



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

**For reporting year  
1 March 2023 to 29 February 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 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 Onley is an adult male category C training and resettlement prison on the border of Northamptonshire and Warwickshire, between Daventry and Rugby. The prison is part of the East Midlands group. Previously, the population was predominantly from London (80%). However, through the reporting year, the population changed to include more men from the Midlands area. By the end of the reporting year, the population was reverting to mostly men from the London area.

The certified normal accommodation (the number of people a prison can hold without being overcrowded) is 742<sup>1</sup>. During the reporting year, near capacity was reached. Prisoners are housed in 12 wings A-L, of which F wing is the care and separation unit (CSU). The wings radiate from a single corridor in the main block, which also includes the kitchen, gym, education unit, chaplaincy and the healthcare unit. J and K wings are in a separate block, as is L wing, which is the newest.

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<sup>1</sup> Figures included in this report are local management information. They reflect the prison's position at the time of reporting, but may be subject to change following further validation and therefore may not always tally with Official Statistics later published by the Ministry of Justice.

### **3. Key points**

#### **3.1 Main findings**

##### **Safety**

- Increased availability of illicit substances.
- Increased drone activity.
- Increase of incidents of violence between prisoners.
- Increase in assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documents.

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

- Poor condition of outside exercise yards.
- Concerns over food quantity and quality and menu choices.
- Delays in property reaching prisoner when transferred to HMP Onley.
- Poor condition of some cell windows.

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

- Concerns over officer visibility during medication distribution and clinics.
- Difficulties in the facilitation of hospital appointments by officers.
- Limited drug and alcohol rehabilitation.
- Limited awareness among staff and officers of the HM Prison & Probation Service (HMPPS) Prison Drugs Strategy.

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

- Poor prisoner engagement in activities .
- Inadequate number of workspaces for the prison population.
- Inadequate workplace instructors.
- Impact of the end of custody supervised (ECSL) scheme on pre-release planning.
- Backlogs in OASys (offender management system) completion and sentence planning.

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

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

- As the Board has stated in every annual report for many years, missing, mislaid and delayed prisoner property continues to be a problem, particularly on transfer between prisons. The aim of the Prisoners' Property Policy Framework is to improve the management of property, but this has not been met. The manual, paper-based system is error-prone and inefficient. It relies on the manual recording of tags on prisoner property. How does the Minister plan to use technology to drive a better outcome in this area for prisoners?
- We would, again, ask the Minister to address the ongoing situation in relation to IPP prisoners who are many years beyond their original minimum term and who face great uncertainty as to when they may be released or what they are required to do to become eligible for release.

- The windows and frames across the establishment are in a poor condition. When will the Minister arrange for the windows to be replaced, as they are no longer fit for purpose, are an easy target for drone drops and endanger the ongoing security and stability of the establishment.

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

- What additional support can be provided to reduce drone activity at HMP Onley?
- HMP Onley is a rehabilitation prison that should provide meaningful activity for all residents, but there are not enough workplace instructors. What additional support can be provided to recruit instructional staff?
- The Board has seen no significant evidence that the new Prisoners' Property Policy Framework has made a positive impact. Property can routinely take four weeks to be received after a prisoner has been transferred to HMP Onley. The Board views this unacceptable. How does the Prison Service plan to remedy this problem?
- The Board's view is that the population management unit (PMU) is ineffective. There were instances when prisoners transferred to HMP Onley could not be offered an appropriate intervention or course suited to their needs, which resulted in significant frustration for the prisoner. What steps will the Prison Service take to address this issue.

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

- Now that enhanced gate security (EGS) has been installed, when will this be staffed fully during the working day?
- As staffing levels have now significantly improved, when will there be an improvement in key work activity across the establishment?
- When will mandatory drug testing (MDT) be implemented on a routine and ongoing basis within the establishment? Will this be sufficient to fully understand the prevalence of drug taking within the population?
- What more can be done to improve the number of prisoners employed or attending education? What more can be done to ensure prisoners allocated to work attend?
- What can be done to improve the condition of the external exercise yards so that they provide a dignified, safe and fit-for-purpose area for prisoners?

### 3.3 Response to the last report

Issue raised	Response given	Progress
<b>To the Minister</b> 1. Staff shortages had an impact on all areas of the establishment and the daily life of the prisoners. What further assistance can be given to recruitment?	1. The first-time officer scheme, which provides new staff with the opportunity to spend their first two years at HMP Onley and then return to their home area or stay at the prison permanently, has exceeded the initial target and will be extended. A business case has been approved to allow prison officers to level transfer to HMP Onley. There is also continued support with payment plus and detached duty. In addition, there is staff support and development, including the prison officer personal development programme – monthly resignation rates of bands 3-5 prison officer have improved.	1. By the end of the reporting year, most prison officer vacancies were filled. This included several trainee officers still at college and not yet operational.  Operational support grade (OSG) staff numbers did improve, although vacancies remained by the end of the reporting year.
<b>To the Prison Service</b> 1. Capital bid for replacement windows was approved in 2019. Can a date be given for when this work will be carried out?  2. The food budget appears insufficient to ensure that prisoner meals are of a sufficient quality	1. The estates investment proposal has been approved. However, there are competing pressures, such as fire safety and life-saving projects, which are being prioritised. In the meantime, the original windows will continue to be maintained until a budget allocation is made available.  2. To support prisons to address the rising cost of food, HMPPS is working	1. No progress made. Holes in windows and window frames remain a route into the prison for illicit substances via drone drops, which impacts on the safety of all prisoners.  2. The Board continued to receive

and quantity. Will there be any review of the budget?	closely with catering managers to understand the issues experienced and share good practice ideas. HMPPS is also working with the Department of Health and Social Care's Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, following Government guidelines to provide enhanced advice to prisoners on eating healthy meals. However, food budgets are determined locally by the Governor.	complaints regarding the quality and quantity of food and menu choices.
3. Workshop Instructor vacancies.	3. HMP Onley recognises the importance of having workshops staffed to provide purposeful activity places for prisoners to learn skills and improve their opportunities to gain employment once released. Whilst the number of vacancies has reduced since the Board's reporting period, the prison continues to advertise and recruit instructional officers to fill the remaining vacancies	3. Instructional vacancies continue to inhibit the ability of the establishment to provide purposeful activity to more than 50% of the population.
4. What further support can be provided to ensure key work is delivered consistently and to a high standard for all prisoners, despite the shortage of prison officers.	4. It is recognised that some prisons are currently unable to achieve the original offender management in custody (OMiC) key work model, which is one session per week for every prisoner. All prisons are aiming to deliver this original model on a weekly or fortnightly basis. However, some prisons are operating to	4. Approximately, 25% of prisoners received a 45-minute key work session per week.



<p>5. The loss or delay of prisoner property is a problem and a main area of complaint, despite the introduction of the Prisoners' Property Policy Framework. How will you ensure that the situation is improved?</p>	<p>individually agreed regime progression plans (RPPs), which will detail what they plan to deliver and to whom, based on the available resources. The RPPs are a temporary measure in recognition that some prisons are struggling to delivery key work due to operational pressures. A new plan for the 2024/2025 financial year will set out the expectations for the delivery of key work.</p> <p>5. The Board's concerns are noted that despite the implementation of the new Prisoners' Property Policy Framework, excess property is still not being sent quickly enough when a prisoner transfers. The framework introduced a new requirement that prisons must transfer excess property within four weeks unless there are exceptional circumstances that make this impossible. To avoid the problem of delays altogether, the framework places an emphasis on ensuring compliance with volumetric control limits, since anything within these limits will be transferred with the prisoner. HMP Onley has also set a target, communicated to the Prisoner Council, which is considered realistic, given the significant increase in internal and</p>	<p>5. The Board received a slight reduction in the number of applications (prisoners' written representations) regarding property, but this continues to be an ongoing issue for prisoners transferring to HMP Onley.</p>
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	external moves of prisoners through reception and staffing resources. HMPPS is monitoring the impact of the new framework going forward and will continue to look at what further improvements can be made.	
<p><b>To the Governor</b></p> <p>1. When is it envisaged that a full and sustainable regime will be available to all prisoners in HMP Onley?</p> <p>2. What actions can be taken to ensure there is improvement in the management and processing of property and that it is issued to prisoners in a timely manner?</p> <p>3. When will there be a return to full mandatory drug testing (MDT)?</p> <p>4. Prison officer shortages impacted on the daily life of prisoners and on the implementation of key work as intended in the offender management in custody (OMiC) model. What local actions are underway to improve officer staffing levels?</p>	<p>1. Significant improvement has been made with time out of cell for prisoners.</p> <p>2. Steps have been taken to issue received properly in a timely manner once received.</p> <p>3. When staffing levels allow, this will be re-introduced.</p> <p>4. When staffing levels allow, this will be re-introduced.</p>	<p>1. HMP Onley is nearing a full complement of officers. The focus now needs to be on supporting these officers.</p> <p>2. Still significant delays with property being received from transferring establishments.</p> <p>3. None.</p> <p>4. Key work has restarted, but it is running at approximately 25%.</p>

## **Evidence sections 4 – 7**

### **4. Safety**

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

The Board observed that prisoners who arrived at HMP Onley were treated with professionalism and care.

All the relevant checks, processes and assessments were in place. Assessments that were unable to be completed on arrival, due to staffing levels, were followed up on the induction wing.

At the beginning of the reporting year, there were significant delays in inductions, due to staffing issues. There was an improvement towards the end of the reporting year although, on occasion, delays still occurred.

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

There were 258 incidents of self-harm from 144 individuals. This was an increase from 223 incidents from 76 individuals in 2022. In the Board's view, the increase was the result of a rise in the number of prisoners citing bullying, being under threat and debt issues. There was a particular rise observed in self-harm incidents towards the end of the reporting year. The Board believes this was partly due to a more open regime, the increased mixing of men and the lack of workplaces and medication issues.

The number of assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documents increased significantly, from 185 opened in 2022 to 245 in 2023 (see Annex B).

From January 2023 to December 2023, 454 men arrived at HMP Onley with a self-harm history. This was believed to be partly due to the prison population including more men from the East and West Midlands. By the end of the reporting year, as the prison population reverted to mainly men from the London area, there was a slight reduction in the number of ACCT documents.

The establishment conducted regular quality checks on the completion of ACCT documents, which identified some quality issues. These included observations not always in line with what was expected, generic conversations and supervisor summaries entered sporadically.

On average, 12 Listeners (prisoners trained by the Samaritans to provide confidential emotional support to fellow prisoners) were available and continued to offer an important and valuable service. Access to the Listeners was good. The establishment continued to recruit Listeners, but by the end of the reporting year five wings were without a permanent Listener.

There was, unfortunately, one death in custody during the reporting year. This is currently under investigation by the Prisons & Probation Ombudsman (PPO). The initial finding is that the prisoner, apparently, took his own life. Detailed findings and an inquest date is yet to be announced.

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

Recorded incidents of violence increased to 153 from 147 in the previous year (see Annex C). The Board are particularly concerned about the increase of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults. In the reporting year, this was 103 compared with 67 in the previous year. The Board is aware that an increase in bullying and debt were triggers for incidents of violence. This was possibly due the increased contact between prisoners from attending work and education in comparison with 2022.

Challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs), used to support and manage prisoners who pose an increased risk of violence, were used as a violence reduction strategy. The prison's ability to manage violence, however, was impacted by the under-resourcing of key work (see section 5.3).

The number of prisoners who were self-isolating fell steadily throughout the reporting period, from an average of 5.3 at the start of the year to an average 2.9 by the end of the year. From the Board's observations, self-isolating prisoners were monitored and their needs generally looked after. Debt issues appeared to be the main reason why prisoners chose self-isolation.

By the end of the reporting year, 15 violence reduction representatives were in place.

### **4.4 Use of force**

There were 370 reported use of force (UoF) incidents compared with 343 in 2022. Half of all incidents of UoF were due to non-compliance, compared with one-third in 2022. In November 2023, a full lock down search was conducted. As a result, 15 men were subject to force, and this partly accounted for the increase in UoF incidents. The Board has attended UoF briefing meetings to observe the discussion and analysis of incidents. Of the 370 incidents, 342 were captured on body worn video cameras (BWVCs), which is 92.5% compared with 83% in 2022.

The establishment underwent extensive staff training in the use of PAVA incapacitant spray and spontaneous protection enabling accelerated response (SPEAR), which uses a person's reflex action in threatening situations as a basis for defence. There was no use of PAVA incapacitant spray during the reporting year. There were four trained UoF instructors in place by December 2023.

### **4.5 Preventing illicit items**

The Board is concerned about the increase in the number of illicit items entering the establishment.

The enhanced security gate (ESG) was not always operational due to staffing pressures, which meant staff were not consistently searched prior to entry.

The establishment banned paper of any kind entering the establishment from January 2024, believing this could be a route for illicit substances, as it can be impregnated with drugs.

Intelligence-led searches were successful, with 1,170 finds of illicit items. These included mobile phone accessories (314), tampered-with vape capsules (180), cannabis (153), tobacco (146), mobile phones (139), fermenting liquids (137) and improvised weapons (87). In addition, 33 intact drone packages were seized.

HMP Onley worked closely with the local police force to report and tackle drone issues when live incidents occurred or related finds from within the prison were identified.

Ways of stopping drone drops to individual windows, especially on I wing, are ongoing and the Board is pleased to note the proactive approach by the Governor to do everything possible to stop drone drops. When a drone was seen, all exercise yards were secured to make it harder for the package to be collected. The yards were only opened once staff had fully searched the area and prisoners. There were two convictions from drone activity.

The security team raised its profile within the establishment. This resulted in increased intelligence-led submissions, a proactive approach to searching and challenging prisoners and supporting staff to report matters of concern.

The Board was concerned about unlocked gates and doors being identified on a regular basis. The number of such incidents, however, reduced towards the end of the reporting year.

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

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

The Board monitored the wings on a regular basis. Generally, they were observed to be clean and tidy but, on the occasions when this was not the case, it was reported to the residential Governors. The poor condition of cell windows remained a concern. They are a route into the prison, via drones, for illicit items, which is a health, wellbeing and safety issue. In addition, some wings get very warm in the summer and cold in the winter.

Capital expenditure was approved for replacement windows, but no date has been given for the work to be carried out.

On several occasions, the Board highlighted to the Governor the condition of the exercise yards. Most were overgrown with weeds and some had uneven paving slabs. The establishment reported that they were committed to resolving this issue. The Board will continue to monitor.

The Board was concerned about the general availability of prison clothing and the lack of clothing in appropriate sizes. The availability of replacement mattresses and cell furniture was also problematic. The Board's raised these concerns with the Governor. An improvement was observed towards the end of the reporting year.

The Board was also concerned about food quality and portion sizes. We were advised on several occasions by the Governor that there were no budget constraints. This was disputed, however, by the kitchen manager, who also said that menu decisions were made in accordance with the available budget and national nutritional guidelines.

The Board was pleased to see toasters and microwaves back on J and K wings, the drug rehabilitation wings, as incentives. We discussed with the Deputy Governor the issue of 'some, but not all wings' having access to toasters and microwaves.

The Board identified significant issues with wings not receiving their ordered supplies. Wings were reporting shortages in obtaining basic items such as toilet rolls, shower gel, deodorant, disinfectant, mop heads and disposable gloves. Some staff said they were bringing in their own gloves. This was brought to the attention of the senior management team (SMT) by the Board. As a result, a new process, to ensure all wings were supplied with basic items, was introduced.

### **5.2 Segregation**

The care and segregation unit (CSU) had 14 cells. Where possible, residents left the CSU within seven to ten days. Good order or discipline (GOoD) reviews (where the prison determines if a prisoner should remain segregated) observed by the Board were conducted fairly. There were no residents in the CSU for longer than 42 days.

During the reporting year, the CSU staff dealt with residents who had challenging complex mental health issues. The Board observed that the care provided by the CSU staff to these residents was appropriate and supportive.

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

The Board evidenced some excellent staff/prisoner interactions by experienced officers. New, inexperienced officers are yet to build these skills and therefore may not fully understand the impact it can have on prisoner outcomes.

Key work was impacted by staffing issues, with, on average, only 35% of prisoners spending the recommended 45 minutes per week with their key worker. Other areas of activity were prioritised when officer shortages were high.

Although officer staffing levels improved towards the end of the reporting year there was no increase in key work activity. The Board will be monitoring key work activity closely.

### **5.4 Equality and diversity**

The equalities action team (EAT) and the race equalities action team (REAT) meetings were held quarterly. The meetings scrutinised comprehensive and detailed data collated from all departments of the prison concerning protected characteristics (these include race, age, religion, disability, sex, gender reassignment, which it is unlawful to discriminate against). Where any disproportionality was noted, an investigation was conducted. If necessary, appropriate action was taken. This was documented and reported back at the next meeting.

The Board did not observe any persistent or significant trends of disproportionality relating to any of the protected characteristics.

A total of 146 discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs) were submitted. This was an increase of 27 compared with the previous year. One was upheld and six were partially upheld. A total of four of the 146 DIRFs submitted were transferred to the prison complaints system, as they were not DIRF related. See Annex D.

The data the prison provided showed an increase in DIRFs without a specific complaint or protected characteristic, such as 'not being treated equally' or 'discriminated against', for example. These accounted for 42 of the 57 of the DIRFs noted in Annex D as 'other'.

In 2022, the Board welcomed the news that the establishment was looking into services to support the communication needs of prisoners with hearing loss. However, no progress was reported to have been made on this issue by the end of the reporting year.

The Board was satisfied that the needs of prisoners with mobility issues or a disability were effectively and respectfully managed.

Black History Month and the LGBTQ+ Month were celebrated. The Board would welcome more focus on other sections of the population, such as foreign national prisoners, the Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller (GRT) communities, young adults (21-24 years old) and prisoners with disabilities, for example.

By the end of the reporting year, the establishment had nine equality representatives, three foreign national prisoner representatives and one GRT representative in place. The establishment continues to recruit more representatives.

## **5.5 Faith and pastoral support**

The multi-faith chaplaincy team provided pastoral support and care to prisoners and staff. Weekly corporate worship was generally taking place for the numerically larger faiths. There were still some staffing shortfalls for the numerically smaller faiths, with attempts made to recruit a Buddhist chaplain, a Rastafarian chaplain and a Pagan chaplain. The Pagan chaplain departed during the reporting period.

The Sycamore Tree course continued throughout the reporting year and was run by volunteers from Prison Fellowship. The course addressed victim awareness and principles of restorative justice. There was a Bible study group running on Tuesday evenings and a Rosary group running on Thursday evenings, in addition to the some Islamic classes. The Alpha course, offering an introduction to the Christian faith, recommenced.

The system, introduced during 2022, for Muslim prisoners to have a heated food box in their cells for use during Ramadhan was used again successfully in 2023.

The chaplaincy team is well embedded in HMP Onley and continues to provide an invaluable service.

## **5.6 Incentives schemes**

The prison incentive scheme was widely used during the reporting year. Previously reported in 2022, the establishment introduced a policy of losing privileges for not attending work or education. There was no evidence that this policy improved attendance rates, especially among those prisoners already on a basic regime. At the end of the reporting year, 47% of prisoners were on enhanced, 49% on standard and 4% on basic privileges.

The Board reviewed the incentives data for the period January 2023 to December 2023 and no disproportionality was identified.

## **5.7 Complaints**

The establishment continued to receive and process a high number of complaints. A total of 2,809 complaintst were received, including those for other establishments. This compared with 2,757 in 2022.

Property issues represented over 25% of all complaints. They were mostly regarding the transfer of property into HMP Onley. Other areas of complaints included general conditions, 9%; incentives scheme, 6.5%; and employment, 5.6% These areas showed an increase compared with 2022.

The complaints process was managed well, although there was a fall in the percentage of complaints responded to within five days, from 97% to 95%.

## **5.8 Property**

The Board continued to receive complaints regarding property within the establishment and property on transfer. This caused frustration for the prisoners and additional workload for the prison staff and the Board. Staffing issues in reception at the beginning of the reporting year resulted in significant delays in prisoners receiving their property. The Board believes that despite the introduction of the Prisoner's Property Policy Framework progress has been slow.



The Board was aware of issues regarding prisoners transferred into HMP Onley not being able to keep all or some of their property. This was because the prison's property rules differ to those in other establishments. This was a source of prisoner frustration.

## **6. Health and wellbeing**

### **6.1 Healthcare general**

Meetings of the local delivery board (LDB) restarted in February 2024. This meeting was the first since the current provider, Practice Plus Group (PPG), took over healthcare provision at HMP Onley in October 2022. The minutes of the February meeting recorded the reporting of two safeguarding concerns. PPG continued to review its complement of staff and to recruit, where necessary and appropriate, to ensure the right skill mix and staffing levels. At the end of the reporting period, there were vacancies for a senior primary care nurse, a primary care nurse, a senior substance misuse nurse and a substance misuse nurse. A general practitioner, a mental health support worker, a nurse for long-term conditions, a clinical psychologist and a full-time pharmacist were appointed.

Two healthcare champions started their role within the department, working closely with the patient engagement lead (PEL) and the deputy head of the healthcare department. They visited all wings to deliver appointment slips and visited prisoners not attending appointments to understand the reasons why and to promote attendance. The PEL continued to be visible on the wings, engaging with both prisoners and officers. Contact was being arranged with an external provider to offer support to transgender men.

Bi-monthly patient forums continued to be held and a monthly healthcare newsletter was distributed to the wings.

The Board arranged, with effect from January 2023, to receive bi-monthly healthcare complaints' data. During January and February 2024, a total of 42 complaints were received, relating to medication (20), dentist (5), mental health (1), and nurse or general practitioner (5). A total of 11 complaints were categorised as miscellaneous. Healthcare forms and clear information to prisoners on how the PPG healthcare complaints process works were available on all wings.

The Board received an increase in complaints relating to healthcare in comparison with the number received in the previous reporting year (see section 8). The importance of healthcare managing prisoner expectations, for example in relation to wait times to see the GP, was discussed at the meeting of the LDB. The LDB identified the need for improved communication between the wings and healthcare.

The Board continues to carefully monitor healthcare complaints.

### **6.2 Physical healthcare**

Staffing levels continued to improve during the reporting period and agency use was reduced. The recruitment of an advanced nurse practitioner, able to triage primary healthcare appointments, significantly reduced general practitioner (GP) wait time.

The dental appointment wait time continued to be a concern, but was an improvement on the previous reporting year. This improvement was facilitated by the dentist working an extra day a week, with dental nurse provision available five days a week. The average number of patients on the dentist's wait list between April 2023 and February 2024 was 94 and the average wait time 75 days. The number of

routine appointments not dealt with in eight weeks had fallen, from 45 in April 2023 to six in February 2024.

Officer visibility during medication administration times and during clinics was an area of concern. Healthcare was working with the wings to get this issue resolved, along with the late arrival of prisoners at the medication hatch in the mornings. Late arrivals meant the hatch was often unable to close at 10am. This was having an impact on the running of clinics and other aspects of healthcare service delivery.

The February 2024 LDB meeting reported 14 hospital appointments were not attended, as they could not be facilitated by the prison. This is a concern of the Board. Three were cancelled by the hospital.

### **6.3 Mental health**

Staffing issues within the mental health team were challenging and affected patient assessments and ongoing care and treatment. This resulted in an increase in the use of agency nurses to deliver service provision. Nurses from other prisons were also needed to assist with the triaging and to reduce the backlog of patient assessments. At the end of the reporting period, staffing levels in the team had improved and three registered mental health nurses (RMHNS) and one mental health support worker were being security vetted.

Weekly meetings were held within the mental health team to discuss referrals and caseloads.

The mental health team continued to work with the alcohol and substance misuse service and the integrated drug care system (IDTS) to support for prisoners with substance dependency and misuse needs. The team also worked with the neurodiversity team, safer custody and the Samaritans in implementing trauma-focused care. A psychologist-led group initiative on supporting prisoners to manage issues concerning their own mental health, such as sleep, anxiety and low mood, was in the early stages of implementation.

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

The regime was affected at the beginning of the reporting year by prison officer vacancies, regular wing lockdowns, insufficient workspaces and instructor shortages. As a result, the number of prisoners engaged in purposeful activity was approximately 30%. As the number of prison officer vacancies reduced, a full-time regime was reintroduced, although significant numbers of prisoners remained unoccupied throughout the day. A lack of prisoner motivation to engage in purposeful activity was a contributory factor. Creating a positive regime at HMP Onley is, therefore, one of the prison's priority areas for action. The Board commends the start of efforts by activities, the wings and Governor to encourage prisoners to engage in purposeful time out of cell.

### **6.5 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation**

Staff shortages and recruitment difficulties had an impact on service provision and delivery. Psychosocial groups did not run, and most prisoners were seen on an individual basis. Groups are scheduled to restart in April 2024, but the initial focus will be on staff training.

Workbooks were offered to prisoners, enabling them the opportunity to reflect on their substance misuse and its impact. During the reporting year, 79 were given out and 51 were returned, with a completion rate of 65%.

There was little development during the reporting period of J wing (the recovery wing) and K wing (the incentivised substance free living unit) in relation to rehabilitation. Prisoners on J wing were still misusing substances, but were moved to the wing because they wanted to focus on their recovery. K wing offered few incentives. Discussions continue on the type of incentives K wing should offer, such as additional gym sessions, for example.

Acupuncture and art sessions ran, but acupuncture was halted due to staffing difficulties. Several unstructured interventions were held, including a Christmas event and a time to talk event on World Mental Health Day.

A drug strategy lead was appointed in May 2023 to head up the prison drug strategy. Drug strategy meetings, which should involve representatives from all areas of the prison including prisoners, are scheduled. A drug strategy awareness event was held in February but it was poorly attended. A lack of communication to all staff about the event was thought to be responsible.

## **6.6 Soft skills**

A prison information document worker (PID) was available on each wing. There is a plan to develop the role to support activities that better disseminate information to all wings and to improve PID rooms.

Leaflets and posters about health and wellbeing, plus information on support and services offered by the prison, are visibly displayed on the wings and along the main corridor.

## **7. Progression and resettlement**

### **7.1 Education, library**

Actions continued to be implemented to improve service provision following the June 2022 Ofsted /HIMP inspection. A specific focus was maintained on Maths and English with the appointment of a prison reading specialist and an additional Maths tutor.

The 2023-2024 teacher observations found the quality of teaching to be good or better for 87.5% of the tutors. This was above the key performance indicator of 80%. The overall satisfaction rate by prisoners on their learning experience was 100%. Prisoner learners were particularly positive about gaining skills that would help them in their work or life and that teachers had good or excellent knowledge of the subject.

All tutors were offered support to improve their written and face-to-face feedback using the justice model, although this is a work in progress.

A peer mentor was allocated for every classroom and a workshop champion to painting and decorating.

Accredited courses included functional skills for English and Maths and essential digital skills. Accredited in-cell outreach courses included peer mentoring, budgeting, personal development, self-employment and understanding stress and emotions. For the period of April 2023 to February 2024, 632 prisoners started 1,316 qualifications. There was a completion and success rate of 94%.

The library was open during the week and weekends. It was well stocked with almost 2,000 items, including audio books, self-help resources and books in different languages. Driving test theory papers and DVDs were a new addition to the library. At the end of the reporting year, there were 675 prisoner members, of which 643 were actively borrowing resources.

A monthly display corner focused on specific issues such as neurodiversity or a national theme day or week. The chess club ceased to run at the end of 2023, as prisoners were not authorised to attend by the activities department.

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

There were insufficient workspaces for the prison population. At the end February 2024, there were approximately 448 full-time workspaces for a population of 726. Attendance averaged 60-65%. The number of available spaces allocated did improve, however, from approximately 80% in 2022 to approximately 92% in 2023.

Access to workshops was hampered across the year by the lack of instructor staff. Lack of motivation to work and an inconsistent approach among officers to absence authorisation were also contributory factors.

Vocational work included accredited courses in barbering, catering, concrete, waste management, dry lining, painting, decorating and health and safety. Non-accredited jobs included working in the kitchen and on the wings.

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

Around 65%-70% of prisoners did not have offender management and sentence planning in place on the offender assessment system (OASys) when they arrived at HMP Onley. As a result, there were backlogs in OASys completion and sentence planning. During the reporting period, only 42% of prisoners had an up-to-date OASys. Additional support from agency workers was used to complete assessments.

The number of prisoners waiting for transfer to a category D establishment (an open prison) improved, falling from around 17 in February 2023 to between zero and five by the end of the reporting year. During the reporting period, there were a total of 123 category D transfers, compared with 118 in 2023. Prisoners at HMP Onley were transferred to either HMP Sudbury or HMP Hollesley Bay.

The bi-monthly imprisonment for public protection (IPP) forums were discontinued during 2023, as they were thought not to be effective in addressing the specific needs of this group of prisoners. In line with the national drive to better support and progress IPP prisoners, the offender management unit (OMU) began to develop a more tailored and collaborative approach to addressing each IPP prisoner's needs. This has yet to be implemented. The prison council, however, offers IPP prisoners – and all prisoners - the opportunity to bring their concerns to the attention of the prison.

The home detention curfew (HDC) caseload doubled to 42 by the end of the reporting period. The OMU reported that this was due to shorter sentences and the prison population reverting to receiving more prisoners from the London area. During February 2024, a total of 30 prisoners were released on the end of custody supervised licence (ECSL) scheme.

The thinking skills programme (TSP) was the only intervention offered at HMP Onley. Around 72 prisoners completed the programme between March 2023 and March 2024. The waiting list was 15 at the end February 2024, compared with 80 in February 2023. The Board is aware that the TSP is likely to be replaced in 2025. This may benefit those prisoners at HMP Onley whose progression needs are currently not met by the TSP course.

### **7.4 Family contact**

The total number of social video calls made between February 2023 and February 2024 was 2911. The average monthly number of calls was 242. The usage availability across all wings was approximately 40%. There were ongoing issues concerning connectivity, the availability of staff and calls not starting on time. This caused considerable frustration at times for both staff and prisoners. By the end of the reporting year, all wings had a laptop for social video calls.

A prisoner visits survey was conducted in February 2024. Good points identified in the survey included staff politeness to visitors, a relaxed environment, good children's facilities, and a good snack bar with reasonably priced items and booking system. The visits' hall had been newly decorated and new children's toys were available. Areas for improvement identified food options to include hot food and sandwiches, to celebrate special occasions and visits to start on time. The areas for

improvement were added to the family and significant others strategy for consideration.

In-cell telephony made family contact easier. However, five cell phones remained inactive on H wing, the induction wing, due to a long-standing wiring fault. British Telecom (BT) were reported to have visited the wing on several occasions but the issue remained unresolved. The Board is continuing to monitor the situation.

H wing also had a problem with missing cell phones. Some were replaced but several continued to disappear, resulting in several cells having no in-cell phone. The Board is concerned that some prisoners are moved into a cell where a missing phone has not been replaced. The issue is being monitored by the Board.

## **7.5 Resettlement planning**

The employment hub continued to embed the many challenges in getting prisoners 'work ready' prior to the 12-week pre-release period, including the impact of the ECSL scheme.

The monthly target of 20% of prisoners into employment within six weeks of release varied between 6% and 30% due to a range of contributory factors.

Fewer workspaces than the number of prisoners was reported to have affected some prisoners' motivation to work. Increasingly, prisoners were saying they were unavailable to work following release and would rather claim welfare benefits.

The creation of a prisoner employment and information, advice and guidance (IAG) red band role (prisoners trusted to work in special or privileged positions) to support men pre-release was an initiative welcomed by the Board.

The employment advisory board (EAB) maintained poor contact, which hampered the hub in receiving strategic guidance and advice on training and employment. A new EAB Chair was appointed in early 2024. In addition, the notification of job vacancies, via the new futures network (NFN) broker, was not easy at times because of the prison's geographical location and population, which reverted to being predominantly from the London area.

The employment hub organised and held several employer events, including those with the London Third Sector Agency (dry-lining), The Ivy restaurant chain, The Dusty Knuckle bakery and café chain, Delta Hotels and Only a Pavement Away.

They were also successful in being selected by Greene King for HMP Onley to run its second academy and securing the delivery of six rail track courses through the Future Skills Programme. The first course commenced February 2024. In addition, the prison was able to deliver three construction and start-up business courses. Six cohorts completed a forklift training and storage course.

Staff shortages impacted on the consistent opening of the Departure Lounge: throughout the reporting year, it opened only on a few occasions.

## 8. The work of the IMB

### Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	13
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	5
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	5
Total number of visits to the establishment	286

### Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	10	7
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	3	3
C	Equality	0	0
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	11	18
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	17	9
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	3	7
F	Food and kitchens	12	12
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	34	41
H1	Property within the establishment	33	37
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	107	58
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	8	9
I	Sentence management, including home detention curfew (HDC), release on temporary licence (ROTL), parole, release dates, re-categorisation	49	38
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	61	68
K	Transfers	24	24
L	Miscellaneous	87	93
	<b>Total number of applications</b>	<b>459</b>	<b>424</b>



## **Annex A**

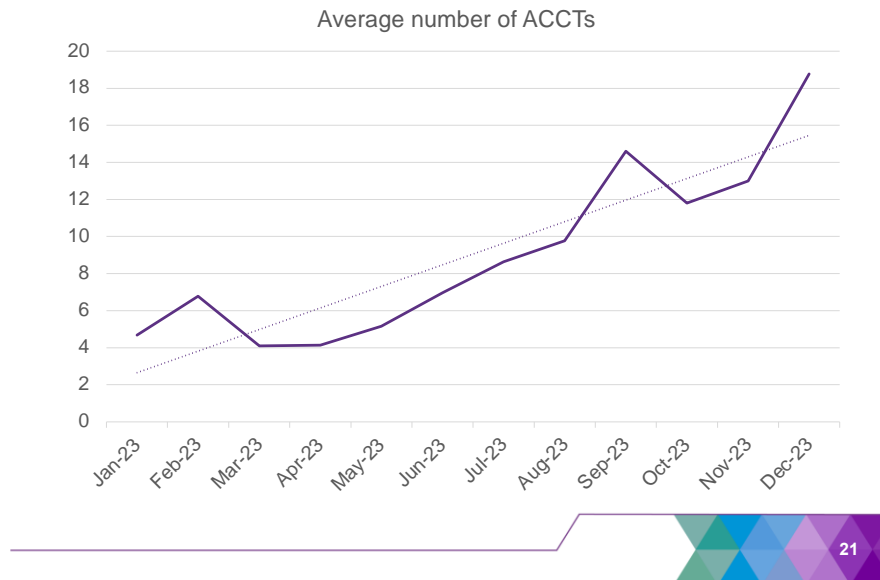
### **Service providers**

- Maintenance: Amey Estates
- Education: People Plus
- Library: People Plus
- Escort contractor: Amey
- Healthcare and pharmacy: Practice Plus Group
- Opticians: Prison Optical Trust
- Substance misuse programme: Forward Trust
- Visitors' centre: Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT)
- Resettlement support: East of England

## Annex B

### Increase in the number of ACCTs

#### ACCTs and self-harm



## Annex C

### Recorded violence

	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>% change</b>
Prisoner-on-prisoner assaults	50	80	-30	A decrease of 62.5%
Prisoner-on-staff assaults	103	67	+36	An increase of 53.7%
<b>Total</b>	153	147	+6	An increase of 4%

## Annex D

### Discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs)

Category of DIRF	Submitted in 2023	Submitted in 2022
Ethnicity	54	67
Religion	16	29
Disability	9	15
Age	1	4
Sexual orientation	5	4
Gender re-assignment	0	1
Other	57	0
Total	142	120
Total number of DIRFs submitted	146	119
Upheld/partially upheld	7 (4.93%)	10 (8%)

## Annex E

### Prisoner survey

The Board conducted a prisoner survey in May 2023. There were 114 responses, which was 15.5% of the prison population. The responses enabled the Board to focus on the key areas that were important to the prisoners.



### HAVE YOUR SAY RESPONSES – May 2023 (114 responses)

Q1. How safe do you feel in the prison?					Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> 13 Very safe 11.4%	<input type="checkbox"/> 40 Quite safe 35.4%	<input type="checkbox"/> 29 Neither safe nor unsafe 25.4%	<input type="checkbox"/> 18 Quite unsafe 15.7%	<input type="checkbox"/> 14 Very unsafe 12.2%	46.4% very or quite safe 27.9% quite or very unsafe
Q2. What is the condition of your accommodation (cell, shared areas of your wing)?					
<input type="checkbox"/> 8 Very good 7%	<input type="checkbox"/> 29 Quite good 25.4%	<input type="checkbox"/> 33 Neither good nor bad 28.9%	<input type="checkbox"/> 23 Quite bad 20.1%	<input type="checkbox"/> 21 Very bad 18.4%	32.4% very or quite good 38.5% quite or very bad
Q3. What is the quality of the food?					
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Very good 1.7%	<input type="checkbox"/> 18 Quite good 15.8%	<input type="checkbox"/> 17 Neither good nor bad 14.9%	<input type="checkbox"/> 28 Quite bad 24.5%	<input type="checkbox"/> 49 Very bad 42.9%	17.5% very or quite good 67.4% quite or very bad
Q4. How often do you have the chance to speak to a staff member about how you are getting on?					
<input type="checkbox"/> 15 Very often 13.1%	<input type="checkbox"/> 17 Sometimes 14.9%	<input type="checkbox"/> 19 Once in a while 16.6%	<input type="checkbox"/> 38 Rarely 33%	<input type="checkbox"/> 25 Never 21.9%	28% very or sometimes 54.9% rarely or never
Q5. How easy or difficult it is to speak to someone in healthcare when you need to?					
<input type="checkbox"/> 6 Very easy 5.2%	<input type="checkbox"/> 12 Quite easy 10.5%	<input type="checkbox"/> 23 Neither easy, nor difficult 20.1%	<input type="checkbox"/> 36 Quite difficult 31.6%	<input type="checkbox"/> 37 Very difficult 32.4%	15.7% very or quite easy 64% quite or very difficult
Q6. How often have you been able to have contact with friends, family (through letters, parcels, phone, visits)? Interpretation					
<input type="checkbox"/> 31 Very often 27.1%	<input type="checkbox"/> 36 Sometimes 31.5%	<input type="checkbox"/> 23 Once in a while 20.1%	<input type="checkbox"/> 17 Rarely 14.9%	<input type="checkbox"/> 7 Never 6.1%	58.6% very often or sometimes 21% rarely or never
Q7. How do you feel about the way your complaints are addressed?					
<input type="checkbox"/> 0 Very satisfied 0%	<input type="checkbox"/> 10 Quite satisfied 8.7%	<input type="checkbox"/> 30 Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied 26.3%	<input type="checkbox"/> 37 Quite dissatisfied 32.4%	<input type="checkbox"/> 36 Very dissatisfied 31.5%	8.7% very or quite satisfied 63.9% quite or very dissatisfied
Q8. How easy or difficult it is to get to activities like education, vocational training, work?					
<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Very easy 2.6%	<input type="checkbox"/> 17 Quite easy 14.9%	<input type="checkbox"/> 20 Neither easy, nor difficult 17.5%	<input type="checkbox"/> 34 Quite difficult 29.8%	<input type="checkbox"/> 40 Very difficult 35%	17.5% very or quite easy 64.8% quite or very difficult
Q9. How easy is it to get support for mental health and wellbeing?					
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Very easy 0.8%	<input type="checkbox"/> 12 Quite easy 10.5%	<input type="checkbox"/> 32 Neither easy, nor difficult 28%	<input type="checkbox"/> 31 Quite difficult 27.1%	<input type="checkbox"/> 37 Very difficult 32.4%	11.3% very or quite easy 59.5% quite or very difficult
Q10. Have you heard before of the IMB (Independent Monitoring Board) team of volunteers?					
<input type="checkbox"/> 91 Yes = 79.8%			<input type="checkbox"/> 23 No = 20.1%		

<b>Q11. Please tell us the 3 most important things that could make your life better in prison.</b>				
<b>Food</b> <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">32</span> = 28.3% including quality, choice, portion sizes, healthy options <b>Work</b> <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">30</span> = 26.7% including choice, suitability, availability, ability to get qualifications <b>Staff</b> <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">29</span> = 25.6% including contact, knowledge, shortages, people skills, contact with a governor <b>Regime</b> <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">21</span> = 18.7% including time out of cell, consistency, communication of regime changes <b>Living conditions</b> <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">19</span> = 16.7% including furniture, repairs, cold/heat, cold showers Other notable comments: gym, healthcare, pay, OMU response, handling of complaints				
Any other comments that you would like to share with us related to the above questions: See below.				
<b>Q12. What is your current age?</b>				
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">3</span> 25 years old or under 2.6%	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">75</span> 26-49 years old 66.3 %	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">35</span> 50 years old or over 30.9%		
<b>Q13. What is your ethnic group?</b>				
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">57</span> White 50.4%	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">24</span> Black 21.2%	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">15</span> Asian 13.2%	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">10</span> Mixed 8.8%	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">7</span> Other 6.1%
<b>Q14. Do you think that you have a health condition or disability that affects your day-to-day activity?</b>				
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">47</span> Yes = 41.5%		<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">66</span> No = 58.4%		
<b>Q15. Are you on Remand?</b>				
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">1</span> Yes		<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">112</span> No		

## Question 11: additional comments from prisoners

### Drugs

Drugs are rife - people blatantly dealing - easier to get Spice than help

### Food

Someone needs to inspect the food – undercooked - not healthy - portions wouldn't feed my 14-year-old son - can't eat the food.

### Work/education

3 months since arrival no job or education - education courses take months to get on - work helps rehabilitation - wait for employment/education causes mental health issues with no income.

### Health

If you have a mental illness this place does not help you - takes a month to see a doctor and 3-4 months to see a dentist - mental health going downhill being locked up 22 hours a day - impossible to see a mental health nurse - if you are working, they never come and get you for your healthcare appointment

### Living conditions

I-wing showers hardly ever have hot water - Battersea dog kennels are better than this place - only allowed 2 toilet rolls a week - treated worse than dogs - repairs to cells take months - if you can't work due to no jobs you get no fresh air - locked up for 22 hours a day.

## **Staff**

Staff are too lazy to help you - never see a governor on the wing - staff tell you to put in a complaint when it could be sorted there and then - takes ages or never get a reply from a comp - unfunny and sarcasm when asking officers questions - staff from all departments need educating on invisible disabilities - Covid is an excuse with OMU waiting lists - being in prison for 7 weeks and not seeing OMU for cat D or sentence plan is shocking - no confidentiality - some officers are very young with no confidence and don't apply the rules - never see the CM - never get key worker sessions - to be listened to - £2.20 a month for phone calls when there is no work.

## **Other**

When I complete an education exam they take me off the gym list and it takes a month to get back on - purple visits get cancelled all the time - there's no reward for good behaviour - everything in this prison is difficult - I'm locked up all day while other prisoners are unlocked all day on the wing - why can't staff, including OMU, phone you on the cell phone - with prices going up it's hard to get by on the small wage - not everyone can afford to buy a shave - this is the worst prison I've been to, including cat B - over 50s discriminated for work and education - she deserves a higher rank, she is helpful with information - it would be good to speak with someone from the IMB as independent.



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