



# **Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Holme House**

**For reporting year  
1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023**

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# Contents

<b>Introductory sections 1 – 3</b>	<b>Page</b>
1. Statutory role of the IMB	3
2. Description of the establishment	4
3. Key points	5
 <b>Evidence sections 4 – 7</b>	
4. Safety	8
5. Fair and humane treatment	12
6. Health and wellbeing	16
7. Progression and resettlement	19
 <b>The work of the IMB</b>	
Board statistics	22
Applications to the IMB	22
 <b>Annex A</b>	
Main service providers	23
 <b>Annex B</b>	
Tables and graphs	24

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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**

- 2.1 HMP Holme House is a category C training and resettlement prison, holding convicted adult male prisoners (aged 18 and over). The number of young people (18-25 years of age) has steadily increased over the last two years and at the end of 2023 made up almost 15% (170 prisoners) of the prisoner population.

The prison is part of the North East Prison Group, together with HMP Durham, HMP Kirklevington Grange and HMP Deerbolt. The majority of the prisoners are from the local region, with a small number from further afield. The operational capacity is 1,179<sup>1</sup> (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), with a certified normal accommodation (CNA) of 1,036, which is the number of prisoners a prison can hold without being crowded.

- 2.2 The prison consists of seven house blocks, with one house block being used as a Psychologically Informed Planned Environment (PIPE), a programme to help treat and support high-risk, high-harm offender, and one accommodating vulnerable prisoners. A therapeutic community (where prisoners are housed separately to the population and take part in intensive rehabilitation) is based in another block and veterans are accommodated together in part of a block.
- 2.3 There is an in-patient healthcare provision with 14 beds, and an end-of-life suite with two beds.
- 2.4 The separation and integration unit (SIU) has a CNA of 28, which includes two units of special accommodation.
- 2.5 Education is delivered from three regimes buildings. A suite of training kitchens and a bistro are available for catering training.
- 2.6 There are a number of workshops delivering services to this and other prisons. These include a large laundry and a DHL operation that supplies men with 'canteen', which is their weekly purchases of groceries and toiletries. Woodwork, fabric and other workshops are available to train prisoners, where goods are manufactured for internal and a small number of external customers.
- 2.7 The garden and grounds maintenance service, along with yards and bins work, are based in external sheds and greenhouses.
- 2.8 The prison has a large, well-used gym and a sports hall. A large kitchen, with an on-site bakery, provides work for prisoners, as well as delivering three meals (two meals and a packed breakfast) each day to over 1,100 people.

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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**

- The deterioration in the structure of the buildings in the prison, together with slow progress on addressing repairs, has impacted life in the prison.
- There has been an increase in the number of young offenders in the prison over the reporting year (with a cohort of 170 at the end of December compared with 141 at the same time in previous year). This has had an impact on the culture in some areas of the prison, with a small number of young offenders being housed in the vulnerable persons' house block for their own safety. Bullying and intimidation of older prisoners has been reported.
- Staffing shortages have had some impact on the prison, with shortages in the offender management unit (OMU) resulting in a low number of prisoners leaving prison to a job.
- From the Board's observations, the Governor and their team generally delivered a caring and supportive regime during the year.

#### **Safety**

- The prison appears to be less safe than in previous years, with an increase in disorder, violence and incidents of the use of force. The Board considers the increase in violence to be directly linked to the number of young offenders accommodated and the levels of illicit items, including drugs and phones, entering the prison (see section 4).

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

- The Board has observed significant issues caused by repairs and maintenance not being carried out within a realistic timescale and which have had a direct impact on the wellbeing and progress of prisoners. When it rains, some of the main corridors have standing water from incorrectly drained roofs to the gym. The roof vents in house block seven continue to malfunction, resulting in poor temperature control.
- Issues relating to leaking roofs in the laundry and wood workshop have resulted in work being suspended when it rains. Unfortunately, external customer contracts have been lost and prisoners have not been able to work.
- Delays to repairs to other parts of the prison, such as the kitchens, showers, serveries and cells, have also caused some difficulties for prisoners. More information is provided in section 5.1.

#### **Health and wellbeing**

- The services provided to prisoners by the healthcare centre have improved significantly and are felt to be equivalent to those provided outside of the prison service.

#### **Progression and resettlement**

- The prison was inspected by Ofsted as part of HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) visit in March 2023. In its assessment, Ofsted stated that each of the five main areas 'requires improvement'.

- The prison has over 900 workplaces, although about half are part-time. However, it is disappointing that some work has not been able to take place due to lack of availability of premises (e.g. the laundry).

## **3.2 Main areas for development**

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

3.2.1 Why is funding for essential repairs (both minor and capital works) being delayed or not made available?

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

3.2.2 Can the vetting process be speeded up to ensure that new staff are in post without unnecessary delay?

3.2.3 Why is the Prison Service tied into a contract to purchase food from a company that has shortages, is inflexible and provides poor-quality items on occasion? When will this contract be up for re-tender?

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

3.2.4 Despite many steps being taken, there are still significant numbers of illicit items, including phones, entering the prison each month. Does the Governor think that staff, contractor and prisoner security can be improved?

3.2.5. Although the ambience within the prison is generally good, disrepair is evident throughout the establishment. What is the Governor doing to improve this?

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

Issue raised	Response given	Progress
<p>Funding to be provided in a timely manner for essential repairs.</p> <p>Repairs and maintenance are slow and, therefore, result in a backlog: e.g. cell repairs, roofing, floors, main kitchen equipment, servery equipment.</p>	<p>The Board will be pleased to note that a commitment has been made to make funding available for the refurbishment of residential shower recesses. An ongoing programme of refurbishments will also continue through the current financial year 2023-24. These projects are to the value of approximately £3 million and include the replacement of the electrical switchgear and upgrading the perimeter lighting. A further agreement has been reached to upgrade the internal</p>	<p>Not all the showers have been refurbished, as funding is not available.</p> <p>The work contract for lighting has been awarded and design started in spring 2023. Work had not started on site as of January 2024.</p>

	lighting across house blocks one to four when the wings are made available for the works.	
Can IPP (imprisoned for public protection) prisoners be offered a fair process for their release and clarity about their future position?	The Government accepted the Justice Select Committee's (JSC) recommendation to review the Action Plan and shared the outcome of the review with the JSC on 26 April 2023.	There has been a reduction from 50 IPP prisoners to 41, 29 of whom are recalls (when a prisoner is returned to prison because they have broken the conditions of their license). Mentors are in place for IPP and life-sentence prisoners.
Bakery equipment not operational.	The bakery is operational again.	As of January 2024, the bakery proofer is not operational.

## **Evidence sections 4 – 7**

### **4. Safety**

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

The reception team receives convicted prisoners transferred from other prisons, principally from HMP Durham. During 2023, over 1,200 prisoners were transferred into the prison. Incoming prisoners usually arrive in the early afternoon, and on entry undertake a full body scan.

We observed the reception area to be well run and prisoners being treated with care at what can be a very anxious and confusing time for them. One of the red band prisoners (who have a greater degree of trust and autonomy in their jobs in the prison) in reception is also Samaritan-trained as a Listener. New prisoners are given food and a drink whilst they wait to be processed.

The transfer of prisoner property is an area that gives cause to a significant number of complaints. Observations in reception evidence that, on arrival, prisoner property is dealt with diligently. However, there continue to be times when not all of the property arrives.

Due to circumstances outside the control of HMP Holme House, prisoners sometimes arrive late in the day (2-3pm), after being held in their previous prison ready for departure from early morning. This late arrival time means that processes within reception have to be actioned swiftly before the end of the day.

Induction for mainstream prisoners starts on their first morning at Holme House daily (Monday to Saturday). The Board is pleased to report that all prisoners are required to undertake induction, even if they have been in Holme House previously. Sessions include meeting with a safer custody officer, Listener, drug and alcohol recovery team (DART) staff member and chaplaincy team.

The new prisoners attend a session on their second morning covering numeracy, literacy and employment opportunities. It identifies prisoners appropriate for referral to the Shannon Trust (a charity) reading programme, as well as education and training needs. New prisoners do not move on from the first night wing until they are signed off as having been through induction.

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

The incidence of self-harm by prisoners in 2023 was similar to that in 2022 – an average of 50 each month – with a number of men self-harming on multiple occasions (see Annex B, Table 4.2.1). The most common means of self-harm were cutting, ligature and overdose.

The Board has observed assessments, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) reviews and has been pleased to see clear action and support plans being put in place to help self-harmers.

During the first half of the year, the number of ACCTs was slightly lower than for the same period in 2022, while in the second half of the year, it was significantly higher than the same period in 2022.



The prison has 19 Samaritan-trained and supervised Listeners (nine based in the house block for vulnerable prisoners and ten in mainstream house blocks). Prisoners are also able to telephone Samaritans directly from their cells. Demand for Listener support is highest between 7pm and 1am. The Samaritans are planning to recruit and train 15 new Listeners in spring 2024.

During December, the prison had technical problems accessing the confidential access line that family and friends can use to contact the prison if they have concerns about a prisoner's welfare. Prisoners were advised about the problem on the kiosks (a self-service computer system that allows prisoners to manage their daily affairs), and how family and friends could use the prisoners' family website [www.prisonersfamilies.org](http://www.prisonersfamilies.org).

There were five deaths in custody during 2023 (compared with eight in 2022), all of which were anticipated. None was self-inflicted. One prisoner, who was released from custody in late 2023, died within 28 days of release. The prison has used the palliative care beds to support prisoners who are approaching the end of their lives, as well as their families. The prison had 10 family liaison officers as of December 2023, with plans to increase this number in early 2024.

Samaritans provide a support system entitled 'postvention' for staff and prisoners when a prisoner has died or taken his own life.

The prison's safeguarding policy was reviewed and updated during 2023. The prison is a participant in the Tees Adult Safeguarding Board.

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

The level of violence among prisoners was higher this year than in the previous reporting period with, on average, 20 incidents per month in 2023 compared with 15 in 2022.

The number of incidents in which prisoners assaulted prison staff was slightly higher in 2023 (40 incidents) than in 2022 (30 incidents).

Challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs) are used in managing prisoners who are a danger to other or are vulnerable to harm through violent behaviour. Fortnightly CSIP meetings check that reviews of the plans are completed on time and documented the facts and improvements.

A debt summit held in autumn 2022, attended by officers and prisoners, resulted in the prison reviewing the combined self-harm, debt and violence action plan into a more comprehensive 'debt reduction action plan 2023/24', which was launched in June 2023. It has been encouraging to see the focus on debt during the year, which is seeking to be a 'whole prison approach' and including family members, who will see notices about debt in visits areas and on the prison website.

There were 166 incidents of disorder, including incidents at height (defined as any incident taking place at height above or below ground level and can include prisoners on the netting, climbing over bars or on the roof) during 2023, an increase on 122 in 2022.

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

Use of force was consistently higher in 2023 than in 2022 and showed an upward trend. There were 468 incidents in the use of force in 2023, compared with 268 in 2022 (see Annex B, Graph 4.4).

December 2023 had the highest monthly number of use of force incidents recorded in recent years in the prison.

The command suite was opened twice (to deal with serious incidents) during the year, both occasions during December. The Board, through its observations during the incidents and at subsequent use of force scrutiny reviews, is satisfied that the use of force employed by prison staff and the national tactical response group (NTRG) was proportionate during the incidents on both these occasions.

Analysis shows that the most common reason for the use of force (the majority of force being a guiding hold, which involves taking a prisoner by the arm and directing them to a particular location) is the refusal of a prisoner to relocate (38% of incidents), most often from the house block used for early days of custody. So the Board is pleased to see that prisoner induction has been modified to stress that all prisoners must move on from the early days' location.

During the latter part of 2023, the Board observed that younger prisoners were subject to the use of force disproportionate to their population in the prison (see Annex B, Table 4.4.1). In 2022, younger prisoners made up 11% of the population and in 2023 this figure was 14%. Although this is not a significant increase of population, the use of force has been disproportionate. During the year, staff have looked into de-escalation tactics for younger prisoners and delivered more 'choices and changes' interventions.

A Board member attends to monitor the use of force scrutiny meetings, typically held weekly. In all the cases scrutinised, the member was satisfied that force had been used appropriately. Analysis of the use of force against protected characteristics (including, among others, race, religion, gender and sexual orientation, which it is unlawful to discriminate against) did not show any differential use on the different groups.

Planned and spontaneous uses of force are monitored by the monthly strategic use of force meeting and the weekly scrutiny meeting. A total of 98% of incidents were captured on body worn video cameras (BWVCs) in November. This fell to 92% in December, in part due to the nature and spontaneity of some of the incidents.

The Board continues to welcome that prisoner representatives attend the use of force strategic meetings and see redacted information presentations. The prisoners are free to share the redacted information statistical presentation with fellow prisoners. They also contribute a valuable perspective to discussions, which is respected by other participants.

Complaints about the use of force are considered by the use of force committee, which views available CCTV and BWVC footage of the incident (prisoner representatives are not present during these reviews). Complaints, typically two per month, have been considered by the committee.

Since the introduction of PAVA incapacitant spray in 2022 to Holme House, over 90% of officers are now trained to carry it. PAVA was drawn 10 times during the year and deployed seven times. The Board notes that both the drawing of PAVA and its use increased in 2023.

Since the introduction of PAVA incapacitant spray in 2022 to Holme House, over 90% of officers are now trained to carry it. In 2023, 96% of staff were trained compared with 82% in 2022. PAVA was drawn 10 times during the year and deployed seven times. The Board notes that both the drawing of PAVA and its use increased in 2023. Every incident where PAVA was drawn/used is scrutinised during the weekly use of force scrutiny meeting. The Board notes that this scrutiny identified no concerns with the actions.

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

The prison faced an ongoing challenge to prevent illicit items entering the prison during the year. The common routes were drones, visitors, letters and, possibly, staff and contractors. Attempts to stop drones being used to drop items into exercise yards included new netting over some yards and the increased use of the prison drone to scrutinise the perimeter.

Drugs are an ever-present threat to the stability of the prison and the wellbeing of prisoners. The latter months of 2023 saw an increase in drugs (particularly Spice, a chemical compound that mimics the effects of the active ingredient in cannabis, entering the prison impregnated in fake legal documents).

The passing of illicit items during social visits continued. The security team and regional sniffer dogs are in attendance. The Board applauds the sensitive nature in which the dog handlers operate when around visitors, particularly children and babies.

Significant quantities of fermented liquid (hooch) were seized during 2023. A fermented liquids action plan is in operation. The security team undertakes targeted searches using detector dogs. The Board notes that the search dogs are a regional resource and, therefore, not always available, particularly out of hours. However, the drug reduction programme funds two dogs and two officers, who can be available during the week and also at weekend.

During most months of the year, a number of mobile phones (and associated paraphernalia) have been found in the prison (both very small, simple models and larger models). The Board notes that the prevalence of phones' finds is concerning and indicates that there are channels available for phones to be entering the prison regularly.

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

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

#### **Accommodation**

Although the general appearance and cleanliness of the accommodation has improved, there is still significant areas of concern.

- There are still many cells that were designed for one person now being used for two. There is, therefore, automatically overcrowding in those cells. Some cells still do not have proper screening to the WC. We understand that new curtains have been ordered for the WC screening.
- Prisoners have to eat all their meals in the small space available, including when the cellmate uses the WC. This matter does not comply with Government guidelines for cell-sharing.
- A significant number of showers on house blocks have not been refurbished.
- Floors in many serveries are damaged and, as well as forming a tripping hazard, are not able to be easily cleaned.
- There are cracked and broken plastic covers to many serveries which increase the risk of injury as well as poor food hygiene.
- The roof vents on house block seven have had recurrent operational challenges, resulting in cold and wet conditions on the wing. Also, there have been issues with heating and hot water provision on other wings due to gas supply and boiler breakdowns.

#### **Clothing**

- The provision of clothing and bedding seems, generally, to be good.

#### **Food**

- Last year, the Board reported that the quality of food had deteriorated and this deterioration has continued during 2023. There are a significant number of pieces of equipment in the main kitchens that are not working, including bratt pans (kitchen appliances that can cook large batches of food in different ways), which has resulted in increased stress on the prison's ability to produce good-quality food. Food shortages have continued and replacements are often not suitable. The way in which food is only purchased from one company is very restricting and results in an inflexible process, where better quality and priced food could be purchased.
- There have been periods of shortages of staff employed in the kitchen due to sickness. This has led to prisoners not being properly supervised, resulting in food not being properly cooked and an increase in food thefts.
- An improvement plan is in place to address facets of the catering provision, including equipment and menu choices. This plan is not yet fully implemented and will require equipment to be fully repaired and fit for purpose.

### **5.2 Segregation**

The SIU has 26 cells with two special accommodation cells (in which furniture, bedding and sanitation may have been removed for the prisoner's safety). The SIU is well maintained and cell damage usually repaired quickly. Unfortunately, cells are frequently damaged by disruptive prisoners.

In October 2023, two prisoners were held in SIU over their 42 days, following a delay in approval for extensions being granted. Despite this, the Board found the prisoners in SIU were treated well by the officers.

Until May 2023, the SIU occupancy was low, typically in single figures. In May, there was an influx of young adult prisoners from HMP Deerbolt, following a serious incident there. This pushed SIU occupancy to 18 and this remained high - in double figures - for the rest of the year.

Special accommodation was used twice in the year and then only for short periods.

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

There has been significant emphasis placed on delivering key worker sessions during 2023, which has led to over 30,000 key worker meetings during the year, (compared with 19,292 in 2022). Whilst this continues to remain short of one session for each prisoner a week, it represents a compliance figure of 50%. On average, across the year there were 156 key workers available (compared with 139 in 2022).

### **5.4 Equality and diversity**

The prison holds a monthly Diversity and Inclusion Forum. Membership includes departmental heads and prisoner representatives. It has operated throughout the year, monitoring and discharging the responsibilities of equality and diversity in all areas of prison life and, where necessary, identifying and taking remedial or improvement actions. The data provided help to identify any potential disproportionality against prisoners with protected characteristics across facets of prison life, e.g. the use of force, complaints, employment and the incentives scheme.

The meeting aims to encourage prisoners and staff to report incidents of victimisation, harassment and discrimination in the prison by using the discrimination incident report forms (DIRFs) and to increase their confidence in the investigation processes and actions following findings.

The Board has noted that for many metrics the younger prisoners are disproportionately represented in, for example, incidents of the use of force, unemployment, Basic status in the incentives scheme (which rewards good behaviour. There are three categories: Basic, the lowest, plus Standard and Enhanced), etc. The prison has developed an action plan to try and support younger prisoners.

The Board notes that recent data have indicated that over 40% of prisoners are considered to have some type of disability.

In 2023, 118 DIRFs (129 in 2022) were submitted and 32 (21 in 2022) were found proven. A number of DIRFs were submitted that were re-categorised as complaints and dealt with through the prison complaints processes.

Focus groups operate for protected characteristics. The Board is pleased to observe the development of an 'over 50s' group as part of the response to Holme House having an ageing prison population (more than 5% of prisoners are over 60 and more than 15% are over 50). A number of the focus groups, such as that representing the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, have not met regularly during 2023.

The prison has recognised and celebrated special days in the diversity and inclusion calendar, e.g. Holocaust Memorial Day and PRIDE.

As part of the national programme to enhance understanding and engagement with prisoners who are neurodiverse, the prison welcomed a neurodiversity support manager in 2023.

### **5.5 Faith and pastoral support**

The chaplaincy team has been well staffed throughout the majority of the year. Due to a vacancy arising for an Imam, provision was delivered through sessional and volunteer Imams during the latter part of the year, with very little disruption to the services provided.

Appropriate seasonal festivals for all the significant faith groups represented in the prison population have been marked. As in previous years, additional activities have been arranged such as faith-specific study groups. A local community choir also provided two performances in the run up to Christmas. The chaplaincy team continued to work with the Angel Tree Prison Fellowship charity to support prisoners' children (particularly around Christmas). Over 130 children were supported with gifts from around 50 prisoner requests.

The chaplaincy team has provided significant pastoral support to men with bereavements, family difficulties and other particular needs.

### **5.6 Incentives schemes**

The incentives scheme is designed to promote and encourage positive behaviour and it has, essentially, settled during 2023. The only change from 2022 was that the proportion of prisoners placed in the Basic category increased slightly to 3%, with 45% on the Enhanced 45% level and 52% on the Standard level.

The Board notes that:

- young adults are disproportionately represented in these figures, with very few young adults on the Enhanced level during the year and the majority on Standard or Basic
- the use of the incentives' review scheme following an incident of poor behaviour is not always consistently applied to prisoners
- the prison has implemented a number of benefits for Enhanced prisoner, such as being able to order electrical goods, for example.

### **5.7 Complaints**

Prisoners submitted 2,536 complaints (COMP 1s, which are ordinary complaints) in 2023, an increase of 2.4% on the figure of 2,476 in 2022. The 2023 figures did not show any discernible trends. A total of 201 appeals, Comp 1As (216 in 2022), against the initial responses were submitted.

All responses to complaints were in time and subject to quality assurance. The Board noted the respectful and well-expressed nature of responses. In many cases the response refers to the responding officer or Governor having spoken to the prisoner about the complaint.

The categories with the highest number of complaints were: property, 391 complaints (16% of the total number); residential, 329 (13%); and DHL/canteen, 201 (8%). Prisoners frequently made comments to Board members about food, but only 138 formal complaints concerning this category were submitted (5.4% of all complaints).

## **5.8 Property**

Applications to the Board covered issues about property, including missing/lost or damaged property, as well as confiscated or withheld property and property with uncertain ownership (where it was gifted from one to another but not recorded on property cards and not authorised).

The new Prisoners' Property Policy Framework was implemented in September 2022. Whilst it is difficult to quantify the impact this has had on prisoners' property concerns, the number of applications to the Board relating to this category has fallen (see Annex B, Table 5.8). The prison complaints data relating to property also show a reduction between 2022 (456 complaints) and 2023 (403 complaints). However, it remains too high, causing unnecessary concern for prisoners. The Board has been pleased to see efforts being made during the year (such as making property part of the focus of the daily briefings) to ensure staffing is available so that property is processed swiftly when it arrives.

## **6. Health and wellbeing**

### **6.1 Healthcare general**

Spectrum Community Health CIC is contracted to provide healthcare, including GPs, nurses, in-patient care and administrative support, clinical and alcohol misuse treatment and pharmacy services, as well as oversee dental care.

A Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection of the healthcare services in March 2023 found the department to have 'excellent leadership' and demonstrated the progress that had been made under the head of healthcare.

The inspection also commented on good communication in the department. Compliments were passed on and the management of complaints was good. Spectrum categorise complaints as "formal" and "informal". In 2023, there was a drop in the number of "informal complaints", from 357 in 2022 to 290 in 2023, in addition ten formal complaints were submitted. Most complaints centred on medication, particularly concerning prisoners arriving in the prison and having their medication altered during the assessment by Spectrum.

Staffing levels improved, with very few vacancies. There was a much-reduced use of agency nurses, although bank nurses were frequently used.

Daily senior staff meetings continued, where current issues were discussed and current guidelines and pain management were debated.

The out-patients department worked well, with the waiting room being able to hold up to 20 prisoners. There is a separate waiting room for those categorised as vulnerable prisoners.

The 16 bed in-patient unit continued to be a regional resource for prisons in the region without in-patient provision and catered for patients with physical, mental and social needs. All patients appeared to have a care plan.

The palliative care suite has similarly continued to be a regional resource, and in 2023 the Board observed that prisoners were treated with compassion and given support by the staff. There were five deaths in custody during the year.

### **6.2 Physical healthcare**

Nurses in reception screen prisoners who arrive at Holme House and complete a healthcare screening template. They also generate a referral to the mental health team, if necessary.

Nurses continued to triage patients on house blocks or via the kiosks and GPs saw patients for face-to-face appointments where required. Prisoners receive a more responsive service. The waiting list to see the dentist is much improved and stands at six weeks, which is comparable to that in the community.

There is a specialist nurse who sees prisoners with long-term problems. An appointed nurse oversees health promotion, including patient diets, spirometry (measuring lung function for those with COPD), diabetes and tissue viability. Also, 'red bands' (prisoners with a greater degree of trust and autonomy in their jobs in the prison) help disseminate information to prisoners.



A complex-needs nurse monitored all chronic conditions, with 42 prisoners on the complex-needs register. All prisoners who were eligible were offered and given Covid boosters and flu vaccinations.

Weekly meetings are held with nurses, doctors, pharmacy, the mental health team and staff from Humankind (a charity that supports those with complex health and social needs) to discuss nominated prisoners. Escorts are funded by commissioners and transport prisoners to hospital for routine out-patient and emergency appointments.

### **6.3 Mental health**

Primary care assessment waiting times were four working days. The department had no staffing vacancies and there were 297 patients on the caseload. There were four mental health peers drawn from the prisoner population.

The mental health team continued to provide interventions with speech and language therapy, dialectical behaviour therapy, eye-movement psychological intervention, cognitive behaviour therapy, counselling and psychiatrist consultations. Group work included stress management, dialectical behaviour therapy skills, trauma groups and a mental health gym group.

The mental health team has two external psychiatrists, one full-time psychologist and a higher assistant psychological assistant.

Care navigators supported individual prisoners prior to release into the community.

Mental health representatives attend initial ACCT reviews and attend follow-up reviews when necessary.

One person was waiting to be transferred to a mental health unit. He was eventually transferred during the year, but finding spaces in appropriate hospitals continued to be problem.

Support was given to mental health prisoners in the in-patient unit.

### **6.4 Social care**

The management of social care assessment and provision is overseen by Spectrum. Equipment identified as required during occupational therapist assessment is provided through the Tees Community Equipment Service (TCES) for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC).

An on-site sub-store of commonly provided equipment is kept to enable timely issue of equipment. Commonly provided items include raised toilet seats, toilet frames and walking sticks.

SBC occupational therapists provide social care training for prisoners employed as carers. Several social carer training sessions have been held during the year. There has been a steady number of applications from prisoners to be social carers; they are subject to suitability checks prior to going on the waiting list for training.

The Board notes that in light of the ageing prison population, the need for prisoners to be employed as social carers will increase.

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

Throughout the year, the prison has operated the full mandated regime, which means that all prisoners, except those in the SIU, have been out of their cells for far more than the two-hour minimum. In the SIU, prisoners are allowed out of their cell for a daily shower, plus half an hour exercise.

## **6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation**

Holme House continues to be a drug rehabilitation prison (DRP), with an average of 50% of the prison population using the services of a non-clinical DART at any one time. Humankind continued to deliver a programme in the therapeutic community wing. In 2023, it was delivered by eight staff and six prisoner-graduates of the course. A total of 54 prisoners graduated from the programme, with 22 prisoners being de-selected. Eight prisoners became alcohol-free.

At the end of the year, there were 282 prisoners on treatment by a clinical DART, 84% of which were on a maintenance dose and the remaining 16% on reduction treatment.

The therapeutic community on house block six continues to offer care and occupation to prisoners who have become drug- or alcohol-free during their stay in the prison. The animal care therapy continues to develop, with a range of rescue animals and birds being cared for by the prisoners. This care includes construction of animal houses, ponds and cages.

## **6.7 Soft skills and exercise**

This year, the gym has improved its performance significantly. Monthly gym use has increased from 4,000 hours in 2022 to 11,000 hours in 2023. The number of physical activity courses available to prisoners has increased to include:

- Football twinning with Hartlepool Football Club.
- Rugby league with Doncaster Rugby Club.
- LTA soft tennis - Holme House is the only prison to offer this course.
- The personal activity development scheme (PADS), which is held three times a year. Although usually only for prisoners, the last one was a mixed prisoner-and-staff course. The programme is physically very tough and applicants are tested before being allowed to join.

## **7. Progression and resettlement**

### **7.1 Education, library**

Since Covid-19, the Board has not been able to fully monitor the progress of prisoners' educational achievements and academic qualifications. Table 7.1 in Annex B sets out the academic achievements for the year, as regards entry qualifications and NVQ Levels 1 and 2. This area is a priority for monitoring in future years.

The prison was inspected by Ofsted as part of March 2023 HMIP visit. All five areas inspected were assessed as 'requires improvement'.

Formal education continued throughout the year and the percentage of attendance against allocation monitored. The percentages attending varied significantly over the year, with the 80% target reached for only four months. Prisoners who fail to attend without good reason have their wages stopped. There is a significant problem with some young adult prisoners refusing to engage.

The library has operated throughout the year, providing traditional library services to prisoners. It has also introduced the 'Reading Dads' scheme, which has proved very popular. It involves the prisoner and his young child receiving the same book and reading it over the same time period.

The Shannon Trust charity also operated throughout the year, providing support for prisoners who wanted to improve their literacy and numeracy.

### **7.2 Vocational training, work**

The prison has continued to improve its workplace provision and now has just over 900 workplaces, an increase of around 150 on last year. Of these, over 450 are full time, although the number could be reduced so that more men are able to find employment with an increase in part-time jobs. This is a gradual process, as the changes are only made when places become vacant. This has allowed, and will continue to provide, a greater range of workplaces and ensure men can access work, education and programme facilities as part of their core day.

One significant matter observed by the Board in 2023 has been the frequent lack of availability of work in both the laundry, wood mill and machine shop. This is due to a leaking roof which, at times, means a full complement of prisoners cannot be accommodated. This has had the knock-on impact of some commercial contracts being lost and therefore there being less work in the future.

As in previous years, vulnerable prisoners do not have access to the same range of courses as other men. However, it is difficult to see how this can be resolved without more resources or a redesign of the prison's physical layout. Attendance at work, as for all purposeful activity, is generally good, at over 85%, although this does vary from week to week.

It remains a desire of the prison to extend the curriculum to fully meet the needs of all the prison population. As a result of effective careers guidance, the men's choice of prison-based activity fits well with their vocational aspirations. The intention remains to integrate English and Maths more closely in the workshops. The industry manager is in communication with both Waste Management Industry Training and Advisory Board (WAMITAB) and City and Guilds, with the intention of bringing more

vocational qualifications back into the prison. However, the latter is dependent on available funding.

Unfortunately, although prisoners did gain valuable skills and knowledge to support their release plans, these achievements are not consistently recorded in such a way as to enable the men to demonstrate them fully on their release.

There remains limited opportunity for prisoners to engage with employers whilst in prison, because the prison employment board has not been very functional during the year.

Industrial workshops allow men to develop skills in laundry, wood finishing, joinery, gardening, waste management, warehouse distribution and garment manufacture. Coding and software development continue to be run successfully in-house, to the point that prisoners were motivated to explore the possibility of self-employment on release.

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

The OMU has faced quite a few challenges in 2023, largely due to staffing reductions caused by ill-health, retirement and vacancies. This has had an impact on the prisoners in terms of the time spent by staff communicating with them. However, many of the initiatives, such as key worker meetings and in-cell phone technology introduced last year, continue and are of real benefit.

The staffing level issues mentioned have had a negative effect after the successes of the previous year. This is a result of the increased caseloads of the prison offender managers (POMs). The resulting shortfall of POMs means some are not necessarily seeing their prisoners as often as they would like.

The POM drop-in sessions in legal visits are ongoing and proving useful for POMs to complete offender assessment system (OASys) reports and other reports, as well as offering the opportunity for contact and communication with the prisoners they manage.

Preparation for transfer and progression:

- 662 offender assessment system (OASys) assessments were completed in 2023.
- 373 temporary presumptive re-categorisation scheme (TPRS) assessments have been completed since February 2023; of these, 20 have progressed to category D.
- 180 home detention curfew (HDC) approvals and releases.
- 137 category D transfers.

Parole hearings are still held remotely, and some are accommodated in the evenings to make sure hearings are not delayed or adjourned.

### **7.4 Family contact**

Prisoners can keep in contact with their families and friends by mail, phone, email-a-prisoner and social visits, either face to face or by video.

During the year, 8,720 face-to-face social visits took place (compared with 4,284 in 2022). Around 6,000 social video calls were made during 2023, including on 25 and 26 December.

The number of visitors mentioning difficulties in booking a visit has decreased significantly since the online system was established and bedded in after some initial hiccups. Visitors have reported inconsistencies with security staff on the entry portal as regards proof of identity and appropriateness of clothing.

The NEPACS charity ran six family days for mains prisoners and three family days for vulnerable prisoners. In addition, a family day was held for veterans. In 2023, 12 adult-only social visits and 12 father and child social visits took place.

Security protocols mean that any visitor caught trying to smuggle illicit items or substances into the prison are apprehended and banned. During the year, 45 visitors were banned because of this and other misbehaviour and 31 prisoners were placed on closed visits (where the prisoner and the visitor are prevented from any form of physical contact). At the end of 2023, there were 14 banned visitors and 11 prisoners subject to closed visits.

NEPACS arranges a variety of activities to support prisoners' children, including giving out chocolate eggs at Easter and a competition to design the NEPACS Christmas card.

Prior to the restrictions imposed during Covid-19, there was regular small attendance at the NEPACS visitor voice meetings. These enabled the families and loved on of prisoners to express their views on how visits are run and how NEPACS and the prison could improve the experience and support for families. The meetings for visitors to vulnerable prisoners and mains arranged during 2023 had only one visitor attending.

## **7.5 Resettlement planning**

In 2023, a total of 1,307 prisoners were released, with 180 released under home detention curfew (HDC). About 95% of the men released had an address to go to. Unfortunately, a significant number of prisoners left without achieving their educational goals or to a job.

## 8. The work of the IMB

### Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	15
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	8
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	9
Total number of visits to the establishment	283

### Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	7	20
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	2	0
C	Equality	8	2
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	18	15
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	20	19
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	8	10
F	Food and kitchens	13	12
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	17	38
H1	Property within the establishment	33	19
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	29	29
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	10	9
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence), parole, release dates, re-categorisation	37	23
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	32	18
K	Transfers	9	16
L	Miscellaneous	0	2
	<b>Total number of applications</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>232</b>

## **Annex A**

### **Main service providers**

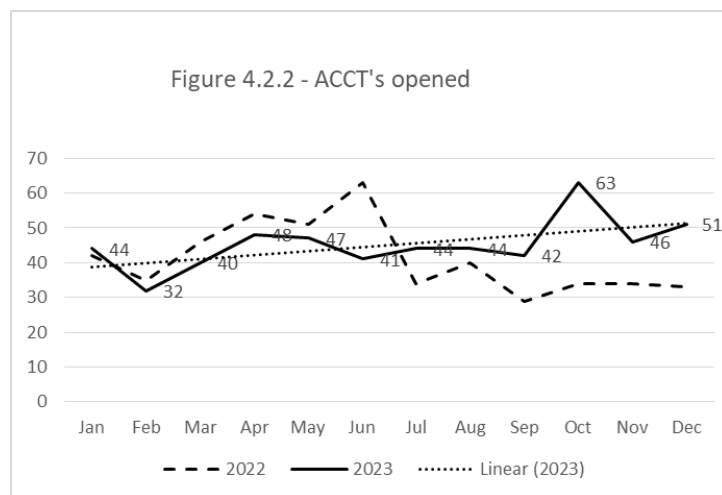
- Spectrum Community Health CIC: healthcare
- Novus: education, learning and skills
- Bidfood: food and catering suppliers
- DHL: prisoner canteen
- GEOAmey: prisoner transport
- Amey: works and stores
- Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV): mental health services
- Stockton Borough Council: library services, social care support
- Samaritans: Listeners
- NEPACS: family support
- Humankind: rehabilitation, non-clinical DART services

## Annex B

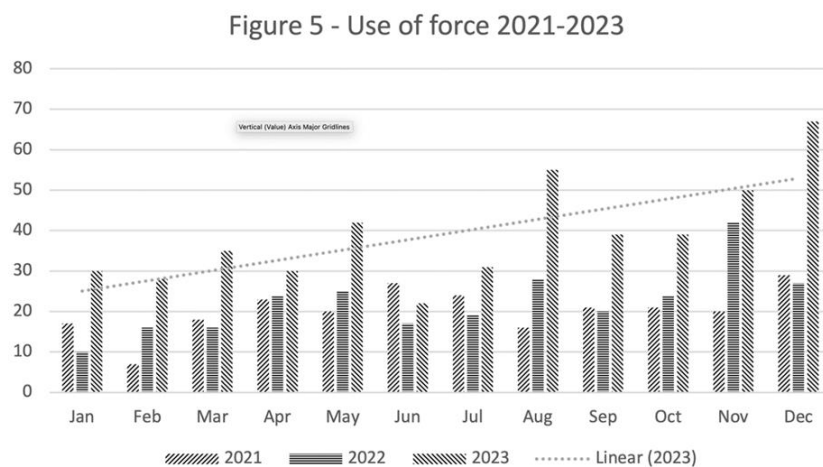
**Table 4.2.1: Monthly data on self-harm incidents**

Month	Number of prisoners self-harming	Number of prisoners self-harming on multiple occasions
May 2023	27	8
June 2023	19	6
July 2023	25	8
August 2023	35	16
September 2023	24	11
October 2023	37	14
November 2023	37	17
December 2023	35	14

**Graph 4.2.2: ACCTs opened**



**Graph 4.4: Use of force incidents 2021-2023**





**Table 4.4.1: Proportion of total uses of force on younger prisoners**

Month	18-25 yrs
August 2023	47%
September 2023	24%
October 2023	21%
November 2023	34%
December 2023	45%

**Table 5.8: Applications to the IMB concerning issues with property**

	Applications received by the IMB	2022	2023
H1	Property within this establishment	33	19
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	29	29
	All property applications	62	48
	Total of all applications	243	232
	% of property applications	26%	21%

**Table 7.1**

<b>Maths</b>	Number of awards
Entry Level 1	3
Entry Level 2	23
Level 1	10
Level 2	10

<b>English</b>	Number of awards
Entry Level 1	1
Entry Level 2	11
Entry Level 3	27
Level 1	17
Level 2	12



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