



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Leicester

**For reporting year
1 February 2023 to 31 January 2024**

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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 Leicester is a local male adult prison with reception and resettlement functions and serves the courts of Leicester and Leicestershire. Of the prison population, 98% are local to the county of Leicestershire¹.

HMP Leicester is a Victorian prison built in 1874, behind a gatehouse dating from 1825, occupying a three-acre site close to Leicester city centre. A visits hall and administration accommodation were added in 1990. The main residential unit is a long, rectangular cell block with four galleried landings. Usually, two prisoners share a cell.

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) was reduced from 344 to 327 prisoners at the time of writing, in March 2024. There are separate areas on the main wing for the care and separation unit (CSU), which houses segregated prisoners, and the My Recovery Unit (MRU), which delivers substance misuse recovery services. There is one main outdoor exercise area.

About 26 vulnerable prisoners continue to be housed in the Welford unit, which is in a separate building, with a dedicated small exercise area. When the Welford unit is full, other vulnerable prisoners are held on the induction unit and are offered their regime on the Welford unit. The healthcare facility occupies the ground floor.

Other buildings on site include those housing reception, the offender management unit (OMU), resettlement services, learning and skills, two workshops, gym, multi-faith room, chaplaincy, IMB office and legal visits.

¹ 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 prison continues to be well led by an energetic Governor and senior management team that strives to provide a good service within the restrictions of old, unsuitable buildings, which will continue to need considerable investment to ensure an acceptable standard of living conditions. The increased rate of 'churn' of prisoners on remand (those held in prison until the time of their trial or subsequent sentence hearing), sentenced, or on recall (when a prisoner released on licence or parole is returned to prison because they have broken the conditions of their supervision) has added to the pressure on staff to ensure a safe and decent regime for all those passing through this very busy local prison.

Safety

There has been a concerning rise in the number of incidents of self-harm during the year (4.2), reflecting the increasing number of prisoners passing through the establishment with mental health issues, some of whom were prolific in their risky and harmful behaviour. Prison staff were alert to the risks of individual prisoners, using the assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) processes. These support individuals who are at risk of self-harm and suicide and, during the reporting year, included responding quickly and averting fatal injury in the cases of two men. Increased turnover of prisoners made it more difficult to recruit, train and retain prisoners in the role of Listeners.

The number of violent incidents, both assaults on staff and other prisoners, has increased but is lower than pre-pandemic levels (4.3). The use of force by staff (4.4) is now high compared with similar prisons. However, much of this consists of low-level interventions, and incidents reviewed by IMB members have generally been appropriate and proportionate. There has been good use of intelligence to intercept weapons, drugs, and mobile phones (4.5). However, the rate of positive mandatory drug tests indicates the increasing use of illegal drugs, which rose substantially in the early months of 2024. There have been improvements to the processes for receiving and inducting new prisoners (4.1). However, the process for inducting vulnerable prisoners and those with limited verbal skills in English needs further work.

Fair and humane treatment

The condition of the ageing prison cells continues to deteriorate (5.1.1), with a need to replace windows and grills to improve security and decency. There were occasions when there was insufficient basic clothing and kit, due to the heavy throughput of new prisoners. Further capital investment is required to bring all showers up to a decent standard (5.1.2) and a programme of cell refurbishment and redecoration is needed. Food is of a reasonable standard (5.1.3), although the allocated budget remains insufficient, and there are problems at times with the maintenance of essential kitchen equipment.

The CSU has been under considerable pressure throughout the year (5.2), with too many men remaining there for extended periods, often due to delays in transferring those with severe mental illness to secure hospital settings. However, the level of care demonstrated by CSU staff has been good. The number of adjudications (5.2.4), disciplinary hearings held when a prisoner is suspected of breaking prison

rules, rose in line with the increased number of violent incidents, although the proportion proven was low.

The Board observed many positive interactions between staff and prisoners (5.3). The prison was fully staffed for much of the year and the turnover of those who had completed their training was low. However, many prison officers were relatively new and require ongoing training to consolidate their skills and experience. Despite the good staffing levels, the number of key working sessions was well below target (5.3.3). The number of complaints remained steady (5.7), and the large majority of responses reviewed by the IMB were appropriate.

Health and wellbeing

Healthcare provision was generally appropriate within the constraints of an unhealthy and ageing prison environment. However, there were a high number of vacancies covered by temporary staff. Physical healthcare services (6.2) were good, although the transfer of healthcare provider resulted in some disruption to GP services, with prisoners waiting too long to see a GP following this change. Mental health services were good (6.3), but delays in transferring individuals to secure settings were often excessive. There continued to be an absence of psychosocial treatment for those with substance misuse problems (6.6), despite this being part of the healthcare contract. Time out of cell was comparable with similar prisons (6.5) and was limited by the facilities available. Exercise in the open air was generally available for an hour a day, and the gym remained a popular and well-used resource.

Progression and resettlement

Education provision continued to develop (7.1). While attendance required improvement, the success rate of men achieving qualifications in functional skills was good. The library (7.1.2) was popular, providing a range of events and activities, although the budget for new books and resources was insufficient. The range of vocational courses on offer increased and the proportion of men obtaining qualifications was high (7.2). Workshop provision was limited, and the work available was low skilled and insufficiently motivational.

The offender management unit (OMU) was very busy with the churn of prisoners, with most sentenced men now being transferred to prisons outside Leicestershire (7.3). The availability of social visits was extended in the evenings and at weekends (7.4). Resettlement planning developed as a real strength of the prison (7.5), with the introduction of the new resettlement hub and excellent links with employers. However, with most short-sentenced men transferred elsewhere, the challenge was to enable the work commenced in Leicester, particularly the links with employers, to follow individuals as they moved. While the proportion of men in accommodation on release increased at the end of 2023, with more early releases in 2024, more men are now being released without a firm offer of accommodation.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

Transfer of seriously mentally ill prisoners

The Board has, again, to report that some prisoners experienced very long waits for transfer to secure hospital accommodation (6.3.1). The number of prisoners waiting

a place has increased and several of these men deteriorated while waiting in the care and separation unit.

What actions will the Minister take, together with colleagues in health commissioning, to ensure there are sufficient secure hospital places to cope promptly with the demand?

Men leaving prison without accommodation

Over the past year, 37% of prisoners released from HMP Leicester did not have accommodation to go to (7.5) and the situation has worsened since with the recent increase in the numbers of prisoners on early release.

How does the Minister plan to work with colleagues who have responsibility for housing and local Government to increase opportunities for the accommodation of prisoners on release?

Short-sentence prisoners transferred to prisons some distance away.

With the increasing proportion of remand prisoners at HMP Leicester, most short-sentence prisoners are being transferred to prisons further afield rather than being resettled locally.

With the opening of HMP Fosse Way on the edge of Leicester, can more of these prisoners be transferred there to improve contact with families, local employers and accommodation providers to improve opportunities for resettlement and to reduce prisoner's anxieties about transfer?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

Need for significant capital investment

The conditions of cells are deteriorating, with broken windows and grills needing replacement (5.1.1) to provide more decent accommodation and to reduce opportunities for delivery of contraband by drones.

Can funds be found for replacing cell windows and grills?

Provision of meaningful work in workshops

The work available in the prison workshops fails to develop prisoners' skills, motivate them or link to job opportunities in the community (7.2).

Can HMPPS source more meaningful work for the prison workshops that develops skills relating to job vacancies in the local travel-to-work area?

TO THE GOVERNOR

Induction of vulnerable prisoners and those with additional needs

Vulnerable prisoners do not receive the same quality of induction as the general prison population, and induction is not sufficiently tailored to those with additional needs or lack of fluency in English (4.1).

Can the Governor review and improve induction so that it is equitable for all?

More systematic key working

The frequency and regularity of key working requires improvement (5.3.3).

Can the Governor develop a revised scheme that is deliverable within the resources available, which is predictable and routine and targets those most in need of attention and support?

My Recovery Unit

The substance misuse unit is not working as intended and the healthcare unit is not providing a comprehensive therapeutic regime (6.6).

Can the Governor work with healthcare commissioners and the provider to ensure that the healthcare unit provides a more holistic, therapeutic regime for prisoners who are seeking to reduce their substance misuse?

3.3 Response to the last report

Issue raised	Progress
To the Minister Mentally ill prisoners experiencing very long waits for transfer to secure hospital accommodation.	The proportion of men waiting too long for transfer to a secure facility worsened in 2023. Nine of the eleven men waited more than the 28-day target, with waits ranging from 50 to 195 days.
The increasing number of prisoners waiting for court hearings.	The number of men waiting for court hearings has increased. The remand and unsentenced population at HMP Leicester was 75% at the end of January 2024, compared with 64% on the same date in 2023.
Men leaving prison without accommodation.	There has been a marginal improvement in the percentage of men obtaining accommodation on release with the opening of the new CAS3 service (which offers those leaving prison temporary accommodation for up to 84 nights) in the latter part of 2023. However, the situation has worsened more recently, with many men who were released on end of custody release licences leaving prison without accommodation.
To the Prison Service Need for significant capital investment in the gym.	We are pleased to report that the gym floor has now been replaced. However, there is still serious water ingress, because the gutters are continuing to overflow and are awaiting repair.

The availability of finance, benefit and debt services for prisoners.	There remains no rehabilitation services contract for finance, benefit and debt at HMP Leicester. However, there are limited services available in the prison, with support from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and resettlement services.
The poor condition of many prison cells.	The prison has remained full for most of 2023 and the programme of refurbishment and redecoration of cells has stalled. Due to heavy throughput of prisoners the conditions of cells and in particular the windows have continued to deteriorate.
To the Governor Inconsistent induction of prisoners.	There has been a recent improvement in induction procedures with the opening of the new resettlement hub. However, there has been no improvement in arrangements for vulnerable prisoners or those who are not fluent in English or have learning difficulties.
Under-developed substance misuse services.	The regime for the My Recovery Unit (MRU) has not developed, as the proposed psychosocial interventions have not been delivered by the healthcare provider.
Insufficient key working.	Key working continues to average about 20% of expected hours during any week. However, plans are developing for re-scoping and targeting the scheme to improve the impact for priority groups and those in their early days in custody.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

4.1.1 *First night*

The reception area is relatively small for the increasingly high number of men arriving during the year, sometimes up to 190 per month. There are only four cells which, on occasion, is insufficient if there are simultaneous receptions and transfers/discharges. Until mid-reporting year, the first night initial interviews were conducted in the first night centre office; then, subsequently more appropriately, but not ideally, in the reception area in a small office that also serves as a staff tearoom.

The initial reception process aims to ensure prisoners are safe, supported, and that their immediate needs are met.

There were frequent occasions when new prisoners arrived late from court. Attempts were made to ensure prisoners were provided with a hot meal and shower and an opportunity to make a first-night phone call. No Listeners were deployed in reception, and only one induction orderly was employed for most of the year. To avoid the possibility of prisoners incurring early debt to buy essentials, an advance of £20 was immediately made. Decency packs comprising essential toiletries were provided, together with most other essential kit, but there were occasional shortages of items such as duvets, kettles and phones for immediate issue.

4.1.2 *Induction unit*

Time out of cell is limited on the induction unit to 2.5 hours a day. For much of the year, there were inadequate arrangements to ensure a comprehensive explanation of all procedures. With the opening of the new resettlement hub, on day two most new arrivals attended the hub where staff, assisted by an induction orderly, explained prison procedures and identified opportunities for addressing immediate and future resettlement needs.

Vulnerable prisoners had the same first-night treatment as other prisoners and were located on the induction wing. However, they did not attend the resettlement hub on their second day. Relevant staff were expected to visit the men at their cell door to explain procedures and address prisoners' immediate needs, which was not satisfactory. Several vulnerable prisoners told IMB members that they had not received a proper induction. Due to the lack of space on the vulnerable prisoners' wing, for most of the reporting year several vulnerable individuals remained on the induction unit, where they were more at risk, which was not ideal. These prisoners were offered the opportunity to shower and exercise on the vulnerable prisoners' wing for part of the day.

At the end of the reporting year, a review of the reception and induction process has begun. The IMB will monitor the effectiveness of this in 2024.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

4.2.1 Self-harm and constant watch

The rate of prisoners self-harming increased this year, with 563 incidents compared with 226 in 2022 (see Annex B). HMP Leicester had one of the highest number of self-harm incidents nationally. The reasons for this were complex, because incidents of mental health illness were known to be higher for prisoners. Many prisoners will be diagnosed with two or more types of mental health disorder, including alcohol and drug dependency and other forms of mental illness.

The fact that Leicester prison is constantly turning over its population may also partially contribute to the increased rate of incidents, as some prisoners cannot establish a stable routine of daily behaviour before they are moved on to a different prison. Of these incidents, 40 related to prisoner's concerns about a transfer to another establishment, away from Leicester which, in some cases, would make it more difficult for families to visit.

Whilst the number of incidents is high, the number of individuals self-harming is low, with over 40 per cent of these incidents carried out by those with a history of self-harm repeating this behaviour. Approximately, 6-7% of HMP Leicester's population engaged in self-harm each month.

Most concerns were identified by officers and healthcare staff during the reception and induction processes. All self-harming prisoners and those at risk were managed by the ACCT process. Prisoners showing manipulative and goal-oriented behaviour were encouraged to engage with an individual management plan, setting clear boundaries for entitlements that staff aimed to deliver in a consistent manner.

Cutting, scratching and wound aggravation remained the most frequent form of self-harm. The prison was part of a pilot to replace razor blades with electric razors. However, it was discovered that individuals moved their choice of implements to broken plastic, broken glass, metal and fingernails, so the pilot was discontinued.

Hanging and self-strangulation was the second most frequent form of self-harm, with bedding, clothing and towels being the implements most frequently used. One individual accounted for a large number of these incidents.

Two incidents were categorised as 'near misses' in the reporting year. Both individuals were attended at the scene by prison staff, who responded quickly, with the prisoners transferred to hospital for treatment. Both recovered and returned to the prison after a couple of days; the incidents were fully investigated by the prison to learn any lessons.

The number of episodes of constant supervision fell in 2023. However, there was a peak of five men at once at the end of 2023 being so supervised, taking up a considerable proportion of prison officer resources. Due to significant safeguarding and mental health concerns, one person was supervised throughout the entire year. Despite becoming a sentenced prisoner, no category B prison would agree to take him while on constant supervision, thereby limiting opportunities to engage him in a more appropriate regime.

Constant supervision data	2021	2022	2023
Number of episodes of constant supervision	40	24	18
Number of individuals involved	28	16	18
Number lasting all year	-	-	1
Number of episodes lasting for greater than 30 days	-	-	6
Number of episodes lasting between 15-30 days	-	-	2
Number of episodes lasting between 1-14 days	-	-	8

A dedicated safer custody phone line is available for members of the public who are concerned about a prisoner's welfare. In addition, a family contact portal went live in November 2023. Families can now submit a concern through the portal, which is then picked up and actioned by the safer custody team. The portal is hosted by the charity, Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT), and is a nationwide initiative. These calls are properly logged and promptly followed up by a check with the prisoner, and appropriate action is taken.

The cell call bell system has been repaired, enabling prisoners to call for assistance in case of an emergency. However, there is a recurrent problem with the software that monitors the system and response times, making it difficult for managers to oversee how quickly staff are responding or to drive down the number of calls that are not emergencies.

The Board continues to commend the whole prison approach in relation to the supportive teamwork shown to ensure that individuals are kept safe.

4.2.2 The ACCT process

The number of ACCT documents opened increased from 195 in 2022 to 290 in 2023. The main reasons were due to prisoners' individual mental health and issues relating to sentencing, family contact and transfers. Approximately 38% of ACCTs were initially closed and then reopened in relation to the same prisoner for the same or differing reasons.

The IMB does not view the increase in opening or re-opening of ACCT documents in 2023 as a concern, as the Board believes this is evidence of the increasing vigilance of staff in recording and ensuring that the health needs of prisoners are met through a robust system of support across the establishment.

The screening process is effective and indicates that the training officers and healthcare staff receive in recognising when ACCTs should be opened, and information shared is bearing fruit. The number of ACCTs open on any day varied, with an average of five or six opened each week. On average, 7% of the prison population was placed on an ACCT each month. This, along with the number of incidents of self-harm, indicates that providing the necessary support for these individuals continues to be both challenging and, at times, very resource intensive.

A robust quality assurance programme is in place. All ACCTs are checked daily by the case co-ordinator, then checked by a manager after each review meeting with

the prisoner. Feedback is given to individual staff about omissions or poor entries, and the overall findings are discussed at the safer custody meeting, with trends highlighted for action. Regular refresher training is offered to staff.

4.2.3 Deaths in custody

There have been no deaths in custody this reporting year. The Board is sorry to report the death of a prisoner in the community shortly after release. However, his death was, apparently, not linked to his time in prison or the circumstances of his release.

4.2.4 Listeners

Listeners are a group of volunteer prisoners, selected, trained and supported by the Samaritans and by safer custody staff. They offer confidential support to prisoners in emotional distress and crisis, and are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The number of trained Listeners fell to three during the first three months of 2023, increased to 11 in May and remained high until the end of August, when the number fell to five. This was due to trained Listeners transferring to other prisons, as there is no provision for keeping them at Leicester after 28 days following their sentence. The shortage of Listeners made it difficult to maintain a full service throughout the year. A training course for eight new volunteers was due to be held in the first quarter of 2024, and recruitment for new volunteers remains ongoing.

When possible, Listeners made themselves available on the landings and subject to requests from individual prisoners, but none were deployed in reception in 2023. Prisoners can also contact the Samaritans and other advice agencies through their in-cell phones.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

There was a 56% increase in the number of violent incidents, rising from 119 in 2022 to 186 in 2023, although this is lower than the number of such incidents in 2019, before the Covid-19 pandemic (see Annex B). The figures indicate that the post pandemic shift towards normality provides greater opportunities for violence, and staff continue to face challenging behaviour from groups and individual prisoners. The number of fights and assaults between prisoners increased, due to external and internal issues, gang membership, the sale of illicit items, prisoner debt and mental health.

Staff assaults increased and most resulted from staff challenging prisoner behaviour in order to maintain the regime. There were four serious assaults against staff this year, all required medical attention and were referred to the police.

The number of serious prisoner on prisoner assaults reduced this year to six; all victims were offered referral to the police and support as appropriate. Damage to prison property and incidents of fire setting also reduced this year.

Challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs) were used during 2023 to identify individuals who posed a risk to themselves or others. Forty-two plans were opened during 2023, compared with forty in 2022. The new Head of Safer Custody started to identify those dual harmers who are involved in both deliberate self-harm and violence. Those placed on an ACCT and on CSIP were allocated a Custodial

Manager to oversee both processes offering additional managerial support, oversight and integrated action planning.

The Chaplaincy with the support of volunteers continues to offer the opportunity for prisoners to study its Facing Up to Conflict course which is a six-week distance-learning course available through the Alternatives to Violence Project Britain, accredited by HMPPS (**see 5.5 Faith and pastoral support**).

4.4 Use of force

There was a 74% increase in the use of force (UoF) in 2023 compared with the previous year, which is now back to the levels seen before the Covid-19 pandemic. From being the third lowest for use of force in 2022, when measured against nine comparator prisons, HMP Leicester became the second highest in 2023. Forty of the episodes were planned in 2023, compared with 23 in 2022, and 47 in 2021. Much of the use of force in 2023 was low-level, such as placing prisoners in rigid handcuffs to escort them to reception or the CSU, or guiding arm holds for those under the influence of substances.

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Incidents	544	395	365	315	549

The use of force was high in May 2023 due, in part, to separate fighters from rival groups, and in November due to a small number of prolific self-harmers where force was required to prevent actions such as self-strangulation. Prisoners subjected to the use of force are seen the same day by healthcare staff and by the duty Governor.

The national tactical response group (NTRG), a team trained to intervene in dangerous, high-risk situations, was called out to ten incidents at height in 2023, where individuals had climbed onto the safety netting to make a protest. All these incidents were safely resolve, two after the deployment of PAVA incapacitant spray. IMB members observed the professionalism and care of all staff involved.

PAVA was deployed on six occasions in 2023 compared with two in 2022. In addition to the two occasions mentioned above, it was used twice to break up a fight: on one occasion, a prisoner grabbed the spray from an officer, and on another occasion, it was used incorrectly to pacify a man who was self-harming. All incidents were quality assured by safer custody staff.

There is UoF meeting once a month, where data is analysed and incidents reviewed. A member of the IMB attends these regularly to act as an independent person and to provide assurance of fair treatment. There is also a weekly meeting to review all body-worn video camera and CCTV footage of incidents. Missed opportunities for de-escalation or poor recording of incidents are fed back to named individuals, and guidance and training offered. The IMB observed that UoF was, mostly, appropriate and any incidents identified as needing investigation were undertaken by managers from other prisons, with issues and/or recommendations carried out by the head of safer custody and his team.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

The number of intelligence reports raised during the reporting year (6,909) saw a 31% increase on the previous year. For all individuals entering the prison, there was enhanced searching and scanning in place, with an X-ray property scanner becoming operational in February 2023.

Finds	2020	2021	2022	2023
Weapons	55	32	38	54
Mobile phones	23	19	56	55

Intelligence-led searches have a good success rate. Finds of weapons have increased and a substantial number of mobile phones continued to enter the prison, including a number of smart phones, which are difficult to secrete. The number of packages found to have been thrown over the very high prison wall fell to three in the reporting year, compared with 24 in the previous year. Now that the new X-ray baggage scanner scans all staff and visitors' bags on entering the prison, this should reduce the number of unauthorised items previously brought in by this route.

More recently, however, there has been evidence of at least one drone making delivery of unauthorised items such as drugs and mobile phones to a prisoner through their cell window. This is a disturbing development. It is difficult to detect during hours of darkness and is made easier by the deteriorating fabric of the cell windows and their grills.

There were 2,243 body scans completed on prisoners in reception this year, either when they entered the prison or when there was suspicion that they were concealing items internally. Of these scans, 13.7 per cent (307) were positive, invariably for organic matter such as drugs. It has become more difficult for prisoners to bring phones into the establishment through this route.

The number of intelligence reports of prisoners seen to be under the influence of drugs was lower in 2023 than 2022, but there has been a steep rise since the beginning of 2024. The number of in-possession drugs' finds increased in 2023 and this trend has increased further into 2024. There are concerns this may relate to new forms of Spice (a synthetic cannabinoid), available in paste or liquid form, which may be more difficult to detect, and which is routinely soaked into paper or clothes and distributed.

A total of 376 random drug tests were completed on prisoners in the reporting year, with the percentage testing positive ranging from 9.3% in April to 34.5% in September. Over the course of the reporting year, 20.5% of mandatory drug tests were positive, against a target of 14.7%, indicating a significant amount of illegal drug use by prisoners.

Drugs	2020	2021	2022	2023
In-possession drugs' finds	58	39	62	76
Prisoners reported under the influence of drugs	99	28	74	44

The trace detection equipment identified 30 mailed-in items of drug-impregnated paper, usually new psychoactive substances (NPS), compared with 11 items in 2022. There were eight detected attempts by visitors to pass unauthorised items to prisoners in the visits room.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

5.1.1 Accommodation and clothing

The standard of cleanliness on the wings is variable and the age of the prison and its facilities makes it difficult to achieve a consistently high standard. Most of the cells require refurbishment and redecoration. The windows are deteriorating, along with their window grills, and replacing them with Perspex sheets with holes in is not a decent solution. A programme of window replacement is urgently needed to improve dignity and security.

The subterranean Parsons unit, along with the adjacent CSU, suffers from damp and the presence of cockroaches. A programme of cell redecoration is needed but has not happened, as the Governor has not been permitted to take cells offline for this purpose due to prison population pressures. The condition of the cells continues to deteriorate. Despite new boilers and an overhaul of the heating system in 2021, some cells remain cold.

Domestic washing machines and dryers are available on each of the landings to enable prisoners to launder their own clothes, though the equipment suffers from heavy usage, so requires frequent repairs. A system of decency checks has been introduced to ensure that each cell has the required fittings and equipment. However, there is a constant need to ensure that items are not hoarded and that each man has sufficient clothing and bedding. There is a particular problem with ensuring that each man has a duvet, which is important when the cells are cold.

A new workshop has been opened that recycles prisoners' rubbish. This has enabled large amounts of used kit to be recycled, having previously been disposed of by prisoners. The increased throughput of prisoners has placed a heavy strain on the available kit and has led to frequent shortages. Decency packs are available on application on a weekly basis, providing free toiletries for prisoners who do not have enough money to purchase these items from their canteen (a facility where prisoners can buy supplies not provided by the prison).

5.1.2 Capital investment

The project to complete the fire safety and other alarm systems has been further delayed and is still not complete after three and a half years. Two sets of showers on the main wing have been refurbished to a good standard and money has been found to refurbish another two sets in 2024, leaving another five sets which still require attention. However, the prison building will continue to require significant capital expenditure because of its age and condition to ensure the facilities provide an acceptable and decent environment. While considerable sums have been spent re-roofing some of the prison buildings in recent years, the same areas have been prone to significant flooding, despite the work done. It is hoped that planned work on the gutters and rainwater goods will resolve these issues.

5.1.3 Food

Throughout 2023, the kitchen staff continued to deliver food of a good standard, with a reasonable menu choice, despite the rising costs of ingredients on a budget that has not increased sufficiently with inflation and which, as a result, is continually

overspent. At times during the year, there were shortages of some staple foods from the suppliers including eggs, turkey and ham. The servery is open at lunchtime, when breakfast packs are also issued, and for the hot evening meal. The catering course enables learners to gain a range of skills, although they are usually not in the prison long enough to develop them further. Similarly, due to the high churn of the prison population, there are often vacancies for workers in the kitchen, which requires men to complete their education induction and be passed by security before they can be employed in this role.

For an extended period, there were important pieces of catering equipment out of action, waiting for Amey to secure the necessary parts. At the time of writing in April 2024, the two main walk-in freezers were out of action, one for more than three months, making the safe storage of food more complicated.

The kitchen continued to provide for a wide range of diets, with special meals created for a range of seasonal and religious festivals.

5.2 Segregation

5.2.1 Accommodation

There have been some problems with the accommodation in the CSU in the reporting year. There was also a problem with sewage flooding the new adjudication room. The room that is currently being used for adjudications is small and cramped, posing a health and safety risk when dealing with volatile prisoners.

5.2.2 Population

In 2023, there were 201 episodes of segregation, compared with 182 in 2022, and 209 in 2021. The CSU has been under consistent strain throughout 2023, mainly with prisoners suffering from some form of mental ill health and of varying severity. The CSU has, invariably, been full, and at times several men have been held under CSU conditions on the main wing, where observations were undertaken by landing staff and exercise and showers arranged by CSU staff. This arrangement was not ideal and could lead to inconsistent treatment. Of those men initially segregated, 29 were already on an ACCT and a further 10 were placed on an ACCT whilst in the CSU, representing 19.5% of admissions to the unit. Whilst a defensible decision document was completed in all these cases and IMB members observed how caring CSU staff were, it was of concern that so many men at risk of self-harm were subject to segregation, although it was recognised that a number posed a risk to staff and other prisoners.

One reason why the CSU was full during the year was the number of men who have remained in the unit for more than 42 days, and some for double that time. Thirteen men were held in the CSU for more than 42 days between April 2023 and March 2024. By comparison, there were four such overstayers in 2021 and five in 2022. Many of these men had poor mental health and several were awaiting transfer to secure establishments, which was delayed, or had been remanded by the Courts whilst awaiting assessment (see 6.3.1/*Gatekeeping process*).

The IMB has a default policy, in that it will not support the continued holding of such prisoners in the unit unless there are extenuating circumstances. Some 42-day extensions for re-integration are observed to be unrealistic with some such prisoners being moved to another prison still within their CSU. The IMB recognises the

difficulties in managing such prisoners. However, we observed that the ruling from the 'Bourgass' Supreme Court case² (29 July 2015), was not being met by senior management regionally and nationally and we suggest requires an urgent review.

Despite the difficulties in dealing with men with complex problems, some of whom were on 'dirty protests', CSU staff were upbeat and enthusiastic in their work and regularly undertook work not in their role specification. They successfully supported some men with very complex needs to settle and return to normal location.

The segregation monitoring and review group met on three out of four occasions in 2023, and data on equality was scrutinised to identify any trends and disproportionality. Segregated prisoners were also discussed at the weekly safety intervention meeting (SIM), and effective multidisciplinary case reviews were held for challenging prisoners.

5.2.3 The safe cell

There was no use of the restraining body belt in 2023 and one use of special accommodation (a cell from which furniture, bedding and sanitation have been removed for safety reasons) for a short period, when a prisoner destroyed the contents of his cell.

5.2.4 Adjudications

In 2023, 1,382 adjudication charges (disciplinary hearings when a prisoner is suspected of having broken prison rules) were laid, an increase of 18% over the 1168 laid in 2022. The percentage of charges proven in 2023 was 42%, compared with 42.5% in 2022, and 55% in 2021. In the reporting year, 22% of charges were dismissed and a further 13% were not progressed. In part, this was due to cases being out of time, insufficient evidence being produced or prisoners being transferred to other prisons before their cases were heard.

The most frequent charge was 'disobeys a lawful order' (383 instances), which was usually refusal to share a cell or to transfer to another establishment. There were 351 charges for being in possession of an unauthorised article, 141 for assault and 120 for failing a mandatory drug test (MDT).

Similar to 2022, there was only one referral to the independent adjudicator (IA) and that case was not proceeded with. The Governor took the view that cases were best dealt in line with the penalties that could be imposed by the prison, which do not include the awarding of additional days in custody. If the matters were sufficiently serious, they were passed to the police.

The quarterly adjudication standardisation meetings met on three out of a possible four occasions in 2023. There was scrutiny and interrogation of the data, analysis of trends and equalities, and quality assurance checks of paperwork and processes. Adjudications are on the whole being carried out appropriately, however we observe due to the turnover of new staff some charges are wrongly worded or put under the wrong rule, and not all are laid within the 48-hour time limit. This concerns the IMB, mainly because it is not clear how this is being fed back to individual officers with any training/development needs being identified and delivered.

² ['Bourgass' Supreme Court case](#)

5.2.5 Referral to the police

In 2023, 32 charges were referred to the police for crimes committed in prison, compared with 37 in 2022 and 46 in 2021. At the end of the reporting year, 25 had been completed and the remainder were still with the police. Of those completed, 21 were rejected: two for not being in the public interest, three for not enough evidence, seven because the victim (who was a prisoner) refused to co-operate, three because they were prisoners subject to deportation, and two because a prisoner was considered to be mentally unwell. Four cases were accepted and referred to the Crown Prosecution Service. Four cases were returned to the prison for adjudication.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

5.3.1 Staff-prisoner relationships

The very good, supportive and constructive interactions between staff and prisoners consistently highlighted in IMB Leicester annual reports remain a strength of the establishment. The Board observed many instances of good staff-prisoner engagement and good humour. There was a regular weekly newsletter for prisoners. However, it was disappointing that the arrangement for a staff prisoner council, which started in October 2022, did not continue into the second half of 2023. This was a missed opportunity to hear the concerns of prisoners and to improve communication.

5.3.2 Availability of prison officer and operational support grades

The staffing situation was reasonably settled, with a full complement of prison officer grades in post for most of the year. Indeed, as of 31 January 2024, there were 128.95 band three prison officers in post against the agreed profile of 108, of whom two were in training. There were 19 band four supervising officers, and 13 custodial managers (five of whom were temporarily promoted), against an agreed profile of 14. This meant there was little disruption to delivery of the prison regime, which was a considerable improvement over the previous reporting year. The improved pay scales appeared to attract more recruits. There was an increase in the number of custodial managers and a reduction in supervising officers to improve supervision of staff on the main wing. As a consequence of having an oversupply of band three prison officers, the prison was required to provide some staff for detached duty. It also meant that the prison budget was considerably overspent, with no leeway for any discretionary expenditure.

Many band three officers were new to the role, and although it was not a requirement of employment, only nine of the 47 officers (19%) on apprenticeships completed the scheme, not including those who had already left the service. At times, this lack of experience was reflected in how prisoners were managed.

During the course of the reporting year, the turnover rate of prison officers was approximately 22% (24 out of 108), and for operational support grades was 39% (12 out of 31, although some of these individuals were promoted). However, the turnover rate of those band three prison officers who completed their training was reduced to 3.6%. It appeared that a number who were recruited were not suitable for the role and soon left, suggesting that more focus should be placed on improving the recruitment process to increase the number of new staff who are suitable for the role and to reduce wastage.

5.3.3 Key working

Prisoners should have regular meetings with an allocated key worker to address their immediate needs and future plans; this is an important part of their rehabilitation. All prisoners are allocated a key worker (a member of prison staff who supports a prisoner throughout the custodial period), who, ideally, should meet with them every week. A revised key work policy was launched in May 2023. But the Board was concerned that, during the course of the reporting year, the number of key working sessions delivered averaged about 20%, against a target of 74%, and never exceeded 50% of the expected hours in any week.

The key worker scheme appeared to have serious difficulty in delivering what was promised and this was surprising given the current levels of staff availability. The reasons for this were not entirely clear. However, there is an urgent need to establish what is achievable and to refocus the scheme so that it can deliver consistent individualised care for prisoners.

5.4 Equality and diversity

The protected characteristics listed in the Equality Act 2010 are age, sex, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity leave, race (includes nationality and ethnicity), religion or belief, and sexual orientation. Prisoners self-declare their protected characteristics, which are then recorded on the P-NOMIS (an internal computer system) and used to analyse any disparities. However, the Board is concerned that there does not appear to be a nationally agreed methodology for quality assuring the accuracy of data on protected characteristics. The Board is satisfied that the prison is proactive and uses its equality data to analyse issues such as complaints of discrimination, adjudications and the use of force to identify any disproportionate impact on prisoners in line with their protected characteristics.

HMP Leicester continued to hold a diverse population. When comparing ethnicity, the majority of the population was made up of white prisoners, with 51% of the population self-declaring as 'White British'. There was a reduction in the 'White Other' category, from 17 % in 2021, to 12% in the reporting year. The Gypsy, Roma and Traveller prisoner group averaged 2% of the population.

Religion (see 5.5 Faith and pastoral support). When compared with the breakdown by ethnicity, it is important to clarify that there is not always a correlation between religion and minority ethnic background.

The breakdown of the prison population by age has remained almost static over the past two years, with the most common age group being those 30-39 years of age, averaging 39% of the prison population.

Equalities data is now being proactively incorporated into most management meetings to improve monitoring of prisoner outcomes. However, there are limitations around gathering accurate data on sexuality and disability and complex health-related data, which relies solely on self-declaration. Self-declaration of disability status stands at 94%, with 31% of the prison population identifying as having a mental health or physical disability, and 13% having neurodiverse conditions or learning difficulties.

A neurodiversity support manager was appointed in September 2023 and focused attention on identifying and recording autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and learning difficulties (including dyslexia) in order to tailor the responses of prison staff to the needs of individuals.

There continues to be a steady and marked increase in the recording of sexuality. In March 2022, there was a 76% response rate compared with 96% in February 2024. The Board notes that, at times, the prison culture may not be conducive for some to declare their sexual identity.

Prisoners who said they were either gender fluid, non-binary or transgender were supported according to their individual needs and preferences.

There were about 870 foreign national prisoners in HMP Leicester in 2023, who made up approximately 23% of the prison population. This is high compared with the national average of 12%, but consistent with the demographic of the local area. The proportion of foreign national prisoners who were of Albanian origin halved, from about 40% in 2022 to 20% in 2023.

5.4.1 *Discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs)*

There were 65 DIRFs submitted in 2023, compared with 60 in 2022, and 41 in 2021. In the Board's view, the slight increase can be attributed to the redirection of complaint forms submitted with the harassment/discrimination box checked to be dealt with as a DIRF investigation rather than as a complaint. Of the 65 DIRFs submitted, four were upheld and three partially upheld, while two remain under investigation.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The prison chaplaincy has representations from 11 different faith groups. In the reporting year, 75% of prisoners declared their religion. Of these, 25% identified as Christian, 28% as Muslim and 25% as having no religion, with smaller numbers coming from other faith groups. Weekly corporate worship is offered to Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Free Church registered prisoners. Prisoners of other faiths/denominations, or none, were able to access any of these corporate worship meetings. Smaller study groups also operate, supported by volunteers.

Prisoners were supported to observe recognised religious festivals pertaining to their faith or belief. Where a festival was marked with food, arrangements were agreed with the catering department. There were occasions where faith communities donated appropriate food items to help prisoners mark religious festivals/events, including Ramadan, Eid, Diwali, Christmas and Easter.

The chaplaincy arranged for Official Prison Visitors to meet with prisoners who, otherwise, would not receive social visits and would like such contact. At the end of the reporting year, five such visitors were operating, four prisoners were receiving social visits and another three were on the waiting list. During the reporting year, 37 men expressed an interest, but of these only ten received a social visit, because most of the remainder had been transferred before a visit could take place.

The chaplaincy piloted the Sycamore Tree Course in the autumn 2023. This is a victim-awareness course that helps learners explore the wider effects of crime on victims, offenders and the community. Twelve prisoners completed the course and received certificates. Each participant did a symbolic 'Act of Restitution', expressed either in the form of a written letter, a rap song or some artwork. Through this act, participants were able to show their remorse and say sorry to their victims, families and society.

Two chaplaincy volunteers co-ordinated the Facing Up to Conflict (FUTC) course. This is a distance learning course that helps people learn how better to handle conflict, reduce violence and get on better with others. In 2023, 35 prisoners completed the course and 12 received their certificates. There were 26 prisoners on the waiting list.

5.6 Incentives scheme

The incentives policy was reviewed in October, with changes made to make it more responsive to the needs of young adults and those with disabilities who appear to fare worse. Over the course of 2023, an average of 22 prisoners were on the basic level of incentives, some 7% of the prison population, and an average of 65 prisoners were on the enhanced level, approximately 21% of the prison population in HMP Leicester. The rest of the prisoners were on the standard level.

Prisoners who behave well can achieve enhanced status and earn extra privileges, such as additional gym sessions at the weekend and more evening social visits and can have a games console that plays DVDs. Those prisoners whose behaviour deteriorates are downgraded from standard to basic and lose their access to in-cell television.

During the course of the year, there was difficulty in recruiting sufficient prisoners to work full-time in the kitchens. These workers were housed in the Parsons unit, in the basement of the prison, where the cells are generally in a worse condition. To incentivise this work, the local daily pay rate was increased and they were allowed additional evening association and access to more recreation facilities and equipment for making snacks.

5.7 Complaints

The number of complaints in 2023 was similar to the previous year and was high compared with similar prisons. There was an increase in the proportion of complainants who were not satisfied with the outcome of their original complaints and submitted an appeal (COMP 1A). In addition, there were eight confidential complaints (COMP 2s) submitted to the Governor or regional manager. From January 2023, these were no longer submitted to the IMB.

The complaints team was energetic, and 98% of responses were returned within the allowed timescale. Prisoners were encouraged to speak to wing staff or to use the general landing application process first, so that issues could be resolved promptly. The most frequent areas of complaints are categorised in this table:

Complaint	2020	2021	2022	2023
COMP 1 (ordinary complaint)	677	478	624	637
COMP 1A (appeal)	58	47	70	85
Property	85	81	155	174
Residential	-	98	155	214
Finance	77	48	75	54
Staff	72	61	57	75

A full breakdown of the subjects of complaint can be found in Annex B.

A total of 53% of COMP 1s were upheld in full or in part. Where prisoners went on to appeal the outcome of a complaint, 32% were upheld in full or in part. The Board had occasion to inspect complaints paperwork when applications (written representations prisoners make to the Board) were being investigated and can confirm that the general quality of replies from the establishment was generally good.

In addition, during 2023, the Board took part in an audit of complaints. A random sample of 60 cases was reviewed. Most responses were good, with a clear explanation of the investigation that had been done and of the outcome, plus an apology, if warranted. Seven were unsatisfactory, and feedback was given to the business manager to feed back to the responder. In a few others, it was unclear how more systemic learning from complaints was being taken forward.

The complaints department conducted two surveys of prisoner experience of the complaints process in 2023. Every prisoner received a form and was incentivised to complete it with an additional £1 pin credit. Ninety-four completed forms were returned in May and 99 in November. The vast majority of those who had submitted a complaint said they had tried to resolve the matter with staff before doing so. There was an improving trend of prisoner satisfaction with the responses to complaints, rising from 34% of respondents in May to 52% in November. An action plan to further improve satisfaction with the complaints process has been put in place.

5.8 Property

Of the 174 complaints to the establishment about property, 74 were related to transfer from another establishment, while 100 concerned property within the establishment, including alleged loss, usually on cell clearance or move, or damage, or were regarding clothing parcels. Of these complaints, 20 were upheld and 22 partially upheld.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

The healthcare contracts moved from Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust to Practice Plus Group on 1 March 2024. Substance misuse services continue to be fully integrated. Currently, there are 25 healthcare staff in post, with a head of healthcare and three clinical matrons responsible for primary care (physical health), mental health, and substance misuse services (SMS). As of April 2024, there were 15.7 staff vacancies, with significant gaps in the numbers of permanent mental health nurses and pharmacy technicians; most of the vacancies are covered by agency staff. Some of the vacancies were due to recruiting to new roles under the new contract. Following transition to the new contract, Inclusion Healthcare no longer provides the GP service. The service is supported by GPs experienced in caring for patients in secure establishments via agency, whilst advertising for a substantive full-time GP.

The majority of applications to healthcare related to failing mental health or skin problems: living in the oppressive and often poorly maintained environment is not conducive to good health. The Board received 14 applications relating to healthcare in 2023: several concerned disagreements about decisions by clinicians regarding medication, three related to delays in seeing a psychiatrist and two were referred on to the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS).

6.2 Physical healthcare

Subcontracted services included a dentist, an optician and, more recently, substance misuse psychosocial recovery provision. A dual-registered nurse specialising in general and mental health ensured collaborative care for individuals requiring support with both mental health and substance misuse. The waiting list for routine dentistry was approximately four weeks (three weeks in 2022), and GP appointments in April 2024 were about four weeks, a considerable increase over the one-week waits in 2022. However, urgent cases were seen more quickly. A full-time GP is being recruited, who will provide more appointments, which should greatly improve waiting times. Emergency appointments are accommodated on the next GP session (between same day and a four-day wait). Attendance at appointments is around 80% most days (85% in 2022).

A full vaccination service is available, including against Covid-19 and flu, and prisoners were repeatedly encouraged to take this up, given the vulnerability of the population. There was a particular drive to try to increase the uptake of Hepatitis B vaccinations and MMR, with a slight improvement in uptake. One of the greatest improvements has been in the testing for Hepatitis C: this was completed with mouth swabs in reception, which gave an instant result, allowing more men to be tested on arrival.

Healthcare work on the wings included providing reception screening interviews, attendance at ACCT reviews, same-day reviews following the use of force, and attending self-harming prisoners, and those who developed acute medical problems. For a variety of medical health issues during 2023, there were 127 attendances at the accident and emergency department (79 in 2022), and 19 prisoners were on bed watch (seven in 2022) for a total of 30 days and nights. Healthcare staff were

identifying more prisoners who required treatment in outside hospitals. However, a number subsequently declined this treatment, preferring to be back in the prison.

6.3 Mental health

Mental health provision in HMP Leicester remains good, with a dedicated team providing full interventions and care for those with low-level mental illness right through to those with secondary care needs. This is made up of healthcare support workers, nurses, psychological wellbeing practitioners, psychologists and psychiatrists. Nottinghamshire NHS Foundation Trust, the previous provider, also developed a full, very well-functioning neurodevelopmental disorder (ND) pathway. This ensured that prisoners with ND needs were cared for, diagnosed and referred on for appropriate care in the community. Some excellent links were made with community services, such as the ADHD clinic, enabling a much smoother transition into the community.

Caseloads averaged around 90 prisoners receiving care from the mental health team. There were a number of months in 2023 when psychiatry cover was increased to two days per week, as there was a worrying increase in the number of men coming into prison who required treatment for significant mental illness. Referrals to secure care doubled, to 17 cases in the reporting year, compared with nine in 2022.

The link between the court liaison and diversion (L&D) team and prison healthcare was tenuous at best, but mostly non-existent. This left mentally ill prisoners entering the establishment at risk of deteriorating. The Governor asked for a meeting with the manager of the L&D team to discuss why mentally ill prisoners were not being picked up and possibly diverted before entering the prison.

6.3.1 *The gatekeeping process*

This is the system by which prisoners with serious mental illness are transferred to secure psychiatric accommodation under a section of the Mental Health Act. The IMPACT team for secure services in the East and West Midlands continued to work effectively, and the referral system and assessment process was good. However, there are still insufficient places in the national secure estate. For many of the 17 men who required transfer to secure provision, there were significant delays. Of the 11 men who should have been transferred in line with the 28-day standard, nine experienced delays of more than 28 days, with waits ranging from 50 to 195 days! Several of these men were detained in the CSU for extended periods, which was not an appropriate place to keep those with significant and often deteriorating mental health conditions (**see 5.2.2**).

6.3.2 *Critical time intervention*

This valuable initiative, providing through-the gate resettlement support for men with complex mental health needs (revolving-door individuals), was discontinued in February 2023. This was disappointing, given that 53 men were engaged and supported in 2022.

6.4 Social care

A healthcare assistant takes the lead on social care and liaises with the social care team from Leicester City Council. During 2023, 15 referrals were made for

assessment, and eight men received a social care package. This included patients receiving equipment and assistance in meeting their daily living activities.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

6.5.1 Regime

While remand prisoners (those held in prison until the time of their trial or subsequent sentence hearing) do not have to engage in work or activities, all prisoners who are working or attending activities get three hours a day out of their cell to attend these, Monday to Thursday. This is in addition to a two-hour domestic session where they can shower, exercise or go to the gym. Those who did not attend either work or activities had approximately two-and-a-half hours out of their cells on weekdays to complete their domestic activities. Kitchen workers could be out of their cells for seven hours a day, including early evening association. Those on the induction wing had two-and-a-half hours per day out of their cells for a domestic session unless they were also involved in education activities. On occasion, the general regime was more restrictive, when staff training takes place.

At weekends, there is less activity and prisoners get three-and-a-half hours out of their cells each day for showers, gym and exercise. For most prisoners, being locked two to a cell made for one person for the large majority of the time resulted in boredom and tension due to the lack of privacy. Some prisoners used substances to try and escape from the reality of their situation.

6.5.2 Exercise and gym

All prisoners can get an hour's exercise in the open air each day, either in the main exercise yard or the Welford Unit exercise yard for vulnerable prisoners and those in the CSU. Some weights and gym equipment are provided on the exercise yard, supervised by a member of gym staff. The surface of the main exercise yard has deteriorated and is no longer safe for playing team games, so requires replacement.

There are five physical education instructors (PEIs) covering the gym and activities on the main exercise yard. The gym is very popular and heavily used. Groups of up to 20 men can be allocated to each session, but these numbers are often exceeded. Main wing prisoners can attend up to seven sessions per week, and vulnerable prisoners four. Those in the CSU can attend for an hour on Friday mornings.

As it is popular, much of the gym equipment is ageing and worn, and a programme of replacement is needed to ensure that sufficient safe equipment is available. The gym staff are very motivational and arrange various physical challenges for prisoners. They also deliver certificated first-aid training. The gym is an important area for prisoners to find some physical relief. However, flooding from leaking gutters and downspouts has threatened the operation of this facility at times. IMB members are pleased to see that the bowling floor is, at last, being replaced. It is hoped that repairs to the gutters and downspouts that are imminent will ensure this facility continues to remain open during periods of heavy rainfall.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

Support for prisoners with addiction problems on reception into HMP Leicester is good. There is a substance misuse prescriber available every day for new receptions

and any patients requiring detoxification medication receive it on arrival. There is an established process to ensure patients who are detoxing are assessed regularly.

The separate 29-bed My Recovery Unit (MRU) reopened in September 2022 for prisoners wanting to receive help to recover from drug and alcohol misuse. While individuals received substitute prescribing and individual sessions with the substance misuse staff from Nottinghamshire Healthcare (now PPG), the psychosocial interventions that were promised under their contract were not delivered.

The MRU is supposed to operate as a therapeutic environment, with men receiving 28 days' treatment before returning to the main wing. This has not happened to date. There have been vacancies amongst substance misuse service staff, and there remains no agreement between the treatment provider and the prison about where therapeutic group work should take place. Given the high levels of drug misuse in HMP Leicester, there is a need for more comprehensive psychosocial provision for these men to reduce demand and support recovery. However, there are good links with the community substance misuse provision in Leicester for those who are released to the local area.

6.7 Soft skills

There have been several wellbeing days for prisoners over the course of the year, held in the chapel, following a suggestion from the prisoner council. These have included sessions on relaxation, meditation, Hopi ear candles and healthy living, with input from gym staff. Yoga sessions have also been introduced in the upstairs gym and auricular acupuncture has been piloted.

The prison has also been involved in the chess wingman pilot, which has engaged prisoners in playing chess as a way of improving interpersonal interaction and mental health. This was featured in a recent prison radio day at HMP Leicester.

With the establishment of the new resettlement hub, there is a variety of short courses on offer, including nutrition courses, delivered by Samworths, and interpersonal skills, delivered by PPL PRS.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

7.1.1 Education

Education provision is good. It is managed by an enthusiastic head of learning and skills and effectively delivered by People Plus. The composition of the prison population results in the following challenges:

- approximately 80% of the men are on remand, for whom there is no requirement to engage in either education or work.
- convicted men typically have a short stay at Leicester, restricting the time available to complete courses.

Attendance at education courses during the year averaged approximately 67% of men allocated to this activity.

The information, advice and guidance (IAG) co-ordinator explores short and long-term career and personal goals with new prisoners, taking into account the results of their basic skills screening, personal difficulties and disadvantages, and creates digital learning plans for each individual at the start of custody (**see 7.4**).

The percentage of men who made progress in English or Maths, following their initial assessment, increased from 5% in April to 26% in December. Of the 347 men in 2023 who started courses in functional skills in English, Maths or ESOL (English for speakers of other languages), 83% achieved qualifications.

All but one of the 160 men who undertook courses in personal or social development achieved Gateway qualifications in modules such as:

- budgeting
- developing personal skills
- health and safety in the workplace
- improving own confidence
- individual rights and responsibilities
- introduction to self-employment
- solving work-related problems
- time management
- understanding stress
- valuing equality and diversity.

Laptop computers are provided for up to 40 men who have been approved to complete personal study on a wide range of subjects in their cells in addition to class-based learning. Men can also undertake up to 12 video-based courses on the Way2Learn TV channel in their cells, which can assist progression in prison and on release. Personal computers are also available in the library and the employment hub, as part of a virtual college.

7.1.2 Library

The library provides a much-appreciated facility and is conveniently located on the main landing. Reading and borrowing opportunities are available for up to ten prisoners at a time in morning and afternoon sessions from Monday to Thursday.

If more space was available, even more men could be accommodated for reading and related activities.

Improvements in library services include:

- funding for staffing for additional library opening sessions on Saturdays, which is anticipated to start in early 2024.
- appointment of a Shannon Trust facilitator in January 2024. She has trained seven prisoner mentors and commenced the Turning Pages programme. This supports learners, who might otherwise be resistant to a classroom environment, with reading on a one-to-one basis.
- the imminent appointment of a Leicester City Council volunteer to recommence Storybook Dads (where men record stories on a DVD or CD for their children), which has not run since Covid-19 restrictions.

Library initiatives have included:

- securing Arts Council funding to support the delivery of ten diverse activities, such as clay modelling and Christmas card making, organised by the writer in residence Alistair Fruish
- arranging with the National Justice Museum to support prisoners with craft projects
- facilitating Prison Radio Takeover Day, which enabled men across the prison to request songs or give shout-outs
- participation in a reading challenge event involving prisoners reading and rating six books, with a prize of £20-worth of books.

Constraints that limit the scope and extent of library activities include:

- no increase in the library budget to allow for increased cost of books, which restricts the library's ability to refresh stocks
- limited availability of Albanian language books, which denies reading opportunities to the significant number of Albanian men in the prison with limited English
- a lack of space for craft and other library projects, restricting the numbers that can participate and the need to find alternative space for recording Storybook Dads to avoid library closures while stories are being read
- a lack of access to the P-NOMIS computer system in the library, requiring staff to go elsewhere to complete necessary checks.

7.2 Vocational training, work

Vocational training provision is good, with 85% of 265 starters achieving a qualification on the following short courses:

- food preparation and cooking
- food safety
- warehousing
- cleaning
- CSCS (Construction Skills Certification Scheme)
- peer mentoring
- waste and recycling.

Food-related courses are delivered in the training kitchen, enabling men to gain NVQ Levels 1 and 2 qualifications. All who completed the courses were successful. However, almost 20% of starters did not complete because they were either unexpectedly released from court or transferred to other prisons. To increase the chance of all starters completing their course, the duration has been restructured and reduced from six to four weeks for 2024, whilst still enabling men to gain a qualification. One successful graduate secured a job on release in the hospitality sector with Greene King.

Enthusiastic gym staff in 2023 have enabled:

- 23 out of 27 men to achieve both Active IQ personal training and first-aid course qualifications
- 147 men trained in manual handling, enabling their deployment both within prison and on release, where such qualification is a requirement for a wide range of jobs.

A prisoner gave the following positive feedback on completing their course: *‘The art course has helped me improve my current skills, and being on the peer mentor course has taught me a lot of life skills which will be useful on the outside when going to work or interacting with other people. I am looking forward to starting the CSCS course as this is the first step to starting my new career.’*

Other vocational training related events are included at **7.5**.

7.2.2 Work

A prisoner pay and activities policy aims to promote and provide purposeful activity. However, space and limited facilities mean that the only full-time work available is in the kitchens or waste management, and those in part-time work or activities can only engage in them either in the morning or the afternoon on Monday to Thursday and Friday mornings.

There are approximately 40 workplaces available, such as in cleaning, the kitchen, or in orderly roles, but most of the places available in the workshops provide minimal opportunities for meaningful, purposeful work. There are two workshops with the following functions:

- deconstructing parts for recycling
- recovering and recycling prisoners’ discarded items, such as clothing, bedding and utensils, which would otherwise have been destroyed.

Neither work is motivating, as reflected by the average workshop attendance in 2023 of approximately 36% against a target of 80%. It is, however, notable that almost £4,500 savings in the first four months of operation have been made on the cost of purchasing new items by virtue of recovery of materials in the recycling workshop that would otherwise have been destroyed.

Constraints on provision of purposeful activity include:

- restricted space for workshops
- the shortage of meaningful work available
- relatively short stays for most of the prisoners.

7.3 Offender management, progression

The offender management unit (OMU) is staffed by 6.3 equivalent prison offender managers (POMs), and a combination of probation and prison officers, managed by a senior probation officer. There are 8.5 administrative caseworkers and a band four senior case administrator, all managed by the head of offender management services. The POMs continue to provide an OMU internal duty line service to answer prisoners' queries, as well as conducting face-to-face work.

At the beginning of the reporting period, in February 2023, HMP Leicester was designated as a local prison, with a 55% reception and a 45% resettlement function. Reception prisoners are those awaiting court, either on remand or convicted and awaiting sentence. Throughout 2023, the backlog of court cases has continued to grow. From August 2023, the expectation was that the prison would hold 80% remand and unsentenced prisoners and just 20% sentenced prisoners, which includes those just sentenced and men who have been recalled following a breach of their licence. As a consequence, all men serving more than 28 days are now expected to transfer to training prisons. This has meant that many men with short sentences who are from the local area have had to be located to prisons further away, disrupting opportunities for resettlement and requiring family visitors to travel further, which had increased the stress on the prisoners and their families.

Although sentenced men are transferred out promptly, this has meant that the number of men passing through the prison has increased considerably, which has increased the workload of the OMU. This churn effect has also affected the fabric of the prison and the availability of kit for the prisoners moving through the establishment.

A total of 22 men were released on home detention curfew (HDC) during 2023. However, six experienced delays in their release due to difficulties in obtaining suitable, verified accommodation.

7.4 Family contact

Family contact is encouraged and enabled by social visits, social video calls, in cell telephones and the 'email a prisoner' system.

The visits hall, known as the gateway, provides a family-friendly environment. PACT (Prison Advice and Care Trust) staff are available to greet and support visitors and their children throughout their visit and to assist prison staff, if necessary, in serving cold snacks. Hot drinks are available, but there is no provision for hot food due to lack of appropriate washing facilities.

Social visits' provision is good and is available every day except Friday. In addition to afternoon social visits, evening social visits are now available on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, and morning sessions at weekends, which supports contact with families who may be more available to visit outside normal working hours.

Each daytime session caters for a maximum 23 men, and evening sessions a maximum of 10 men. Convicted men can have two or three social visits a month, depending on their level of privilege earned. Men on remand can have up to three social visits per week. Take-up of visits has increased from typically 52% of slots

available in August to 58% in January 2024. Average uptake of evening slots is 82% of capacity.

Social video calls can be made every weekday, via three prison video terminals. Take-up is low, and on some days no calls have taken place. The highest take-up during the year was 22% of availability, in January 2024. It is probable that the low use of this facility is because most prisoners are local to Leicester and, if not quickly transferred, would opt for a social visit.

All men can make outgoing phone calls at any time to approved contacts, subject to having sufficient phone credit.

Improvements made during the year include:

- unconvicted men who may be at court on weekdays may be allowed two social visits at a weekend
- the children's play area has been refreshed using sturdy wooden furniture for creative play, providing scope for more active expression
- increased availability for evening social visits to assist families not able to visit during the day.

There have been four well-attended family days (which bring together men and their families outside of their statutory entitlement, usually in more informal settings) arranged by PACT, providing activities and a meal:

- Easter-themed event in April
- Summer-themed event in August
- 'Harry Potters Cauldron' event in October
- 'Santa' visit in December.

7.5 Resettlement planning

Resettlement activity has been effectively managed, and co-ordination achieved through regular, well-attended reducing reoffending meetings. The pre-release team and the employment and housing leads play a key role in these. The approach taken is that resettlement planning should start from the first day in custody.

The large majority of men in HMP Leicester are on remand or awaiting sentence. Most sentenced men are moved on to another prison within 28 days. Consequently, during the reporting year, there were only 24 sentenced men who were eligible for 12-week pre-release planning.

Release preparation and planning starts on arrival, with assessment of both immediate, as well as subsequent, needs, such as notifications to community offender managers (COM) where there is a duty to refer prisoners to local housing authorities in cases of potential homelessness. A total of 235 such notifications were made in 2023 for 58% of releases. Although only 63% of men were accommodated on their first night following release (a similar proportion to 2022), there has been an overall trend of improvement during the reporting year in the number finding accommodation. However, the recent extension of end of custody release licenses has led to more men being released at short notice without accommodation.

The availability of housing through the new community accommodation service (CAS3) is welcome: from the start of the service, in July 2023, until January 2024, 47 men were accommodated. However, ten of these men (21%) were recalled or

remanded into custody whilst accommodated there. Unfortunately, 33 men, approximately 8% of total releases during the year, were recalled on the same day, some of whom, having no accommodation, committed offences to secure a return to custody. Whilst there is ongoing improvement in engagement with local authorities in respect of men's housing needs, the lack of suitable available accommodation remains a significant problem.

The proportion of men who found employment within six weeks of release was similar to 2022, at 10%. This does not reflect the commendable work carried out by all those involved in resettlement activity.

The new resettlement hub was officially opened in December and was attended by 17 different local employers from hospitality, construction, utilities, marketing, manufacturing and recruitment industries. Similar events are planned, involving other, potential employers. As a result of positive employer engagement, seven men were offered employment. However, only one was able to take up the offer, as the others lacked suitable accommodation that met the requirements of their licence supervision with the Probation Service.

The resettlement hub provides a private area each morning away from the main wing for discussion of resettlement issues. New arrivals can get support with:

- ID requirements
- opening bank accounts
- dealing with debts
- benefits issues
- reviewing current skills and future employment possibilities.

Typically, 15 birth certificates per month are obtained, and having a birth certificate and national insurance number enables men to apply for a provisional driving licence. Around 17 bank accounts are opened per month, but it is noted that, increasingly, men have a bank account on arrival.

A prison orderly who has been very effective in maintaining a skills database and with CV writing, commented: *'Prison is the punishment' and 'resettlement work can help, it is now '1000 times better.'*

An employment hub located on the main wing offers support to men looking for jobs on release, IAG, to help with writing CVs, and a member of staff from the DWP to help with accessing benefits.

The prison employment lead, in conjunction with members of the Employment Advisory Board, have engaged employers in delivering the following events and training sessions to assist prisoners with obtaining future employment:

- scaffolding virtual experience
- computer-coding taster
- logistics academy
- construction and traffic management
- roadshow for driving roles
- sensory tasting
- employability workshops.

The prison employment lead was recently awarded the 'Above and Beyond' award at the New Futures Network 'Unlocking Summit'.

The Shaw Trust provides a departure lounge for released prisoners close by the prison at Voluntary Action Leicestershire. Men who are unemployed can receive ongoing help there with accommodation support, finance, debt, money management advice, plus a range of wellbeing activities. While most men who qualify for this service are referred, during 2023, only 25 attended initially. Other men subsequently took up this opportunity, referred by the Probation Service, having had other priorities on the day of release.

Improvements and initiatives during the year include:

- Availability of housing with the Community Accommodation Service (CAS3)
- Opening of the employment and resettlement hubs
- Increased engagement with potential employers

Constraints on the effectiveness of resettlement:

- No Commissioned Rehabilitative Services (CRS) contract in place to provide accommodation advice and assistance on release for remand prisoners.
- Ongoing lack of local available accommodation
- Prisoners moved to resettlement prisons outside of Leicestershire.

8. The work of the IMB

During 2023, the Board provided face-to-face monitoring and a monitoring visit at least weekly, and Board meetings were held monthly. Two members left the Board, after one year, and ten years' service, respectively. Two members successfully completed the new member training course. A recruitment campaign was held in April 2023 and attracted five applicants, of whom three were appointed.

Members continued to be made welcome in the establishment, and prisoner contact was readily facilitated. Members observed a sample of establishment meetings during the year, including the daily briefing, safer custody, safety intervention meetings, reducing reoffending, segregation monitoring and review group, adjudication monitoring group and the use of force. The Board also continued to receive the daily briefing sheet, prisoner and staff newsletters, notices to staff and prisoners, and the minutes of key departmental meetings.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	12
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	10
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	10
Total number of visits to the establishment	220

Applications to the IMB

Application boxes are situated in the Welford unit, induction unit, CSU, Parsons unit, MRU and beside the servery on the main wing. During the reporting year, the boxes were opened weekly, by an attending member.

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	6	9
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	6	2
C	Equality	2	1
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	1	1
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	5	11
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	5	1
F	Food and kitchens	2	1
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	16	14
H1	Property within the establishment	3	6
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	2	5
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	1	0
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence), parole, release dates, re-categorisation	8	5
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	9	10
K	Transfers	1	10
L	Miscellaneous	5	6
	Total number of applications	72	82

Annex A

Service providers

- Healthcare: Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, commissioned by NHS England (Midlands and East). As of 1 March 2024, the contractor changed to Practice Plus Group.
- Dental care: Time for Teeth, commissioned by NHS England
- Integrated drug and alcohol treatment services (IDTS): Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. As of 1 March 2024, the contractor changed to Practice Plus Group.
- Education and skills: People Plus
- Library services: Leicestershire County Council (LCC)
- Probation services: East Midlands Region
- Escort contractor: GEOAmey
- Catering suppliers: Bidfood
- Maintenance: Amey
- Family engagement: PACT (Prison Advice and Care Trust)

Annex B: tables

Self-harm data

Incidents of self-harm per annum	563
Average number of incidents per month	46
Average percentage of overall prison population self-harming per month	6-7%
Primary reasons for self-harming	%
Mental health and medication	16.2
Other	15.1
Regime	9.8
Vapes	8.5
Taxing/bullying and debt	7.5
Transfer to another establishment	7.3
Offence	5.2
Family contact and relationships	2.7
Primary methods of self-harming	%
Cutting, scratching and wound aggravation	50
Hanging and self-strangulation, using, bedding, clothing, towels, belts or shoelaces	32
Self-poisoning, using own or others' medication, illegal drugs or cleaning materials	8
Head banging and wall punching	3
Swallowing and inserting objects	2
Burning	0.5
<i>Locally collected data</i>	

Assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documents

ACCT documents opened	290
ACCT documents re-opened	41%
Percentage of overall prison population on ACCTs per month	6-7%
Average number of ACCTs opened per week	5-6
Average number of ACCTs opened per month	24
Person opening ACCTs	%
Officers	46.5
Healthcare	32.5
Custodial managers/supervising officer	15.5
Chaplaincy/education	3
Public protection	2.5
Primary reasons for opening ACCT documents	
Mental health and medication	20
Other	15
Sentence related	13
Transfer to another establishment	11.5
Family contact and relationships	10
Taxing and bullying/debt/finance	10
Offence/regime	10
<i>Locally collected data</i>	

Incidents

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total of all types of incidents	1258	957	849	849	1169
Total violent incidents	313	119	124	119	186
Serious assaults on prisoners by prisoners					8
Assaults on prisoner by prisoners	133	53	49	49	60
Fights	47	14	12	29	43
Serious assaults on staff by prisoners					6
Assaults on staff by prisoners	103	54	63	38	60
Damage to prison property and environment	300	205	147	172	153
Threatening/abusive behaviour	336	132	132	86	62
Dirty protests	-	-	-	-	17
<i>Locally collected data</i>					

Analysis of prisoner complaints by subject

Subject of complaint	Number of complaints	Percentage
Residential	214	30.48%
Property	100	14.25%
Staff	75	10.69%
Finance	54	7.69%
Work	49	6.98%
Visits	38	5.41%
Letters/censors	30	4.27%
OASys/offender management	30	4.27%
Transfer	28	4.00%
Canteen	16	2.28%
Incentives	14	2.00%
Security	13	1.85%
Food	12	1.71%
Violence	11	1.57%
Pre-release/release	7	1.00%
Education	5	0.71%
Reception	2	0.28%
Adjudication	1	0.14%
Bullying	1	0.14%
Segregation	1	0.14%
Other	1	0.14%
Total	702	100%



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