



# **Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP/YOI Isis**

**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 IMB is part of the United Kingdom's National Preventive Mechanism.

## 2. Description of the establishment

HMP/YOI Isis is a public sector training prison for convicted men. It is a prison for young adults between 18 and 21 years, and category C adults up to 27 years old. In 2023, it was designated as the London hub prison for convicted young adult men, and the number of prisoners aged between 18 and 21 increased during the reporting year. In December 2023, the proportion of prisoners in this age range was 32%.

The prison is situated in Thamesmead, in south-east London. The certified normal accommodation (the number of prisoners a prison can hold without being crowded) is 478<sup>1</sup>, and the operational capacity – that is, the maximum population it can safely and decently hold – is 628. In December 2023, the population was around 600.

Prisoners are accommodated in two house blocks, Thames and Meridian, each comprising a central hub and four spurs. Each spur can accommodate over 70 prisoners, on three levels. Each spur has a servery, and outside each is an exercise yard with fitness equipment. Each house block has a laundry, operated by laundry orderlies.

In a block opposite the house blocks is the Academy, with 19 classrooms and a capacity in excess of 200, plus the Skills Zone, with six workshops; a library; a healthcare unit; and a multi-faith suite. Separately, there is a well-equipped gym, able to accommodate 40 prisoners; a cardiovascular studio; an indoor sports hall; and two outdoor Astroturf pitches. The kitchen is managed by Mitie (a private company contracted to provide facilities management, including catering) with a workforce that includes 20+ prisoners.

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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

- Violence in the prison increased markedly this year, with a 31% increase in prisoner-on-prisoner assaults and a 66% increase in prisoner-on-staff assaults compared to 2022. Over the course of the reporting year, officers were trained in the use of Pava (an incapacitant spray) and rigid-bar handcuffs (RBH). By the end of the reporting year, 76% of staff were trained in the use of Pava and the spray had been issued to 68% of them, that is, 87 staff.
- The prison's needs-based Violence Reduction Strategy 2023-2024 was published in March. This lays out the prison's response to the challenge posed by the designation of HMP/YOI Isis as the London hub prison for convicted young adult men and the consequential potential increase in conflict.
- There was an increase in self-harm compared with 2022, up from an average of 15 incidents per month to 21 (see graph 2 in Annex B). The average number of assessment, care in custody and teamwork documents (ACCTs), used to support prisoners who are at risk of self-harm and suicide, opened per month, also increased from 8 to 11 (see graph 1 in Annex B). As in last year's report, we found the quality of ACCT completion variable.

##### Fair and humane treatment

- The general standard of cleanliness of the spurs continued to be of concern. In particular, serveries were often left overnight with dirty pans and remnants of food from the previous day. First-night cleanliness and condition of cells for new prisoners were often unacceptable.
- There was a notable increase in the number of men held in the Segregation Unit, the prison's care and separation unit where prisoners are kept away from the rest of the population, attributed by the prison to the increased proportion of younger prisoners and changes in the regime. There is a lack of data available about the breakdown by prisoner protected characteristics (including, among others, race, religion, gender and sexual orientation, which it's unlawful to discriminate against) held in segregation as the segregation monitoring and review group (SMARG) did not meet all year, making it difficult to monitor fairness. This extended to no systematic recording of the use of restricted regimes and separate regimes.
- Of the 541 prisoners held in the Segregation Unit over the year, there were 223 under Good Order or Discipline (GOoD) rules (where a prisoner's behaviour has endangered other prisoners or staff, or caused problems for the rest of the prison), of whom 44 were young offenders (YOs; in 2022, the figures were 104 and 18, respectively). As in 2022, it has been difficult for the IMB to be present at many GOoD reviews (which determine whether or not a prisoner needs to remain in the Segregation Unit), as for most of the year no regular time for them had been established. Even when a regular time was designated towards the end of the year the time proved to be fluid and the IMB continued to have difficulty in attending, arriving on a number of occasions to discover the reviews had either already taken place or been rescheduled many hours later.
- The Board witnessed a whole-team approach to equalities, with senior managers appointed champions for each protected characteristic and a wide range of events and initiatives organised by the Diversity and Inclusion Manager and her team. Scrutiny of the prison's response to discrimination incident report forms (DIRFs)

was undertaken by the charity, Zahid Mubarek Trust, which found that, in almost all cases, the prison had been extremely diligent in responding, investigating and resolving complaints.

- As the Board has stated in every annual report since 2018, prisoner property continued to be a problem, particularly property on transfer between prisons. The aim of the Prisoners' Property Policy Framework, to improve the management of property, has not been met. The most common complaints to the prison were, by far, about property, and they also made up 28% (48) of applications (prisoners' written submissions) to the IMB.

### **Health and wellbeing**

- Following the implementation of the new healthcare contract, the provider introduced a multi-disciplinary early days in custody team and a release and transfer team.
- It has been assessed that 45% of prisoner had mental health problems, and that 30% of prisoners were neurodiverse. A Neurodiversity Support Manager (NSM) was appointed, and staff were trained in trauma-informed care to provide additional support for neurodiverse prisoners.
- The caseload of Oxleas Interventions for prisoners with substance misuse issues increased through the reporting year, from 189 in March to 323 in October.

### **Progression and resettlement**

- There was an improvement in the time prisoners spend in the Academy and the Skills Zone engaging in taught sessions. However, more could be done to increase the range of skills offered and also to improve links to shortage areas for employers and to men's interests.
- The Thinking Skills Programme (TSP), which teaches prisoners social and problem-solving skills, was the only accredited programme running in the prison to help reduce reoffending. If prisoners needed other programmes to complete their sentence plans, such as Kaizen (a behaviour-management course for men who have been convicted of violent or sexual offences), they had to move to another prison.
- Staffing shortages, particularly in the first half of the year, frequently led to cross-deployment of offender management unit (OMU) staff to other operational roles with consequent impact on their offender management work.

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

The IMB still believes that the most important development for prisoners at HMP/YOI Isis is to ensure they all have as much time as possible out of their cells, including time in the evening and at weekends. When out of cell, they should have access to education, vocational programmes and work and have the programmes, staff and agencies that will support their rehabilitation and resettlement. This overarching aim needs to be an accepted priority for the Minister, the Prison Service and the prison.

### ***TO THE MINISTER***

- As the Board has said in every annual report since 2018, prisoner property continues to be a problem, particularly property on transfer between prisons. The aim of the Prisoners' Property Policy Framework is to improve the management of property, but this has not been met. The manual, paper-based system is error-prone and inefficient. It relies on the manual recording of tags on prisoner property

bags and handwritten property cards, which are sometimes illegible, incomplete and inaccurate. Will the minister allocate funding to digitise the system?

- Staffing levels continue to impact many aspects of the prison regime, partly due to a high level of ineffective staff, i.e. staff who are unavailable for prison duties due to sickness or other reasons. This impacts prisoners' access to training and education, healthcare and faith services. Will the minister increase the prison's headcount buffer for ineffective staff to allow the regime to be fully resourced?

### **TO THE PRISON SERVICE**

- Loss of prisoner property continues to be a problem, and the Prisoner Property Policy Framework has not improved this. How will the Prison Service improve processes and technology to ensure that prisoners' property is not lost?
- Since at least 2014, the Board has drawn attention to the need for prisons receiving prisoners from the courts to complete an initial sentence plan (OASys) before onward transfer. The current system is clearly not working. How will the Prison Service address this and ensure that every prisoner on arrival at HMP/YOI Isis comes with a sentence plan that will enable him to begin the process of rehabilitation?
- The windows in prisoners' cells are still a problem even though a solution has been found. Only six cells had their windows renovated in 2023. Can the Prison Service assure us that the remaining windows will be fixed in 2024?
- The only HMPPS accredited programme run at HMP/YOI Isis is the Thinking Skills Programme (TSP) and prisoners must move to another prison if their sentence plan requires that they take other courses. Can the Prison Service authorise and facilitate the running of a wider range of accredited programmes at HMP/YOI Isis?

### **TO THE GOVERNOR**

- Can the Governor ensure that data regarding separate and restricted regimes is collated and analysed to provide a better understanding of these regimes' use and impact?
- How will the Governor monitor, analyse and report on prisoners' time out of cell and engagement in purposeful activities?
- Can the Governor ensure that processes for making sure that cell bells are answered in the specified times are followed and monitored?
- Will the Governor ensure that the regime allows sufficient time at the end of the day to allow cleaners to properly clean the serveries and remove any uneaten food?

### **3.3 Response to the last report**

<b>Issue raised with the Minister</b>	<b>Response given</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Require that the amount of churn, i.e. the frequency that prisoners are moved around the prison estate, is reduced so that prisoners arriving at HMP/YOI Isis have enough of their sentence remaining to	I understand the Board's concerns about the movement of prisoners around the estate and the need to provide them with sufficient time to support their rehabilitation. As a designated training and resettlement prison, HMP/YOI Isis accepts prisoners in line	Population pressures across the prison estate have greatly increased. In response, the Government introduced schemes such as the End of Custody Supervised Licence (ECSL) early release scheme and the

<p>enable them to benefit from the training and rehabilitation activities of the prison and for the prison to provide appropriate preparation for release.</p>	<p>with the offender flows model, which includes prisoners with a short period of time left to serve ahead of their release. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is continuing to manage the impact of ongoing population pressures and is looking to make the most efficient use of the spaces available right across the adult estate to help reception prisons meet their commitment to serving the courts.</p> <p>Consequently, all training and resettlement prisons have been asked to build flexibility into their populations and regimes whilst balancing the rehabilitative needs of their prisoner population.</p>	<p>Temporary Presumptive Recategorisation Scheme (TPRS), requiring Governors to fast-track men to open prison without recategorisation to D Cat. The ECSL scheme puts pressure on probation and support services outside the prison, potentially compromising rehabilitation efforts. TPRS meant that preparation for release in HMP/YOI Isis was halted at a critical time before release and that a young man may have been moved hundreds of miles from his home area.</p>
<p>Support the Prison Service in the development and implementation of an effective workforce strategy by ensuring that the pay and conditions of prison officers are attractive when compared against similar professions?</p>	<p>Regarding the Board's concerns about the workforce strategy and the pay for prison officers compared to similar professions, market comparators are a significant consideration when HMPPS makes pay proposals to the Prison Service Pay Review Body (PSPRB), which determines pay for prison officers. There are few professional comparators that pay as highly as HMPPS that require no qualifications for entry, with the starting salary for prison officers at HMPPYOI Isis £34,140 for a 39-hour week. This compares with an advertised starting salary of £32,200 for 40 hours a week for a custody officer at HMP Thameside, operated by a private provider located close by.</p> <p>It is recognised that recruitment of prison officers in London has always been challenging, as HMPPS has to compete with a</p>	<p>We are not aware of a national workforce strategy.</p> <p>Prison officer numbers at HMP/YOI Isis improved towards the end of the year. However, the high number of ineffective staff meant that there were often regime curtailments due to lack of staff. Band 3-5 prison officer staff resignation levels improved from 14.42% in January 2023 to 9.33% in December 2023.</p>



	<p>large economy and a competitive labour market. The HMPPS resourcing strategy for prison officers includes bearing down on attrition to address its main drivers, of which pay is one element. Other steps being taken include over-recruiting in parts of the country where there are no recruitment difficulties and sending officers on detached duty to areas where they are most needed and offering Payment Plus to existing staff to compensate for small shortfalls in prison officer numbers. In addition, whilst HMPPS seeks most of its new prison officers from the locality in which each prison is based, recruits are now sought through a national recruitment scheme that places new officers in prisons with staff shortfalls for a period of two years, after which the officers can request to stay at their placement prison or move to one in their permanent home area.</p> <p>Strenuous efforts are being made to recruit new prison officers, at a time of higher than usual turnover. Workforce planning processes are in place to ensure prison groups have the information needed to manage current staffing levels and make accurate predictions around the future resourcing needs.</p> <p>Recruitment and retention levels in London prisons are reviewed by the London Prison Group Director monthly to consider how to respond at a local level. Whilst HMP/YOI Isis has a small shortfall in Band 3 prison officers, as well as vacancies at other grades, including specialist PE officers,</p>	
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	<p>the staffing position at HMP/YOI Isis is kept under close review. For the reporting period January to December 2022, HMP/YOI Isis overall staff group (all grades) decreased by 10 from 288 to 278 employees. As of March 2023, there was a marginal increase in staff to 280.</p> <p>To increase the numbers of new recruits to HMP/YOI Isis, continued marketing is being used across a variety of channels, including adding the prison to the First Deployment Scheme already mentioned, where prison officers move temporarily to the prison at the outset of their employment. To better understand why staff leave, the London HR Team conduct exit interviews and focus groups to identify the key areas of focus. To improve retention, staff engagement and recognition have increased to give staff greater opportunity to share views and feel valued, which has also highlighted areas and drivers that need to be addressed to benefit the workforce. Efforts are also being focused on levels of sickness and non-effective staff to achieve the maximum availability of staffing resource. In addition, a further outreach strategy initiative is currently being worked on, which will aid HMP/YOI Isis in raising its profile in the community and attract potential future employees.</p>	
<b>Issue raised with the Prison Service</b>	<b>Response given</b>	<b>Progress</b>
As highlighted in previous IMB annual reports, there is the need for a workforce strategy that addresses the		See above.

issues of recruitment, attrition and availability.		
A solution to the broken windows in prisoners' cells needs to be found and funded.	<p>The windows installed at HMP/YOI Isis are Ministry of Justice compliant, but are not the same design as those currently being installed across the prison estate. It is recognised that this has led to issues obtaining the replacement opening mechanisms due to the original supplier going bankrupt. Another supplier was sourced, which was able to supply the necessary parts, but since Covid-19 they, too, have gone bankrupt. The facilities management provider has contacted a contractor who is currently fitting cell windows at other prisons. This contractor has also identified an issue with the hinges and has recommended replacing the whole window unit at a cost of approximately £2,000 per unit. In view of this, a bid has been submitted to replace the windows.</p> <p>All bids from prisons are being carefully considered, noting that demands for maintenance are much greater than the available funding. HMPPS is prioritising works carefully to make the best use of the funding, focusing on risk to life and risk to capacity, decency and sustainability. In the interim, developments with the window issue continues to be monitored through regular meetings with the facilities management provider, which is in contact with another supplier who will be visiting HMP/YOI Isis to try and find a solution to the problem.</p>	<p>Some funding to renovate 70 windows was made available towards the end of the year, but in 2023 only six windows were repaired in a pilot programme, with a further 64 planned for 2024, out of about 480 cell windows that require renovation. A letter from the Lord Chancellor to the Chairs of London Independent Monitoring Boards, dated 22 February 2024, listed investment in maintenance at seven of the 10 London prisons, but did not mention any investment in renovation of the windows at HMP/YOI Isis.</p>

<p>Having published a Prisoners' Property Policy Framework, HMPPS should ensure that it is fully implemented and adhered to.</p>	<p>The Prisoners' Property Policy Framework, which was implemented on 5 September 2022, is the result of extensive consultation, including with the IMB. It has been designed with procedural justice at its core and aims to ensure consistency and fairness and enhance prisoners' satisfaction with processes and outcomes. Given the nature of property and the movement of prisoners between prisons, the Framework looks to provide greater direction and standardisation on a national basis. It strengthens processes in relation to the main problem areas identified by IMBs and staff, including the handling of valuable property, managing cell clearances, compliance with volumetric control (the limit on how much property a prisoner is allowed) and forwarding on excess property following a prisoner's transfer. The Framework is clear that Governors should ensure management checks are undertaken to have confidence that prisoners' property is being handled correctly and with care. This includes, for example, property cards (a list of everything the prisoner has with them when they arrive at the prison), being accurately completed and the volume of property held by prisoners being checked regularly to ensure it does not become excessive. HMPPS also plans to undertake work in due course to establish the impact of the new Framework nationally across the estate.</p>	<p>Loss of prisoner property continues to be a problem, and in the experience of Board members and prison staff they have spoken to, the Prisoners' Property Policy Framework has not improved this.</p>
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<p>Require prisons receiving prisoners from the courts to complete an offender assessment system (OASys) report, which aims to work out why a prisoner offends and what can be done to help them stop the behaviour), before a prisoner is transferred.</p>	<p>As part of the Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) sentence management, the expectation is that training prisons will complete the (OASys) initial sentence plan or, in some circumstances, it will be the resettlement prisons if the prisoner does not meet the criteria for a move to a training prison. The OASys initial sentence plan is undertaken within 10 weeks for standard determinate sentences (these have a fixed release date) or within 16 weeks for those prisoners with an indeterminate sentence. Prison offender managers (POMs) are responsible for completing the OASys initial sentence plan for prison-responsible case, those prisoners with 10 months or more left to serve. However, it is recognised that staffing shortages for both prison and probation prison offender managers has led to a backlog at HMP/YOI Isis. The HMPPS OASys taskforce is actively working with the prison to reduce the backlog by offering remote assistance, as well as overtime to clear the existing start of custody backlogs.</p>	<p>There remains a backlog of OASys reports, estimated to be about 116 at the end of December 2023.</p>
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<p>Provide an assessment of the impact of the changed arrangements for the resettlement of prisoners on their prospects of securing housing, employment and education.<sup>18</sup></p>	<p>Further to last year's response, embedded pre-release teams are now in place, providing pre-release resettlement support for all prisoners, including those unsentenced or out of area. The pre-release teams liaise with the Community Probation Practitioner or Short Sentence Function, as well as supporting pre-release planning throughout the sentence, such as progressing referrals to the Commissioned Rehabilitative Service (CRS) providers and providing a point of contact.</p> <p>Education, Training and Employment (ETE) support, pre-release, is also provided by prisons, and ETE interventions via the CRS providers are then accessible, post-release, for people on probation.</p> <p>It is difficult to provide an accurate assessment of the impact the changes to resettlement arrangements for prisoners has had, due to staffing issues experienced across London probation services since probation unification. Currently, only two out of 18 Probation Delivery Units have around an 80% level of staffing, while the others have significantly less.</p> <p>Due to pre-release teams in London consistently carrying between 40-50% vacancy rates, as well as community teams having similar numbers of vacancies, it has been difficult to establish the level and quality of service, with both prison and probation teams having to work to prioritisation frameworks. For instance, the short-sentence function has yet to be established across London, nor</p>	<p>No assessment has been received.</p> <p>A follow-up inspection by OFSTED, in April 2023, found that there had been progress in the provision of careers education and the creation of a new employment hub had helped strengthen the preparation of prisoners for release. However, the report noted that 'Although managers had clearly defined plans for assessing the impact of the employment hub on the number of prisoners gaining employment on release, it was too soon to judge how successful it had been. A small number nearing release had not received sufficient information, advice and guidance and were unclear about their release arrangements'.</p> <p>Prison performance hub figures show that the number of prisoners housed on the first night after custodial release was 86.05% in January 2023 and 100% in December 2023. Those in employment at six weeks after release was about 7% in January and December. Employment at six months after release was 23.81% in January 2023 and 35.90% in December 2023.</p>
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	<p>has the prioritisation of work with out-of- area cases which, in some prisons, account for a significant proportion of the prisoner population. However, London Probation is working with Local Housing Authority partners, CRS housing providers and prison-based Strategic Housing Specialists to establish London borough resettlement panels focused on improving resettlement planning to avoid homelessness on release. The panels will also provide a referral pathway into the new Community Accommodation Service - Tier 3 - which will provide up to 84 nights' transitional accommodation in the private rental sector.</p>	
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Issue raised with the Governor	Progress
Provide training and/or supervision of officers completing assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documents, used to support prisoners who are at risk of self-harm or suicide, to ensure consistently accurate good-quality entries.	ACCTS are routinely checked by supervising officers (SOs). From September, the results of ACCT checks by the Head of Safer Custody were reviewed at the monthly Safety, Equalities and Use of Force meeting. However, during monitoring visits, IMB members often note that the quality of ACCT completion is variable.
Continue the development of data and information that provides live information on participation in purposeful activities.	This area has improved and the data appear to be more readily available both to the IMB and internally.
Ensure that the prison can show the outcomes for prisoners of the education model adopted for education programmes. Also use data to improve the focus on teaching outcomes for prisoners and their employability on release.	The education model has been revised and the return of in-cell learning packs has improved, with 80% now returned. Teaching is now judged to be 93% good or better. A total of 7% of men have a job to go to on release.
Work to ensure the full use of the Skills Zone facilities.	Workshop use improved over the course of the reporting year, but IMB members frequently noticed on their monitoring visits that workshops were not in use.

Monitor, using data, the approach across the prison to answering cell bells.	No progress. The Board has been told that it has proven impossible to extract information about response times to cell bells from the Control Room systems.
As soon as practical, resume weekly faith services. Require the chaplaincy to provide regular information to prisoners on the work and activities provided by the chaplaincy.	The frequency of Muslim prayers improved over the course of the year, as prisoners have been allowed to mix in larger groups. However, prisoners still only attend Jumu'ah (Friday prayers) one week in four. The shortage of prison officers has had an effect on Christian Sunday services which have, on several occasions, been cancelled on the day.
Provide a wider range of accredited programmes for prisoners to help them address issues prior to release or facilitate moves to prisons where these programmes are available.	The only accredited programme is still Thinking Skills.



## **Evidence sections 4 – 7**

### **4. Safety**

The prison's Safer Custody team collates data on safety, violence and drug use, which is presented at a monthly, multi-disciplinary Safety, Equalities and Use of Force meeting. In previous years, a data analyst produced a comprehensive dataset, which has not been available since their departure. Instead, data from the HMPPS Incident Reporting System (IRS) is presented at the monthly meeting and forms the basis for this report.

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

##### **Reception**

Isis usually receives young men three days a week from a reception prison and not directly from court, together with a small complement of men who are convicted and are still awaiting sentencing. The age category is between 18 and 27 years.

The number of transfers into Isis during 2023 totalled 909, which compares with 982 in 2022, 797 in 2021, and 624 in 2020.

Reception activity data for 2023 is shown in Annex B (see Table 1).

Although the reception areas were kept generally clean, many newly arrived prisoners reported that the holding rooms, especially the toilet facilities, needed attention. This was also apparent from our monitoring reports. From the Board's observations, prisoners were treated with decency and respect throughout the arrival and searching procedures, which included each prisoner having a body scan. They were seen for an initial assessment by the safer custody and healthcare teams, and prisoner induction reps were on hand for advice, before they were transferred to the induction spur for between two and four weeks. They were then moved to a permanent location in the prison.

Prisoners arriving without all their property were, in most cases, offered assistance by officers who contacted the transferring prison.

Cross-deployment to cover gaps on house block duties continued to be a problem, which resulted in a restricted number of officers being available in reception to cover escort duties. In addition, a delay in prisoners' hand-in property being delivered to them resulted in a backlog often accumulating in reception. However, reception staff endeavoured to issue property that was in store as quickly as possible.

##### **Induction**

In the Board's view, first-night procedures continued to be well covered and staff and prisoner representatives were welcoming. Emotional support, if required, was available from a Samaritan-trained prisoner Listener. An evening meal was provided, but prisoners seldom had the opportunity to shower until the following day. First-night welfare checks appeared to be made hourly.

The following day, secondary healthcare checks and safer custody checks were carried out and the new prisoners were seen by chaplaincy, OMU prison offender managers, Oxleas Interventions and the IMB prisoner representative, and were given instructions on the use of biometric facilities.

During the prisoner's first week, education assessment and gym inductions also took place. In addition, there was a follow-up from induction representatives should any further

questions or concerns arise. Regime and staff restrictions impacted on some inductions during the year.

The cleanliness of first-night cells was often not acceptable.

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

There was an increase in self-harm in 2023, with an average of 21 incidents per month compared with 15 per month in 2022, but lower than the 34 per month in 2021. The month-by-month comparison between 2022 and 2023 is shown in Annex B (see graph 2). The figures may be skewed by the actions of a single prisoner. For example, over half (22) of the self-harm incidents in December's figure of involved a single prisoner. The most frequent form of self-harm recorded was cutting, followed by the use of a ligature.

The number of ACCT documents opened during 2023 increased to an average of 11 per month (compared with an average of 8 in 2022). As in 2022, the quality of ACCTs remains variable, with some up to date and others missing entries, particularly the detail around 'quality' conversations and interactions. This has been highlighted in our weekly monitoring reports to the prison.

The Samaritans-led Listener programme had an average of 12 call-outs per month during the reporting year. The number of Listeners fluctuated: there were six at the end of the year, with further recruitment in progress. The top four reasons for call-outs were: problems with staff or the regime, family issues, mental health/illness and bereavement.

There were no deaths in custody during 2023.

## **4.3 Violence and violence reduction**

Violence in the prison increased markedly this year. Data presented at the monthly Safety, Equalities and Use of Force meeting show 319 incidents of prisoner assaults and fights in 2023, compared with 244 recorded in 2022, an increase of 31%. Assaults on staff increased from 97 in 2022 to 161 in 2023, up 66%. A graph showing the variation of violence across the year is shown in Annex B (see graph 4). The trend for prisoner assaults and fights rose over the course of the year, whereas the trend for prisoner-on-staff assaults was roughly flat, with a peak from May to August.

The number of weapons found or used increased across the year, from 12 in January to 39 in December – the highest number recorded. However, the number of weapons found is higher than the number used: for example, in December, 27 were found and 12 were used. The most common weapons used and found in 2023 were razor blades, plugs, objects in a sock and screws. There is concern that possession of weapons becomes a self-reinforcing trend, as young men arm themselves for protection because of the increasing number of weapons in the establishment.

The prison believes, and the Board agrees, that there are a number of factors behind the increase in violence:

- The age profile of prisoners has reduced, with a 50% increase in the more violent 18 to 21 age group, which now makes up more than 30% of the prison population. Analysis of January 2024 data showed that this age group committed 46% of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults and 50% of prisoner-on-staff assaults, when they formed 32% of the prison population.
- There was increased mixing of prisoners, as the prison moved to increase prisoners' time out of their cells and in education or work. At the start of the year 'cohorting' (managing prisoners for activities in groups of 35 or so) was still in place.

This was removed at the start of February, following which prisoners were able to mix and attend activities at the spur level – over 70 young men. At the start of September there was a further increase in the number of prisoners able to mix when attendance at education, training and religious services changed to groups of two spurs.

- Approximately 136 gangs are active in the prison, with about 50% of prisoners having a gang affiliation. Keeping members of opposing gangs apart is a challenge, which has been exacerbated by the increased mixing of prisoners.
- Violence associated with the illicit economy increased the overall level of violence in some months. This is illustrated by graph 5 in Annex B, which compares the number of items found in cell searches with the level of violence. Violence was highest in the months when more illicit items were found.

The number of prisoners on challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs), which are used to support and manage prisoners who pose an increased risk of violence, increased over the course of the year, as shown in graph 6 in Annex B. The Head of Safer Custody carried out regular quality-assurance checks on CSIPs. Examples of promising practice and areas for improvement were presented at the monthly meeting. The prison carried out two case studies to illustrate the benefits of well-run CSIPs: both prisoners showed a reduction in poor behaviour, a move into prison work and, in one case, a big reduction in self-harm. The HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) Report on an Independent Review of Progress of HMP/YOI Isis in May cited, as a notable positive practice, the prison's incorporation of Choices and Changes (a resource pack to promote maturation in young adults) into CSIPs for some prisoners, with the intention of helping prisoners understand and change their behaviour.

The prison's needs-based Violence Reduction Strategy 2023-2024 was published in March. This lays out the prison's response to the challenge posed by the designation of HMP/YOI Isis as the London hub prison for convicted young adult men and the consequential potential increase in conflict. The initiatives described include:

- A range of interventions to support young men in changing their behaviour, such as CSIP and Pathways to Progression (P2P), incorporating the Choices and Changes resources;
- Ensuring the prison works in a trauma-informed way through Trauma Informed Care training and instituting regular reflective practice sessions for staff led by forensic psychologists;
- Improving communications between staff and prisoners using techniques such as SBAR (situation, background, assessment, recommendation – a briefing tool) and RECODE (a framework for dialogue);
- Supporting young men with neurodivergence. At least 30% of the young men at HMP/YOI Isis are diagnosed as having a neurodiversity. Six out of the top 10 VIPER (violence predictor) scores in December were in neurodiverse young men.

In addition, the Belong charity ran restorative justice sessions with individual prisoners through the year and trained and supported conflict coaches. Men of Purpose provided mentoring for the most gang-affected prisoners and the Changing the Game course was run.

Two violence-reduction forums were held in November with prisoners on C and H spurs. Attendees felt that gang conflict was one of the biggest factors leading to violence in the prison, and that having some older prisoners would help calm the environment. Further comments from the forums are reported in section 7.1, below.

#### **4.4 Use of force**

The use of force increased over the course of the year at a faster rate than the increase in violence, as shown in graph 4 in Annex B. In the Board's view, the difference may be due to an increase in the number of multi-prisoner fights, where a single incident requires force to be used on a number of prisoners.

During the early months of the year, staff were trained in the use of Pava spray (an incapacitant spray similar to pepper spray) and rigid bar Handcuffs (RBH). Cuffs were used an average of nine times a month in the first three months of the year and 21.5 times a month on average between May and December. By the end of the year, 76% of staff were trained in the use of Pava, and the spray had been issued to 68% of them, which was 87 staff. Pava was drawn three times in 2023 but only used twice, both times in December. Batons were drawn 23 times and used on three of those. Cuff pain compliance was used three times.

Routine use of body worn video cameras (BWVCs) increased over the course of the year. On average, 42 BWVCs were routinely taken each month. By the end of the year, about 95% of staff were taking BWVCs. Some footage was available for an average of 88% of incidents, compared with 80% last year, and in November 98% of incidents had BWVC footage. Footage is reviewed at a weekly management meeting, following which officers may be given advice about best practice.

#### **4.5 Preventing illicit items**

The prison adopted a number of ways of preventing illicit items. The full-body scanner in reception aims to ensure any illegal items are identified when new prisoners transfer into Isis. All in-coming post and parcels are tested, all staff and official visitors enter through airport-style security, and sniffer dogs, an X-ray scanner and an itemiser (a device that detects illicit drugs) are used to check all goods delivered to the prison.

Data from the Safety Diagnostics Tool shows that the number of drugs finds in the prison was about the same as in the previous year: there were 142 drugs' finds and 20 alcohol-related finds in 2023, compared with 145 and 45 in 2022.

There were no mandatory drug tests (MDTs) during 2023, due to a lack of staff. There were 606 voluntary drug tests (VDTs) during 2023, with about 9% being positive. Prisoners on the Enhanced D spur (for those on the highest level of the incentives scheme) were tested to ensure they were meeting the terms of the compact they agreed when they moved to the spur. The percentage of positive VDTs was markedly higher in the latter months of the year, as shown in graph 8 in Annex B.

Intelligence-led cell searches are used to find illicit items. There were 456 searches in 2023 compared with 498 in the previous year. Over 1,300 illicit items were found during the year, with an increasing trend through the year as shown in Annex B (see graph 7). The most common items found were bank details, drug- and alcohol- related finds, including cannabis, Spice (a chemical compound that mimics the effects of the active ingredient in cannabis) and fermenting liquids, USBs (a computer memory storage device) and improvised weapons.

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

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

The prison continued to make checks once a fortnight on each spur in the two house blocks on the standards of hygiene and cleanliness, with the residential Manager drawing attention to the areas of concern. Checks by the Board still indicated that the standards were not always up to a high level of cleanliness. Board members reported that, on many occasions, unwashed trays and the remains of food from the previous night were still visible the following morning.

The cleanliness of food trolleys and clean trays being returned to the kitchen was variable; on one occasion, IMB members saw a mouse coming out of a trolley in the kitchen holding area, and the kitchen manager reported that this was not unusual.

Vermin have, at times, been a concern, but this has largely been kept under control and a monthly maintenance service was in operation.

Temperature books, which record temperatures prior to serving meals, were being completed regularly and hand-washing facilities and paper towels were provided. But PPE (personal protective equipment) and safety boots were seldom worn when workers were collecting food from the kitchen.

Many cells required redecoration and, in particular, the heavily stained toilets were still in need of specialist cleaning. Concerns were raised by many new prisoners arriving on the Induction spur that the condition of their cells was below standard. Toilet seats with lids have been installed and a screening curtain provided in double cells. All cells have in-cell phone facilities.

In the last reporting year, the IMB expressed concern at the number of badly fitting cell windows, which have design problems. The budget was obtained to renovate 70 of the 480 cell windows. In 2023, six windows were fixed.

The Board remained concerned by the number of cell bells activated but not answered within five minutes, as witnessed on monitoring visits. The cell bell answering system is complex and we were told that it does not lend itself to automated reporting. Prisoners using the bells for unnecessary purposes are penalised under the incentives scheme, but no records are available for statistical analysis.

### **5.2 Segregation**

The Segregation Unit has 16 cells, plus two special accommodation cells (where items such as the furniture, bedding and sanitation have been removed for safety reasons). A total of 541 prisoners were segregated in the Segregation Unit during 2023, of whom 114 were young offenders, a significant increase on the 2022 numbers of 351 and 97 respectively. In the Board's view, the reasons for this rise are complex, but include the increase in younger prisoners (who are more likely to be involved in fights), increased contact between prisoners as the regime changed throughout the year, the significant increase in serious assaults (including on staff) and the use of weapons resulting in time spent in the Segregation Unit. The number of prisoners on ACCTs held in the unit was 25, a 47% increase on the 2022 number of 17, partly explained by the increase in the segregation population. In 2022, no young offenders (YOs) in the Segregation Unit had an ACCT, while there were two in 2023. The decision to hold such prisoners in the Segregation Unit is always made by a Governor, recorded as a Defensible Decision, and is subject to review.

The special accommodation cell was used twice in March 2023, for two different men.

The Board remains concerned that prisoners with serious mental health problems were held in the Segregation Unit, often whilst waiting for an appropriate transfer to a specialist hospital, as there is no in-patient facility in the prison.

Of the 541 prisoners held in the Segregation Unit over the year, there were 223 under Good Order or Discipline (GOoD) rules, of whom 44 were YOs (in 2022, the figures were 104 and 18, respectively). Unfortunately, the Segregation Managements and Review Group (SMARG) meetings, which consider the Segregation Unit statistics and trends, including considering the adult/YO and minority ethnic split against the total Isis population, did not meet at all in 2023.

Data on the number of prisoners held in the Segregation Unit for more than 42 days (requiring Prison Group Director authorisation) and on the use of restricted regimes, was not available, itself a cause for concern.

As in 2022, it has been difficult for the IMB to be present at many GOoD reviews (which determine whether or not a prisoner needs to remain in the Segregation Unit), as for most of the year no regular time for them had been established. A process change towards the end of the year meant that all GOoD reviews would be conducted by the Governor in charge of the Segregation Unit, wherever possible, with a regular slot (in theory) fixed. However, the time proved to be fluid and the IMB continued to have difficulty in attending, arriving on a number of occasions to discover the reviews had either already taken place or been rescheduled many hours later. This was a real source of frustration. The Board was also concerned about occasional irregularities with segregation paperwork.

It was a challenging year in the Segregation Unit, given the high occupancy levels which, at times, made it more difficult to speak to all the men when we were conducting monitoring visits. Nonetheless, the relationships between officers and prisoners were observed to be good and the unit was kept clean and generally maintained to a good standard.

A particularly positive development was the introduction of the Pathways to Progression (P2P), designed for exceptional cases where a prisoner requires additional support from a multi-disciplinary team to address behaviour and be able to return successfully to the wing. Four prisoners benefitted from this intervention in 2023.

### **5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships**

Over the year, 13 applications were made by prisoners to the IMB concerning the behaviour of staff. This compared to 30 in 2022. We have observed that staff usually have good relationships with prisoners. Prison Governors have been aware, however, that with the high number of new staff recruited over the year, there is a need for additional training, both to build confidence in dealing with prisoners and empathy with their needs for rehabilitation. Prison officer numbers improved towards the end of the year. Band 3-5 prison officer staff resignation levels dropped, from 14.42% in January 2023 to 9.33% in December 2023.

### **5.4 Equality and diversity**

The prison continued to monitor equality and diversity across a range of measures, with responsibility for managing this falling to a Diversity and Inclusion Manager and a Senior Officer. One or more members of the Senior Management team act as 'champions' in relation to each protected characteristic. At the monthly Safety, Equalities and Use of Force meeting, statistics were reviewed and IMB members observed the willingness of

prison staff to explore further where there was evidence of over- or under-representation of a group with a protected characteristic: measures were taken to try to understand the causes and, if possible, address these. For instance, a deep dive was undertaken into why black Muslim men were over-represented in violence and on Basic status, the lowest level of the incentive scheme.

Equalities mentors, one for each spur, met monthly with the Diversity and Inclusion Manager. Prisoners' voices were also heard through the Community Council. For instance, it was identified that black prisoners in segregation were not able to access appropriate hair and skincare products and this was addressed.

A total of 35 Discrimination Incident Report Forms (DIRFs) were submitted in 2023, compared with 49 in 2022. This decrease was attributed to fact that one prisoner had submitted 12 DIRFs in 2022 and also to the increase of 50% in the number of prisoners aged 18-21; from the DIRFs submitted in 2023, only 14% were from this age range, even though they make up 30% of the prison population.

A total of 52% of the DIRFs were from Muslim prisoners, who make up 43% of the prison population. Of these, 16.5% were upheld, against 25% of those from Christian denominations or no stated religion.

Four applications regarding equality were received by the IMB over the course of the year. Of these, three related to how DIRFS were being handled, including two from the same person. On further investigation, IMB members established that DIRF procedures had been followed correctly.

During the year, scrutiny of the prison's response to DIRFs was undertaken by the charity, Zahid Mubarek Trust, which found that in almost all cases the prison had been extremely diligent in responding, investigating and resolving complaints.

The prison continued to mount and expand its programme of events to promote inclusion with 62 special days, weeks or months celebrated and marked on calendars, by displays, workshops or events. Every month, a forum and a training event were held for staff. An example of a monthly calendar from June 2023 demonstrating the breadth of activity is shown in Annex B (see Table 2).

## **5.5 Faith and pastoral support**

The population on 1 December 2023 (607 on roll) was: 42% Muslim; 13% Roman Catholic; 30% Anglican and other Christian denominations; 12% no religion; and 3% all others (which includes Jewish, Sikh, Hindu, Jehovah's Witness and Rastafarian).

It was another challenging year in multi-faith chaplaincy. Although the impact of Covid-19 had been resolved, the demands on prison officers' availability, restricted regimes, increased violence and gang affiliation all continued to contribute to prisoners not being able to attend regular weekly faith services.

Friday prayers were curtailed for Muslim prisoners from December 2022, following a serious violent incident, resulting in the majority of prisoners being restricted to attending by spur once every six weeks. This restriction was maintained until October 2023, when attendance was increased to one week in four.

Prison officers' availability had an adverse impact on Christian Sunday services which were often cancelled on the day. This affected the Anglican and other Christian denominations, with the exception of the Roman Catholic population. It would be a concern for the Board should these cancellations continue or become the norm.

The Free Church pastor, who had responsibility for all Christian Prisoners, with the exception of the Roman Catholic population, distributed in-cell packs to the Christian population and any other offenders who expressed an interest. The packs contained daily scripture suggestions, actions to take, prayers to make and a daily prayer journal. These packs were very well received and are becoming a regular part of the prison's Christian population's faith journey.

In addition, the Free Church Pastor distributed a weekly Ras Teferi in-cell pack to the Rastafarian prison population (10, as of December 2023). The pack contained greetings in the name of H.I.M Emperor Haile Selassie, daily prayers, chants and psalms, together with suggested readings.

Sycamore Tree, a six-week restorative justice course, remained popular and was often oversubscribed.

## **5.6 Incentives schemes**

The incentives scheme (made up of Enhanced, Standard and Basic) has remained broadly unchanged since 2018. Over the course of the year, an average of about 40% of prisoners had Enhanced status, while about 11% were on the Basic level. The number of prisoners on Basic increased from the previous year (see graph 9 in Annex B), with an average of 67 prisoners at this level each month compared with 42 in 2022. The figures showed an upward trend over the course of the year, with spikes in months where there were higher levels of violence, as it is closely aligned to the Violence Reduction policy. The number of positive and negative awards is a roughly 40/60 split, depending on events in the prison. Prisoners' perception is that positives are rare, and negatives used as a threat, but this is not necessarily borne out in evidence.

In general, the proportion of prisoners from minority ethnicities at each incentives scheme level matches the proportion in the prison population, although black prisoners were over-represented on the Basic status for 10 months of the year. The proportions on Basic from different religions were broadly the same as in the prison population. The most striking difference between the number of prisoners at each level compared with the population was with respect to prisoner age: 40% of those aged 18-21 were on Basic and 16% on Enhanced compared with 30.5 % in the population. This reflected the increased propensity to violence and bad behaviour of the younger demographic.

Towards the end of the year, a review of the incentives scheme process took place, but it was not rolled out in 2023.

## **5.7 Complaints**

There were fewer complaints to the prison in 2023 than in 2022, with an average of nearly 62 a month. Complaints about property – about 35% – were, by far, the most common. About 12.5% of complaints were passed on to other prisons for response, with HMP Pentonville and HMP Thameside the most frequent. The next most common categories were canteen (10%), staff (6%) and transfers (6%). Complaint forms were consistently available alongside the complaints' boxes on each spur. An average of 57% of complaints were responded to on time.

## **5.8 Property**

As the Board has stated in every annual report since 2018, prisoner property continues to be a problem, particularly property on transfer between prisons. The aim of the Prisoners' Property Policy Framework to improve the management of prisoner property has not been met. Prison complaints about property were, by far, the most common, and 28% (48) of



IMB applications concerned property, with 20% relating to property during transfer or in another facility.

In last year's report, the Board expressed disappointment that technology has not been introduced to manage and track prisoners' property. The current paper-based process is inherently unreliable because...

- the system relies on the manual recording of tags on prisoners' property bags. This makes tracking missing property very difficult, especially when prisoners have moved a number of times.
- Property cards are error-prone, with information being transferred to new cards on arrival, which makes it difficult to trace when an item of property was initially recorded and last recorded. There are five different cards that property can be recorded on, making confusion or omission more likely. Sometimes, the handwritten cards are illegible. Staff have reported that property cards received from sending prisons are often incomplete or inaccurate.
- the process for requesting missing property from the sending prison is time-consuming and inefficient. The Prisoners' Property Policy Framework states that property left at the sending prison, because the volumetric control had been exceeded or it couldn't be located at the time of transfer, is expected to be transferred to the receiving prison within 28 days. This is the reason why the receiving prison does not chase the missing property until four weeks has passed or does not act on complaints until after four weeks. The delay means that tracing property is more difficult.

The impact on prisoners can be significant: as well as their clothes being potentially misplaced, they could also lose irreplaceable personal items such as photos and letters, and legal paperwork. Not only is delayed and lost property upsetting for prisoners, but it is costly both in staff time and compensation.

## **6. Health and wellbeing**

### **6.1 Healthcare general**

Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust was the provider for physical and mental healthcare services and substance-misuse treatment services. Dental services were contracted by NHS England, and optometry was provided by The Prison Optician Trust. The contract for healthcare services was tendered in 2022. Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust was awarded the contract, with the new contract starting on the 1 April 2023. Health partnerships met quarterly at a local delivery board to review the healthcare services provided and the management of operational challenges. At the end of 2023, these meetings moved to bi-monthly.

Complaints to the Trust were in single figures each month, with a high of seven in April and no complaints in March or July. Although there were no common themes, the most frequent complaints concerned delays in hospital treatment. In 2023, there were 11 healthcare-related applications to the IMB.

There were 69.4 whole time equivalent (wte) staff providing services, including a mental health team of 12.9 wte, primary care team of 17.5 wte, 17 wte Interventions staff and four pharmacy staff. This excludes psychiatrists, consultants and GPs. The vacancy rate since April averaged around 10%, contributed to by the creation of new posts that had not yet been filled. These included a social worker, speech and language therapist and healthcare administrator.

Since April, an Early Days in Custody (EDiC) team was in place. This is a multi-disciplinary team that conducts first-night assessments and secondary health screenings. A multi-disciplinary team for release and transfer was also created. This team helps to ensure that a released prisoner is re-connected with a GP, is aware of and able to keep hospital appointments and is in touch with support agencies such as NACRO (a charity offering prisoners practical help and support through its education, housing and health services). The team operated alongside prison staff who are working with prisoners in the 12 weeks before their release.

Normal healthcare staffing encompassed a core day between 8am and 7pm. Outside of these hours, there was a nurse in the prison and the GP on call. In the Segregation Unit, a nurse saw each prisoner every day and a GP saw all prisoners every 72 hours. A member of the mental health team carried out weekly welfare checks.

### **6.2 Physical healthcare**

Primary care was provided through a range of GP, nurse and specialist clinics, such as dental, podiatry, sexual health, optician, long-term conditions and blood-borne viruses.

The number of prisoners not attending for their appointments ('did not attend' or DNAs) was high throughout the year, and there was only five weeks in the year when the number of DNAs was less than 10%. The highest number of DNAs was for the GP, advanced nurse practitioner (ANP), dental and podiatry. For GP and ANP clinics, the average DNAs across the year was 27%, with 12 weeks in the year when the level of DNAs was above 35%. The average number of prisoners booked into clinics was 51 per week. For dental clinics, the average DNAs for the year was 39% and an average 19 prisoners were booked into clinics each week. When comparing the later months with the beginning of the year, there was an improvement. This reflected a number of steps put in place to encourage attendance. These included the GP and ANP clinics moving to the house blocks, using the in-cell phone to remind prisoners of their appointments, checking the week before that prisoners intended to keep their appointment and the appointment of three 'red band'

prisoners (those with a greater degree of trust and autonomy in their jobs in the prison), who could check on prisoners due at clinics. The reasons prisoners gave for not attending included attendance at the gym or education, or association. Insufficient staffing levels meant the prison had not provided a healthcare officer on some occasions and there had been delays in prisoners being unlocked. The IMB has also, at times, been told by prisoners that they were not aware they had an appointment.

In November and December, questionnaires were circulated to prisoners by the healthcare unit. A total of 114 forms were returned, of which 92 gave positive feedback and 22 negative feedback. There were no common themes. Patient forums are planned but have not yet started,

The Board agreed with the HMIP assessment in 2022, that waiting times for all healthcare provision were acceptable, except for the optician, where waits were protracted, due to sickness. Following a return visit in 2023, HMIP assessed that waiting times for all provision in 2023 were acceptable, The Board support this assessment. Prisoners received medication at the treatment room on each house block, unless they were assessed as suitable to have prescribed medication in their cells.

### **6.3 Mental health**

The mental health team consisted of psychological interventions, mental health in-reach, psychiatry, counselling (provided by Atrium) and occupational therapy. Patients with mental health needs were identified on arrival. It was assessed that 45% of prisoners had a mental health problem. A neurodiversity support manager (NSM) was appointed who worked on identifying neurodiverse prisoners. Her assessment was that approximately a third of prisoners are neurodiverse. HMIP found that waiting times for mental health in-reach, psychiatry, counselling and psychological interventions were good, but that it could take up to eight weeks for an initial triage for those requesting mental health input. The Board agrees that this is too long for early intervention opportunities.

There was a weekly multi-disciplinary team referral meeting and trauma-informed consultation with the wider prison for complex cases, segregated prisoners and prisoners on ACCTs or CSIPs. ACCT reviews were attended by a member of the mental health team.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and learning disability pathways were in place, as were the stepped care model of psychological interventions, counselling and accessible psychiatry. An occupational therapist has been in post since the previous reporting year.

The Release and Transfer team developed release plans for mental health patients and contacted community mental health services for those with continuing care needs.

### **6.4 Social care**

Partnership working between Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust and the Royal Borough of Greenwich (RBG) continued in providing support to those prisoners with social care needs. The charity, Change, Grow, Live (CGL), was responsible for delivering all social care defined in the support plans provided by the RBG. Due to the young age of the population, the demand for social care was very low. At the end of 2023, there were no prisoners requiring support.

### **6.5 Time out of cell, regime**

Time out of cell continued to be limited, with some prisoners receiving only 2.5 hours out of cell on weekdays and, sometimes, less at the weekend. Those in full-time employment or living on the Enhanced level wing were out of their cell for about six hours a day. Prisoners

in vocational training could also spend about six hours out of their cell on the two days they attended activities. The prison performance hub metric CU172, 'purposeful activity attendance (overall)', which measures 'the percentage of prisoners in at least half-time purposeful activity', was 24.7% in January 2023. It had increased to 33.55% by December, although it was still marked as red in the RAG (red, amber, green) rating system, because it was below the 65% delivery requirement.

HMIP reported in 2022 that *'We found leaders were trying to deliver too much with too few staff'*. Although this approach has changed and the prison now plans on the basis of available staff, time out of cell remained limited because there were too few available staff. Staff availability was also impacted by the high number of ineffective staff, due to sickness or injury, for example. The IMB notes that there are no current plans to increase the availability of staff, so the regime can be broadened, allowing more time out of cell and more purposeful activities.

Time out of cell was also influenced by the need to control gang-related violence. In order to prevent prisoners from opposing gangs coming into contact with one another, only two spurs at a time attended the Academy and only one house block at a time went to the Skills Zone.

## **6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation**

Oxleas Interventions provided one-to-one and group work support for those with substance misuse issues, and onward referral to community agencies for continued support on release. Within five days of referral, the service aimed to allocate a recovery worker to work with the prisoner to develop a recovery plan. The caseload gradually increased during the year, from 189 clients in March to 323 in October; of these, between four and nine clients were in the community. Between 62 and 124 prisoners each month participated in behaviour change programmes. This range was similar to figures in the 2022 reporting year. All new arrivals to the prison met with a member of the Interventions team; this ranged from 57 to 102 prisoners each month. An average of 41% asked to participate in the organised programmes.

## **6.7 Soft skills**

During the year, the charity, Kinetic Youth, ran nine two-and-a-half-hour group sessions with prisoners each week. These aimed to allow participants to gain skills in communication, facilitation, reflection and planning to support personal growth and learning. They also held 40-minute one-to-one sessions with up to three prisoners a week.

## 7. Progression and resettlement

### 7.1 Education, vocational training, work

The HMIP unannounced inspection report, which included an Ofsted inspection, was published in December 2022 and highlighted the following priority concerns:

- Most prisoners had too little time out of their cells.
- The curriculum did not meet the resettlement needs of prisoners, with the range of activities too narrow to lead to sustainable employment on release.
- Too many prisoners did not achieve their qualifications, and workshop time was insufficient to achieve the practical aspects of their course.
- Careers education, information advice and guidance for prisoners were insufficient.
- There was too much variation in the quality of teaching across education, skills and work.

The action plan submitted in January 2023, in response to this report, highlighted actions which would be taken to address these concerns with deadlines of April 2023.

Ofsted's follow-up inspection in April 2023 found that there had been progress in the provision of careers education, while the creation of a new employment hub had helped strengthen prisoners' preparation for release. However, the report noted: *'Although managers had clearly defined plans for assessing the impact of the employment hub on the number of prisoners gaining employment on release, it was too soon to judge how successful it had been. A small number nearing release had not received sufficient information, advice and guidance and were unclear about their release arrangements.'*

Ofsted noted that insufficient progress had been made in supporting prisoners on the spurs to complete their in-cell education packs, with variable levels of supporting visits across the different curriculum areas. The report noted that there were insufficient opportunities for prisoners to study at higher levels.

The report continued: *'Leaders and managers had not assessed whether the changes they had made to the curriculum had led to an increase in sustainable employment on release.'*

The Board has noted these observations and broadly agrees with the findings.

On 28 November 2023, two violence-reduction forums were held, involving 18 prisoners. Amongst their responses to questions relating to their ideas for reducing violence within the prison, the following suggestions were made by individual prisoners:

- *'We need better activities with education, more hands-on courses in plumbing and brick laying, where we can leave prison and do something good.'*
- *'We need more rehabilitation. Prisoners with longer sentences need more. We get railway only six weeks before we leave. We want more cooking courses to help us on the outside. We want more hands-on classes to give us skills to get us a good job not just math and English things a lot of us know - previously when we have requested this, we have been laughed at.'*
- *'More time out for Skills Zone. Like a proper C Cat. Any other C Cat, there would be free flow every weekday for work, Skills Zone, etc. Here, you barely leave your cell. Where is the incentive?'*
- *'Proper courses. Mechanics. I used to do mechanics in my last jail; here there is nothing in Skills Zone for me. I need to be doing things with my hands to keep me busy and focused.'*

These comments concur with the view of the IMB that there is still much to be done within this area to provide prisoners with meaningful and purposeful rehabilitation. During the year, the IMB raised 16 significant issues of concern with the prison Governors arising from our monitoring reports for this area.

Whilst there were visible improvements this year on the number of men attending courses in the workshops and an improved incentives scheme to ensure attendance, the IMB continued to be concerned about the range of courses offered and the limited use of the available workshops.

Since October, prisoners enrolled in education or training activities attended lessons in the Academy or Skills Zone for 10 hours a week, an increase from 2.5-3 hours previously.

Some courses continued to be undersubscribed, particularly the kitchen orderly positions, where a third of all positions are vacant, and waste management and recycling, where there were often 50% of all vacancies unfilled. Prisoner surveys suggested that the high levels of vacancies were due to the scheduling of these roles and their perceived undesirability, despite these having very good employment prospects. This was the same situation as in 2022. There were, however, waiting lists for some courses, including radio broadcasting and painting and decorating.

Since the middle of the year, education performance data was more forthcoming and showed an improving picture. A total of 93% of teaching was graded as good or better by the end of the year. The number of men taking and passing qualifications was increasing as their time in the Academy or the Skills Zone increased. Success rates varied between 60 and 85%, but average was 70%. Bookings during sessions averaged at 50 learners in the Academy and 10 in the Skills Zone. However, attendance averaged 65%, meaning only approximately 38 men in education and training per session out of a population of over 600, which equated to 16% of the population attending a class-based learning opportunity per session.

Barbering training was provided in small salons on the house blocks, allowing attendees to achieve the Level 3 barbering qualification.

The staff catering facility, the 180 Kitchen, provided opportunities for prisoners to secure a Level 2 qualification in food preparation and handling and offered a chance for men to gain skills as a barista. The 180 Kitchen also supplied portion-controlled meals for the community through various outlets. Men spoke positively about this facility and valued the training it offers.

Third party/voluntary sector courses included music production, football coaching, theatre and media production, employability and a community kitchen. There was no data available on the levels of employment in these areas for prisoners on release.

This year, there was input from a charity, Untold, with some men completing theatre skills training via tutors from the Brit School. The music production course and the music business course were in demand. However, less typical courses, such as script writing or applied theatre, were not so popular. Post-release, InHouse Records offered all students the free use of studio time, with a dedicated coach, while UAL (University of Arts London) and Notting Hill Academy of Music welcomed the men to apply for courses at their institutions. To support this, the men could undertake the Open Book scheme to gain qualifications towards the necessary entry requirements. Mediorite, a video production agency, offered through-the-gate training and employment, enabling the men who had been on the course to work for Mediorite on real projects. Untold was also working with

Switchback to design and build a through-the-gate internship/work experience programme.

The induction course for events management company Gallowglass continued to be run for men close to release. This offered employment opportunities, with interviews held at the end of the course. The charity, Bounceback, also continued to work with the prison to support rehabilitation and preparation for the world of work.

An employment lead was appointed during the year. This appears to have had a positive impact on employment rates after prison sentences for Isis men. The prison Performance Hub metric CU175, 'Prisoners in Employment at 6 months after custodial release' increased across the year from 23.81% in January to 33.55% in December.

## **7.2 Library**

Throughout 2023, the library was available to all learners in Education, and each class had a library slot every day. Prisoners could also put in a request to visit the library through the biometric kiosk (a self-service computer system that allows prisoners to manage their daily affairs), or by completing a visit form from the library or workshops. The number of prisoners visiting the library increased over the course of the year, as the number of prisoners allowed to attend the Academy together increased, although library sessions were lost on 33 occasions due to incidents, events or lack of staff.

Storybook Dads (where prisoners can record stories on CD or DVD for their children) was run through the library, with the charity, PACT, making the recordings. A total of 113 stories were recorded during 2023.

Six entries were submitted to the Koestler Awards in April 2023, and four of the six won a prize or recommendation.

Events held throughout the year included two creative writing workshops with poet Mr Gee and spoken word artist and playwright Yomi Sode, a Bedtime Stories workshop, a chess tournament, and a visit by Bonnie Garmus, author of *Lessons in Chemistry*.

## **7.3 Offender management, progression**

The offender management unit (OMU) faced similar issues to previous years, with shortages of staff, exacerbated by cross-deployment of prison offender managers (POMs) to cover staff shortages elsewhere in the prison. At the end of 2023, there were 1.5 vacancies for probation staff. OMU surgeries with case management staff were being held once a month on each of the spurs. Key work with prisoners was extremely limited. While at the end of 2023 discussions were being held to set up a priority group for key work, this would not address the requirement for every prisoner to have regular sessions with their key worker.

There continued to be a backlog of offender assessment system (OASys) reports, estimated to be about 116 at the end of 2023. This is because many prisoners arrive at Isis without one, although the responsibility usually lies with the sending prison. Prison probation officers estimated that 75% of the OASys reports were not done. The prison was being helped to reduce this by a remote task force.

In 2023, there were fewer applications to the IMB related to sentence management than in the year before: 18% compared to 27% in 2022. The main concerns were the inability of prisoners to contact their OMU worker about home detention curfew (HDC) or recategorisation.

The Thinking Skills Programme is the only HMPPS-accredited programme in the prison to help reduce reoffending. If prisoners need other programmes to complete their sentence plans, such as Kaizen, they must move to another prison, which has proven difficult due to prison population pressures.

The issues faced by OMU meant that some services were not being provided at the expected level. In particular, some prisoners had difficulties in progressing through their sentence plans. The situation was exacerbated by a high churn of prisoners on short sentences. Some men arrived at Isis with only a few weeks left to serve.

#### **7.4 Family contact**

Over the year, there were 4,434 social visits, 2,531 social video calls and 81 prisoners attended Family Days (which bring together prisoners and their families outside of their statutory entitlement, usually in more informal settings), with 226 visitors attending.

#### **7.5 Resettlement planning**

There were 659 releases in 2023, more than the 527 in 2022.

Prison officers and probation officers in the prison manage the release of prisoners, with local probation officers dealing with the higher risk offenders. There were continued issues with the lack of probation staff in the prison and in local area, which made preparing prisoners for release less effective.

There were a number of initiatives and courses in the prison to prepare prisoners for release. Prison staff have brought together useful directories of organisations and initiatives, one for prisoners and one for staff.

The IMB carried out a small survey of prisoners nearing their release date. The answers to the questionnaire confirmed the information collected by the prison that nearly all prisoners had accommodation arranged and all had bank accounts. However, more than half of the respondents had not spoken to a member of staff about their release.

Some organisations provided direct support for prisoners on release. St Mungo's dealt with housing referrals for prisoners released to London boroughs. Up to October 2023, the charity reports that 96% of prisoners were housed on the first night of release. However, they said there have been issues with contacting some community offender managers (COMs) and a lack of response from some boroughs. The prison employment hub supports prisoners into work and training. Trailblazers and Switchback provide some support through the gate.

As mentioned in previous years, the disparate nature of the services on and after release and the lack of an effective mechanism for tracking the short- and longer- term outcomes for those released from Isis means it is very difficult to measure the 'success' of the initiatives in the prison to help prisoners with accommodation, employment and wellbeing after release.



## 8. The work of the IMB

### Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	14
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	9
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	11
Total number of shifts on the 0800 telephone line	25
Total number of visits to the establishment	335

### Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	5	18
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	6	12
C	Equality		4
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	3	9
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	6	4
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	4	4
F	Food and kitchens	1	1
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	7	11
H1	Property within the establishment	16	14
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	28	34
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	1	1
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence), parole, release dates, re-categorisation	46	31
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	30	13
K	Transfers	7	8
L	Miscellaneous	8	6
	<b>Total number of applications</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>170</b>

## **Annex A**

### **Service providers**

- Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust provides healthcare, while Oxleas Interventions provides support to those with substance misuse issues.
- Novus is the education provider.
- Library services are provided by the Royal Borough of Greenwich.
- Mitie provides comprehensive facilities management, including catering.
- Charitable, voluntary or business organisations working within the prison included:
  - The Shannon Trust
  - Switchback
  - Kinetic
  - Belong
  - Bounce Back
  - Atrium
  - St Mungo's
  - Samaritans
  - Trailblazers
  - Forward Trust
  - Untold
  - Guildhall
  - The Brit School
  - The Young Vic
  - Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT)
  - Synergy
  - Changing the Game
  - Storybook Dads
  - Gallowglass
  - Goldsmiths College
  - Shaw Trust

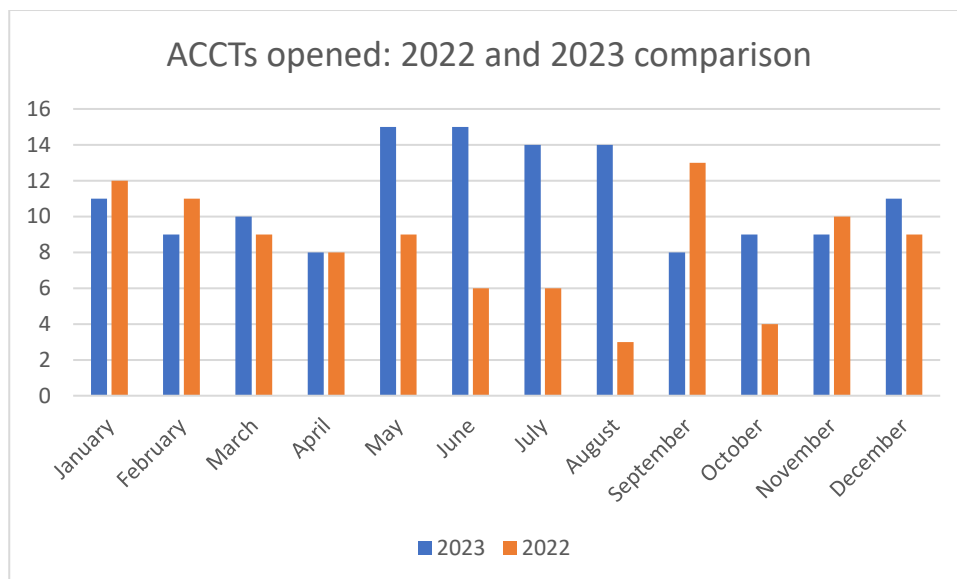
## Annex B

### Tables and graphs

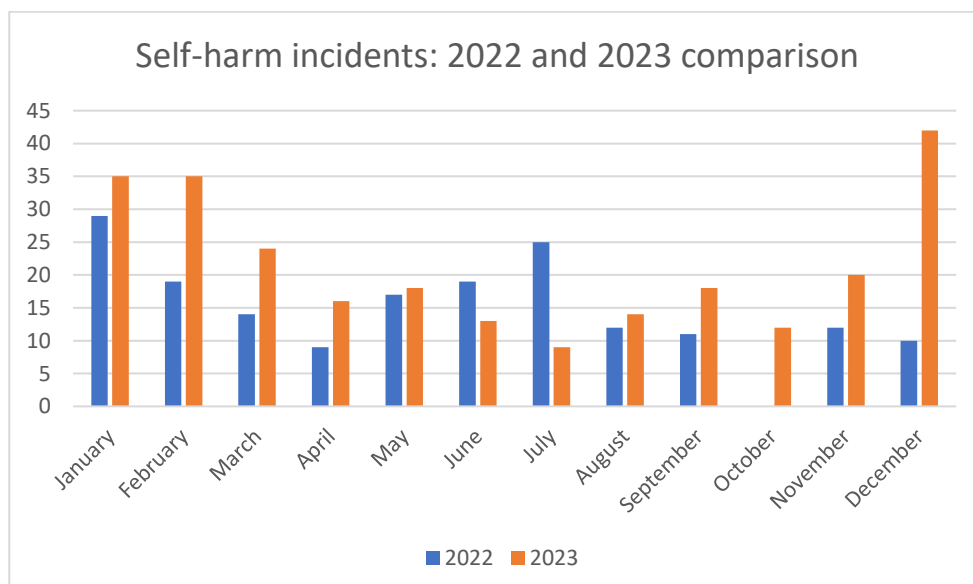
Table 1: 2023 Reception activity

Release	Transfer in	Transfer out	Hospital escort	Funeral escort	Transfer to court	Bed-watches
659	909	175	265	9	93	12

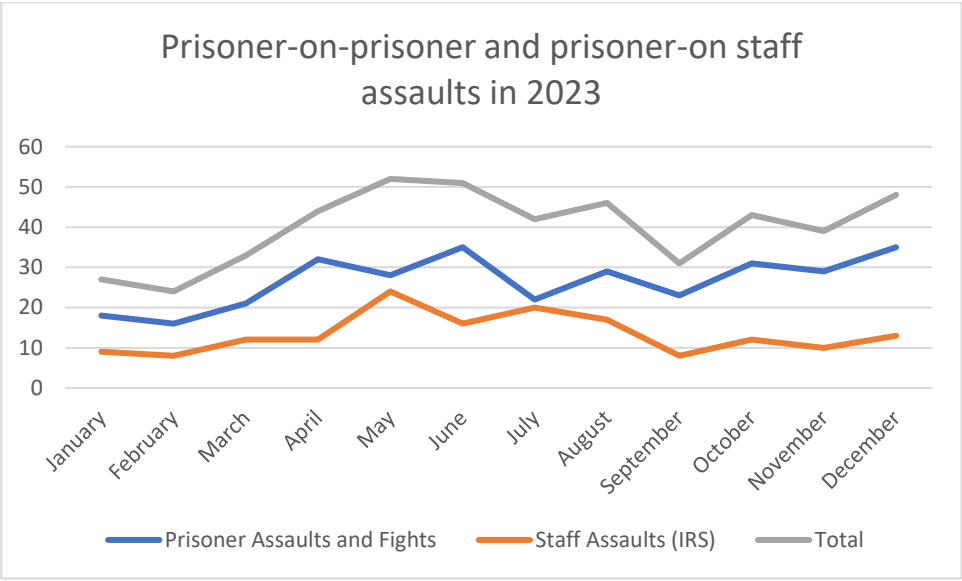
Graph 1



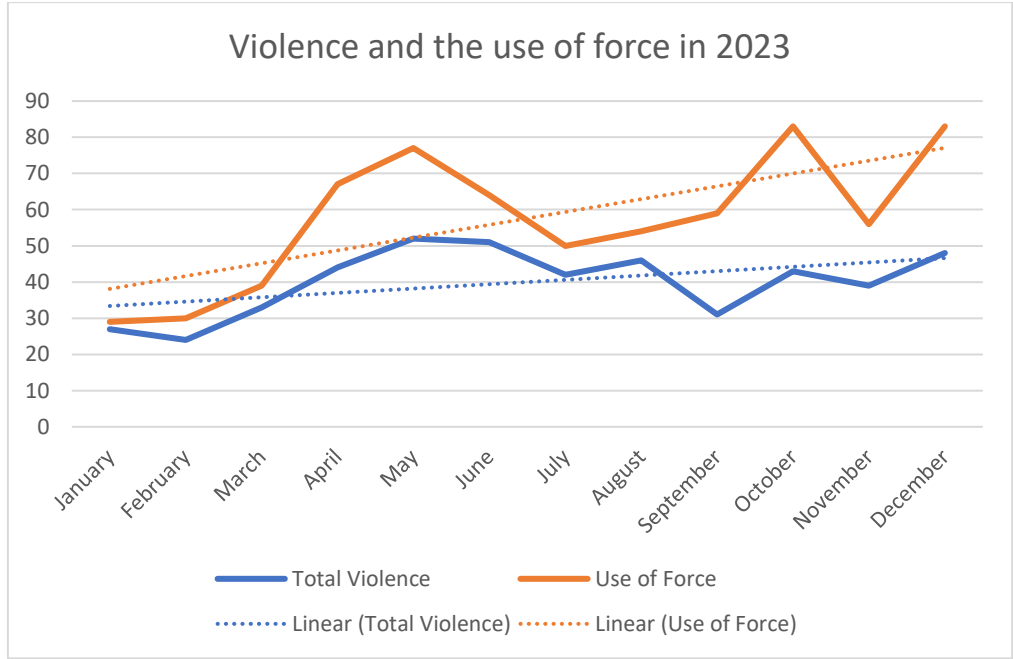
Graph 2



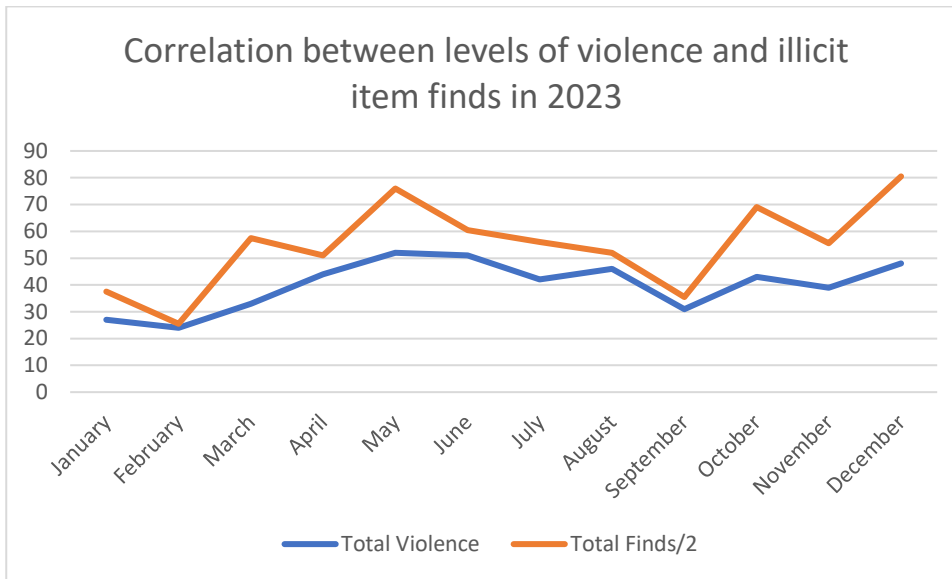
Graph 3



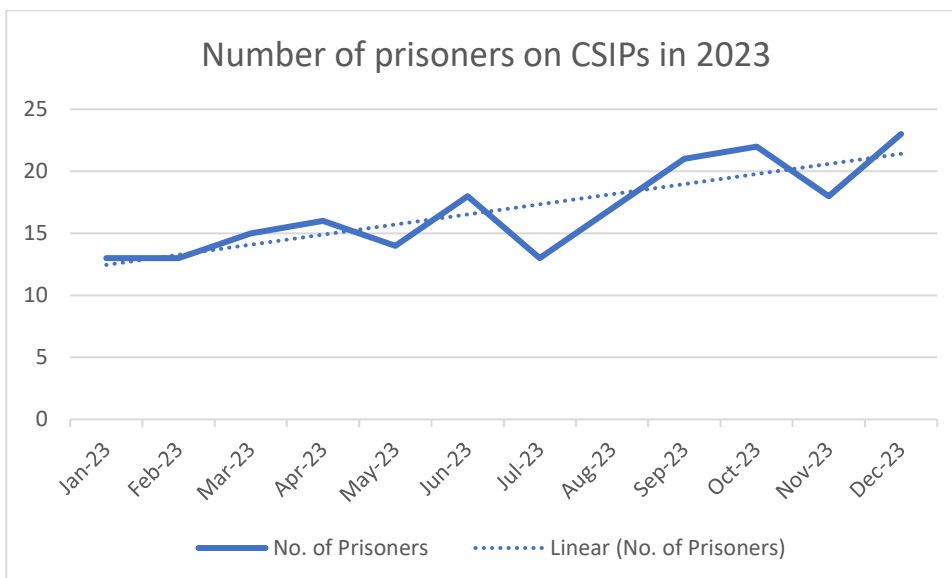
Graph 4



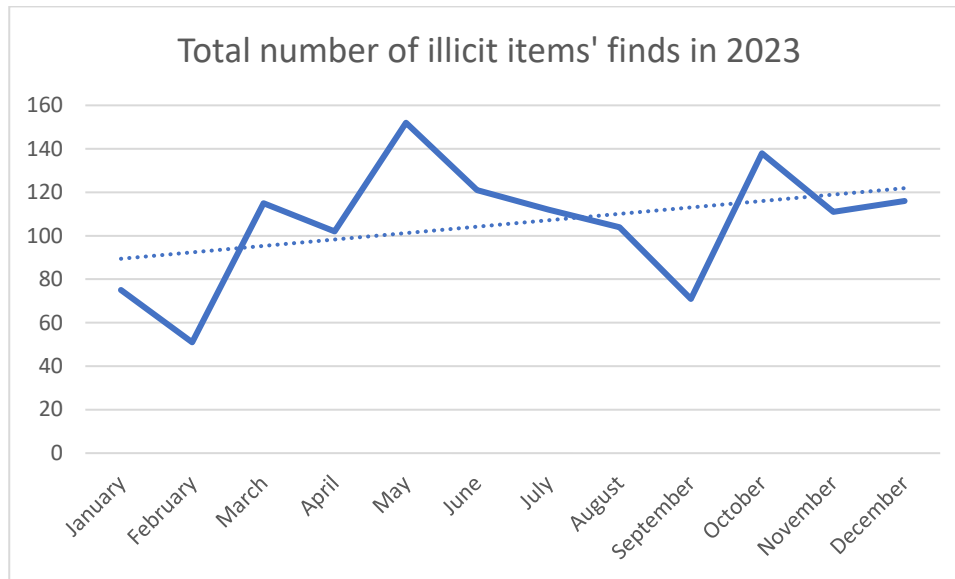
Graph 5



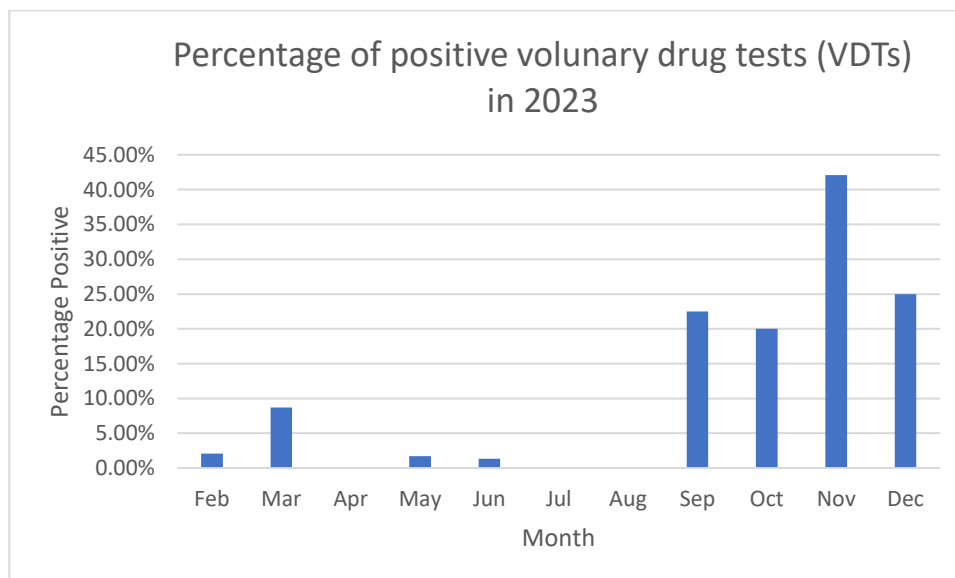
Graph 6



Graph 7



Graph 8



Graph 9

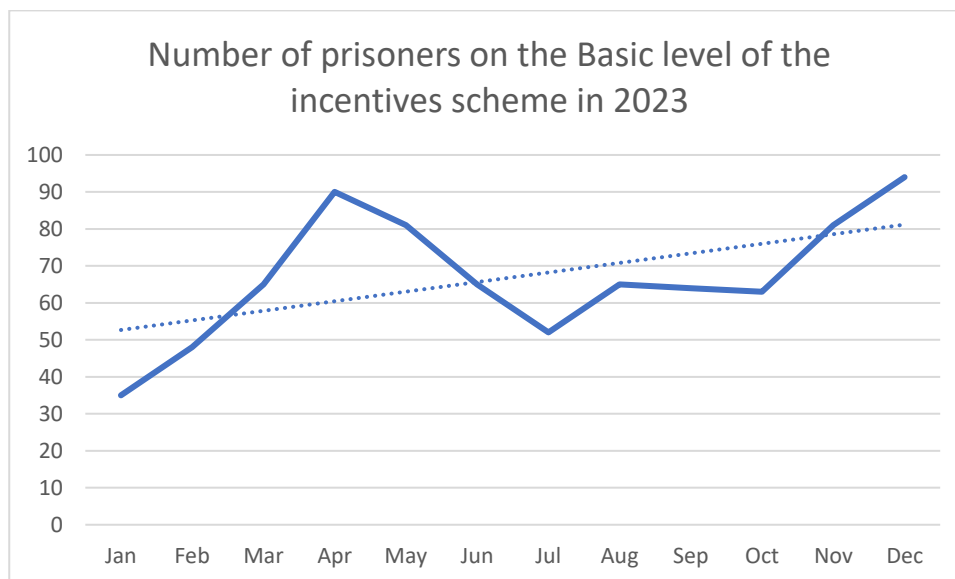


Table 2: an example of a monthly calendar from June 2023 demonstrating the breadth of activity organised by the Diversity and Inclusion Manager alongside the Senior Management team.

FORUM: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller and Use of Force   TRAINING: Supporting our GRT men			
June	1-30	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month, plus Pride Month	GRT event for prisoners, GRT and LGBTQ+ hub decorations, NTS and Staff Inclusion Event for Pride, GRT and LGBTQ+ badges
	12-18	Men's Health Awareness Week	Cop a Feel challenge on spurs, MOT for staff
	19-25	Learning Disability Week	Senior Management Team Champions organised event
	22	Windrush Day	P4 Display, info on prisoner TV channel
		Pride	Pride activities across the prison and throughout the month



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