



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Grendon

**For reporting year
1 January 2023 to 31 December 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 Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) is part of the United Kingdom's National Preventive Mechanism.

2. Description of the establishment

- 2.1 HMP Grendon was opened in 1962 as a category B prison (for those considered a risk to public safety but not categorised a maximum security threat) and is designed to provide therapy for prisoners with personality disorders. It has developed both a national and international reputation for its work and Grendon remains the UK's only therapeutic community (TC) prison whose sole raison-d'être is therapy.
- 2.2 There are a number of prisoners serving indeterminate sentences (which don't have a set release date, but a minimum time to be served set by the court), but most men are serving long, determinate sentences (which have fixed end dates). Serving prisoners apply for a place at Grendon to address their offending behaviour and psychological deficits. Many have personality disorders and addiction histories. The process of therapy requires considerable commitment, with many men taking several years to complete their therapy. The therapeutic regime is supported by a multidisciplinary group of staff.
- 2.3 Grendon is termed a democratic TC, as the men take an active part in their therapy, for example, by chairing wing community meetings held twice weekly. Small therapy groups are held on the other weekday mornings where all men are encouraged actively to participate. Overall, both staff and residents alike are responsible to their communities for their actions.
- 2.4 The prison's current operational capacity is 185¹ (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), although the roll for most of the year was around 160, while an ongoing fire safety project continues to be delivered, requiring the temporary loss of one TC. During the year, one refurbished wing (G wing) was reopened, and another (B wing) was closed.
- 2.5 F wing (a TC Plus facility, for those with learning disabilities) has a capacity for 20 men, the assessment wing (G wing) for 40.
- 2.6 Arriving residents remain on the assessment wing for between three and six months, with a similar regime similar to the TC wings.
- 2.7 Grendon is incorporated into the national offender personality disorder pathway programme, which works with people who have a confirmed diagnosis of a personality disorder.
- 2.8 The prison is jointly managed with Springhill, and a single IMB monitors both prisons. Although the two prisons share many services and staff, Springhill and Grendon operate as separate units and exist for quite different purposes.
- 2.9 The following health services are provided:
 - Primary healthcare: Practice Plus Group (PPG), with subcontracts to Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust. Clinics include well-man, diabetes, asthma and immunisations.
 - Drug and alcohol recovery team (DART): Midlands Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust.

¹ Figures included in this report are largely local management information data. 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.

- Podiatry and physiotherapy: Policy Practice Group MSK, Buckinghamshire.
- Mental health services: Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health NHS Trust - contracted to the assessment unit.
- Dental: Time for Teeth.
- Audiology: Specsavers.
- Optician: The Prisons Opticians Trust.
- Pharmacy: outsourced to Sigcare.

2.10 On-site education services are provided by Milton Keynes College (MKC).

2.11 Gov Facility Services Ltd manages the maintenance and facilities' management services.

3. Key points

3.1 Main findings

Safety

- Safety was maintained with slightly more assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) plans (created to support prisoners who are at risk of self-harm and suicide) opened this year (34) compared with 32 last year (4.2.2). The 34 incidences of self-harm recorded were slightly higher than in the last reporting year (28), but low against the backdrop that some 40% of men in Grendon have a history of self-harm (4.2.1)
- Use of force (UoF) incidents remained low (4.4.1), but challenge support and intervention plans (CSIPs), used to support and manage prisoners who pose an elevated risk of violence, more than doubled, to 41, compared with 16 last year (4.3.2); intelligent reports (IRs) categorised as violence trebled (4.3.1).
- A succession of disturbances occurred on several wings, some linked to the presence of illicit items (drugs and phones). In 2023, IRs for illicit drugs were at a five year high (4.5.1). Compared with last year, adjudications (disciplinary hearings for men alleged to have broken prison rules) rose by 50% and those proven more than doubled (5.2.3). Eleven men were moved out of Grendon for security reasons compared with three last year (4.5.1, 4.5.5, 4.5.6 and 7.1.9). However, total IRs were slightly lower than last year (4.3.1).
- There were two cell call bell faults or failures in the year, the most serious when, for a period, there was no working intercom on one wing. The response time to an overnight in-cell call was almost three hours; action was quickly taken to ensure this didn't recur (4.2.3).

Fair and humane treatment

- The fire safety project continued through the year, with one wing returned to the prison and one vacated for refurbishment (5.1.1). The project, though necessary, remains an ongoing disruption for both men and staff.
- Grendon suffered from a major rat infestation from mid-year, with increased sighting on a number of wings. From September, unprecedented measures were taken, and by the end of the year the problem had peaked but had not been fully resolved (5.12, 5.1.3).
- Grendon's night sanitation system failed to meet basic decency levels on too many occasions. When the Board made a monitoring night visit in November, we reported that the system on one wing was not working (5.1.5). During the outbreak of norovirus, emergency in-cell sanitation kits and buckets were issued to affected men to use in their cells, who had to clean their own mess during this time (6.2.3).
- A 50p a week wage increase was agreed in September but was not implemented until December. This was clearly insufficient to keep pace with inflation (7.3.1).
- A chaplaincy team member continues to provide bereavement counselling, as an external professional organisation has still not been found (5.5.4).
- There was a marked drop in the number of complaints this year, with property issues continuing to dominate (5.7.1). The Board's (unscientific) review of a sample judged that there was a slight improvement over last year in how complaints were handled (5.7.3).
- A diversity and inclusion (D&I) action team was set up early in the year, which worked closely with diversity reps and peer equality mentors (PEMs) across all wings, and monthly focus groups meet on each wing (5.4.1).

Health and wellbeing

- The Board's ability to monitor healthcare effectively continues to be severely constrained by a lack of data. We received several applications (written submissions prisoners make to the Board) about slow or lack of response/follow up, but we were unable to verify this, which is unsatisfactory (6.1.3).
- A survey conducted by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) reported that just over half of the men judged the quality of health services to be 'good'/'quite good', compared with a 71% rating two years ago (6.1.2) . About half of the men said they had been helped with mental health problems (6.3.1).
- A new post of health engagement lead was created, followed by the appointment and training of health champions. This resulted in the rolling out of new initiatives to monitor and report back on men's health, and to enhance the response to complaints against the backdrop of staff absenteeism. Feedback from professional staff is that they are making an important contribution (6.1.8).
- An outbreak of norovirus occurred in August, spreading across the wings. Correct procedures were followed, and quite soon no new cases were reported (6.2.3).

Progression and resettlement

- The mechanics of the therapy regime have now returned to the pre-Covid era, although it is widely agreed that more work still needs to be done to restore Grendon's unique democratic therapeutic community culture (7.1.1 and 7.1.2).
- However, peer reviews and audits continue to confirm the high quality of the service provided (7.1.5) and there is still a long waiting list of men wanting to come to Grendon (7.1.1)
- Resignations and persistent vacancies of professional therapy staff have affected the service, and on one wing late in the year, exceptional measures had to be taken to address staff shortages (7.1.3).
- There is a continuing problem of too many people out of therapy (OOT) having to stay on at Grendon because of the general overcrowding of prisons and the lack of single-man transfer transport (7.1.7).
- The delivery of high-quality education has been constrained by a number of factors, the two most important being staff shortages and men not attending education because of group and wing specials (extraordinary meetings in addition to community and group meetings) and staff training (7.2.2, 7.2.5).
- May's Ofsted report highlighted other problems, including insufficient screening and weaknesses in reading assessments and too many men not finishing their courses on time. The provider, Milton Keynes College, developed a template to address these problems, but by the year end some remained outstanding (7.2.6).
- There has been a steady rise in men studying for Open University degrees, with charities helping with scholarships (7.2,7).
- Grendon's library continues to be well used; it put on a number of events with external speakers and facilitated impressive creative activities (7.2.8 and 6.7.3).
- In October, a careers and resettlement event was held, with more than a dozen external agencies participating. It was well attended by the men and staff (7.6.2).
- Grendon's artist in residence continued to work with the men, and exhibitions of their work were held to which external guests and the press were invited (6.7.2).

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- The Board followed the cases of three men whose Ministerial responses to the Parole Board failed to meet the required 28-day deadline; one man had to wait for eight months (7.4.2). Could the Minister assure the Board that measures have been put in place to address these delays and that they will not occur in future?
- The lack of funds for much-needed capital expenditures, including the upgrading of old and dilapidated buildings and fittings, including the windows on the wings, is causing growing frustration for both men and staff. For example, as noted in this year's HMIP report, men are not able to play football outside because no money is available to repair the asphalt surface (6.5.1). Can the Minister provide assurance that he is aware of these capital funding shortfalls, and give some indication of a timetable for when funds are likely to be forthcoming to start to address these concerns?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- How does the Prison Service plan to address the growing problem of men who are OOT and unable to move out of Grendon, which was also noted in last year's report? It continues to have a detrimental effect on the prison's ability to deliver its goals as a democratic therapeutic community by disrupting life on the wings and perpetuating the queue of men accepted to come to Grendon (7.1.7).
- The delivery schedule of the ongoing fire and safety project continues to suffer from delays (5.1.1). Can the Prison Service indicate when this problem will be permanently resolved?
- The Board continues to believe that the night sanitation system does not meet minimum decency and hygiene outcomes for prisoners, and this year it has suffered further operational problems (5.1.4 and 6.2.3). What plans does the Prison Service have to replace Grendon's night sanitation system?
- The budget the prison has to fund a fairer wage, to help offset the ever-growing gap between the increased costs the men face in canteen and other purchases and the 50p weekly rise awarded, remains woefully inadequate (7.3.1). What steps will the Prison Service take to address this injustice?

TO THE GOVERNOR

The Board looks forward to:

- Working closely with the new Governor to fulfil its statutory role.
- A resolution to the problems of men being pulled from education to attend therapy specials, and lessons being cancelled because of staff training (7.1.4 and 7.2.5).
- Continued progress in the efforts to rebuild Grendon's unique culture and ethos (7.1.2).
- Staff training on responses to complaints continuing to be a priority area (5.7.1 and 5.7.3).
- Monitoring any new initiatives rolled out to enable the prison to better scrutinise the impact of health delivery and the health complaints' system (6.1.3, 6.1.4 and 6.1.10).
- Improvements to the effectiveness of the prison's Diversity and Inclusion mandate in delivering necessary change being sustained and the re-establishment of the external scrutiny of all discrimination incident report forms (DIRFs) (5.4.2 and 5.4.4).
- A monthly set of routinely collected/agreed healthcare data through which we can monitor the quality of healthcare (6.1.3).

3.3 Response to the last report

Issue raised	Response given	Progress
<p>To the Minister</p> <p>1. Is the Minister aware of the impact of decisions to override Parole Board recommendations both for the men and probation staff involved, as well as the wider repercussions on the therapeutic communities?</p>	<p>1. New tests were introduced in 2022, which allow the Secretary of State to accept or override the recommendations of the Parole Board in relation to an IPP (imprisonment for public protection) prisoner's suitability for a move to open conditions. Work is underway to explore what further opportunities can be developed to support progression of these prisoners in closed conditions.</p>	<p>1. The announcement made in November, to give those with IPP sentences an end-date, does not apply to those held in custody.</p>
<p>To the Prison Service</p> <p>1. The lack of availability to transport men out of therapy (OOT) needs to be addressed to avoid unnecessary delays and distress.</p> <p>2. Improvements to the delivery schedule of the ongoing fire and safety project, as well as improved handovers of completed wings, are necessary in order to reduce disruption and return the prison to capacity.</p> <p>3. Improvements to night sanitation from the fire safety project have yet to be evidenced and the Board continues to believe the system does not meet decency and hygiene outcomes for prisoners.</p>	<p>1. In the context of continuing population pressures challenges, HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) prioritises moves for men who have been OOT the longest.</p> <p>2. The project is complex. F and G wings have been handed back to the prison and a thorough 'lessons learned' exercise was carried out.</p> <p>3. Acknowledges that problems have continued, including in the switch room. The Governor has operational contingency plans in place to deal with rare systems' breakdowns to ensure prisons have access to services.</p>	<p>1. The problem has, if anything, worsened: in January, 14 men had been OOT for more than three months, but by the final quarter of the reporting year, the number had risen to 16.</p> <p>2. The handing back of G wing was accompanied by a succession of teething problems. The handing back of B wing has been repeatedly delayed (5.1.1).</p> <p>3. New and different problems arose during the year, suggesting the system remains unreliable (5.1.5, 6.2.3).</p>

<p>4. There appears to be no maximum response time for appeals against adjudications sent to the external assessment unit.</p> <p>5. There is insufficient budget for the prison to fund a fairer wage to help offset the increased costs that the men face in canteen (the term used for the weekly delivery of items a prisoner has ordered) and other purchases.</p>	<p>4. The time required to submit an appeal and receive a reply depends on whether the case is deemed to be a 'fast track' appeal or not. Regrettably, some cases do not receive a response within the specified timeline. HMPSS assures the Board the agency will always strive to achieve a timely response wherever possible.</p> <p>5. HMPPS acknowledges inflationary pressures prisoners face. A 10% uplift in private cash a man can access from funds sent in by family and friends was introduced in September 2002 to help men manage the impact of price increases.</p>	<p>4. The Board has not been approached by any men on this issue, but will continue to monitor the response times to any appeals.</p> <p>5. The (small) 50p a week wage increase award was not implemented until the last month of the year and is not enough to resolve the problem of ever-rising prices.</p>
<p>To the Governor</p> <p>1. Continued progress on rebuilding culture and ethos on the communities.</p> <p>2. Training on responses to complaints.</p> <p>3. Improved governance of healthcare data and outcomes (6.1.2) and overseeing delivery of health champions and improved communication with men.</p>		<p>1. Progress has been made, but more still needs to be done (7.1.2).</p> <p>2. Our analysis suggests work still needs to be done (5.7.3).</p> <p>3. Little sign of progress in the amount and relevance of data provided to effectively monitor health outcomes (6.1.3). The patient engagement lead and health champion initiative has been rolled out with great success (6.1.8).</p>

<p>4. Delivery of staff training, e.g. suicide and self-Harm (SASH) prevention.</p> <p>5. Reporting on response times to cell bells.</p> <p>6. The good work on D&I being sustained.</p> <p>7. The problem of men being pulled from education to attend therapy sessions.</p>		<p>4. Progress recorded, but some officer support grade (OSG) staff have not been SASH trained (4.2.2)</p> <p>5. Instances of major problems recorded during the year (4.2.3, 5.1.4).</p> <p>6. Good progress, but also one major setback (5.4.1 and 5.4.2).</p> <p>7. The problem has not been resolved, but is being focused on now as a priority (7.2.5).</p>
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Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

- 4.1.1 The majority of men arriving at Grendon live on the assessment wing, with a planned stay of around three months: during the year, the numbers on the wing hovered around the 25 mark. Since the start of the year, all men coming to Grendon have been body-scanned. In March, Grendon's assessment cohort arrivals were moved to the newly refurbished G wing. Regrettably, as had happened for F wing last year, it suffered from an initial range of teething problems: no deep clean had been carried out; some floors needed repairing; some kitchen lights were not working; the water from some taps ran brown and there was low pressure in the showers; the heating was either too hot or too cold; and the phone booth had a missing door. The IMB spoke to some men who expressed their frustration. However, most problems were resolved in the following weeks.
- 4.1.2 Grendon's May inspection by HMIP included a residents' survey which was completed by close to 80% of men. It asked men about their experiences at reception. Some 90% of them said they felt safe on their first night, and a similar percentage said they were treated well on arrival, while 26% said they didn't have any problems when they first arrived. The biggest issues on arrival were in relation to phone numbers (27%), feelings of depression (19), and contacting family (17%). A total of 54% did not get their numbers on their PIN (a personal identification number a prisoner must use when they make a phone call) within 24 hours. Processes have been adjusted in response.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

- 4.2.1 Each wing at Grendon has a safer custody representative. There were no deaths in custody (DICs) in 2023. Given that almost 40% of men have a history of self-harm, self-harm indicators, though higher than last year, remained low: over the year, 34 incidents were recorded, 21% higher than last year (28). Intelligence reports (IRs) for self-harm were 46 for the year, compared with 35 in 2022. There were 11 IRs concerning heightened risk of suicide, compared to two in the whole of 2022.
- 4.2.2 **ACCTs:** A total of 34 ACCT plans were opened in the year, compared with 32 in 2022 and 38 in 2021. The number of ACCTs that had to be reopened (8) was far higher than last year, when only one was reopened. During weekly monitoring visits, Board members saw well over half of men who were on ACCTs and all those we spoke to said they felt supported by staff. With few exceptions, ACCT documentation appeared to be filled in correctly and on time. Monthly quality-assurance checks on the documentation were thorough, with learning points provided to wing managers and case co-ordinators and reinforced in suicide and self-harm (SASH) prevention training. However, during a December visit, the IMB learned that not all officer support grades (OSGs) had had SASH training, even though they were sometimes the only staff left on the wing with vulnerable men. End of year data (combined for HMP Grendon and Springhill) show that some 76% of relevant officers had been SASH-trained.
- 4.2.3 **Cell bells** For most of the year, Grendon's cell bell system worked, although they use out-of-date technologies and are vulnerable to breakdowns. When men returned to G wing in the spring after extensive refurbishment, initially some of the

cell bells were not working correctly (4.1.1). Then, for a period in July, there was no working intercom on D wing, while, relatedly, an incident reported in the observations book showed a response time of 2 hours and 57 minutes to an overnight in-cell call. This happened at night, when the duty officer was monitoring across two wings and the original call was not heard; no processes were in place to pick up the missed call. Action was taken to address the immediate problem.

- 4.2.4 **Samaritans' phones** Grendon does not have Listeners (prisoners trained by the Samaritans to provide peer support), as there is potentially a conflict with therapy, but there is access to a direct phone line on all wings. There were, however, a few instances during the year when phones were unavailable during the night, and in late October, the phone on G wing was faulty; the problem continued for at least 10 days before it was finally fixed.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

- 4.3.1 In the reporting year, there were two assaults on staff and six where prisoners assaulted prisoners. However, violence IRs rose threefold, to 22, compared with seven last year, reflected in the rise of group and wing specials (7.1.4), though numbers fell markedly towards the end of the year. The total number of safer custody IRs for the year fell to 339, compared with 351 for 2022.
- 4.3.2 **CSIPs** A total of 41 CSIPs were opened during the year, more than double last year's figure of 16, with 15 referrals made in the year compared with seven last year. As for some months, IRs were submitted regarding threats to prisoners but no referrals were made. Senior staff raised questions about this, and the issue was examined in the second half of the year. One reason offered was that some staff felt that the CSIP process is counterproductive to therapy.
- 4.3.3 Although all CSIP paperwork is logged on NOMIS (the national offender management computer system), the Board does not have access to it, which limits our ability to understand why the plans have been drawn up or to monitor progress. Safer custody representatives from the wings continued to attend the regular monthly safer custody meetings, though not the accompanying safety intervention meetings (SIMs).

4.4 Use of force (UoF)

- 4.4.1 **UoF Incidents** Figures continued to remain at low levels, with four incidents this year, categorised as an assault on a fellow prisoner, moves out of Grendon and an assault on a staff member. This compares with three incidents last year and five in 2021. All assaults were spontaneous (not planned) and deemed 'fairly minor' by the prison; the staff member suffered a superficial head cut, which required the application of a small Steri-Strip.
- 4.4.2 **Training** By the end of October, 99% of staff needing to be trained had had SPEAR (spontaneous protection enabling accelerated response) training and 88% of relevant officers at Grendon had been issued with pelargonic acid vanillylamide (PAVA) incapacitant spray. In addition, across both Grendon and Springhill prisons, Tornado riot training had been completed for 13 men, higher than the initial target of nine.
- 4.4.3 Since it was first introduced in May, PAVA spray has never been used at Grendon.
- 4.4.4 **BWVCs (body worn video cameras)** These are now widely available, regularly used and turned on when deemed necessary. All uses of BWVCs are recorded.

The IMB sat in on a UoF meeting in October to review the recording of an incident, where an emotional man was brought under control by 3-4 officers and handcuffed. Asked if men who are taped can have access to the video recorded incidents, we were told that they could if they put in a Comp1 (an ordinary complaint). If the incident recorded results in an adjudication, the man filmed would automatically be asked if he wished to watch the video prior to the hearing.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

- 4.5.1 **Drugs** Both mandatory and voluntary drug testing (urine-based) continued during the year. In 2023, IRs for drugs were at a five-year high, with more than twice as many recorded – 377 – compared with 150 last year. In the first half of the year, intelligence suggested that Spice (a chemical compound which mimics the effects of the active ingredient in cannabis) and cannabis were entering the prison, that illegal alcohol- and vape-trading was also taking place. In addition, multiple reports of individual prisoners having increased in size and becoming unusually aggressive suggested a significant increase in illegal steroids. During visits, the IMB repeatedly saw the consequence of these depressing developments in the rise of wing specials, reports by staff of unruly behaviour and the evident effect on staff morale. From mid-year, intelligence on illegal drugs started to drop, and in December, the prison's risk assessment for drugs was downgraded from significant to tolerable.
- 4.5.2 Men are tested for drugs using mandatory, risk, suspicion and voluntary testing, based on an agreed compact. For the latter, there were eight positives (excluding any positives consistent with medication) for the year, of which seven were for cannabis. These results do not lead to an adjudication, but are discussed in the community. There were 11 positives from other types of tests.
- 4.5.3 The HMIP survey of men conducted in May reported that 19% said it was easy to obtain illicit drugs in prison, with 13% reporting the same for being able to access bootleg alcohol.
- 4.5.4 In July, surveillance of incoming parcels for potential drugs was increased and the Governor issued a notice to prisoners (NTP) announcing more intensive searches of men going on and off the wing.
- 4.5.5 **Phones** Illicit use of mobile phones is monitored regularly, and significant activity was recorded on at least two wings over a number of weeks during the year. Following a man's transfer out of Grendon in October, a mobile phone was discovered in the receiving prison. Also in October, the mobile phone risk rating for Grendon was raised from tolerable to manageable for the first time in the year and remained at that level to December.
- 4.5.6 There were 329 IRs and five finds in the year compared with 242 IRs and four finds in 2022. In April, D wing reported that they were only holding wing specials to deal with phone issues. The same wing cancelled its social day in November due to phone issues. In pre-Covid years, this sort of issue might not have resulted in the same consequences and could be linked more generally to a wider loss of culture, a change of ethos and of staff and more men waiting for longer periods for a transfer (7.1.2).
- 4.5.7 **Key lock compromises** These almost doubled this year – 103 against 56 in 2022 – which is clearly concerning, possibly related to weaknesses in the training of new staff members.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

5.1.1 **Accommodation** The fire safety improvement project continued to contribute to a non-normal working and living environment for men and staff. Work on G wing was completed in March (4.1.1) and B wing was closed for major works. This was meant to be completed by October but still wasn't at year end, and a late January opening was anticipated. This year, a budget was approved to make use of the 10 empty cells located above healthcare, possibly to house men who were OOT (7.1.7), but progress in advancing this idea was slow.

5.1.2 **Vermin** As the year progressed, there were increasing problems of rats, initially sighted outside in rising numbers. By mid-year, men and staff reported that they had come onto some wings and had sometimes been seen not only in the kitchen area but also in the corridors. On a visit in July, men showed Board members nibbled food and rat droppings on food-contact surfaces and evidence of rats having gnawed through the waste bins. They also reported seeing rats on the fresh food (fruit and bread) that had been brought onto the wing.

5.1.3 The prison has a contract with Rentokil which, by mid-year, had increased the number of baited traps, but the infestation, if anything, worsened. In October, Rentokil carried out an in-depth survey and agreed to further increase the number of traps, introduce more potent bait and targeting nests directly. By mid-November they were visiting twice a week to re-bait. Additionally, they recommended repairing holes in buildings and out-buildings, revisiting food and refuse management and stressed the need for men never to throw food/food waste out of the window. Staff were asked to report every rat-sighting. Both men and staff regularly raised the vermin issue with IMB members during monitoring visits: all agreed that no one should have to live and work in an environment when so many rats are so much in evidence at such close quarters. In December, it appeared that the problem had peaked, though it still not been fully resolved.

5.1.4 **Appliance and equipment breakdowns** A number of basic appliances broke down during the year – the main oven/steamer on one wing, a tumble dryer on two and a washing machine – which took many weeks to have repaired or be replaced. In the interim, food was cooked in the main kitchen and men had to take their soiled laundry to other wings. Successive intermittent heating problems arose on two wings towards the end of the year; in some cases, men were having to wear gloves to keep warm. The problems were finally fixed the week before Christmas.

The prison was very sympathetic to one wing where a number of chairs and tables had broken, but it was unable to resolve the problem speedily because the Government-appointed supplier purchases such items in bulk and, seemingly, infrequently.

5.1.5 **Night sanitation** The Board has reported for several years that Grendon's 'Nightsan' system, whereby men press their cell bell to alert the duty officer so they can be unlocked, one at a time, to use the toilet, is not compatible with decency and hygiene. It is also unreliable and ongoing problems were reported on two wings. During the year, there were problems with the cell bell system (4.2.3), and on a night visit in November, the Board noted that the Nightsan screen on A wing was not accurately recording men in or out of cell: multiple men on the same spur were incorrectly shown as out of cell. On a visit in April, a man spoke to an IMB member about the sanitation buckets for use in emergencies (either when an alarm system

is not working or, more commonly, when there are long delays in responding to cell bells) and said they were not fit for purpose, being neither airtight nor big enough, particularly during Ramadan when men drink a lot at night. To mitigate the problem, men had been using detergent bottles, but these are no longer allowed.

- 5.1.6 **Food** The catering staff welcomed a small but significant rise in Grendon's food budget, which enabled the prison to maintain the quality, range and quantity of food it serves the men. More compliments than complaints have been recorded in the comments book kept on each wing which, this year, are now being regularly read and commented on by kitchen staff. A food survey conducted by kitchen management in May reported that 69% of men at Grendon said the food is varied enough and 83% rated the quality as 'good' or 'excellent', although the response rate was low, at around 30%.

These figures are consistent with the HMIP survey, where 79% of men said the food was 'good' or 'quite good' and 66% said they were given 'sufficient food always' or 'most of the time'. Changes in the packaging of daily food snacks, making them smaller, led to some men saying that food quantities had been reduced; however, the kitchen manager is adamant this is not the case.

Following an external assessment, the Springhill and Grendon kitchens (judged as a unit) were ranked first in the South Central region for Budget Control and Food Quality.

However, the IMB received a number of complaints about food portions saying there is never enough food at mealtimes. In contrast, men mostly complimented the prison for the food it prepares for special occasions (Christmas, Diwali, the end of Ramadan, etc.). However, following a number of complaints about food provided over Black History Month, it was agreed that, in future, kitchen staff should discuss potential dishes and menus with the wings.

- 5.1.7 **Canteen and catalogue ordering** The prices of items men can purchase continued to rise during the year, with wages paid not keeping up with inflation (7.3.1). For example, six eggs, which cost £1 for six at the start of the year, were £1.85 by the end of the year. A number of men were critical of the time taken for orders to be processed, refunds to come through and the limited choice of goods they were able to purchase. The latter is consistent with the HMIP survey, which recorded 51% of men saying they were unable to buy items they needed. Some, however, are on the list of restricted or prohibited items, such as controllers and hard drives for Xboxes.
- 5.1.8 The IMB followed the case of a man who had taken out a subscription to two religious magazines at his previous prison, but on coming Grendon had not been receiving them. He put in a Comp1 and started to receive them, but then they stopped. He was told by the prison that the publisher was not authorised to send them directly to the prisoner. After about two months, a solution appeared to have been found: the magazines should be sent directly from the supplier to safer custody or the chaplaincy, for them to be passed on to reception to be processed and then passed on to the man.

5.2 Segregation

- 5.2.1 In the past, the IMB has reported that there is no segregation in Grendon. However, unusually, the IMB was notified in July that a man on G wing was put into segregation to be transferred to HMP Bullingdon the next day. His transfer was noted in the security book, with a comment to confirm that the good order or

discipline (GOoD) paperwork (where a prisoner has been kept apart – segregated – from other prisoners due to disruptive behaviour) had been raised; as this went with him, there was no opportunity for the Board to review it on a subsequent rota visit.

- 5.2.2 No one was transferred from Springhill to Grendon during the year. However, one man (with mental health issues) transferred in 2021 was still in Grendon at the start of the year. Eventually, in early October, after repeated transport cancellations and the growing frustration of Grendon staff trying to facilitate his move, he went to the prison to which he had asked to be transferred.
- 5.2.3 **Adjudications** There were 68 men charged this year, compared with 42 last year, a rise of over 50%. Of these cases, 47 (69%) were proven, compared with only 18 (42%) last year.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

- 5.3.1 In the HMIP survey of men, 90% said the staff treated them with respect and that they could turn to staff if they needed help. A total of 73% of men said they felt treated as individuals, 83% said they felt staff were supporting them and almost 70% said they felt able to talk to a manager or Governor. In the HMIP survey of staff, over 80% of respondents said they had never seen staff members behaving inappropriately towards prisoners, with only a small minority (12%) saying they had.
- 5.3.2 In February, Board members spoke to a man who was part of an interview panel for a new wing facilitator. This sort of engagement between staff and prisoners is not unusual in a therapeutic community.

5.4 Equality and diversity

- 5.4.1 The dedicated diversity and inclusion (D&I) manager post was not renewed when the postholder left in January; however, the job was upgraded to Governor level, albeit with additional responsibilities. Significant changes were made in the prison's approach to D&I. For example, more emphasis was given to raise awareness by setting up a D&I action team, with the remit to 'do what is right, not what is comfortable', which now works closely with diversity representatives and peer equality mentors (PEMs) across all the wings. Additionally, focus group meetings are held monthly on the wings. From mid-year, each functional head is now responsible for the collection of relevant data for the monthly D&I meeting at which they will be expected to comment on and explain any figures that appear to be out of range.
- 5.4.2 Another major innovation was to bring in an external organisation, a charity called the Zahid Mubarek Trust (ZMT), to scrutinise all discrimination incident report forms (DIRFs) that men raise (5.4.7) and to provide advice on issues of diversity. However, this arrangement stopped late in the year, as it did in neighbouring prisons.
- 5.4.3 **D&I Investigations** Partly as a result of these initiatives, a number of more systemic issues were drawn to the committee's attention and examined. Actual or potential discrimination issues investigated included the following: that all dismissed adjudications were men ethnically coded W1 ('white British'); and why a disproportionately high number of men returned to unit (RTU) were from black, Asian and minority ethnic groups.
- 5.4.4 **Job discrimination** In May, following questions about why a disproportionate number of Red Band jobs (these are roles with a greater degree of trust and

autonomy in the prison) seem to have been given to men on D wing, it was found that the wing had been going through the process of individuals getting backing prior to any job being advertised. However, on other wings, the backing process only began after the job had been advertised. It was agreed the same process should apply across all wings.

- 5.4.5 **Age** Following feedback and representations made, extra gym sessions have now been offered to older residents.
- 5.4.6 **Education** Towards the end of the year, it became clear that assessments of those in education who have or might have learning difficulties and disabilities (LDS) were either not being carried out or not undertaken sufficiently rigorously and comprehensively. Milton Keynes College agreed to look into these problems and take steps to address current inadequacies (7.2.6).
- 5.4.7 **DIRFs** Over the year, Grendon received 23 DIRFs (19 from prisoners and 4 from staff), of which 13 related to race, six to disability, three to religion and one other. Some 30% responses were late, in many cases because of extensive consultation. Most were dismissed, usually with the agreement of the prisoner. The ZMT agreed with the judgement of the prison in five out of the seven cases it reviewed.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

- 5.5.1 About half of Grendon's population (47%) categorise themselves as Christian, 25% as Muslim and 24% as having no religion. Chaplains of the main faiths/religions – Anglican, Free Church and Quaker, Catholic, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Jewish and Pagan – visit, many regularly, providing three or four services most weeks. Although attendance at services has risen since last year, numbers are still somewhat lower than in pre-Covid days. There is still no Rastafarian or Mormon chaplain and since Covid the Buddhist chaplain hasn't come into the prison.
- 5.5.2 A new chaplaincy 'drop-in' service began in January and has proved popular. Important festivals for all the major faiths are celebrated, including Christmas, Diwali and Eid, and special food is usually prepared. Feedback from the men to the IMB has always been positive. Grendon's annual carol concert remains popular: some 50 men attended this year, joined by staff, from Governors down, and many visitors.
- 5.5.3 The HMIP survey (4.1.2) reported that a significant number of men (19%) felt their religious beliefs were not respected, or were unable to speak to the chaplain of their faith in private (15%). Early in the year, an issue arose about men congregating as a group to attend and lead Muslim prayers on one wing; and, for a time, restrictions were imposed, which caused enormous ill-feeling. However, after a few weeks of discussion, with input from the head chaplain and the Imam, the rules were made clearer and men are now allowed to assemble together on the wing, with a rota for men leading the prayers.
- 5.5.4 The chaplaincy has continued to help with bereavement counselling. However, attempts to use an external agency to provide bereavement counselling, now that Cruse Bereavement Care is no longer coming into prisons, has still not been resolved.

5.6 Incentive schemes

- 5.6.1 Virtually all men are on Enhanced status of the incentive scheme (there are three levels: Enhanced, Standard and Basic) and the community on each wing runs within the parameters of its own constitution, which all community members sign up

to. Issues of breaking boundaries are dealt with by the community in small groups or, in serious cases, by the whole wing in community meetings. If deemed necessary, the whole community will take a 'commitment vote' on an individual, which, *in extremis*, can result in them leaving therapy and Grendon.

5.7 Complaints

- 5.7.1 There was a significant reduction in complaints: from 313 in 2022 to 220 in 2023, a 30% drop. This follows a clear trend, with the 2022 figure recording a 45% fall compared with the average of the previous three years' total. However, it is possible that one reason for the fall might be the growing feeling among men that they do not find the complaints system fair or helpful - a point made by a few men during the IMB's monitoring rounds this year (5.7.4).

The table records complaints for the last five years

Selected complaints	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Property	54	90	87	110	103
Recategorisation	2	14	32	49	27
Confidential access	9	9	57	31	14
Data breach	3	1	26	0	0
Canteen	23	10	14	20	55
Catalogue	0	0	20	10	49
Transfers	1	16	30	8	12
Mail	0	4	9	25	8
Other	128	169	320	345	262
Total of all complaints	220	313	595	598	530

- 5.7.2 The table of complaints does not include any related to health. This is because all health-related complaints are sent directly to healthcare and not recorded or monitored by the prison (see 6.1.4).
- 5.7.3 The Board continued to review a sample of complaints through the year and RAG (red, amber, green) rated the responses for timeliness, tone and in relation to how the complaint was resolved. The process was not scientific. Of the 47 examined in the year to December, our results show that just over half were assessed as green (53%), a slight improvement on last year, and just under half were assessed as needing further improvement (28% amber; 19% red). Senior management do their own sampling and quality assurance. If our sample is at all representative, it suggests there is still a need for continued improvement. Concerningly, at times, the person who is the subject of the complaint is the one who responds.
- 5.7.4 In response to a question asked in the HMIP survey, 'Are complaints usually dealt with fairly?', 36% said 'yes' this year, a sharp drop from the 50% figure recorded last year; 31% said 'no' this year, compared with 27% last year. In answer to the question 'Are complaints usually dealt with in 7 days?', 23% said 'yes', down from

last year's figure of 33%. These figures would seem to corroborate the Board's findings that there is room for improvement (5.7.3).

5.8 Property

- 5.8.1 Complaints about property (5.7.1) continued to be the highest category in the reporting year, amounting to 54, a quarter of the total. Most sent to other prisons related to missing property when men were transferred to Grendon. The IMB received two or three applications (Apps) from such men, and on two occasions we contacted the IMB at the sending prison, who were able to expedite the location of the missing items and have them sent on to Grendon. As mentioned last year, the issue of how different prisons interpret national rules on hard drives for Xboxes continues to be raised at inter-wing meetings and cause frustration.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

- 6.1.1 Healthcare at Grendon is overseen and managed by the Practice Plus Group (PPG), with other agencies providing additional services (2.9).
- 6.1.2 **Patient satisfaction** The HMIP survey in May recorded that only just over half (52%) of respondents judged the overall quality of the health services to be 'very' or 'quite good', compared with 71% in the two previous years' surveys. This is a significant drop, with 43% saying they were 'quite' or 'very bad'. In relation to access, 61% of men said it was difficult to see a doctor and 32% that it was difficult to see a nurse. However, when they did get to see these professionals, 55% said the doctor was 'quite' or 'very good', and 65% said the same about the nurse. This year, 26% of applications to the IMB were health-related, significantly less than last year's figure of 40%.
- 6.1.3 **Data problems** As we reported last year, the Board and prison management continue to have very limited access to aggregate and time-series data. This would allow us to assess the provision of healthcare, covering areas such as performance of subcontracted clinics, DNAs (did not attend) for appointments, access to routine screening, including cancer screening and NHS Health Checks, and in-depth analysis of complaints. This year, as last, the local delivery quality board (LDQB) meeting was often cancelled and minutes from meetings, if recorded, were not always circulated. No meetings were held in the five months between April and September.
- 6.1.4 **Healthcare complaints** Healthcare makes a distinction between 'concerns' and 'complaints', although the IMB has no access to the monthly or annual data for either. However, from what a number of men have told us, responses to complaints are sometimes late, and sometimes not responded to at all, so the overall numbers could be higher. Relatedly, the Board remains concerned about how the prison deals with the paperwork of a man who is dissatisfied with the way his initial health complaint has been dealt with (or when he has not had a response): when he files a Comp1A appeal, the Comp1A form is not read by prison staff but sent directly back to healthcare to respond, rather than using any independent mechanism or process. The issue of outstanding complaints was known by healthcare and a prisoner notice was posted mid-year to request the men to resubmit any complaints if they have not had a response/resolution. Concerns about the way health complaints are processed have continued to be raised at inter-wing meetings, though the new appointments discussed below (6.1.8) seemed to have improved communication between the men and health care.
- 6.1.5 Unlike prison complaints (where the Prisons & Probation Ombudsman/PPO can be approached and, if appropriate, make recommendations), healthcare complaints can involve NHS England and/or the NHS complaints advocacy service. However, the Board has no data to indicate how often this route was used by men dissatisfied with the response to their complaint.
- 6.1.6 There were six applications to the Board about healthcare (24% of the total applications receive) this year, compared with 13 in 2022 (39% of the total), with a number relating to lack of responses from healthcare to their initial complaint.

- 6.1.7 **GP services and staff shortages** Progress has been made in developing links between prison GPs and community GP records, with good buy-in from residents. This will also improve the sharing of information between prisons. However, staff shortages, unfilled vacancies and sick leave absences have affected services; as the May HMIP report observed, 'Staffing pressures were limiting the ability of some services to deliver a full range of interventions, but staff used contingencies and prioritised care as much as possible.' On a visit in March, the IMB noted that staff shortages were so severe that only essential care could be provided.
- 6.1.8 **Promoting health** Early in the year, following the appointment of the patient engagement lead, health champions HCs, which are paid positions, were trained and began work. Their role is to promote a healthier lifestyle (including blood pressure testing and weight monitoring) and signposting support. By November, the HCs were working on all wings except for A wing, which had yet to decide whether it wanted to become part of the programme. These appointments led to a raft of new initiatives: drop-in sessions for minor health queries; wellbeing days for health checks; the production of a monthly newsletter for the men, which includes a 'You said, we did' section; and assisting in the ability of healthcare to respond to complaints as the service has faced ongoing staff absenteeism. Feedback from professional healthcare staff is that these new postholders are doing excellent work, lightening their load and easing pressures caused by staff shortages.
- 6.1.9 **Pharmacist** The qualified pharmacist post, covering both Grendon and Springhill on a part-time basis, fell vacant from September. Though the prison's pharmacy-technician was able to continue to dispense/distribute most medications, more complex cases required higher-level input, which was provided remotely but only on a part-time basis. The IMB was not able to judge whether, in practice, this affected the timely delivery of medicines. However earlier, in May, the HMIP noted that pharmacy services lacked sufficient oversight and controls to ensure that medicines were managed effectively.
- 6.1.10 **Hospital appointments** In general, the system of taking and accompanying men to hospital appointments continued to work well during the year, notwithstanding one instance where the wrong man was sent to an appointment. However, a number of hospital appointments were cancelled, although the IMB does not believe appointments for secondary care face any greater challenges than those in the community. Evidence of a more systemic problem arose in the case of a prisoner who was prescribed medication to be picked up from the hospital pharmacy. However, the man and his accompanying officer had to leave before the prescription had been filled. As there was no system in place for the prison or healthcare to pick up the medication, the man had to wait many weeks before he eventually received it.

6.2 Physical healthcare

- 6.2.1 **Waiting lists for subcontracted care** Most men referred for subcontracted care appointments were seen within six weeks, the major exception being optical appointments where, on average through the year, 19% of patients were not seen within six weeks. In December, 11% of men with physiotherapy appointments were not seen within six weeks, though the annual average figure was lower than 5%.
- 6.2.2 **Covid/flu and vaccinations** There were a few isolated Covid-19 cases, especially early in the year. A significant outbreak on D wing occurred in March; the prison

quickly deployed control measures (including restricting access to the gym, religious services and education). Not all men were affected and those who tested negative were able to continue with visits.

The roll-out of the winter Covid-19 and flu vaccines began in the autumn. By mid-November, all men qualifying for and wishing to have the vaccine had received it and the same was true for the Covid-19 vaccine by early December.

- 6.2.3 **Norovirus outbreak** This occurred in August, beginning in C wing, but soon spread to four other wings, as a growing number of men reported cases of extreme diarrhoea and vomiting. The prison quickly contacted the national incident management unit (NIMU) and strictly followed national guidance: men with the virus were isolated on the wing, food was brought to them and they used dedicated ablution facilities; stool samples were sent away for testing; and intense cleaning regimes were instituted. At night, affected men made use of in-cell buckets, and emergency kits were provided to assist those needing to go to the toilet in a hurry. Those ill in their cells were required to clear up any mess themselves at night whilst still unwell, which was not pleasant.

Wings were locked down for a time, but within a month the virus had disappeared as quickly as it had arrived. The most likely cause was thought to have been through contact-made visits; remarkably, no staff were affected.

6.3 Mental healthcare

- 6.3.1 As many men coming to Grendon are grappling with issues related to a disturbed past in their efforts to turn their lives around (4.2.1), mental health problems are ever-present in the rhythm and life of the prison.

Against this backdrop, in their May survey of Grendon, the HMIP asked men if they had any mental health problems: 49% said 'yes', 47% said they'd been helped with their mental health problems while at Grendon, and 33% said they felt their mental health had improved while at the prison. These results broadly mirror those of similar HMIP surveys conducted over the past few years. It is, therefore, not surprising that many ACCTs opened in the year related to self-harm and thoughts of self-harm and suicide. Healthcare continues to interact with professional staff on the wings in helping to address mental health issues. However, in part because of the confidentiality of such interaction and also due to the lack of access to data, the Board was not able to monitor such activities and interactions.

- 6.3.2 Men continue to tell Board members that going to the gym makes a huge difference to their mental health. An IMB visit in November reported that the Chair and Vice-Chair of one wing had undergone neurodiversity training.

6.4 Social care

- 6.4.1 Social care cases are dealt with by safer custody, which usually refers cases to Buckinghamshire County Council Adult Social Care, with whom they have a memorandum of understanding (MOU) - an agreement of co-operation between two parties that is not legally binding - signed in November 2022. However, cases related to mobility issues, such as wheelchairs and walkers, are referred to physiotherapy. Safer custody communicates the results of referrals back to the men, and where requests have been turned down the grounds for such rejections are provided. Besides these ongoing exchanges, the prison and the Council's adult social care unit have regular (quarterly) meetings.

- 6.4.2 Although no one has needed palliative care, a palliative care pathway and links with the local hospice are in place.
- 6.4.3 On average over the year, one social care referral a month was processed. Many related to mobility issues, and early in the year a number of men were requesting high-back chairs. Although some complained about delays in getting decisions, most cases are dealt with on time and the majority of men who spoke to the IMB expressed satisfaction with the service, confirming the findings of HMIP's May inspection. However, a minority are not. For example, the IMB spoke to a man whose request for a bed-board was approved in February, but weeks later he was still waiting for it to be provided.
- 6.4.4 An ongoing, unresolved issue remains in cases where Buckinghamshire Council's Social Care team recommends men be provided with items such as special mattresses and pillows, but which are not on the prison's approved list (usually due to fire-retardant concerns). In October, one man told the IMB he had been waiting 10 months for such an issue to be resolved.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

- 6.5.1 Men are only locked in their cell at night. At other times, when not in therapy sessions (7.1), they are free to move about their wing and leave the wing to attend the gym/education/prison work or exercise outside (all wings have their own outdoor space, as well as a prison-wide exercise area). The majority of men take regular exercise. The HMIP survey records almost 90% saying they exercise at least five times a week, and over 85% say they go to the gym at least twice a week. During the year, new internal gym equipment has been installed, and from mid-year the PE department put on extra gym sessions for prisoners who have successfully completed therapy. They have also continued to run first-aid courses for those interested. However, Grendon has still not yet re-established group sports activities, because of the state of the asphalt surface. As the HMIP report noted, football and basketball used to be played outdoors. The gym has repeatedly put in bids to have the outside sports pitch resurfaced so team sports can be resumed, but financial constraints continue to prevent this from happening.
- 6.5.2 Throughout the year, staff shortages have meant gym sessions have sometimes had to be cancelled, especially over weekends, while regular gym sessions continued to be cancelled whenever they clashed with wing specials, which happened quite often mid-year (see also 7.1.4).
- 6.5.3 New outdoor gym equipment installed in the community gardens was available from mid-year. However, it has not been used as often as residents wished, because of the lack of supervisory staff.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

- 6.6.1 The caseload of the drug and alcohol recovery team (DART) has grown from 75 at the end of the previous report, peaking in June at 87 (35 active and 52 inactive clients). The drug of choice appears to continue to be alcohol.
- 6.6.2 In spite of key staff vacancies, extensive staff sickness and health and safety issues preventing use of their meeting room, DART has continued to offer a range of services to residents. Recovery stories and mutual aid group events and inclusion step forward programme for prisons (ISFPP) were run/offered throughout the year. Feedback suggests most have proved popular and have usually been well-attended. Perversely, in October, some men did not receive wing-backing to attend

DART drug events. The April 'Recovering Together' event took place, with external speakers; it was attended by 40 men, with 35 attending the December event. They have proved very popular with the men. Acupuncture group sessions, usually run over six-week periods, have continued to be offered to men at Grendon. In February, 12 men attended, but attendance levels dropped from mid-year, sometimes with just one or two men turning up.

6.7 Soft skills

- 6.7.1 In January, after a three-year gap, the annual 'Grendon Debate', with residents and criminology graduate students from Birmingham City University, started up again; this year marked its 25th year. More than two dozen students joined some 70 Grendon residents and staff for a memorable day. Two IMB members observed the event.
- 6.7.2 Grendon's current artist-in-residence left in December and his replacement starts in early 2024. He worked with men across a range of different media. In March, an exhibition of recent work was displayed at a one-day event attended by external guests, the press and media. Another exhibition was held in early November related to the Remembrance theme; and in late November an Art at HMP Grendon Symposium was held for men and invited guests.
- 6.7.3 The library continued to set up a number of creative initiatives with external facilitators. This year, these included a monthly poetry reading course run by a professor from Oxford University and a New Chapters Writing Group course, run over six months by the National Literary Trust, which ended with the publication of a selection of residents' poems. Participants told the IMB how much they valued the latter course. A number of writing workshops, including one led by a former writer-in-residence from Shakespeare's Globe theatre, also proved popular. One Grendon resident had a book (on football) published this year, while another writes an occasional column for *Inside Time*, the national newspaper for prisoners.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Therapy

7.1.1 Therapy sessions Throughout the year, group work continued to be the heart of the therapeutic regime. Group sessions were held three mornings a week and community meetings on two other days, with additional psychodrama and art sessions offered to those thought most likely to benefit. There continues to be a steady stream of men applying to come to Grendon: each month, about 50 men are awaiting a decision to be accepted. In the eight months from April to December, 121 men had self-referred to come. Most men stay at Grendon for between three and five years; in May, exceptionally, a man left Grendon after almost nine years.

7.1.2 The Grendon culture The rhythm of life on the wings has mostly returned to the pre-Covid era. However, it is widely agreed that there is still work to be done to restore and rebuild Grendon's unique culture following the disruption caused by the pandemic. Last year's annual report drew attention to two senior staff members being tasked with a strategy to redevelop the prison's therapeutic ethos; that work has continued. Although an action plan was drawn up for discussion and roll out, hopefully early next year, not all wing staff have bought into the process. However, in December, DART's Recovering Together event – residents and external speakers share experiences of addiction and recovery – was revived for the first time since Covid, with 37 men attending.

Some staff have said that the large amounts of illegal drugs have contributed to undermining Grendon's ethos. Some men said that the failure, post-Covid, to reinstate inter-wing games and promote other forms of interaction between wings, have been detrimental, missing opportunities to bind and bond everyone participating in Grendon's unique and difficult therapeutic journey.

7.1.3 Staffing problems Staffing issues remain a cause for concern. Long-term uniformed staff members with years of experience as key members of Grendon's therapeutic communities continue to retire and be replaced with younger, less experienced colleagues. Additionally, during the year, there have been vacancies for key professional posts, including therapy managers and registered psychologists. In September, G wing's therapy manager, in post for nine years, left, and in the final quarter of the year there were 3.8 vacancies for group psychotherapists. In the first three months of the year, 16% of group sessions had to be cancelled due to the lack of staff, though by September the figures had returned to a far healthier 4%. However, staff shortages have persisted. In mid-November, there were some three vacancies for key professional staff on F wing. At the end of November, the music therapist left, unreplaced by year-end, and the wing therapist is leaving early in the new year. The effect can clearly be seen in terms of what are called 'clinical staff days'. There should be 32 in a month but in mid-November only 18 days were provided; at the end of the year, the number was down to less than 15. F wing uniformed staff told the IMB they were feeling the strain.

7.1.4 Disruptions Perhaps relatedly, the year has been marked by disruptions across many of the wings, manifested by a rise in both group and especially wing specials, aggravated, at least in part by a rise in illicit drugs and mobile phones (see 4.5.1 - 4.5.5). Wing specials were held on D wing for almost an entire month mid-year and were a dominant feature of life on three wings for a number of months. Security issues have been of growing concern: over the year, 12 men were moved out of

Grendon for security reasons, compared with three for 2022 (see 7.1.9). Of the 12 men who left Grendon in July and August, eight (over 66%) did so because of illicit drug use, security concerns or a lack engagement with the therapy process.

- 7.1.5 **Quality control** In spite of these difficulties and challenges, the quality of Grendon's therapeutic work, which is externally assessed, continues to be highly judged. For example, peer views conducted of all Grendon's wings early in the year found all required standards were being met (84%) or partly met (15%). A wing's work was deemed 'outstanding'. In the final quarter of the year, each wing's clinical therapy work was being externally audited in turn, and informal feedback was very positive. Relatedly, as noted above (5.3.1), the men speak highly of the support they receive from staff: over 90% said staff treated them respectfully, and 91% said they had a member of staff they could turn to if they had a problem. Perhaps most tellingly, when asked by HMIP, over 86% of men said that, as a result of their time at Grendon, they believed they were less likely to offend in future.
- 7.1.6 **Feedback** During visits, IMB members talked to both staff and men about therapy and, on occasions, sat in on community meetings. When asked, most men were willing to share their thoughts and experiences, and it is still rare for a man who has completed his therapy not to speak positively of his time at Grendon. One man told an IMB member that through the help given and his own determination, he feels he is a better person and is now in 'a good place', even if in the early days, he said, it was very tough and he had dark periods; in retrospect he was pleased he had been pushed hard.
- 7.1.7 **Out of Therapy (OOT)** The longer men remain at Grendon when they have completed their therapy (the majority), or who have been assessed as unsuitable and are waiting to be returned to closed conditions, the more disruptive their presence is likely to be. Importantly, too, their presence holds back those waiting to come to Grendon to start therapy. Waiting to move out can be soul-destroying for men remaining at Grendon, as their presence serves no productive purpose, not least to themselves.

The Board is, therefore, concerned that over the year some 14-20 men each month were OOT and over half of these had been OOT for more than three months. The numbers OOT for more than three months rose from 14 at the start of the year to 16 at the end of November, falling back to 14 in December. In June, some 50% of men on F wing were OOT, which staff attributed in part to the disruptions that were then taking place on the wing. The main reasons for such high levels of men who are OOT are usually a combination of transport problems (transfers repeatedly cancelled) and the receiving prisons not having places for returning men.

- 7.1.8 On regular visits, IMB members spoke to men who had been OOT for more than a year, and many, though not all, articulated their frustrations. One man was critical of what he said had been a total lack of communication about his future. With nothing positive to hold onto, and being left in limbo, he said that, in his view, he was not being treated humanely.

7.1.9 Transfers

The following table lists transfers out of Grendon by category

Type of transfers out of Grendon	2023	2022	2021
Progressive	16	11	31
Release/conditional release	3	5	1
Own request	3	9	13
Returned to sending prison	0	4	4
Security issues	12	3	2
Voted out	0	5	0
Unsuitable for therapy	8	6	5
Other reasons	13	22	6
Total	55	65	62

Although year-on-year comparisons are not that instructive when each individual is on his own therapeutic journey, it is interesting to note that progressive and release transfers rose to 19 (34%) in 2023, compared with 16 (20%) in 2022. Other data show that 11 (20%) of transfers out in the reporting year were from the assessment wing, compared with 17 (26%) last year.

7.2 Education, library

7.2.1 Education Although the primary purpose of Grendon is therapy, at any one time, between 30-35 men are also pursuing formal education courses, some 20% of the total roll. The figures in the table, below, show a small but steady rise in new starters over the past few years, with a continuing impressive rate of success.

All courses April – March	2022-23	2021-22	2020-22
Starters	109	106	95
Completed	99	94	97
Achieved	96	90	95
Success overall	97%	96%	98%

7.2.2 Lack of basic skills As in previous years, priority is given to courses on basic literacy, numeracy and IT skills - and rightly so, given the need. Figures for new arrivals from January to October this year showed that 46% had literacy levels below Level 1 (equivalent to ages 9-11), compared with the national average for England of 24%. A total of 43% had numeracy levels below Level 1, compared with the national average of 24%. Both scores are markedly worse than last year, raising serious questions about access to and/or the quality of education courses at the prisons from which men at Grendon come.

7.2.3 Courses The number of education courses offered by the provider, Milton Keynes College (MKC), increased to nine this year, from seven last year. The Grendon prospectus for 2022-23 lists the following ones offered:

- English (Entry to Level 2)
- Maths (Entry to Level 2)
- ICT (Level 1 to Level 3)
- Business (level 1 and 2)/Cleaning (Level 2)
- Customer Service (Level 2)

- Mentoring (Level 1 to Level 2)
- Health and Hygiene (Level 2 being offered in kitchen)
- Diet and Nutrition (Level 2 to be offered by gym staff)
- Waste Management (Level 1)

7.2.4 However, a few courses have not been run as planned, due largely to recruitment problems and staff sickness. For example, by the end of the year, the Cleaning course, offered mid-year to replace the Business course because of the long-running failure to recruit a tutor, was still not up and running - again because of the lack of a tutor. In October, 18% of lessons were not provided because of staffing problems. On our visits, residents repeatedly told the Board that they wanted a wider selection of courses, especially those that would enhance future employment opportunities (see 7.6.2).

7.2.5 **Disruptions** A continual significant problem remains the cancellation of classes because of the priority (understandably) given to therapy: when group or wing specials are called during the afternoon, men are required to withdraw from lessons (see also 7.1.4). In the worst months, attendance levels have fallen to around 65%, with 15% or more of classes being cancelled. In addition, towards the end of the year, the prison decided that for a number of weeks, Monday afternoons would be blocked out for staff training – reducing education contact hours by a fifth. Discussions have taken place to try to resolve the issue of cancelling classes but, by the end of the year, the problems remained unresolved. In spite of these difficulties, monthly surveys consistently record student satisfaction of over 88%, and often well into the nineties.

7.2.6 **Ofsted Inspection** This took place in May and graded Grendon's education as 'Requires Improvement'. Besides flagging a number of the problems raised above, it highlighted others. These included: insufficient screening of, and support for, men with learning difficulties; too many men not finishing their courses on time; mismatches between teacher qualifications and the subjects taught; and ongoing teacher support. MKC soon put in place a plan to address these issues, but a few problems, such as course completion overruns, have persisted, while recruitment remains a perennial problem. It is hoped that the creation of a new senior level post in August, Head of Education, Skills and Works, should help to address Grendon's education problems more effectively and systematically. First indications are encouraging.

7.2.7 **Distance learning** In the second half of the year, six men were studying for Open University (OU) degrees, which continue to prove popular. In October, numbers rose to nine, and more men have registered to take degrees with the OU in the coming year. Both the Longford Trust and the Prison Reform Trust are actively interacting with men, with a view to helping with funding, including scholarships. Towards the end of the year, a standalone computer was provided to each wing to assist distance learning.

7.2.8 **Library** The use made of the ever-popular library has almost returned to pre-Covid levels: all men are now members of the library, compared with 66% in mid-2022. By the end of April, on average, almost 80% of men were visiting the library every week; by the end of September, the figure had risen to some 90%. Items loaned out also rose during the year, rising from 1,778 in the three months to June to 3,002 in the three months to September, an increase of almost 70%. Of these, 61% were book loans, compared to 50% at the end of last year.

- 7.2.9 **The Shannon Trust (ST)** the charity continues to provide a peer-to-peer reading schemes, but its contribution has fallen over the year. Last year, there were seven trained mentors but by mid-November this year's numbers had fallen markedly, while both the ST facilitator and the mentor co-ordinator (a prisoner) left the prison in the second half of the year. Given the literacy levels (see 7.2.2 above), this was a worrying development. As the HMIP report put it, 'There had been very slow progress in implementing a reading strategy as part of the education offer, particularly for those with very-low-level or no reading skills. There was effectively no support available for such prisoners at the time of the inspection.'

However, the Shannon Trust is visiting the prison again to train up a new cohort of men as mentors and by the end of November had trained three more men. The Trust believes that with support from the prison, it can regain its former reach and impact, the near-term target being to increase the number of mentors to five, one on each wing.

7.3 Vocational training, work

- 7.3.1 As at Grendon, therapy is the main 'work'; opportunities for additional work are restricted largely to wing-based tasks, with a limited number of other jobs such as corridor cleaners, in the kitchen, library, healthcare and gym. In the year to October, over half of the men had (lower-level) wing-based jobs, 24 (14%) were employed as Red Bands or orderlies (trusted prisoners who take on work to provide services that contribute to the running of the prison), 16 (10%) men had other, non-wing based jobs, and two were retired. Wages are set locally by the Governor; just before she left in October, the former Governor approved a weekly pay increase of 50p. However, it took until the end of November before the increase was implemented and it was not back-dated. With ever-rising increases in canteen prices, complaints from men about the low levels of wages were continually made during the year and regularly at the monthly inter-wing meetings.
- 7.3.2 There continues to be a limited vocational number of courses on offer, which is a source of tension. On the one hand, the prison (rightly) argues that as many men have more than 10 years of their sentence left to serve and numbers are small, it is hard to know what vocational courses could be offered cost-effectively. On the other hand, on visits, men have often pro-actively told the IMB that they would like to use their time in prison to gain practical skills that would enhance their chance of future employment.

7.4 Offender management, progression

- 7.4.1 In spite of continuing staff shortages, the IMB concurs with the view of HMIP that the offender manager system is generally working well: men see their prison officer managers (POMs) regularly (if often later than they would wish) and feel supported. Replies to the HMIP survey reveal that 85% of men said they have, and understand, their custody plan, and 83% said staff are helping them achieve their objectives. Besides the problems of those men who are OOT (see (7.1.7 and 7.1.8), the biggest problems relate to re-categorisation and delays, some extensive, to Parole Board decisions affecting men at Grendon.
- 7.4.2 **Parole Board delays** The IMB followed the case of one man who had an oral hearing with the Parole Board, with a recommendation that he be transferred to open conditions. Although the Secretary of State is required to respond to Parole Board decisions within 28 days, the man's POM received a letter from the public protection casework section (PPCS) apologising for the delay and saying that a

decision would be made as soon as possible. Eight months later, the man was still waiting. In a second case, a man serving an IPP had to wait five months for confirmation of his category D status (which means a prisoner can move to an open prison). And, in a third case, a man serving life imprisonment waited two months for a response from the Secretary of State to his Parole Board hearing.

- 7.4.3 IPP Sentences** There are some 20 men at Grendon under Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentences. The IMB spoke to two or three men after the Government's February decision to reject the main recommendation of the House of Commons' Judiciary Committee's to undertake a full re-sentencing exercise to permanently put an end to the IPP sentence. To a man, they were clearly disappointed, one deeply upset, as were the prison staff supporting them. For Grendon more broadly - whose raison d'être is to help men re-order their lives so they live a full life in the community - the Government's decision was a particularly bitter blow.

The prison quickly put in place an action plan to alert staff to potential problems and to provide support to help any IPP prisoner who needed it. In November, many months later, the IMB spoke to one IPP prisoner who was over tariff by many years. He said he was not seeing any progress and was finding it all very frustrating but was reluctant to raise the matter formally. By the end of the year, the issue still festered in Grendon. The IMB noted with concern that the November announcement by the Ministry of Justice that those given IPP sentences will now be given an end date for their terms only applied to those living in the community.

7.5 Family contact

- 7.5.1 Visits** Twice weekly social visits continued throughout the year and were well attended. On average in the first eleven months of the year, there were 102 visits a month, with 161 adults and 35 children visiting. The peak time for children was August, when 55 visited. Over two days on one weekend in late November, 17 men had visitors, some 10% of the total roll. The children's area was well stocked with activity materials and during the summer months children took full advantage of the outside play area. Most men the IMB spoke to during the visits were very positive, though one complained that the number of visits he was allowed was too limited.
- 7.5.2** As Grendon takes in men from all over the country, distance and cost limit visits for a number. One man told the IMB that this had been the main reason why he hadn't seen his daughter since she was one, eight years ago. Especially for such men, good use is made of social video calls, especially at weekends. One told us that he had no visitors because his family had cut him off entirely. However, some 35 men (21% of the roll) have no visits, either social visits, family days or through social video calls. The prison is aware of this issue and has set up a visits' forum to discuss it.
- 7.5.3** In addition to weekly visits, during the year Grendon has been re-establishing its pre-Covid practice of arranging one-off events, planning these often a year ahead. These include social and family days held in the spring and autumn, when family members and/or invited guests are able to come into the wing, and three separate children's days. An IMB member who observed the March Family Event on C wing witnessed the inter-active nature of such events and their evident popularity for both residents and visitors and two IMB members observed the March Social Day on D wing, only the second to be held on the wing post-Covid. Moving speeches were given by five men, describing how therapy and community life on the wing were

benefiting them; and they were not afraid to say how tough it was as well. The atmosphere was reported to be 'electrifyingly positive'. Disappointingly, however, the Social Day in June on F wing had to be cancelled as the wing was considered then to be too unstable.

- 7.5.4 **Phone credits and In-cell telephony** Over 90% of men who have credit make regular (sometimes daily) use of the wing pay-phones to maintain family contacts. Criticisms of the service are rare, although the Board's attention was drawn to a man whose family was overseas and needed credit beyond the level allowed. Budgetary approval was given this year to install new phones, both in-cell and for staff to use to speak with men in their cells, with links to safer custody, healthcare, the business hub and the chaplaincy. After a number of delays, the new in-cell system went live just before Christmas but experienced initial teething problems on some wings. It remains to be seen whether staff concerns about men spending increasing amounts of money on phone charges will become a widespread problem.
- 7.5.5 **Postal issue** In the May HMIP survey, men reported problems with sending and receiving mail (33%) and parcels (23%, although when the prison investigated in November it reported no delays in processing post. Earlier in the year, one man told the IMB of his distress on discovering the envelope with a birthday card he had sent his young daughter arrived with the card missing.

7.6 Resettlement planning

- 7.6.1 Most men who leave Grendon are returned to another prison, which could include a psychologically informed planned environment (PIPE). However, this year, three men were released into the community.
- 7.6.2 Partly in response to demands from men, in October the prison organised a Careers, Education and Resettlement Event, attended by a dozen or so external agencies. Two residents produced an accompanying booklet, Take Charge of Your Potential, outlining which organisations can help with support, education and career advice, grants and scholarships. Numerous residents and Governors attended the event, as did the IMB, and feedback was very positive. Going forward, the intention is to keep the booklet updated.
- 7.6.3 In the autumn, external bids were sent out to run a course for some 10 men called 'Thinking Skills' to help write CVS and develop confidence for interviews. As no bids were received, a revised proposal was drafted.
- 7.6.4 **Banking** Efforts continued during the year to try to reach agreement with HSBC for those serving life sentences to open a bank account, which proved a long and frustrating process.

8. The work of the IMB

- 8.1 The Board maintained a full year of weekly rota visits and covered prison meetings. A few IMB board meetings were held remotely.

Three Board members were appointed during the year. Current numbers are eight, although one is on sabbatical.

8.2 Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	14
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	5
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	8 (including 1 on sabbatical)
Total number of visits to the establishment	81*
Total segregation reviews observed	N/A

*All face-to-face IMB Board meetings take place at HMP Springhill.

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Current year	Previous year
A	Accommodation, laundry, clothing, ablutions	5	3
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	1	2
C	Equality	4	0
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	0	0
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	3	1
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	0	0
F	Food and kitchens	0	0
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	6	13
H1	Property within the establishment	0	0
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	3	2
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	2	2
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary leave), parole, release dates, re-categorisation	0	1
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	0	0
K	Transfers	0	6
L	Miscellaneous	1	3
	Total number of applications	25	33



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