An increase in the numbers of prisoners coming in with complex mental health and violent behaviour issues also created additional pressures on accommodation, particularly in healthcare, segregation and in areas of the prison with single cells. Staff reported that finding safe and appropriate accommodation for prisoners became increasingly challenging. Shortages of accommodation meant some prisoners had to be moved and some double cells had to be used to house a single prisoner who could not safely be accommodated elsewhere, reducing capacity still further.

The prison was last formally inspected by HMIP in June 2021, when it was found to be safer than at the previous inspection. Incidents of assaults on staff and use of force had fallen and the rate of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults was one of the lowest of all local prisons. The inspector noted that reductions in violence were at least partly because most prisoners had been locked in their cells for 23 hours a day, at the expense of access to work, education and time to socialise.

The prison continued its policy of managing prisoners in small groups according to their location throughout the reporting year. Prisoners in one group have no contact with prisoners in other groups, and the prison credits this as a key reason for consistently lower levels of recorded self-harm and violence than its comparator prisons, despite population pressures and increases in recorded figures across the wider prison estate. As set out above (4.2), despite improvements for some, many prisoners were still spending most of their day in their cells, much as HMIP found in 2021.

Recorded violent incidents increased by just over 17%, to 345 (294 last year), averaging 29 per month, with some of the increase likely reflecting the increase in population. The number of prisoners involved was 567 (515 last year), the third successive yearly increase.

Prisoner-on-prisoner assaults increased to an average of 19 per month, 12% up from last year's figure of 17 per month, with a noticeable escalation in the second half of the year as the prison population increased. There was a 51% increase in recorded assaults on staff - 141, up from 93 in the previous year - evenly spread across the year.

The results showed unsurprising spikes on the wings during association and higher occurrence in the morning. Many incidents involved prisoners aged 22-33, a group

also recorded as having a proportionally higher number of ACCTs. The prison attributed some of the increases to frustrations caused by the need to move prisoners around against their wishes due to accommodation shortages, and prisoners coming in from outside the usual catchment areas.

Among other measures, the prison also addresses violence through prison safety representatives on the wings and intelligence-led interventions and weapons' seizures. A monthly safety committee reviews the numbers and trends of violent incidents, analyses individual serious violent incidents, and records assaults on staff, including a record of the trigger.

The prison appointed a neurodiversity support manager to offer support to the safety team and staff in managing prisoners with neurodiverse conditions and de-escalating situations before violence erupts. The high incidence of acute mental health problems among prisoners is seen by the prison as a significant driver of assaults on staff.

Prisoners in self-isolation are discussed at a safety intervention meeting (SIM) and a care plan is put in place to support them. Staff are now required to escalate to management and the safer custody team if they become aware of a prisoner who is self-isolating or otherwise at risk due to shortages of suitable accommodation in the prison.

The new ACCT documentation and training has been in place for some time, but there are still some inconsistencies in paperwork. The Board is concerned that ACCT reviews sometimes proceed without the required healthcare representatives in attendance, due to lack of availability and/or prior notification of healthcare staff.

#### **4.4 Use of force (UoF)**

There is a monthly UoF meeting observed by a Board representative. A Governor, a Prison Officers' Association representative, the safety custody manager and the UoF co-ordinator review the weekly UoF incidents using body worn video camera (BWVC) footage, CCTV and UoF paperwork. The poor take up and use of BWVC by staff previously reported by the Board still only seems to improve when there is a push by Governors, rapidly sliding back once attention is diverted.

A SIM takes place weekly with representatives from most of the departments and wings of the prison. It is well-attended and chaired by the safer custody Governor, although shortages of psychology staff limited their contribution during the year. The meeting reviews the prisoners of most concern, including all challenge support and intervention plan (CSIP) prisoners, those assessed as most likely to self-harm, complex individuals posing a risk of violence or significant disorder, those self-isolating, those on constant watch, those refusing food, and prisoners on an ACCT. Violent incidents, most of which will have usually triggered a UoF incident, are recorded and discussed. A member of the Board monitors the meeting.

There were 856 UoF incidents (657 last year), with an average monthly figure of 71 (range: 57 to 97). Broken down by ethnicity, recorded incidents over the period show a disproportionate number by population involving black/black British prisoners, as they did last year.

Ethnicity <i>(All figures have been rounded up)</i>	2022-2023: % of all UoF incidents	% ethnicity in prison population	2021-2022: % of all UoF incidents
Asian/Asian British	12	15	5
Black/black British	43	27	47
Mixed race	6	6	7
White	25	42	37
Other	4	5	3
Unknown	9	7	4

#### 4.5 Preventing illicit items

The geography of the prison makes some areas vulnerable to drones and items being thrown over the walls, although the installation of new windows has helped. Among other interventions, the prison uses body scanners (including some ‘airport-style’ scanning machines), sniffer dogs and searches based on intelligence and interception. As the Board has reported before, scanning can be dependent on staff being available to operate the equipment. There have been some productive illicit-item interventions on intelligence and the quarterly weapons amnesty, but these successes expose the tip of a much larger problem.

The prison acknowledges that drugs of many types are easily accessible and plentiful. Drugs are a serious problem and drive violence, health problems, debt and gang activity. But, as with so much else, staffing shortages and lack of resources seem to have diverted focus elsewhere as the prison emerged from restrictions.

Mandatory drug testing, which was finally reinstated in summer 2022 after a long absence, confirmed positive findings of between 30% and 45% from the summer until December and around 31% for January to May 2023, considerably up from pre-Covid figures and high compared to other prisons. At the end of 2022, funding was secured to develop an incentivised substance-free living unit (a refreshment of an earlier project) on D wing. At the beginning of 2023, out of 60 prisoners voluntarily tested as part of an assessment for living on D4, 10 tested positive.

At the end of 2022, an exercise was undertaken with the police to identify drug supply routes into the prison, and this has led to more finds and interceptions and fewer throwovers (when people outside the prison throw parcels over the prison walls that contain illicit items such as drugs and mobile phones).

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

There is a monthly prisoner consultation meeting chaired by the Governing Governor and attended by prisoner representatives from each wing, other members of the senior management team and managers from other areas of the prison such as the chaplaincy, education, PACT (family engagement) and the kitchen. Starting in March 2023, each meeting focused on a particular topic to ensure the relevant staff could attend. The meeting provides a useful opportunity for prisoners to raise a wide range of issues and ideas. A member of the Board monitors the meeting, when possible.

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

The prison continues to invest in the appearance of its grounds, which includes planting flowers and fruit trees, which also creates attractive employment opportunities for prisoners. Rubbish still regularly accumulates in some outside areas, including near the kitchen, which poses a health and safety hazard.

The prison's perennial heating problems were less pronounced this reporting year, although other repair issues such as leaky roofs, broken showers and malfunctioning cell call bells and alarms continue to highlight the prison's brittle infrastructure. Repairs often consist of 'work arounds' or temporary fixes to systems no longer fit for purpose.

Response times to cell call bells have featured in recent coroner inquests, following deaths in custody, but the Board understands that the antiquated cell bell IT system cannot provide any meaningful data. An upgrade planned to begin at the end of the reporting period appears to have been delayed.

The Board remains concerned about broken lifts, a problem that has persisted for several years. On E wing, prisoners and staff regularly transport heavy crates of dirty laundry and food up and down the stairs. Broken lifts also have a disproportionate impact on prisoners with disabilities and prisoners with mobility issues, restricting their movements within the prison and adversely affecting transfers.

There are only three fully adapted wheelchair cells available on the residential wings with fully separate toilet facilities: one each on B, C and D wings. Most wheelchair users are located on D wing, where there is more floor space and cells have been adapted with handrails. Under a new prisoner-carer scheme, wheelchair users are given priority in the queue for medication, and each has a buddy to assist them with evacuation. The wing Governor has installed movable plastic seats for the showers and fixed benches in the exercise yard. A packing workshop room has now been allocated to the wing so these prisoners can participate in work. It remains the Board's view that the prison is unsuitable for wheelchair users.

There were, again, shortages of replacements for missing or broken essential items such as radios, and some laundry items such as towels and tracksuit bottoms. The process of making available clothes for wearing to Court to prisoners in reception did not always work and caused additional distress to prisoners at a vulnerable time.

Repairs to broken equipment still often take many months. New kitchen equipment purchased three years ago for more than £100k was still awaiting installation by the end of the reporting year, despite repeated chasing by the prison.

The prison has a reputation among prisoners for appalling food. The physical structure of the prison affects the way food can be delivered and consumed and wings have no facilities for prisoners to eat together at a table.

The prison is an outlier among London prisons in delivering single portions of reheated hot food in foil cartons for consumption in cell, rather than having communal serveries on the wings with food served and eaten by prisoners unlocked.

The Board acknowledges that considerable creativity is required to provide nutritious food for adult male prisoners on a budget per prisoner, per day (not set by the prison), of £2.18 (2022-2023), increasing to £2.70 (2023-2024), and that the prison reported it had also overspent its local budget. In March 2023, the prison confirmed that the approximate cost of cartons (which go to general waste) is £100k per year, roughly 15p per prisoner, per day.

The prison has listened to complaints and has taken steps such as staff changes, changes in mealtimes (for example the movement of hot meals to the evening), prisoner consultations and menu design. Despite this, for prisoners who do not have access to a microwave and sufficient funds to purchase top-ups, the situation has not greatly improved. Most prisoners' daily experience still seems to be food of poor quality, quantity and nutritional value. The Board receives many complaints about limited variety and choice, and delivery of special diets remains unreliable. A great deal of food is thrown away uneaten. A rare bright spot was provision during Ramadan, organised by the chaplaincy, which received positive reviews from prisoners.

## **5.2 Segregation**

The segregation unit has 18 cells. Cells are frequently out of use because of 'dirty protests', deliberate damage or intentional flooding. The use of special accommodation is very low, only once in the reporting year.

The largest age group represented in segregation is 20-24-year olds, the second largest group is 25-29 year olds. As in the previous reporting year, there was a higher proportion of black prisoners in segregation than reflected in their population in the prison, a figure that ties in with UoF statistics. Most prisoners stay in segregation for seven to 10 days, but some stay far longer. At the end of the reporting year, there were no prisoners who had spent more than 100 days in segregation.

Separation Monitoring and Review Group (SMARG) meetings are held regularly throughout the year and are observed by the Board. The segregation Governor provides a focus for management of the unit and the custodial manager (CM), who has been in post for several years, has ensured continuity and leadership of the unit. Good order and discipline (GOoD) reviews (where it is determined if a prisoner who has been segregated due to disruptive behaviour should remain segregated) are monitored by a rota of IMB members weekly.

The CM conducts regular checks to ensure paperwork is completed in line with requirements but acknowledges that due to staff shortage and inexperience, daily records are not always checked and monitored effectively. Initial healthcare checks are also not always completed on time. There have been times when the unit did not have a dedicated nurse and healthcare staff attendance at GOoD reviews was not

always reliable or timely. Notification to the IMB of prisoners entering segregation remains patchy.

The unit regularly holds very challenging and volatile prisoners who are often noisy and abusive to staff. The Board has observed segregation staff demonstrating an exceptional level of patience and care for those in their charge. But, at times, the unit has been short of regular staff, with officers from elsewhere in the prison filling the gaps, despite not having the training required for those working in segregation. Staff shortages have also occasionally contributed to a poor atmosphere, with prisoners complaining about slow response time to cell bells.

Prisoners regularly complain about a lack of radios due to damage or removal by prisoners returning to normal location. There is a shelf of donated books replenished regularly, and other books can be ordered and delivered by the library. There are two small exercise yards, one furnished with outdoor gym equipment, and all segregated prisoners can take daily exercise and showers.

The segregation Governor and staff continually review and update plans for a return to normal location in discussion with the prisoner. The Board has observed segregation staff working hard with wing Governors to facilitate moves out of segregation. This can be difficult when gang issues and other affiliations restrict where the prisoner can be located safely, particularly in the case of high-risk prisoners requiring a single cell.

Overcrowding in the prison impacted the return of segregated prisoners to normal location in the second half of the reporting year. It is also concerning that prisoners with serious mental health issues are frequently kept in segregation awaiting a move to the hospital wing, due to shortage of beds. Although mental health staff make regular visits to the unit and provide advice and support with care plans and decision-making, the Board does not consider the restricted conditions of segregation suitable for those with severe mental health problems.

### **5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers**

Staff who began working in the prison during the pandemic are still not gaining experience of running a full regime, despite their increasing length of service. The Board has seen many examples of good and caring relationships between staff and prisoners but complaints to the Board (including from Listeners) about wing staff being unhelpful, not seeming to care and being slow to respond to requests have increased.

The prison reports fewer retention and staffing shortages on paper than other London prisons, but the Board's observations suggest that staff often seem stretched and that both staff and prisoners have become accustomed to spending less time talking to each other without a locked door between them. Overall, the Board's impression is that regime structuring arrangements and staffing shortages have led to more distant, less confident relationships between wing staff and prisoners – a culture shift since the pandemic, and a loss to both prisoners and staff.

Tensions have sometimes boiled over. Reported assaults on staff have markedly increased, attributed by the prison in part to factors such as gang and debt issues on certain wings.



Although the total number of written applications to the Board categorised as about staff/prisoner concerns is lower than last year, the figure should be read with caution as the Board did not deal with confidential complaints received on form Comp2 (in which allegations about staff are often made) after December 2022 because of a change in IMB procedures. Comp2 forms received by the Board before then have also been categorised separately in this report, unlike in previous reports (see the note to Section 8).

The key worker scheme has never worked consistently and seems to have been lost among other pressures on staff time.

#### **5.4 Equality and diversity**

A full-time diversity and equality officer was in post for most of the year before leaving to go on secondment. The Board hopes that the post is filled again and that the positive impact of the previous office holder's appointment will be sustained. A quarterly diversity and equality action team (DEAT) meeting reviews data. Monthly meetings were attended by staff from different departments and prisoner representatives from the wings.

A total of 17 (1%) of prisoners were aged over 70 in May 2023 (nine in October 2022), but there is little specific provision for them. There is also little suitable provision for young prisoners other than the Hero's Journey project (a life coaching programme for prisoners under the age of 25) and a tailored Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.

A prisoner carers' scheme introduced on D wing during the year assists prisoners requiring help with dressing, feeding, cell tidying and helps wheelchair users evacuate in an emergency. Prisoners with mobility issues were provided with very limited work opportunity on D wing, but still had no access to education off the wing.

There was progress in improving the diversity of workers and more black prisoners working in desirable jobs in the gym, reception, FNC and H3. Black History Month was celebrated with events in October 2022.

There were fewer discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs) submitted this reporting year. DIRF boxes on all wings were painted bright blue to match the shirts of wing-equality representatives, who check the boxes daily.

Approximately a third of the population are foreign national prisoners, some supported by the Home Office for lengthy periods, awaiting deportation or transfer. A foreign nationals co-ordinator was appointed, with HMPPS providing funding on a trial basis. But the funding was stopped in the spring, at the end of the trial, despite achieving a significant drop in the number of foreign national prisoners being detained. The Board hopes that funding can be found so that a useful initiative can be reinstated.

Written information is now more consistently available in the most common foreign languages used in the prison (Albanian, Romanian, Polish and Somalian), including a booklet distributed during induction. Big Hand is available as a translation service where needs cannot be met by staff.

## 5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The chaplaincy team continues to be a respected and well-used resource and safety net for prisoners of all faiths or none. A member of the chaplaincy team meets each prisoner every week for a welfare check.

Religious services for the main religions were held on a weekly basis on the wing or in the chapel or multifaith centre before restrictions, but regime limitations and staffing shortages were still limiting access to communal worship throughout this reporting year, with only fortnightly provision in place until the end of May. Even this was sometimes cancelled. Only C wing prisoners were able to attend the annual Christmas carol service.

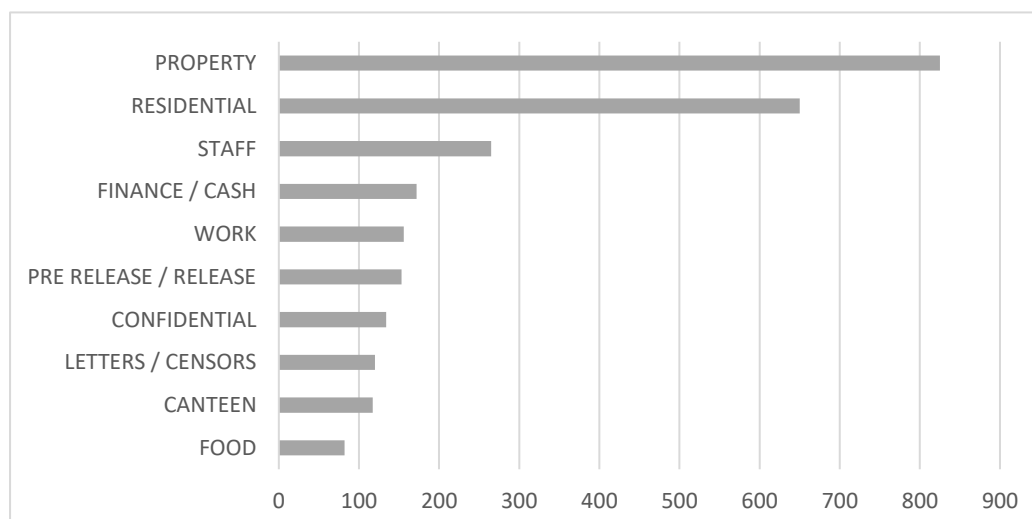
## 5.6 Incentives schemes

A revised and simpler incentives scheme was introduced in October 2022, with more clearly set out behavioural expectations for each level (Basic, Standard and Enhanced) and an emphasis on incentivising rather than punishing. A quarterly forum involves prisoners and staff. The Board has received far fewer complaints about the incentives scheme since it was introduced, but reasons for this may be mixed. With a slow reintroduction and take up of education and work for many prisoners and limited time out of cell, it is not clear to what extent prisoners are losing out on opportunities to demonstrate good behaviour in working towards Enhanced status (the highest level, which earns the prisoner more privileges, such as a TV in their cell), or whether they see much of an incentive to do so.

There have also been repeated reports from prisoners that those on remand (who have a number of special rights and privileges) are not, in practice, being treated very differently to convicted prisoners, and that staff do not always acknowledge or seem clear about what their rights are.

## 5.7 Complaints

A total of 3,112 first level internal complaints (Comp1) were submitted to the prison in the reporting year, a 12% increase from last year (2,771). Numbers were highest in May (333) and lowest in October (163). Of 26 complaint subject areas captured monthly, the top four this reporting year were property (825), residential (650), staff (265) and finance/cash (172).



After a review of the contents of complaints, a communication drive was launched by the prison to advertise and explain the system, with posters and information provided on the wings. The Shannon Trust (a charity that helps people learn to read) and mentors are available to assist prisoners requiring help, but the prison has been unable to supply data to establish whether those unable to communicate in English can use the complaints system effectively.

The time limit for responses to complaints varies between 10 and 15 days, according to the category of complaint. Staff have reduced the backlogs of previous years, and the number of in-time responses has improved to an average of 63.5% this reporting year, albeit from a very low base last year (52%), further improving in the last half of the reporting year to 67%. The Board remains concerned about the quality and helpfulness of some of the responses.

## **5.8 Property**

Missing property appears to be an intractable problem in the prison system. It was the most frequent subject of complaint to the prison and the second in applications to the Board. Lost property causes a great deal of stress and upset to prisoners and families, often at particularly vulnerable times.

The property system is antiquated and, like so much else in the prison, is still largely paper-based. Even able and experienced prisoners with family support struggle to navigate the complexities of tracking and locating their property and many do not get satisfactory or timely responses to requests for information and help. The Board was often asked to obtain copies of property cards (a record of everything a prisoner brought with them to prison) or other information for prisoners who said they had been unable to obtain them despite repeated applications to staff. The Board has also observed that staff responses to prisoner complaints about property were not uniformly helpful or fair. A recurring theme was of prisoners seeking help with and/or compensation for property lost in the prison being told incorrectly that their property was their responsibility, even when the loss was due to factors outside their control.

Many complaints relate to property lost in other establishments or between other establishments and/or court. Prisoners can move several times by the time their property is tracked down, and it then often goes missing again. The prison does try to help by following up complaints with other establishments, but responses are often slow or never come.

## 6. Health and wellbeing

Practice Plus Group (PPG) is the provider of primary care services, pharmacy and primary mental health care within the prison. Other health services are subcontracted: mental health services are provided by Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health NHS Trust and by Forward Trust, which delivers psychosocial support for prisoners with substance-use needs.

A monthly healthcare meeting takes place between the head of healthcare and other health representatives and the deputy Governor. A Board member regularly observes the meeting.

Healthcare complaints' data show a noticeable increase in complaints generally over the reporting year and specifically about appointments (29 compared to eight last year).

Concerns	Medical treatment	Appointments	Medication	Staff behaviour	Mental health	Other	Total
Q1	11	12	15	1	3	6	<b>47</b>
Q2	8	7	6	1	2	2	<b>26</b>
Q3	15	5	6	2	0	3	<b>30</b>
Q4	33	5	18	3	0	1	<b>60</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>163</b>

A key concern this reporting year has been the lack of staff, both medical staff (particularly in mental health/therapies) and prison officer availability to facilitate healthcare appointments. As the Board anticipated, this has affected progress in the implementation of the New Model of Care, aimed at delivering a much more integrated and co-ordinated healthcare system in the prison, caused cancellations of healthcare appointments and increased waiting times for and access to mental health support.

### 6.1 Physical healthcare

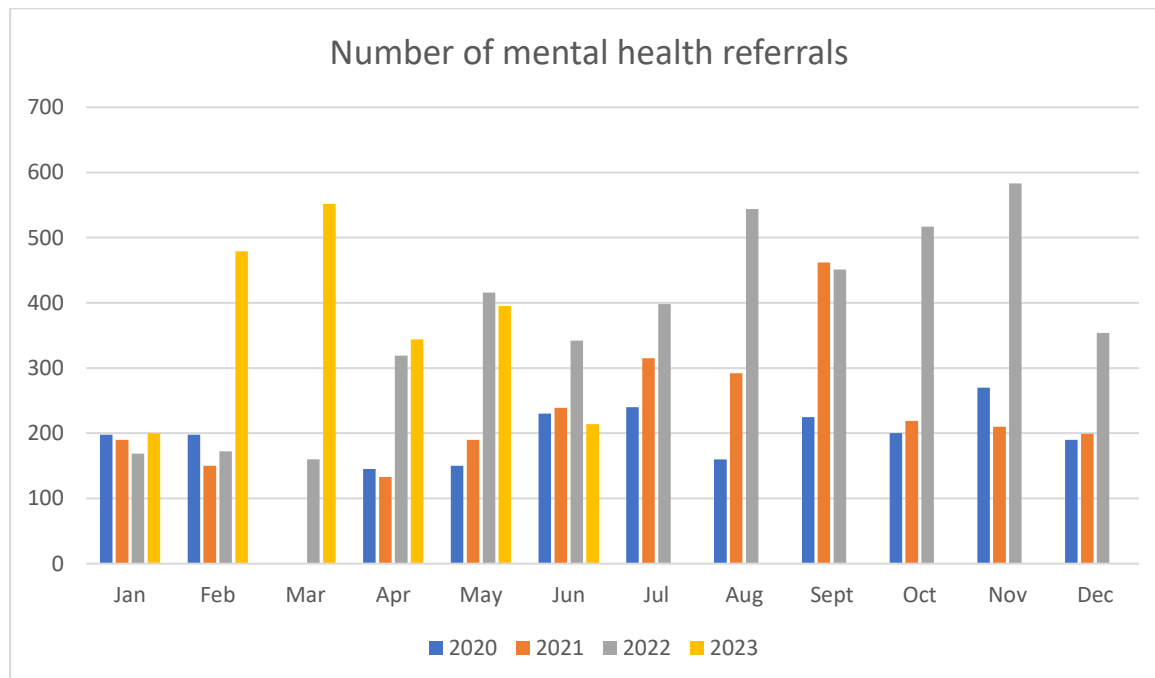
In response to the increase in the cancellation of GP and primary care clinics, the prison introduced special measures to try to ensure that officers are available to protect the most critical clinic days.

Scheduled external hospital appointments continue to be cancelled due to the lack of officer availability, but data provided to the Board showed a marked reduction from last year. The table below shows that an average 11% were cancelled through the reporting year (from around 30% last year).

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Number of appointments	266	269	251	254
Number of emergencies	74	64	49	66
Appointments cancelled by the prison	22	33	24	40

## 6.2 Mental health

The mental health In-Reach team continued to struggle to provide a fully functioning and effective service, because of acute staffing shortages throughout the year. Recruitment is difficult and turnover rapid. The reliance on agency staff and overtime is a poor substitute. Progress was made however towards implementing the New Model of Care with the extension of the Unscheduled Care (Crisis Pathway) to Monday-Sunday, 9am-5pm, providing cover for individuals in mental health crisis over the weekend. The team prioritised urgent referrals to ensure they continued to be seen within the required 24 hours, but waiting times for routine mental health assessments increased from the expected five days to almost three weeks. The table below shows that the number of referrals is noticeably higher than in the same period in previous years, although the introduction in January 2023 of the extended weekend cover had an impact on the numbers.



Lack of staff also meant that attendance at ACCT reviews (for those under the In-Reach caseload) was difficult to manage, and some reviews had to be supported remotely.

The longstanding problem of unacceptable delays for those patients who have been assessed and accepted for transfer to secure hospitals remains. There were 41

mental health transfers during the reporting period: the average waiting time from referral to admission (to all hospital types) was 69 days, although 8 of the 41 patients waited over 100 days from referral to admission to a community mental health unit.

### **6.3 Social care/older prisoners**

The prison is fundamentally unsuited to accommodate an increase in the number of elderly and mobility-impaired prisoners but has taken some measures to mitigate this. Those arriving via reception aged over 55 are automatically placed on a Multi-Professional Complex Case Clinic (MPCCC) waiting list so that any health and mobility issues are recorded.

For patients requiring significant nursing support, there are five physical health beds on the H3 in-patient unit, providing 24-hour nursing care and equipment such as air mattresses, hoists and commodes. Most other older prisoners who need support are housed on D wing on the ground floor (currently 10) and are provided with a fast pass for access to medication if they are mobility impaired.

### **6.4 Therapies/soft skills**

The shortage of staff means that many vulnerable prisoners did not receive the therapeutic support and interventions they required. The lack of psychologists led to the decision earlier in the reporting year to close the referral list which was, at that point, almost 200. There was some improvement in the staffing position by the end of the reporting year.

The occupational therapy team was also severely affected by staff shortages over the reporting year. Assessments of patients' functional ability and activities of daily living have continued in the in-patient unit, as has the weekly music group with a gamelan music instructor. Nevertheless, staff shortages significantly restricted access to the activities of the therapeutic Seacole Centre, which involves patients in assessment or intervention and yoga and music sessions delivered by external facilitators. The centre was also often closed because prison officers were unavailable to provide escorts and supervision, although staff attempted to provide alternative interventions with individuals on the wing.

The Board is very concerned about the detrimental impact of the cancellation of group therapies on some of the most vulnerable prisoners. Health issues and hospital referrals/appointments are discussed at a monthly matron clinic and there is good liaison with the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham Social Services department.

### **6.5 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation**

Forward Trust (a charity that helps manage drug and alcohol services in prisons) faced a familiar challenge of staffing shortages and turnover, with the inevitable adverse impact on support for a very vulnerable cohort of prisoners. Two key posts in recovery counselling and family work remained vacant for most of the reporting year, although staffing issues looked as though they were improving later on in the reporting period. Whilst some regular group work has started for the first time since Covid-19, there is still a six-month waiting list. Staff have been involved in producing a useful session on Spice (a synthetic cannabinoid originally designed to mimic the effects of cannabis) awareness for the internal prison TV system.

## **7. Progression and resettlement**

### **7.1 Education, library**

Prisoners are assessed on entry, but face-to-face education off-wing was still unfortunately only being offered to C wing by the end of the reporting year. Lessons for other prisoners were taken to the wings. Take up and attendance has been patchy, and the Board has been told that the lessons on offer have often been of poor quality and little interest.

After a period with a temporary manager, a permanent education manager is now in place. By the end of the reporting year, the reducing reoffending team had set up a regular meeting with interested parties to identify needs and to develop and implement a reading and literacy strategy.

Assessments of prisoners coming into HMP Wormwood Scrubs between April 2022 and April 2023 found that approximately 11% were unable to read or write (including some for whom English was not their first language). A total of 62% were assessed as having a reading age of 11 years or below. Around 11.5% were thought to have additional learning and neurodiversity needs on initial screening.

The Shannon Trust has had a volunteer presence in the prison for a long time but secured funding for a full-time manager and now has mentors in all areas, including the FNC. They co-ordinate and support those prisoners who can read to teach those who cannot. By the end of the reporting year, there were approximately 80 learners doing reading sessions with their mentor peers on each wing – reported by the Trust to be more than in any other comparable prison.

The library at HMP Wormwood Scrubs is a welcoming space, with well-qualified staff and a well-organised selection of books and other materials. Throughout the reporting year, most prisoners were unable to visit the library in person other than during a book week held to promote the library. Library services for most prisoners were obtained by filling out an application (request) for six books every three weeks, to be delivered to them on the wing by the library staff. A useful and popular service, but a poor substitute for prisoners using the library in person and having the opportunity for discussion, exchange of ideas and socialisation. The book week had an enthusiastic response, with a large increase in the numbers joining and ordering books.

The Give a Book charity supported the prison in creating book rooms on all the residential wings and held a monthly book club for a small group of prisoners on E wing and every two weeks in H3. They also sent books to prisoners for their first night. The popular Story Book Dads initiative, to encourage prisoners to read with their children, stopped during the pandemic and had not restarted by the end of the reporting year. Prisoners with a disability and older prisoners from D wing had a weekly evening session, facilitated by a Governor. Younger prisoners are a significant group, but appear to have no specific provision targeted at their needs.

It is to be hoped that the Board will be able to report next year that educational provision and access to the library has at last improved for all prisoners.

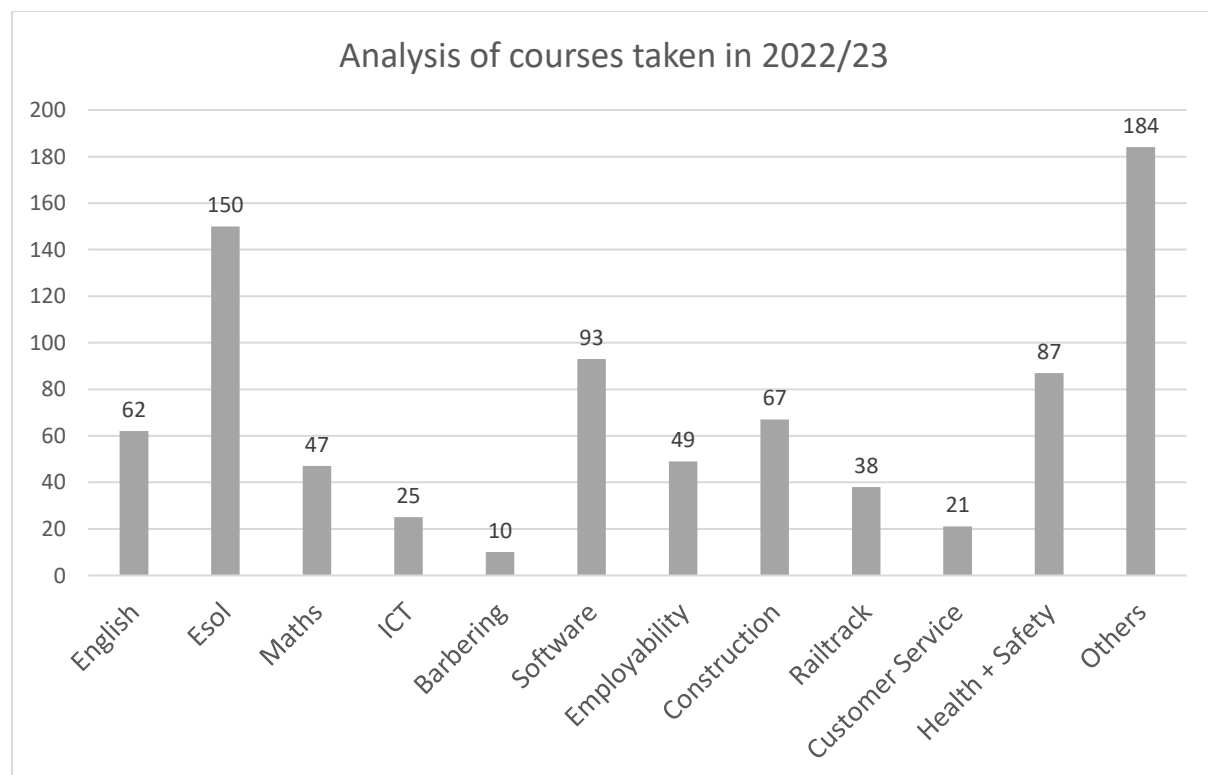
## 7.2 Vocational training, work

Unemployment rates have remained high, with a relatively small number of prisoners often doing multiple jobs, and little movement between roles. The prison has begun work to improve this, with the introduction of an employment hub. The key aim is to support prisoners into meaningful and sustained employment on release and a new focus on improving allocation and moving to part-time roles to increase opportunities for more prisoners. This appears to have improved the number and diversity of prisoners working around the prison and moving around a range of roles by the end of the reporting year. The prison has said that it will continue to build on this.

Industries provides a group of workshops aimed at offering prisoners purposeful activity and transferrable skills, skilled work and qualifications. A new workshop for tea-packing, introduced in September 2022, and a popular construction course were run throughout the reporting year. But for many prisoners, access to these and other workshops remained limited.

The Escape has continued to be a very popular café, offering varied and good-value food to staff, while prisoners enjoy working there. It is a very valuable opportunity for prisoners who receive excellent training, but the prison continues to report that it can prove difficult to find enough suitable prisoners. In addition, largely due to staff shortages, there have been several unannounced closures.

The employment hub supports prisoners in the 12 weeks before release, with Stand Out, a charity that delivers courses to prisoners on employability, and a coaching programme to prisoners on A wing to help them with mentoring and employability skills. The hub also helps those needing bank accounts and identity paperwork and can be contacted by prisoners for advice. The prison recognises that there is much more work to be done in this area.





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

In July 2022, probation staff (responsible since a restructure of the Probation Service in 2021 for both pre-release team/PRT work and the Offender Management in Custody/OMiC model in the Offender Management Unit) reported to the Board that they were short staffed and running a duty system focusing on priority cases, with other cases simply being deferred. Prisoners and prison staff have complained to the Board about delays in being able to access probation services and delays in obtaining information, a source of considerable stress for prisoners.

### **7.4 Family contact**

In August 2022, 363 prisoners had a social visit (approximately 30%). Weekend social visits were eventually reinstated in October 2022, with sessions available according to wing on a fortnightly basis and a plan to offer family days on 26 Sundays across the year. The number of slots available per week, per wing, was increased. However, despite vacant slots being available and despite being entitled to more visits, remand and enhanced prisoners complained to the Board that they were struggling to book more than two visits a month. Staff shortages resulted in some social visits being cancelled, particularly concerning at times likely to have been most convenient to families such as weekends and school holidays. Social video calls continued, but take up declined.

In-cell telephones are popular and well-used and have greatly improved the flexibility and privacy of contact with family members. Families can also use an email-a-prisoner service (where the email is printed out and delivered by prison staff).

There is also now a Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT) family engagement officer located in the visitors' centre who can help to restore family links between prisoners and family and liaise with family members on a prisoner's behalf.

The visits hall has been refurbished, but visitors (who often bring children, travel long distances to the prison and are not able to take food or drink into the prison) were still unable to buy refreshments on site by the end of the reporting year, due to continuing problems organising a payment system. The Board received reports more than once that during some sessions, the prison had not been able to provide water for visitors.

### **7.5 Resettlement planning**

The offender management assessment system (OASys), which is a key element of a prisoner's progression plan in assessing risk and preventing reoffending, had been subject to considerable backlog, but attempts to address this seem to have improved the position this reporting year.

Unlike many other prisons, HMP Wormwood Scrubs does not run a 'departure lounge' facility for prisoners to provide advice about housing and benefits before release. As a result, a significant proportion do not have permanent housing in place on release. Prisoners are unable to access St Mungo's (a charity offering housing advice and support to prisoners) themselves and must be referred after making an application to their pre-release team. As with so much else in the prison, staff shortages in all areas have led to delays.

Remand prisoners were not included in new probation contractual arrangements and could not receive the resettlement and housing advice given to sentenced prisoners and those on probation by the London Housing Advice and Interventions Service in partnership with St Mungo's and Single Homeless Project. Some cases have been picked up by the prison's local team, pending other arrangements, and discussions have been initiated with St Mungo's to help fill a significant gap in provision.

After a period in which its presence was limited to one day a week, third-party funding secured the presence of Citizens Advice in the prison for three days a week. Their telephone number is now approved for prisoner use and details of their services are included in induction material. Demand still far outstrips the limited resources available and further funding is uncertain.

## The work of the IMB

Members of the Board are unpaid volunteers drawn from the community. They have varying backgrounds and experience. Members visit the prison several times a week and can be contacted when needed, but are not there every day. The Board's ability to monitor such a complex environment is necessarily limited by the number and availability of its members, and by the amount of time they can commit to their role.

Prisoners can contact the IMB by means of a written application, or by speaking to a member of the Board. The Board also relies on the Governor and staff of the prison to assist enquiries and supply information and data to enable it to fulfil its role.

The information contained in this report derives from the work of the Board and information supplied by the prison, unless otherwise indicated.

### Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	16
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	13 (of whom three on leave)
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	15 (of whom two in training, one on leave)
Total number of visits to the establishment	280

### Applications to the IMB between 1 June 2022 and 31 May 2023

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	30	19
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	5	3
C	Equality	8	2
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	15	17
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	20	15
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	21	15
F	Food and kitchens	12	20
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	107	59
H1	Property within the establishment	30	36
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	13	16
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	4	4
I	Sentence management, including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	35	38
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	78	46
K	Transfers	10	10
L	Miscellaneous	49	36
	Confidential applications on form Comp2*		116
	Total number of applications	437	452

\*Last reporting year's figures were allocated to subject area, but most this reporting year contained multiple repeat complaints in more than one category, and many were repeat complaints by individuals, so they have been listed as a separate category. The IMB has been directed not to accept Comp2 applications since December 2022.

## **Annex A**

### **List of service providers**

- Adult safeguarding and social care: London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham Adult Social Care
- Education and training: Novus
- Employability training: Stand Out
- Escort contractor: Serco
- General support: Citizens Advice
- Healthcare and pharmacy: Practice Plus Group (PPG)
- Maintenance: Gov Facilities Services Limited
- Mental health: Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health NHS Trust (BEH)
- Substance misuse programme: Forward Trust
- Reading support: Shannon Trust and Give a Book
- Rehabilitative services: Community Rehabilitation Company
- Resettlement support: St Mungo's, London Housing Advice and Single Homeless Project
- Therapeutic treatments: Seacole Centre
- Visitors' centre: Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT)



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