



# **Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Highpoint**

**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 Highpoint was originally opened as a prison in 1977 and has undergone a number of estate reconfigurations over the years. The prison is sited on a former Royal Air Force base, using many of the original buildings, and is split over two adjacent sites (north and south). It is situated some 10 miles southeast of Newmarket in rural Suffolk.

HMP Highpoint is a male category C men's training and resettlement prison (for those whose escape risk is considered to be low but who cannot be trusted in an open prison) for London and Essex. The operational capacity (the maximum number of prisoners that can be held without serious risk to safety, security, good order and the proper running of the planned regime) for the reporting period was 1,270<sup>1</sup>.

Accommodation at the prison varies considerably in terms of fabric and facilities. At the beginning of the reporting year, there were ten residential units on the south site, which include:

- Unit 1: A & B wings
- Unit 2: C & D wings
- Unit 3: E & F spurs
- Unit 4: G & H spurs
- Unit 5: J & K spurs (unit 5, K spur, houses newly arrived prisoners until they can be located to an appropriate unit. This facilitates the delivery of the induction process.)
- Unit 6
- Unit 7: became operational by April/May 2023
- Unit 8: Q, R & S spurs
- Unit 9: T, V & W spurs
- Unit 10: X, Y & Z spurs

En-suite cells are available on units 8, 9 and 10.

On the north site, there are five residential units, which include units 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15.

Most units have in-cell sanitation, except for units 11, 12 and 13 on the north site, which have 24-hour access to lavatory and shower recesses site.

In the previous reporting year, two units had been deemed to be a fire hazard, and by the beginning of 2022 both units had been closed. Unit 6 (40 beds) has been demolished and replaced with 33 Containex accommodation units (portable cabins). Unit 7 (40 beds) was demolished in May, to be replaced by a further 51 Containex units. This had not yet happened by the end of the reporting year.

Most cells are single occupancy; however, there are 38 overcrowded cells across both sites.

Unit 5, K spur, houses newly arrived prisoners until they can be located to an appropriate unit. This facilitates the delivery of the induction process.

Unit 7A consisted of 20 individual units, brought in by HMPPS to provide a temporary solution to the use of overcrowded accommodation. These were removed in January 2022.

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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.

New build: during the reporting year, work was started on the new build. In August 2022, planning permission was granted for extending HMP Highpoint by 741 additional spaces. These will be in three, four-storey T60 accommodation blocks (which comprise three accommodation wings connected to a central support wing, with six different types of ensuite cells). There will be a new workshop building, kitchen, vocational training course (VTC)/education/multi-faith centre, healthcare unit, an extension to the current gate, prisoner property store and outside stores building. In addition, the gym facilities will be extended and improved, and there will be a refurbishment of both reception and the communications room. The infrastructure works were started, but had to be stopped due to asbestos being found buried on the construction site. It was anticipated that the works should have recommended by December 2023.

The dynamics of HMP Highpoint, with its split site and large population held some distance from home (60% come from London or Essex) in a remote and rural location, continue to create significant performance challenges for the prison and make Highpoint a complex establishment.

Agencies and contractors for the prison include:

- Drug rehabilitation services: Phoenix Futures
- Services for families and children: Ormiston Trust
- Healthcare: Practice Plus Group Health and Rehabilitation Services Ltd
- Improving access to psychological therapies (IAPT): Forward Trust
- Escort contractors: Serco, GeoAmey and Mitie (for immigration transport)
- Learning and skills, education and training: People Plus
- Maintenance: Gov Facility Services Ltd (GFSL)
- Resettlement housing (London): St Mungo's
- Information, advice and guidance (IAG): Forward Trust

### **3. Key points**

#### **Background to the report**

This report covers the period from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023. Evidence is gathered from observations made on regular visits, monitoring meetings, scrutiny of data, informal contact with prisoners and staff, surveys and applications (written representations prisoners submit to the IMB).

During the reporting year, the population at Highpoint was around 1,300. Highpoint is one of the largest category C training and resettlement prisons in the country, supporting prisoners who are at various stages in their sentences.

There was a significant increase in self-harm, the number of prisoners supported by the assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) procedures (for those at risk of self-harm and suicide) and the number of reported incidents of violence and disruption.

PAVA (an incapacitant spray) was introduced to HMP Highpoint in the reporting year and was used twice: once in the gym and once on a unit.

The Board has introduced a system of recording any incident where PAVA is used and is recorded as an incident.

There was thorough screening and support for prisoners arriving at Highpoint, and those considered vulnerable continued to be supported throughout their stay. A new strategy was issued in 2023 to help prisoners who are in debt to other prisoners.

#### **3.1 Main findings**

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

In its inspection in October, HMP Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) reported that the segregation unit, where prisoners are separated from the rest of the prison population, was one of the best in the UK. From the HMIP's report, it has continued to be well run and used effectively to support prisoners.

The key worker scheme (where a member of prison staff supports a prisoner throughout the custodial period) was still in place in the reporting year. Various prisoner forums were in place during the reporting year.

During the reporting year, standards of maintenance and general repair in the prison have remained a cause for concern, with work often not completed in a timely manner.

Applications made to the Board about lost property decreased slightly during the reporting year.

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

The GP and nurse-led services achieved a positive rating across the majority of metrics. Mental health needs were matched by resources 95% of the time. Support for those needing help with drug addiction and alcoholism was available. Social care provision now includes a designated officer's support, with a 17.5-hour allocation subject to regime.

##### **Progression and resettlement**

A wide range of courses, both educational and vocational, are available. The Board reports that there was a positive reduction in the backlog of work cases and caseloads have reduced.

Offending behaviour courses, Kaizen (for high or very high-risk adult men who have been convicted of a sexual, including intimate partner violence), and the Thinking Skills Programme (for prisoners with a medium to high risk of reoffending, which supports participants to develop thinking/cognitive skills to manage risk factors, develop protective factors and achieve pro-social goals) are available to prisoners. However, there is still a waiting list.

Social visits and social video calls continued. Resettlement planning continued. Staffing levels are good, and caseloads remain at 50 to 60 prisoners being dealt with per month.

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

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

3.2.1 In spite of the revised Prisoners' Property Policy Framework, the loss or delay of prisoners' property in transfer between establishments is still a concern for the Board, as it was in our last report in 2022. The Board, once again, asks for an urgent review into the handling of prisoners' belongings.

3.2.2 There has been no improvement in the management of prisoners' property within the prison, and the Board would also like to see an improvement in the handling of prisoners' parcels within the security framework.

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

3.2.3 The service provided by Gov Facility Services Ltd (GFSL) is still a major cause for concern. The Board, once again, requests an urgent review of the works maintenance contract to ensure it fully meets the ongoing needs of a challenging prison environment.

3.2.4 As noted in our last report, the netting that blew down in a storm is slowly being replaced (in most units). The prison is still vulnerable to 'throw-overs' (where people from outside the prison throw parcels over the walls, which contain illicit items, to be picked up by prisoners), and the increased opportunity for contraband to get into the prison, which has a negative impact on the health and wellbeing of the prisoners.

#### ***TO THE GOVERNOR***

3.2.5 The Board is aware that drug debt and fermenting liquids to brew prison alcohol are a major concern and we welcome the strategies being implemented to counteract this.

### **3.3 Progress since the last report**

There are a number of developments the Board particularly wishes to highlight as having positive outcomes for prisoners:

- The ongoing development of the key worker scheme.
- Unit 11 on the north site and units 6 and 7 on the south site are now incentivised substance free living (ISFL) areas, where prisoners can receive support and treatment.
- The provision of therapeutic courses in art, music and creative writing.

## Evidence sections 4 – 7

### 4. Safety

#### 4.1 Reception and Induction

4.1.1 Prisoners and their property are searched on arrival. A body scanner was installed in December 2020 and its use is intelligence-led. Its use has to be voluntary, with location to the Segregation Unit, where prisoners are segregated, the usual alternative option for refusal.

4.1.2 The prisoner's property is checked in front of them and, if appropriate, issued to them.

4.1.3 New arrivals are given an 'advance' of £25 for buying additional items. This system helps to reduce some potential debt issues.

4.1.4 On occasion, there are late arrivals. Highpoint does not have a lockout time, but prisoners arriving after about 5.30pm will, following security checks, be given an overnight bag before being located on the induction wing. In normal circumstances, they will have their property logged and be brought back to reception the following morning to have it checked. Prisoners are given the opportunity to make a swap, if they wish, for an alternative item of clothing to be issued.

4.1.5 As there are no healthcare staff on site at this time in the evening, late arrivals are located directly to the induction unit and placed on observation until they are seen by healthcare the following day.

4.1.6 The induction unit is situated on unit 5, K spur. All new arrivals are monitored during the first night. The prison reports that the frequency of checks depends on whether:

- all checks have been completed (in which case, a prisoner is observed every three hours); or
- the screening has not been completed (in which case, the prisoner is observed every hour); or
- the prisoner has not seen healthcare (in which case, the prisoner is observed every 30 minutes).

4.1.7 Chaplaincy sees all new arrivals in person, one to one, within 24 hours of arrival. They signpost the pastoral care available from the chaplaincy team, ensure that religious affiliations are noted and enquire about the prisoner's welfare.

4.1.8 On their first morning on the wing, the new arrivals should meet with orderlies (trusted prisoners who take on work to provide services that contribute to the running of the prison) and be given core information about the prison, the various units and details of the support and treatment available for those who self-harm and/or have drug-misuse issues. All new arrivals are given an information booklet, produced by prisoners, about all aspects of prison life in HMP Highpoint. This is a useful document, as prisoners can refer back to it. However, the IMB is concerned that there are some prisoners who are unable to read but do not always declare this on arrival on the induction unit.

4.1.9 On the second morning of induction, prisoners go for education screening and meet with the Forward Trust charity, which offers information, advice and guidance (IAG). They are also told about employment opportunities and visit the library and are given an introduction to the services offered by the library.



4.1.10 The Board is assured that every effort is made to establish each new prisoner's learning needs and disabilities and to facilitate an individual learning plan. Those with low attainment are strongly advised to attend maths and English classes. Passes in these subjects are obligatory before enrolment on some other courses, such as carpentry, for example.

4.1.11 The IMB has observed the education and library induction process. The staff try hard to include all the prisoners and tell them what is available and when. However, it was obvious that, for a number of those attending, there was too much information to take in at a time, when they were trying to adjust and understand their new environment.

4.1.12 On the third morning, new arrivals are seen again by healthcare and are offered blood tests/screening as part of the consultation.

4.1.13 Once induction has been completed on the third day, prisoners are cleared to move into other accommodation. This can be immediate if there is a vacancy on an appropriate unit. Priority for moves is given to those prisoners who have been on unit 5 the longest. The vast majority leave the induction unit between 7 and 14 days after arrival. Some prisoners can take longer to place if, for example, they require a single cell or an ensuite shower because they have a disability.

4.1.14 As in previous years, the prisoners the Board spoke to on the induction unit were appreciative of the induction arrangements and felt they had been treated with respect and fairness by reception staff.

4.1.15 Property-related applications to the IMB fluctuated throughout the year. There is an issue regarding prisoners being allowed a certain item of property at one establishment but ending up not being issued in HMP Highpoint because of security issues. In the Board's view, universal property regulations would help considerably. Some prisoners have a large amount of property in their cells and a volumetric control scheme was introduced at the end of 2023.

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

4.2.1 During the reporting year, there were, unfortunately, two deaths in custody. These were reported to the Board and recorded as serious incidents.

4.2.2 The number of self-harm incidents at Highpoint has increased significantly during 2023. By way of context, there were 357 reported incidents of self-harm in 2021 and 322 in 2022 (a figure that was back in line with the 320 self-harm incidents recorded pre-pandemic, in 2018). However, during 2023, there were 585 incidents of self-harm, a very big year-on-year increase of 271 cases. A total of 367 prisoners self-harmed by cutting themselves; 76 attempted to hang themselves; 75 attempted strangulation; and 67 ingested harmful substances or objects.

4.2.3 By far, the majority of self-harm incidents involved prisoners cutting themselves. This appears to be in line with the trends of prisoner self-harm observed nationally.

4.2.4 The IMB has been told that the reasons for self-harm have remained much the same as in previous years. The most common reasons given by prisoners for self-harming were:

- Location issues (e.g. the prisoner wanted to be moved off a unit or they had been moved to a unit they did not want to be on, or they wanted a transfer out of the establishment).

- Incentives scheme issues (e.g. having their TV removed, due to being placed on the Basic level of the scheme, following a Serious Single Incident Board, which decides whether or not the prisoner is to be downgraded to the Basic level after acts of violence, the discovery of phones, barricades or any disobedience of lawful order).
- Family issues (e.g. bereavement, concern for an ill family member or relationship issues).
- Debt.
- Healthcare: mental health triggers for self-harming episodes remained diverse in 2023.

4.2.5 The number incidents of self-harm do not equate to the number of prisoners self-harming. There was a significant number of prisoners who self-harmed on several occasions during 2023.

4.2.6 There are three constant-watch cells at Highpoint. The Board is concerned that one of these is in the Segregation Unit, which is considered inappropriate. However, the IMB has been reassured that its use for constant watches of prisoners not already placed in the segregation unit is rare. When it does occur, special measures are put in place for such prisoners, including walks outside of the segregation unit.

4.2.7 The constant-watch cells were used on 27 occasions during the period January 2023 to December 2023, and 18 prisoners were placed under constant watch.

4.2.8 Very sadly, one prisoner was found dead in his cell in 2023 from, apparently, self-inflicted injuries. He was found hanging by officers and resuscitation efforts failed to revive him. The IMB was informed appropriately.

4.2.9 The Listener scheme (which involves prisoners trained by the Samaritans providing confidential emotional support to fellow prisoners) was finally restarted in 2023. Listeners are available to prisoners 24/7 and the names of the on-call Listeners are published in the daily briefing each day. The IMB consider this provision to be imperative and is very pleased the scheme was able to restart.

4.2.10 The issue of debt, caused by prisoners running 'shops', has been recognised by Safer Prisons. The heads of Security and Safer Prisons were working on a new debt strategy in 2022, which was expected to be published in 2023. The IMB has not yet had sight of this report.

4.2.11 The number of assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documents opened rose again in 2023. At 295, the figure was lower than in 2021 (323), but 16% higher than the number opened in 2022, which was 255. Given the increase in the number of self-harm incidents in 2023, this is unsurprising.

4.2.12 It remains the case that the majority of ACCTs opened in 2023 followed incidents of self-harm. Statistics continue to show that prisoners of white ethnicity are more likely to self-harm and to have ACCTs opened (this follows local and national trends).

4.2.13 The Board asks to see prisoners on open ACCTs when visiting the units. Details of all men on ACCTs are given in the daily alerts report and dates of ACCT reviews are noted in the daily briefing (but not the time at which these reviews will occur).

4.2.14 Copies of both the alerts report and daily briefing should be sent to the IMB each day, but sometimes this does not happen.

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

4.3.1 The Safer Prisons Team (SPT) is a dedicated team of officers and office staff, run by a designated Governor, dealing with all matters involving the safety of prisoners, covering areas such as assessments, ACCTs and the use of force.

4.3.2 In 2023, the number of violent incidents reported rose, yet again, to 302. This was an 8% increase on the 280 violent incidents recorded during 2022 which, again, was a very unwelcome increase of 28% on the number of incidents recorded in 2021.

4.3.3 The number of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults dropped slightly, to 195 in 2023. However, there was a very concerning increase of 28% in the number of assaults against staff, with 128 assaults being recorded in the reporting year.

4.3.4 Reasons for the continued increase in reported violent incidents are not fully known, but it appears that there is still some dissatisfaction with the return to a more formal regime after the pandemic. There are also reported changes in the prison population, about which the Board has asked for more details.

4.3.5 Debt continues to fuel unrest. Violent incidents are analysed, and those involved are interviewed by the SPT. A challenge, support and intervention plan (CSIP) is used at Highpoint, as in all adult prisons, to manage prisoners who are violent or pose a heightened risk of being violent. These men are managed and supported on a plan that provides individualised targets and regular reviews.

4.3.6 The Board is aware of prisoners on CSIPs through the daily briefings and alerts reports. The daily briefing shows when the CSIP reviews are taking place, but does not give times, which are subject to change.

4.3.7 All prisoners are seen by a SPT officer following a violent incident.

4.3.8 There was PAVA and SPEAR (spontaneous protection enabling accelerated response) training for all officers in 2023, which was observed by some IMB members.

### **4.4 Vulnerable prisoners**

4.4.1 Bullied victims are supported by staff, and known perpetrators are challenged. Prisoners are often reluctant to name the person they feel is bullying them for fear of retaliation.

4.4.2 Men considered to be bullies are identified in the daily alerts report, with states the reason for their inclusion.

4.4.3 The daily briefing contains the names of those who are registered as 'prisoners of concern'. The concerns are usually around personal hygiene, cleanliness, social care and mental health issues.

4.4.4 Staff document their dealings with these prisoners each day. Details include whether the man has taken his meals, collected his medication, had a shower and taken exercise, plus comments on his general demeanour and the condition of his cell. The men are encouraged and assisted to keep themselves and their cells clean and to discuss any issues they may have. The number of men on the register fluctuates but averages between four and 10 daily.

4.4.5 Prisoners who are self-isolating are named in the daily briefing and Board members try to see them when they visit the units.

4.4.6 Chaplaincy visits all vulnerable prisoners each week.

## **4.5 Use of force**

4.5.1 The Board attends the prison when the use of force (UoF) has been deployed to control prisoners, to ascertain what has occurred and satisfy themselves that the prisoner is safe, has been seen by healthcare and that all procedures have been followed.

4.5.2 Board members attempt to attend the weekly UoF meetings, so they can observe the proceedings, to which they are invited and are encouraged to attend by the prison. However, these meetings are still frequently cancelled or postponed. As volunteers, it is often not possible for the IMB to make diary changes at short notice.

4.5.3 UoF was deployed to control prisoners on 676 occasions during 2023. Throughout the year, there was a steady and substantial increase in the UoF, from 33 occasions in January 2023 to more than double, at 75 and 71 in November and December, respectively. However, 50% of this increase was due to the use of handcuffs and not because of personal protection or control and restraint.

4.5.4 Batons were drawn on three occasions and there was one recorded strike. Rigid-body handcuffs were recorded as being used on 456 occasions.

4.5.5 The IMB remains concerned that body worn video cameras (BWVC) are not always activated, or activated promptly, during a UoF force incident, despite their use being directed.

4.5.6 PAVA spray was used on more than one occasion. The IMB was informed of its use and the circumstances. Prisoners involved were spoken to by the IMB.

4.5.7 Incidents of disorder, in many of the categories reported to the IMB, continued to show a significant increase in prevalence. This remains a concern for the IMB, as figures from 2021 had shown a positive decline compared with figures for the previous year.

4.5.8 Figures for 2023 are shown, below, together with figures for 2022 and 2021:

	<b>2023</b>	2022	2021
Incidents at height	<b>52</b>	53	25
Reports of barricading	<b>84</b>	136	59
Incident of hostage taking	<b>1</b>	1	1
Other incidents of disorder	<b>373</b>	195	173

4.5.9 The Board has received regular reports from Governors throughout the year, and some of the increase in disorder has continued to be attributed to the return to a more formal regime following relaxations during Covid.

4.5.10 The Board notes, again, that the welcome reduction in incidents of disorder in 2021 was attributed positively to regime changes made during the pandemic. At the time, the Board was informed that the prison planned to maintain some of the regime changes, due to the statistical beneficial effects for the prisoners and their safety.

4.5.11 Cell searches take place daily, the majority of which are intelligence-led. However, some are reactive searches, which fall within the cell search policy. Cell searches and unit and compound checks have resulted in a significant number of finds with, overall, a very large prison currency value.

4.5.12 During 2023, there were 209 occasions when weapons were discovered. There were 296 findings of hooch (prison-made alcohol), 337 drugs' finds and 431 occasions on which mobile phones and associated equipment were found.

4.5.13 In the reporting year, Security has reported that its relationship with the police has improved. There is more collaborative work from both parties, and this has been reported as leading to some successful outcomes.

## **4.6 Substance misuse**

4.6.1 Figures from Phoenix Futures, a charity that help people overcome drug and alcohol abuse problems, in the previous reporting year, 2022, showed that there had been a very slight increase in positive drug test results over the results from 2021. In 2023, Phoenix Futures report that, according to their records, there was a further slight increase in drug use among prisoners during 2023 and a further increase in positive test results.

4.6.2 At initial assessment, Phoenix Futures record the prisoner's drug of choice prior to custody. During the reporting year, the service saw an increase in heroin, closely followed by alcohol and cannabis, as being the main drugs of choice on the outside.

4.6.3 All three drugs regularly compete as the drug of choice after custody for 50-65% of the service users at any one time. These figures differ from those given by the Prison Service, whose statistics are based on 'finds' during 2023 and list Spice (a chemical compound that mimics the effects of the active ingredient in cannabis) and alcohol as the drugs of choice.

4.6.4 Phoenix Futures' caseload has remained fairly constant since Covid, and at the end of 2023 they were actively working with approximately 260 prisoners. This represents just over 20% of the Highpoint prison population and is similar to the 2022 figure.

4.6.5 During 2023, unit 11 was established as a drug-free unit known as an incentivised substance free living unit (ISFL). Phoenix Futures does not have any direct input into the running of the unit, but it does actively participate in its timetable by running self-management and recovery training (SMART) courses on a weekly basis.

4.6.6 Phoenix Futures staff working on the north site report that the unit 11/ISFL does run smoothly most of the time, but that it also faces challenges from time to time when the 'wrong type' of prisoner is located in the unit. As the unit is new, it is expected that the pre-placement assessment procedures, which are being fine-tuned, will improve during 2024. Unit 11 has a voluntary drug testing regime in place, which prisoners sign up to when entering the unit.

4.6.7 Units 6 and 7 came on stream as ISFL units at the end of 2023.

4.6.8 Other prisoners can be subject to both random and suspicion-led drugs tests.

4.6.9 Phoenix Futures reports that, across the prison, the lack of interview space suitable for conducting therapeutic interventions and carrying out confidential assessments with prisoners restricts the work they are able to undertake.

4.6.10 Of the 269 active Phoenix Futures clients released from custody during 2023, 37% are known to have continued to engage with drug and alcohol services in the community after release. These figures equate almost exactly to those figures given last year.

4.6.11 Additionally, all prisoners known by the service to have a substance-misuse history are routinely given harm-reduction advice and community engagement details, regardless of whether or not they are active clients at the point of their release.

4.6.12 At least eight weeks prior to release, prisoners who are actively engaging, or who have previously engaged, with Phoenix Futures (or a service at a previous establishment), are seen and offered 'release planning'. During 2023, a total of 373 prisoners were given such advice.

4.6.13 Drug debt remains a concern. This is an ongoing problem and is being taken forward as a whole prison issue. The Safer Prisons Team continues to work closely with those who are identified as being in debt. Phoenix Futures practitioners report that drug debt is one of the main drivers of violence in the establishment. The Board is concerned about the correlation between the reported increase in violent incidents in 2023 and the increase in drug debt during the same period.

4.6.14 The Board remains concerned that drugs continue to get into the prison. Intelligence on the supply of drugs is ever changing, with routes that are cut off being replaced by other ones. The IMB is concerned that netting installed to prevent throw-overs, which came down in storms some years ago, has still not been replaced around units 5 and 10, due to lack of funding.

4.6.15 The IMB has raised concerns with the Governor and at security meetings that regular searching of staff and Board members entering the prison is not undertaken. Residential Governors are constantly monitoring the populations on the units and disrupting groups following information from Security. Advanced fabric checks and hooch sweeps are undertaken.

4.6.16 These searches and the confiscation of subsequent 'finds' can lead to further issues, as greater debt can be accrued, due to prisoners finding they are unable to brew illicit alcohol to pay off debts.

4.6.17 During 2023, there has been a steady increase in the number of prisoners being found under the influence (UTI). This increase can be clearly seen from the reports in the daily briefing, where hardly a day goes by without at least one prisoner being reported as being UTI. During the day, such incidents are dealt with by healthcare staff, but out of hours this often necessitates a call to 111 and requires an ambulance to attend the prison.

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

### **5.1 Accommodation, food**

5.1.1 Governors and prison officers actively ensure the units are clean and tidy. Prisoners who do not keep their cells clean are encouraged to do so. Governors' visits result in a high level of activity and the prisoners are justifiably proud of the results.

5.1.2 The Board understands that the works being carried out by GFSL are still not done in a timely manner (see the IMB 2022 annual report). This continues to have an impact on the two sites, north and south. Even when works were carried out in a timely manner, not all works, including fire safety, were regularly quality checked by a GFSL supervisor. The Board would, once again, point out that the workforce employed within the prison is trying their best to complete the works, but they are still not being adequately managed by the GFSL senior management team.

5.1.3 By the end of the reporting year 2023, the following works were still not completed or carried out in a timely manner:

- 665 repairs as work in progress
- 477 outstanding works orders, items of planned maintenance and reactive maintenance.

5.1.4 Whilst this is an improvement on our last reporting year (2022), it would appear that the GFSL senior management team still does not understand the complexities of the issues and concerns in HMP Highpoint as a working prison. The Board understands that GFSL is still struggling to recruit tradesmen and retain them.

As in our 2022 report, the Board understands that works listed below are still not carried out in a timely manner during the reporting year:

- general repairs to electrical equipment
- general repairs to plumbing
- general repairs/maintenance of fire-protection equipment
- general repairs/maintenance of CCTV systems
- general repairs/maintenance of heating systems, in particular, the boiler plant
- general repairs/maintenance/management of kitchen equipment is not always satisfactory and could be improved.

5.1.5 To assist GFSL in maintenance, prisoners are employed on the south and north sites. They carried out various maintenance works, including cell refurbishment, painting, mastic works and minor plumbing.

5.1.6 As with our last report, the Board would, once again, ask that HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) carry out a review of the works' maintenance contract provided by GFSL to ensure it fully meets the needs of a challenging prison environment.

5.1.7 From the Board's observations, the kitchens are run extremely efficiently, with good teamwork between the prisoners employed and the staff running them. Although at times there is frustration due to faulty equipment, meals are served to the units on schedule. During the reporting year, GFSL has appointed a new kitchen equipment maintenance service provider, JLA. The Board understands that when JLA attends repairs in the prison, it does not carry spares. Consequently, an estimate has to be sent to GFSL for approval, which can take up to two weeks. The Board understands that during the reporting year,

temporary kitchen appliances were supplied, including one working freezer and four combination ovens.

5.1.8 The Board understands that Bidfood, the food company, substitutes items it cannot supply, which makes it very difficult for kitchen staff to adhere to the agreed menus and, therefore, last-minute changes have to be made to the menus.

5.1.9 The Board highlights that, in these circumstances, if it were not for the professionalism and hard work of the staff, meals would not have been provided.

5.1.10 The Board notes that servery orderlies do not always wear the appropriate protective clothing. When this was raised with staff and the orderlies, they cited problems with supply and laundering.

5.1.11 Prisoners have the opportunity to raise issues about their meals on a daily basis via a food comment book kept in every unit servery. Prisoners did not always take up the opportunity to make comments in the books, but when comments were made, managers acted on them.

## **5.2 Segregation**

5.2.1 During the reporting year, the segregation unit continued to be settled and run in a highly professional and productive manner. From the Board's observations, staff have to deal with very challenging and unpredictable behaviour and are able to defuse volatile situations when dealing with prisoners. There are 18 operational cells available, plus one that is reserved for searches, and two special cells, one of which was used as a library and the other as a storeroom. The average occupancy of the unit was nine.

5.2.2 During the reporting year, 427 prisoners passed through the unit, compared with 434 in 2022, a decrease of 1.6%. The average length of stay in 2023 was six days. The segregation unit Governor attempted to keep the occupancy of the unit low. Progression plans are made to facilitate a prisoner's return to a residential unit or, where deemed appropriate, a transfer to another establishment. Seven prisoners stayed in the unit for over 42 days; the correct procedure was followed each time.

5.2.3 Segregation review boards are held twice weekly with a Governor and a member of the mental health team. An IMB member is also present to validate that the correct procedures are followed. Visits were made by a Board member to every prisoner in the unit twice a week, where good access was always given.

5.2.4 During the reporting year, there were 3,785 adjudications (a disciplinary hearing when a prisoner is alleged to have broken prison rules) compared with 3,092 in 2022, an increase of 22.5%. Adjudications were held daily in the segregation unit carried out by a Governor and members of the segregation unit staff. A member of the IMB attended, when possible, in a monitoring role. If a prisoner wished to talk to an IMB member, this took place outside of the adjudication process. The Board noted that at the adjudications the prisoners were shown respect and fair mindedness by the duty Governor and segregation staff.

5.2.5 During 2023, there were 83 use of force incidents in the segregation unit.

5.2.6 During 2023, there were 61 prisoners in the segregation unit supported by ACCTs, an increase of 23 from 38 during 2022. This was a mixture of ACCTs being opened in segregation and prisoners locating there who were already on an open ACCT.



### 5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

5.3.1 There were 52 staff resignations (excluding promotions) during the reporting year across bands 2, 3, 4 and 5 (33 of these were from band 3, prison officer grade; there was one resignation from band 5, custodial manager grade). There were 58 new officer starters in the reporting year. In addition, there were 26 leavers for other reasons, including dismissal, transfer, etc.

5.3.2 Following the lifting of Covid restrictions, the Governor continued to hold forums with each unit for both the south and north prison sites.

5.3.3 Throughout the year, the Governor sent out frequent information bulletins to prisoners on a variety of subjects that impacted them, including any changes to the regime.

5.3.4 During the reporting year, all prisoners were allocated a key worker to support them. The key worker's responsibility is to engage, motivate and support prisoners through their time in prison. The officers have a duty to spend time in the core day to carry out their key worker duties. The Board understands that this is subject to the prison's regime and staff availability. Key workers are expected to spend an average of 45 minutes per prisoner per week.

### 5.4 Equality and diversity

5.4.1 The role of the band 6 non-operational diversity and inclusion lead has gone from strength to strength within the reporting period and, in the view of the Board, provides exceptional support to these prisoners. A diversity and inclusion officer remains ring fenced for 17.5 hours a week, although redeployment often results in this time being greatly reduced.

5.4.2 The full-time business administrator assigned in March 2023 left in September, but was replaced mid-December 2023. The team is also supported once a week by two members of the Ipswich and Suffolk Council for Racial Equality (ISCARE), based on north and south prisons, who are instrumental in supporting the running of forums.

5.4.3 In 2023, 80 discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs) were submitted, of which only nine were upheld:

Race	40
Religion & belief	15
Disability	16
Age	5
Sexual orientation	4
Gender re-assignment	1

A1 Indian	3
A2 Pakistani	5
A3 Bangladeshi	7
A9 Any other Asian background	4
B1 Caribbean	17
B2 African	5

B9 Any other Black background	10
M1 White and Black Caribbean	2
M3 White and Asian	1
O9 Any other	3
W1 British	19
W3 Gypsy or Irish Traveller	2
W9 Any other White background	3

Upheld	9
Partially upheld	10
Inconclusive	14
Not upheld	43
Withdrawn/resolved	4

5.4.4 Throughout 2023, the number of foreign national prisoners was fairly fluid, with approximately 240 by the end of the year (not including 19 Irish national prisoners). This was an increase of 31 from December 2022, when there were 209 foreign national prisoners in Highpoint. They came from over 30 countries, with the main contingents being from Albania, Romania, Poland, Jamaica, Lithuania and India.

## **5.5 Faith and pastoral support**

5.5.1 During the reporting period, the chaplaincy team consisted of one Roman Catholic chaplain, one Muslim, 1.5 Free Church and one Church of England. Jewish, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Humanist, Pagan and Jehovah's Witness chaplains also made regular visits. In addition, there was also a managing chaplain (Roman Catholic), who left at the end of August; a managing chaplain (Church of England) started work in November.

5.5.2 One-to-one sessions continued, and there was a confidential phone line to the Samaritans, as well as a private prayer line, all of which were well used by prisoners. Services and faith festivals were held regularly, although services occasionally had to be cancelled due to staff shortages. Christmas services were held, and there were also Carol services. Each prisoner was also given Christmas cards, donated by the Mothers' Union, to send to family and friends.

5.5.3 Prisoners had access to a bereavement counselling service, provided in the main by the charity Cruse Bereavement Support. This was frequently oversubscribed and not enough counsellors were available to meet the demand. The Board considers that the bereavement support provided by the chaplaincy in HMP Highpoint is exceptional and should be noted.

5.5.4 A number of courses were run for prisoners, such as the Alpha course (an evangelical Christian course), for example, which can help prisoners deal with loss, and the Sycamore Tree Victim Awareness course. The Sycamore Tree course was particularly well attended and there is a waiting list. Some groups, such as the Bible study group, did not take place due to lack of staff. Chaplaincy also facilitated a weekly singing group, led by a talented prisoner.

5.5.5 The chaplaincy also hosted the wedding of a prisoner and his partner, attended by the couple's two children and some members of staff.

5.5.6 A number of compassionate visits took place throughout the year, and were much appreciated by the prisoners and their visitors. It was felt by the chaplains, however, that the conditions of approval for these needed to be more tightly controlled.

5.5.7 Support for prisoners and staff was available when there was a death in custody, and the chaplaincy is informed, as a matter of course, when this occurs.

5.5.8 Much of the work of the chaplaincy is in providing one-to-one support to prisoners daily, regardless of any expressed faith, in a variety of situations, and is highly valued by the prisoners who seek it.

## **5.6 Incentives schemes**

5.6.1 Incentives schemes are available for prisoners as a way of encouraging them to 'do the right thing for the right reason' in order to earn enhancements.

5.6.2 An incentives level can be awarded for positive behaviours, e.g. helping prison staff or other prisoners and taking an active part in their own rehabilitation. A prisoner can receive a negative level for disruptive behaviour over a period of time, or for significant incidents where they did not follow certain rules.

5.6.3 The decision on which incentives levels should be applied on prisoners is based on feedback from prison staff who work closely with the prisoner. A prisoner can appeal against a negative level and a custodial manager will review the decision.

5.6.4 Prisoners on the enhanced level have certain privileges, including designated residential units, access to cooking facilities and freer movement.

## **5.7 Complaints**

5.7.1 Any prisoner who has an issue with the Prison Service can submit a COMP1 (ordinary complaint) to the complaints clerk within three months of the incident or circumstances. The usual response time for a COMP1 is five working days. Should the prisoner not be satisfied with the response, he can complete a COMP1A (an appeal). If still not satisfied, he can take the complaint to the independent prisoner complaint investigations (IPCI).

5.7.2 Should the prisoner have an issue with prison staff, he can submit a COMP2 to the governing governor. The table below, in 5.7.4, details the prison complaints policy on complaints at various stages and respective response times.

5.7.3 Complaints forms were freely available on all the wings during 2023. A total of 3,169 complaints were received during the reporting year, compared to 3,219 in 2022. The majority of complaints received were about access to property and follow-on property from other prisons (see 5.8).

#### 5.7.4 Forms and response times:

Action	Time limit
Submission of complaint by prisoner	Within three months of the incident or the circumstances coming to the prisoner's attention.
Stage 1 response	5 working days
Stage 1 response to complaint against member of staff	10 working days
Stage 1 response to complaint involving another establishment	10 working days
Stage 1 response with an equality aspect	5 working days
Re-submission by prisoner of complaint stage 2 (appeal)	Within one week of receipt of the stage 1 response
Stage 2 response	5 working days
Stage 2 response to complaint against member of staff	10 working days
Stage 2 response to complaint involving another establishment	10 working days
Confidential-access complaint to the Governor	5 working days
Confidential-access complaint to prison Group Director	6 weeks
Response to complaint about a reserved subject	6 weeks

## 5.8 Property

5.8.1 During the reporting year, the Board received 60 applications concerning lost property. This was a decrease from 87 in 2022.

5.8.2 When property is missing, lost or not put on the transport, the Board advises prisoners to complete the Prison Service complaints procedure, COMP 1, or COMP1A,

followed by a COMP2. If the prisoner is not satisfied with the response, the Board advises him to divert his enquiry to the independent prisoners' complaints investigation (IPCI).

5.8.3 Should the prisoner's property be mislaid in the establishment that a Board member is monitoring, it is frequently possible to resolve what has happened to the property. If the Board member cannot help resolve the issue after talking to the reception staff, the prisoner is advised to complete the Prison Service complaints procedure. Should the prisoner still not have received a satisfactory response, he can then send a complaint about lost property to the IPCI.

5.8.4 The Board has been advised that a prisoner can no longer telephone the IPCI and must communicate by letter. This causes problems for those prisoners who have difficulty with writing.

5.8.5 Notwithstanding the revised Prisoners' Property Policy Framework, the loss or delay of prisoners' property in transfer between establishments is still an issue of concern. The Board, once again, would ask for an urgent review of the handling of prisoners' belongings.

5.8.6 Lost or missing property leads to unnecessary time being spent trying to locate the property and, most significantly, frustration and disgruntlement among prisoners. Items are not necessarily of monetary value, but, more significantly, of personal and emotional value to the prisoner. Loss of such belongings can severely affect the wellbeing of all prisoners, particularly those serving longer sentences.

5.8.7 Prisoners who are serving life imprisonment and those sentenced to Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) are allowed to have one parcel sent in on their birthday, which should comprise no more than six items. Other prisoners can request a parcel to be allowed in, which should comprise no more than six items.

5.8.8 The sending of parcels is frequently stopped by order of a Governor considering the large quantity of parcels sent into the prison. During the reporting year, reception in the prison received a total of 1,512 parcels. All the parcels are processed through security checks. On several occasions, contraband items were found.

## 6 Health and wellbeing

### 6.1 Physical healthcare

6.1.1 Healthcare has been provided by Practice Plus Group and Rehabilitation Services Ltd on both the north and south sites since October 2020.

6.1.2 There are two permanently employed GPs and one regular agency GP. The prison employs one full-time advanced nurse practitioner and one agency nurse practitioner.

6.1.3 The on-site paramedic left the prison during in the summer of 2023.

6.1.4 Currently, it is the role of the emergency technician to assess the severity of a health issue in the first instance and decide whether a visit to A&E is required. There is also a physiotherapist assigned to the prison, who attends on a 'needs only' basis.

6.1.5 Although remote telephone sessions were phased out after the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions, these were reintroduced during 2023. Telephone calls to prisoners' cells are used for relaying information that does not require a face-to-face appointment, such as blood test results, for example.

6.1.6 The level of care provided by Practice Plus Group continued to achieve a green rating across the majority of metrics during 2023.

6.1.7 On-site screening has continued throughout 2023, which means that possible life-threatening illnesses, such as bowel cancer and aortic aneurisms, plus genetically inherited conditions such as glaucoma, can be detected early through mobile screening units brought into the establishment.

6.1.8 Historically, the number of appointments that were not kept ('did not attend', or DNAs) have been an issue and this problem has continued to present challenges. During the reporting year, a great deal of effort has been put into resolving this, to pull the rate below a 10% threshold. Taking healthcare out to the units has helped in this regard. In October, DNAs stood at 12.39% and had reduced to 9.79% by December.

Clinics			October	November	December
<b>GP</b>	<b>Appointments</b>	Patients seen face-to-face Patient applications/ virtual reviews/ phone triage	369 0	324 0	233 0
	<b>DNAs</b>	DNAs	95	92	62
	<b>No access</b>	No access	11	5	9
	<b>Average wait time in days</b>	Average wait time in days	10	11	11

<b>Nurse and HCA</b>	<b>Appointments</b>	<b>Appointments booked = Appointments seen =</b>	4520 4520	3902 3421	3631 3202
	<b>DNAs</b>	<b>DNAs</b>	473	481	429
	<b>No access</b>	<b>No access</b>	9	15	8

6.1.9 A nurse-led seven days a week service was provided, using, on average, four nurses per day, assisted by support workers on the south site, with two to three nurses on the north site.

6.1.10 Out-of-hours assistance was provided via the NHS 111 service and paramedic/emergency ambulance call out. If a prisoner needed to attend the local hospital for treatment, officers were deployed to facilitate this. Prison officers also receive first aid training, including the use of the automated defibrillator.

6.1.11 Community dental services is commissioned directly from NHS England. Personnel include two dentists and a dental nurse, with time divided between the north and south sites. During the pandemic, a significant backlog was generated, but prisoners are now being seen within the normal parameters.

6.1.12 During the reporting period, the average DNA rate was 13 patients per month, which has had an impact on waiting-list times.

6.1.13 All appointment slips are sent to patients out of courtesy, and not receiving them is not an excuse for patients not attending.

6.1.14 A new dentist chair was delivered in 2023 to the north site, which was long overdue.

## **6.2 Mental healthcare**

6.2.1 The mental health team is employed by Practice Plus Group. It is commissioned to assess, treat and support prisoners with secondary mental health problems. The mental health team covers both sites and aims to have a member of the team on both every day.

6.2.2 There are two permanent members of the team and two agency nurses, who work full-time within the team. A new psychiatrist was appointed during 2023, who works with the team three days a week.

6.2.3 The mental health team currently has a caseload of 39 prisoners and is commissioned to see people within five working days. It achieved this 95% of the time. It continues to actively recruit staff.

6.2.4 During 2023, the mental health team continued to develop relationships with outside agencies, such as the community mental health team in the London Borough of Haringey, and it has been working closely with discipline staff to manage prisoners with more challenging behaviour.

6.2.5 The mental health team continues to attend meetings, including mandatory segregation reviews and safety intervention meetings (SIMs).

6.2.6 Prisoners on ACCTs plans are seen regularly in accordance with their care plan.

6.2.7 Prisoners with anxiety disorders are referred to the improving access to psychological therapies (IAPT) service, provided by the Forward Trust and commissioned by the NHS.

6.2.8 The following are the performance indicators for the second and third quarters of 2023:

	Second quarter	Third quarter
Referrals received	104	266
First assessment	166	178

Discharges	112	94
One-to-one sessions	1009	891
Caseload active	56	57

### 6.2.9 Neurodiversity

The role of the neurodiversity support manager (NSM) throughout 2023 has had a positive impact on prisoners with neurodiverse needs.

During 2023, the backlog of prisoners awaiting neurodiversity screening was reduced throughout the reporting period, taking it from approximately 428 to 86. Referrals are sent to the NSM for various reasons. Prisoners may be struggling with a neurodivergent need and have no diagnosis. Every prisoner is seen face to face and their needs assessed. If required, further referrals are made.

A tier system is used to grade the severity of the neurodiversity need, with tier 1 highlighting those with few or no challenges; tier 2 for those with mild-to-moderate challenges; and tier 3 for those with moderate-to-severe challenges. The tier is identified by the prisoner during screening. Below is the 2023 data for the three tiers, which show conditions/needs that prisoners have self-declared:

<b>Neurodivergent needs assessments summaries</b>	<b>Tier 1</b>
ADHD	1
ASD/autism	0
Behavioural	1
Colour Blind	0
Communication/interaction	0
Concentration/organisation and memory	0
Dyscalculia	0
Dyslexia/Irlen Syndrome	1
Dyspraxia	0
ESOL	0
Head/brain Injury	0
Hearing issues	0
Learning difficulties	0
Medical	2
Mental health	2
No need/condition self-declared	444
OCD	0
Physical disability	0
PTSD	1
Section 5/educational difficulties	1
Sight/vision impairment	0
Slow processing/memory	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>453</b>



<b>Neurodivergent needs assessments summaries</b>	<b>Tier 2</b>
ADHD	34
ASD/autism	4
Behavioural	0
Concentration/organisation and memory	3
Dyscalculia	0
Dyslexia/Irlen Syndrome	32
Dyspraxia	0
ESOL	11
Head/brain Injury	2
Hearing issues	9
Learning difficulties	11
Medical	34
Mental health	40
No need/condition self-declared	157
OCD	1
Physical disability	4
PTSD	18
Section 5/educational difficulties	48
Sight/vision impairment	2
Slow processing/memory	4
Total	414

<b>Neurodivergent needs assessments summaries</b>	<b>Tier 3</b>
ADHD	66
ASD/autism	5
Behavioural	2
Communication/interaction	1
Concentration/organisation and memory	9
Dyscalculia	4
Dyslexia/Irlen Syndrome	43
ESOL	7
Head/brain Injury	6
Hearing issues	4
Learning difficulties	12
Medical	5
Mental health	31
No need/condition self-declared	73
Physical disability	4
PTSD	6
Section 5/educational difficulties	5
Sight/vision impairment	4
Slow processing/memory	0
Total	287

### **6.3 Social care**

6.3.1 The diversity and inclusion team leader, appointed in September 2022, is also responsible for social care, overseeing the requirements of prisoners with disabilities. A new full time administration assistant was employed in December 2023, replacing one who left in September.

6.3.2 During the reporting period, contact with Suffolk Social Services appeared to improved greatly. Visits to the prison were made monthly and, more recently, weekly. Liaison with the healthcare department has also seen positive improvements. The officer assigned to work 17.5 hours across the diversity, inclusion and social care team, is often redeployed, which can slow down the referral process for social care. Of the 15 cases referred since a social care referral database file was created, only one has successfully been submitted since November. The speed of referrals is further hampered by the online portal being 'user unfriendly'.

6.3.3 There were regular needs assessments, and social care was provided by external sources wherever possible, such as Suffolk Adult and Community Services, for example. When a prisoner required special equipment, Suffolk Adult and Community Services visited the prisoner to assess his needs and provide appropriate support, equivalent to that he would receive in the community.

6.3.4 Prisoners identified as men of concern were discussed at morning meetings.

6.3.5 Peer support was provided wherever required with 'Buddies' appointed to those prisoners who need extra support.

6.3.6 There are no special units at HMP Highpoint, and end-of-life-care support is provided on the units until transfer to the local hospice is appropriate. The Board notes there is a good working relationship with the local hospice.

### **6.4 Exercise, regime**

6.4.1 Prisoners have the opportunity for one outside exercise period per day. This takes place from 11.45am to 12.15pm. Prisoners make good use of the outdoor exercise equipment provided.

6.4.2 There are 11 physical education instructors (PEIs) in post, out of an overall staff capacity of 12. One officer is currently going through the training process.

6.4.3 Attendance at the gym during the reporting period was approximately 60-65% of the overall population (see Annex A).

6.4.4 Learning and skills courses ran all year round and included three Level 2 gym instructor, circuit instructor and four first aid at work 12-week courses during 2023. These are in conjunction with Northampton Saints charitable foundation, which provides two members of staff twice a week to teach the men rugby skills and values. Prisoners who met the requisite standard were offered the progressive qualification of a diploma in personal training. Each course is fully advertised, and applications are encouraged over a period of weeks before the closing date. After this, any men deemed eligible are invited for an open day, where they can showcase their skills and desire for the course. Twelve of these men will then be selected for the course, pending security checks and clearance.

6.4.5 Two new initiatives were introduced during 2023. The first of which was a new session run weekly for prisoners aged 50+. It was recognised that this age group often preferred to use the gym when it was quieter. The second new initiative was a programme for young adults under the age of 25. These sessions ran every Friday for three hours and

were open to prisoners who displayed challenging behaviour. The programme was run over a rolling period of 6-8 weeks and has, so far, been shown to provide a stabilising and motivating contribution to prisoners. There is one peer mentor on each wing to provide additional support.

6.4.6 There were few gym staff redeployments during 2023 and only a few sessions required cancellation. One PEI was more or less constantly used for staff control and restraint (C&R) training in the last six or more months but, despite this, the gym managed to maintain a high level and standard of delivery.

6.4.7 The Board would like to commend the efforts of the gym staff in providing a popular and essential contribution to the prisoners' physical and mental wellbeing.

## **6.5 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation**

6.5.1 Phoenix Futures has been responsible for the delivery of drug and alcohol support at HMP Highpoint since 2018. Prisoner support is provided by eight practitioners, two managers and one family worker. The caseload fluctuated between 200 and 260 throughout 2023, with every prisoner being seen on a one-to-one basis, every 4-6 weeks, on average. Group work continued weekly throughout 2023.

6.5.2 Self-management and recovery (SMART) meetings continued on the north site during 2023. SMART is a programme designed to help individuals struggling with drug addiction or alcoholism to manage their condition and establish a healthier lifestyle.

6.5.3 Incentivised substance free living (ISFL) was relaunched in February 2023, in unit 11 on the north site, with 69 prisoners; and in units 6 and 7 on the south site, with 33 on unit 6 and 51 on unit 7.

6.5.4 Units 6 and 7 have had issues with oral voluntary drug testing (VDT), due to the trained staff sometimes being redeployed for other duties needed by the prison and replaced with other staff who were not trained in the VDT process. This is currently being addressed.

6.5.5 The prisoners are very willing to carry out the drug tests and happy with the Highpoint-designed VDT logbook, which tracks their tests and shows their progression in desisting from illicit drug use.

6.5.6 Unit 11 has been off to a more positive start, with a dedicated staff group who are all trained in VDT and have been reaching the target of two tests per month per prisoner - 138 tests a month since August.

6.5.7 The prisoners are happy with the test procedure and in December only one failed whereas, in August, there were eight failures and one refusal to provide a specimen. Unit 11 has two ISFL orderlies, who run and drive a specific ISFL programme. These consist of art therapy, meditation (eight prisoners on unit 11 are trained in meditation), relapse prevention, SMARTER, fellowship meetings, 'changing minds' (currently on hold due to the facilitator being moved) and a cooking skills group due to start soon.

6.5.8 Unit 11 is starting a new group, Safe Space, which involves 4-5 prisoners who can be called on if a prisoner has an emergency. This could include family issues they want to discuss or experiencing a feeling they are going to relapse.

6.5.9 The Board recognises and commends the great efforts of the ISFL team, which helps prisoners who want to extricate themselves from drugs within the establishment.

## **7. Progression and resettlement**

### **7.1 Education, library**

7.1.1 In the 12-month period, April 2022 to April 2023, 977 prisoners enrolled on education courses, and 689 achieved a qualification (six more are awaiting results). Attendance was around 75% on the south site, and slightly higher on the north site. Non-attendance was sometimes due to wing staff failing to check the daily digital list. Open University (OU) and distance-learning courses continued to be supported, with 17 prisoners following the former, and 10 on other distance-learning courses.

7.1.2 HMP Highpoint is now working with the University of East Anglia as part of the unique CRITO Project, teaching accredited courses on philosophy and literature. Taster sessions were held from April to September, when prisoners could then enrol for the rest of the course.

7.1.3 Art classes changed to part-time (either morning or afternoon) and ran for 10 weeks on the south site, making them available to more prisoners. Entries were submitted for the Koestler Awards for arts in criminal justice. A successful art exhibition was held in the autumn in a local village.

7.1.4 An ongoing disadvantage for both staff and prisoners is that prisoners can be transferred (either between north and south sites, or to another prison) without reference to the education department.

7.1.5 Staffing was stable from September, with two supply cover tutors and two permanent tutors. Previously, managers covered absences. Classes were only ever disrupted for planned closures. During the first few months of the year, the libraries had a staff of three instead of six. Appointments were made in May and December. Both libraries were able to remain open, except in cases of staff sickness.

7.1.6 All new entrants were seen two days after arrival by staff from education, library and information, advice and guidance (IAG, provided by the Forward Trust). These sessions are held in education. Every effort is made beforehand to establish each new prisoner's learning needs and disabilities in order to facilitate an individual learning plan. Those with low attainment are strongly advised to attend Maths and English classes. These are obligatory before enrolment in some other classes such as carpentry. There is also screening and support for neurodiverse prisoners.

7.1.7 The full-time inclusion support co-ordinator works within Industries (where prisoners produce goods to be sold commercially) to support those with learning disabilities. A total of 28 prisoners received outreach support in English and Maths. Peer mentors are a valuable asset in all of this.

7.1.8 The Board is pleased to note that both libraries now have open sessions on a rota basis, including evening sessions on the south site from the beginning of September. Prisoners studying Open University courses often choose to use the library because the internet connection is better than on the units. The delivery service to units continued to facilitate the borrowing of DVDs, which can only be loaned for one week. A new library guide was written for use during induction and on the units.

7.1.9 The charity, Shannon Trust, trains and supports peer mentoring for reading skills, a resource that was used to good effect, mainly on the north site. At the end of November, a fulltime co-ordinator for the Shannon Trust was appointed.

7.1.10 Storybook Dads, where prisoners can record a story on CD or DVD for their children, was run on both sites. A monthly prisoner reading group began on the south site in September, and a monthly craft session in November.

## 7.2 Vocational training, work

7.2.1 Waiting lists are live and change daily. They continue to be held for vocational courses, which reflects the number of prisoners who have the correct levels for course criteria. Waiting lists may have appeared long, but they were in keeping with prisoners who were able to sequence their digital personal learning plan (DPLP). Prisoners often made multiple applications for work placements, which also affected waiting lists.

7.2.2 Figures were published daily, showing details of prisoners classed as 'intentionally unemployed'. Efforts have been increasing to investigate reasons for this and to reduce the number.

7.2.3 Within the prison education framework (PEF) provision, the newer courses in plastering, art, employability, peer mediation, and plumbing continued. Core functional skills and vocational courses, short courses for the construction skills certification scheme (CSCS), food safety, and comedy scriptwriting all continued from the previous year. A multi-skills taster course was instigated on the north site, bringing all vocational workshops together on that site. There was no tutor for the catering course, which was suspended. Good use was made of dynamic purchasing scheme (DPS) funding for gym courses and the excellent Railtrack course, which offers guaranteed employment on release.

7.2.4 Chrome books were used to support OU and distance learning, CV preparation and gym courses.

7.2.5 Figures for the DPS 2023:

Addictive behaviour	83 prisoners completed the course
Level 2 gym course	33
Level 3 personal trainer	12
Banksman	48
EUSR/CSCS course	52
<i>(Energy and Utility Skills Register/Construction Skills Certificate Scheme)</i>	
Mediation	56
Outreach employability	73
Personal track safety	21
Liquid roofing	13
Bio-hazard	39
Counter-balance forklift	51
<i>(Course did not run the whole year due to external tutor issues)</i>	
Electric pallet ruck	43
<i>(Course did not run the whole year due to external tutor issues)</i>	
Level 1 horticulture	48
Level 2 horticulture	3
<i>(Course length is approx. 10 months)</i>	
Level1 warehouse and distribution	29
<i>(Gaps in delivery due to external tutor issues, leading to contract cancellation)</i>	

Level 2 warehouse and distribution	6
<i>(Gaps in delivery due to external tutor issues, leading to contract cancellation)</i>	
Level 2 catering and hospitality	9
<i>(Gaps in delivery due to external tutor issues, leading to contract cancellation)</i>	
Street works	12
Data cabling	12
Level 1 wing cleaning course	24
<i>(Each individual completed 3 units each (bar 1) totalling to 70 units completed)</i>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>667</b>

A weekly chess club is also run through DPS, and HMP Highpoint jointly represented England in an online international chess competition.

7.2.6 During the reporting year, a prison employment lead and a neurodiversity support manager were appointed. An education, skills and work manager was in post for a short while, and a replacement is to be recruited for 2024.

7.2.7 There were two construction work fairs, one attended by 87 prisoners and representatives from 16 employers, and the other by 67 prisoners and 10 employers. There were two employability sessions, run by Wates Construction. Job Centre Plus held two job fairs, attended by 69 and 45 prisoners, and a housing adviser was also present. Other forums addressed gym and leisure, Railtrack, construction, and east of England employers. This area makes a crucial contribution to the rehabilitation aims of the prison. Some of the companies offered outside recruitment days post-release. Prisoners were targeted for these events, based on their interests, courses and the length of their sentence. There was also a talk from Inside Connections, given by its founder, ex-offender John Burton.

7.2.8 Monthly targets for post-release employment (i.e. six months after leaving prison) consistently exceeded the planned target of 16%, averaging 25%.

7.2.9 Railtrack courses:

During the reporting year, the prison has opened a course involving Railtrack, and the prisoners can obtain a vocational qualification with City & Guilds, plus a guaranteed job.

HMP Highpoint is the only prison with the Railtrack course, which was introduced in August 2022. A total of 10 training courses have been completed successfully, with 94 candidates. 69 have been released from custody. 47 started employment or working with Intertrain. Out of the 22 not engaging, this made up of seven recalled to prison (three of whom started working in the sector before the recall). 10 failed to fully engage on release, despite several opportunities. 5 started employments in other sectors. Adding the 5 working in other sectors on release, a total of 52 prisoners gained employment after completing the Railtrack courses.

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

7.3.1 The backlog of work showed a reduction compared with the previous reporting year. The use of laptops continued to be beneficial, particularly in facilitating meetings, such as with community offender managers (COMs – outside probation workers), for example. Prisoners were still arriving from other establishments without a sentence plan, which added to the workload.

7.3.2 Staffing levels improved during the reporting year, and caseloads were reduced to 50 or less. Operational staff (prison offender managers/POMs), however, were frequently

redeployed to support the prison regime, which added to workload pressure for the department. Over the year, 2,521 POM working hours were lost to redeployment, among a staff of six. This was, however, a reduction of 904 hours compared with the previous year.

7.3.3 The team members were very supportive of each other and said they enjoyed their work. Sickness levels were low. Prisoners' complaints were usually about not obtaining their hoped for move to category D status (which meant they could be eligible for a transfer to an open prison), which some mistakenly considered to be their right. More prisoners were aware of who their POM was, and the key worker scheme often supported the work of the offender management unit (OMU).

7.3.4 Under normal circumstances, the handover process begins eight and a half months before release. There were, however, occasions when prisoners were transferred to HMP Highpoint eight weeks prior to release, which inhibited this process.

7.3.5 Another issue was that transfers to another establishment, when it was in the prisoner's best interests, for reintegration into society, were not taking place.

7.3.6 The offending behaviour courses, Kaizen (which addresses issues of violence with high risk prisoners) and the Thinking Skills Programme (TSP), were much in demand, with a waiting list for both courses. Eight new facilitators were appointed in the summer, but prior to this the team was not at full strength.

7.3.7 At least eight weeks prior to release, prisoners who are actively engaging, or who have previously engaged, with the substance misuse treatment service Phoenix Futures (or a service at a previous establishment) are seen and offered release planning.

7.3.8 Prisoners are encouraged to engage with community services on release, and referrals and signposting to other services are completed by Phoenix Futures staff as a regular part of their duties.

## **7.4 Family contact**

7.4.1 Social visits took place regularly on both sites. The busiest sessions were on Friday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons. Family days (both adults plus children, and adult-only sessions), which bring together men and their families outside of their statutory entitlement, usually in more informal settings, were in high demand. Family days for lifers and prisoners with indeterminate sentences (without a set release date) for public protection (IPP) were also held.

7.4.2 The Ormiston Trust provided a welcome and check in service for visitors, as well as childcare facilities, which were well equipped and well used. When Ormiston Trust note that a prisoner's partner is pregnant, they contact chaplaincy to suggest a compassionate visit following the birth (subject to security checks), to enable the father to bond with the baby.

7.4.3 Combat2Coffee (a support outlet for armed forces veterans, including those in prison) provided hot drinks and food, which could be purchased by contactless card.

7.4.4 The chaplaincy team facilitated 74 compassionate/family visits on site. Prisoners also had the use of in cell phones to contact approved numbers whenever they wished.

7.4.5 Because HMP Highpoint is classed as a London prison, it is apparent that visiting can be difficult for families due to the length of journeys required, the cost of journeys and the difficulties with lack of public transport to the area.

## **7.5 Resettlement planning**

7.5.1 The prison deals with low- to medium-risk prisoners (high risk being the responsibility of outside probation services). Prisoners are given a pre-release pack three months before release. They return this, giving information about their needs on release (housing, healthcare, bank account, etc). From this point, the resettlement department can signpost them to the relevant agencies and act as a link between them.

7.5.2 Staffing was good during the reporting year (1 full-time, 2 part-time and 1 administrator). Between 50 and 60 prisoners were dealt with per month. Some support agencies were not available: for example, there is still no qualified debt adviser in post.

7.5.3 There is a full-time worker from St Mungo's, who deals with London housing, liaising with the Probation Service and local councils. There is also a part-time worker from Interventions Alliance, offering support with housing issues.



## 8. The work of the IMB

At the start of the reporting year, there were 10 Board members, one of whom was in training. Within the reporting period, two new members joined, one of whom had left by the end of the year due to changed personal circumstances. Three other members left during the year: one in March, due to time commitments; another, in May, as she had started a full-time job; and the third, in December, following a sabbatical period due to family circumstances. Another member of the Board took a sabbatical from April to September. The member who joined during the year was still in training at the end of the reporting period.

### Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	17
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	9
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	9
Total number of visits to the establishment	471
Twice-weekly segregation reviews were regularly attended throughout the year	104

### Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Reporting year 2022	Reporting year 2023
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	16	10
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	5	0
C	Equality	0	2
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	13	19
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	8	1
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	12	26
F	Food and kitchens	7	5
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	42	38
H1	Property within this establishment	29	27
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	58	33
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	7	1
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence), parole, release dates, re-categorisation	56	35
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	27	16
K	Transfers	34	29
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	75	59
	<b>Total number of applications</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>301</b>

## Annex A

### Gym timetable

GYM TIMETABLE	0815- 0930	0940- 1100	1100- 1200	1345- 1500	1510- 1630	1640- 1750	1755-19:00
M O N	Education PM All Units  (Not required Workshops & Edu) &  Servery Top End	Unemployed and jobseekers All Units  (No Basic prisoners)	Workshops & Education  Bottom End  Unit 6	Cleaners and Servery workers Bottom End  Gym & Football	Cleaners Top End  (No servery workers)	Full Time & EDAM  Units 5 & 10  Basketball Club	Full Time workers & EDAM  A,B,C,D
T U E	Education PM All Units  (Not required Workshops & Edu) &  Servery Bottom End	Remedials  Over 50's  Weight Loss  ACCTS  M.O.C	Workshops & Education  Top End  Unit 7	Cleaners and Servery workers Top End	Cleaners Bottom End  (No servery workers)	Full Time & EDAM  Units 3 and 6 & 7  FT/PT Football List 1	Full Time workers & EDAM  Unit 4
W E D	All Units Inductions  Remedials  Over 50's  Weight Loss	Induction gym session All of K Spur who have completed gym induction  &  Servery workers Top End	Workshops & Education  Top End  Unit 6	Cleaners and Servery workers Bottom End  Astro Turf Gym Course	Cleaners Top End  (No servery workers)  Astro Turf Gym Course	Full Time & EDAM  Units 8 & 9  Rackets Club  FT/PT Football list 2	Full Time workers & EDAM  Unit 6/7 and 10
	Not required workers &	Basic prisoners Unemployed and	Workshops & Education	Cleaners and Servery	Cleaners Bottom End	Full Time & EDAM  A,B,C,D and 6 & 7	Full Time workers & EDAM

T H U	Servery Workers from All Units	jobseekers All Units	Bottom End Unit 7	workers Top End Gym & Football	(No servery workers)	Indoor Cricket Club	Units 8 & 9
						FT/PT Football I List 3	
	08:15- 09:30	09:45 - 11:15		14:00 - 15:15	15:30 - 16:45		
F R I	Education PM All  Units (Not required Workshops & Edu) & Servery Workers Bottom End	Any Not Required.  Extra Reward session (phone call to the gym)  Cleanest  Unit of the week		Full Time & EDAM M  Units 3 and 5	Full Time & EDAM  Units 4 and 8		
				Over 45's Footba II	Dodgebal I Club		
				Che ss Clu b	Ches s Club		
	08:45 - 10:15	10:30 - 12:00		13:45 - 15:15	15:30 - 17:00	FT = Full time workers, gardens, workshops Decency workers and Kitchens.  <u>Not wing cleaners/servery.</u>  • Weekend & 1645 sessions Full time workers only.  Units:  Top End 1,2,5,6,7,10  Bottom End 3,4,8,9	
S A T	Full Time workers  Unit 5 and 6	Full Time workers  Unit 3 and 8		Full Time worker s  Unit 4 and 9	Full Time workers  A,B,C,D and Unit 10		
S U N	Full Time workers & EDAM Units 3  and 9	Full Time workers & EDAM  Units 4		Full Time workers & EDAM  A,B,C,D & 10	Full Time workers & EDAM  Unit 5 and 7		



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