



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Swinfen Hall

**For reporting year
1 May 2023 to 30 April 2024**

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Contents

Introductory sections 1 – 3	Page
1. Statutory role of the IMB	3
2. Description of the establishment	4
3. Key points	5
 Evidence sections 4 – 7	
4. Safety	11
5. Fair and humane treatment	13
6. Health and wellbeing	17
7. Progression and resettlement	22
 The work of the IMB	
Board statistics	25
Applications to the IMB	25

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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

This report presents the findings of the Board at HMP Swinfen Hall for the period 1 May 2023 to 30 April 2024.

The Board's findings are based on a combination of observations on monitoring visits, conversations with prisoners and staff on residential units and in workplaces and reviews of wing forums and prison council meetings. The findings are also a result of attendance at, and reviews of, the minutes for safer custody, use of force, and other meetings, including those with the Governor and their Deputy.

HMP/YOI Swinfen Hall is a public sector prison comprising an integrated young offender institution (YOI) and a category C training prison (which holds prisoners whose escape risk is considered to be low but who cannot be trusted in open conditions) for young men. The prison is defined as a 'national resource,' so receives prisoners from all over the country.

Swinfen Hall's agreed criteria is sentenced men aged between 18 and 28 serving a minimum of 16 months. During the reporting year, at least 90% of the population were young adults aged 18 to 21. Most present a high or very high risk of harm and have complex needs.

2.1 Profile data¹ for the establishment are as follows:

	30 April 2020	30 April 2021	30 April 2022	30 April 2023	30 April 2024
Total prisoner population	556	570	583	614	618
Serving four years or more	98%	<90%	93%	>98%	<90%
Serving a life sentence	38	56	78	106	124
Serving an indeterminate sentence for public protection (IPP)	2	3	0	0	0

As of 30 April 2024, there were:

- 45 men aged 18 to 21 serving a sentence of 10 years or more
- 91 men aged 22 to 27 serving a sentence of 10 years or more
- 92 men aged 18 to 21 serving a life sentence
- 32 men aged 22 to 27 serving a life sentence

At the end of the reporting period, around 30% of the population were prisoners convicted of a sexual offence (PCoSO).

The population of the prison has been between 600 and 620 prisoners for most of the reporting year.

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

In summary, last year's report noted that: *'The Governor and the SLT (senior leadership team) share a vision for the future. The Board considers that the current plans, if delivered, are expected to improve outcomes for prisoners at Swinfen Hall.'* Whilst the recently appointed Governor and their SLT took this objective forward as their primary intent this year, it is the Board's view that the prison failed to deliver the improved outcomes anticipated for prisoners in the last 12 months. Consequently, the prison has failed to meet its primary rehabilitation objectives in the year.

3.1 Main findings

Staffing issues have severely restricted the regime across the reporting year. This includes high levels of sickness/absence and an increasing number of newly appointed and inexperienced staff.

- In a typical week in the second half of reporting year, the prison reported that they had 25 staff off sick, with a further 15 staff on restricted duties.
- Sickness levels increased notably on each occasion of school holidays.
- An understanding by prisoners that there would be more time out of cell for weekend regime, but this was often not provided due to wing closures related to staff sickness levels.
- Only 12.4% of scheduled key worker sessions were completed due to pressure on staff resources.
- Newly appointed band 3 staff have not yet developed suitable 'life experience' to work with young offenders with complex issues (see the question for the Prison Service in 3.2)
- The unsuitability of some newly appointed staff (see the question for the Prison Service in 3.2)
- Mandatory drug tests did not take place in January or February at all and only commenced in late March.

The Board notes that the positive approach by the SLT to improve the prison's culture is encouraging. The SLT is aware of the need to remain alert to early signals that staff groups may be reverting to previous unsatisfactory practices.

The Board accept that the prison's own needs' analysis, as detailed below, reflects the actual needs at Swinfen Hall. The Board is concerned that, despite clear local leadership, this level of need cannot be delivered with the present levels of staffing, impacted adversely by sickness, and other absences of staff.

- 34% of the prison population are 'care experienced' (this is someone who has been in the care of the local authority as a child, regardless of their current age, the time they spent in care or whether they meet the legal definition of a 'care leaver'), with 44% of those serving life sentences being care experienced.
- 19% of the population are serving life sentences, while a further 18% are serving over 10 years and 47% are serving between 5 and 10 years.
- There remains a backlog of outstanding OaSys initial assessments (which are used to gauge the risks and needs of a prisoner), and the population is significantly complex, with 83% of cases being high or very high risk.

- Offence type: 62% for violence and 27% for sexual offences.
- 12% of the population has self-harmed or is self-harming.
- 19% of prisoners have an active gang alert.
- All those serving life sentences are under 25 years old.
- 55% of the population have either an identified neurodiverse condition or present with indicators that require additional assessment and support.
- Based on the screening tool the prison uses, 21% of the population indicate that they may have a learning disability and extra support is required.
- Swinfen Hall is not a resettlement prison, but the prison has released 74 prisoners in the last 12 months.
- 62% of the population has a Level 1 or above in English and maths, but 38% of the population have the literacy and numeracy skills of an 11-year-old or younger.
- 45% of the population have mental health issues, excluding substance misuse.
- 8.4% of the population have been diagnosed with an autistic spectrum disorder and 19.7% with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).
- Learning disability and neurodiversity pathways need development, including specialist skills within the healthcare team.
- There was always a lengthy waiting list for Inspires services, with prisoners moving down the list as new arrivals were deemed to have a greater need, which led to frustrations.
- The Inspires service supports prisoners with neurodiverse needs across the prison
- Most prevalent drug use is cannabis and prisoner feedback suggests this is due to it being culturally acceptable and being perceived as a 'safe' drug.
- There is currently limited data on prisoners' families and children, so the Board are unable to identify any specific needs.
- 36% of the population are not able to access offending behaviour programmes. Waiting lists for programmes remain long and Swinfen Hall is transitioning to the new building choices programme and assessments are not fully complete yet.

(Please note that these figures may not tally with the figures recorded at 30 April 2024, as the report was prepared in January 2024.)

Safety

The level of mandatory drug tests (MDT; see 4.5) indicates that drugs (principally cannabis) are present. This issue drives debt, self-harm and violence in the prison.

Weekly meetings (Smash and SIM) held by the safety team have ensured that care and support is extended to those identified.

The Board has concerns over the very few (usually three or less) self-isolators who choose to live a very limited existence in their cell.

The Board's view is that more focus is needed to either resolve the self-isolation or move these prisoners to a fresh start elsewhere.

The policy of the prison with regard to self-isolators is to identify those who '*completely disengage from the regime*'. The Board feels certain that this policy

results in isolators who may collect meals each day and take a shower every three days not being identified or supported in a reasonable time. The prison policy on these isolators states: *'Those who engage in some regime (formally tier 2) must have reintegration plans completed or an isolating-individual plan in place.'* The Board is not confident these plans are always actioned quickly enough to humanely meet a prisoner's needs. It is the Board's view that these prisoners are still very vulnerable and are, potentially, open to serious abuse, harm, exploitation and deteriorating mental health.

Also concerning is the number (usually five or less) of prisoners who are wing-restricted and who consequently make little or no progress, remaining wing-restricted for many months.

Fair and humane treatment

In the Board's view, the use of segregation (in the care and separation unit, or CSU) has been proportionate in relation to violent incidents in the prison. However, most prisoners did not spend long in the CSU, as staff worked well on exit plans.

Most wing-based staff and prisoner interactions observed were respectful, although it is a serious concern that many staff were inexperienced and lacked confidence with, for example, the enforcement of rules.

This, on occasion, impacted on safety, with injuries sustained in in-cell fights, where cells and laundry rooms should have been locked

Newly installed CCTV not functioning on installation prevented investigation of assault on wings. However, this became fully operational and has provided more and improved quality of coverage across the residential units.

The management of, and response to, prisoner applications to the prison raising a wide range of issues remain weak and unaccountable.

The timeliness and quality of responses to prisoners are not monitored effectively. The response (or, often, lack of response) to prisoner applications directly impacts the confidence many prisoners have in using the applications system.

The management of complaints was robust, with close monitoring of progress of each complaint. Responses to complaints varied in quality and around a third of those checked failed to answer the complaint clearly or reasonably.

Concerns raised in previous years over delays in the handing of prisoner property were resolved with the appointment of a new manager, who focused on process and fairness.

Too many staff lack confidence in enforcing basic standards and do not consistently challenge low-level prisoners' poor behaviour.

There were still multiple examples of the prison making promises to Board members to address issues, which were found not to have been delivered when followed up.

The new core day regime offers too little time out of cell, especially for the unemployed

There were insufficient enrichment activities with which to engage prisoners.

Health and wellbeing

The Board continues to have serious concerns over the availability of appropriate mental health support for those in need, who should be placed in NHS secure mental health units. Other aspects of healthcare raise no serious concerns and the healthcare provider respond very quickly to any issues raised by prisoners.

Progression and resettlement

Resettlement

Where a prisoner has not had a decision to transfer them to their local resettlement prison at least 10 months before release, Swinfen Hall generally manages their release, despite having no formal resettlement facility

Release

Prisoners were released directly from Swinfen Hall on licence or without licence. Occasionally prisoners preparing for release without licence have raised concerns over fears that they feel unsupported and, in worst cases, can end up homeless when they anticipate they will have no confirmed address to go to by the time of release. In reality, during the reporting period Swinfen Hall released 66 young adults to the community, 65 were released with accommodation starting from their first day of release.

Category D applications

Prisoners eligible for transfer to category D open prisons are well supported and progressed to successful applications.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- Can the Minister instruct the Ministry of Justice to implement a system to record the details of all children affected by parental imprisonment at the time of sentencing to assist prisons in providing prisoner family support?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- The HMPPS prison officer appointment process has resulted in some unsuitable appointments. Why are the Governing Governors not permitted to review the suitability of newly appointed band 3 staff prior to their starting the job at the prison?
- Why can staff who are completing their residential course prior to appointment to their prison not have their offer of employment withdrawn if, during the course or on completion, it is clear they do not have the capacity or suitability to take on the role of prison officer?
- Can HMPPS provide funding to support HMP Swinfen Hall with the release of prisoners, bearing in mind that the prison currently has no funding to support prisoners on release and some 80 prisoners are expected to be released directly from the prison in the coming year?

TO THE GOVERNOR

The Board has no specific questions for the Governor, as members raise concerns with the Governor or their Deputy, as necessary, on a regular basis.

3.3 Response to the last report

Safety

Concern/issue last year (2023 report)	Assessment	Progress
The use of weapons has increased. The Board is concerned that searches of men as they leave residential areas and workplaces are failing to detect weapons.	Limited improvement based on monitoring wing and workshop searches.	
A small number of men, despite the efforts of staff, continue to isolate.	The self-isolator engagement in wing regimes is concerning, in terms of positive outcomes.	Minutes of meetings support the view of the Board that there are men partially isolating who are not monitored adequately
Concerns over safety of newly arrived prisoners.	A safety analyst now researches possible prisoner conflicts and advises the safer custody team prior to arrival.	Not now a concern, as the induction wing custody manager clearly monitors and records concerns closely.

Fair and humane treatment

Concern/issue last year (2023 report)	Assessment	Progress
Concern over clothing parcel distribution issues.	Now significantly improved, following intervention by a newly appointed custodial manager.	
Concern that OASys reports were delayed; prisoners felt unable to access resettlement provision.	Delays on OASYS preparation remain at least five months.	Wing forums record little confidence by prisoners in support from the OMU, although the backlog of OASYS is slightly reduced.

Health and wellbeing

Concern/issue last year 2023 report	Assessment	Progress
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An insufficient out-of-hours GP service.	The Board is not confident that the out-of-hours GP service will carry out night visits. This is still a concern.	This remains a concern.
Dentistry: reduced capacity.	Clinic capacity has increased, but more initial appointments has led to a greater backlog of treatment required.	Average appointment waiting time has reduced from 42 to 19 days.
Difficulty recruiting mental health nurses.	Situation has improved.	Not currently an issue.

Progression and resettlement

Concern/issue last year (2023 report)	Assessment	Progress
Prisoners fell behind with educational studies.	Attendance levels have improved.	During the reporting period lessons are planned to be over two hours in length and members have noted many lessons that conclude with little, or no teaching having taken place. Since the reporting period closed, Ofsted noted "most education and skills activities were well-planned. Prisoners, including those with additional learning needs, generally developed an appropriate range of new knowledge, skills and behaviours that helped them to become more confident learners".

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and Induction

The wing custody manager (CM) completes and retains a thorough review of newly arrived prisoner needs on induction. The Board has observed good peer support from first night orderlies.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

There were no deaths in custody during the reporting period.

Safer custody

The following data have been produced by using the safety diagnostic tool.

During the 12 months of the reporting period, there were 369 self-harm incidents. A small number of prisoners repeatedly self-harm, which distorts the figures. Cutting and swallowing objects are the primary causes of self-harm. The use of, or threat to use, a ligature is infrequent.

Although CMs were frequently reminded that the locked door policies on wings must be adhered to at all times, their own meeting records note that this policy was not being fully followed. Consequently, violent incidents were not prevented, and assaults in cells could not be properly investigated or adjudicated (a hearing held when a prisoner is alleged to have broken prison rules).

The locked door policy needs enforcing consistently in light of recent incidents.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

During this reporting period, Swinfen Hall saw a total of 149 assaults on prisoners, 120 fights, with a total of 22 of them being reported as serious.

There were 62 assaults on staff.

The Safer Custody team use data effectively on a weekly basis to identify hot spots, key times, and locations for analysis of violent events. At these meetings there is a focus on creating plans for individual prisoners to combat violent behaviours. However, action point noted are often not resolved or actioned within the next 4 weeks. Of concern is that the process to identify prisoners in need (not fully engaged in the regime on wing) is not always sufficiently robust or timely.

4.4 Use of force

Board members observed many use of force (UoF) meetings over the year. The meetings included thorough reviews of UoF incidents, including reviews of body worn video camera (BWVC) footage, CCTV and officer statements. The process included identifying areas of excellence and also training needs. Action points were noted and confirmed as completed. In the Board's view, the process appeared to be robust.

Board members reviewed most incidents where Pava incapacitant spray was used by staff. The decision to employ Pava in an effort to help end a violent incident was

analysed in detail in the UoF meetings. The Board is confident that incidents where Pava has been used are reviewed thoroughly to ensure compliance with the policy.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

The prison identified the fluctuating availability of illicit items.

Drug strategy analysis is comprehensive but strategy to tackle ingress is a weakness remains a serious concern, in the Board's view. The most prevalent drug use is cannabis and prisoner feedback suggests this is due to it being culturally acceptable and its perception as a 'safe' drug.

Engagement with inclusion, once referred, is increasing and was 61% in January 2024. The number of mandatory drug tests (MDTs) was significantly below expectations, as reported in the prison's own analysis. MDTs have been carried out inconsistently during the reporting period, with the focus switching between random and suspicion tests. Therefore, analysis of this data would not yield reliable information. The most common substance yielding a positive MDT was cannabis.

Analysis of the daily briefing reports over three months showed no staff were allocated responsibility for MDTs for all of January and February and much of March (see earlier comments regarding staff sickness and the impact on the regime). Once random MDTs recommenced in March 2024, there was a 40% failure rate.

Test results in March 2024 on the incentivised substance free living (ISFL) wing raised concerns:

- Of 25 tests completed, 20% were positive for substance misuse.
- In February 2024, 31% of 16 tests were positive.
- There were 66 drug-related seizures in the first nine months of the reporting year, 62% of which tested positive for a variant of cannabis (such as cannabis, cannabis resin or THC), while 11% tested positive for synthetic cannabinoids.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

In the Board's view, cells are adequate on the newer side of the prison. Cells on the original accommodation are cramped. A lack of ventilation makes cells across the prison very uncomfortable in hot weather.

Cleanliness and the ability to handle waste in residential areas has been satisfactory on some wings but very poor in other wings, especially the two larger wings (F and G).

With up to 27 wing workers to clean a wing, it is unacceptable that staff cannot ensure the basics are delivered, including:

- residential communal rooms kept clean and catering equipment washed down;
- food cleared away from serveries once meals are served;
- food trollies cleaned and returned in a satisfactory manner;
- stairs and floors swept and cleaned;
- waste separated correctly;
- staff toilets and kitchen areas on residential units kept clean; and
- food waste double or triple bagged to prevent flies and maggots around bins.

Prisoners are encouraged to feedback their views on food via food observation books, wing forums and the prison council. The quality of the food provided reflects the budget per day of £2.75 per prisoner.

When men have been moved wings, often during an un-planned move, they tend to raise concerns about the misplacement and loss of their property. Where Board members have asked for copies of cell clearance certificates, to understand how a loss may have occurred, staff frequently have not been able to provide them.

5.2 Segregation

The care and separation unit (CSU) in the prison incorporates 15 cells² for:

- Prisoners adjudged to have broken prison rules and serving terms of cellular confinement (CC).
- Prisoners held for the good order or discipline (GOoD) of the prison. GOoD decisions are reviewed by adjudication within 48 hours of the offence, then subsequently after each period of 14 days (Rule 45 for prisoners aged 21 years and older) or seven days (Rule 49 for prisoners aged under 21).

Where Board members attended prisoner reviews for R45/R49 placement in the CSU, those reviews were fully informed, including plans for a return to the wings, detailed and explanatory to the prisoner, and completed robustly but courteously where needed.

² There is one further 'dry cell', used to house prisoners thought to have swallowed, or otherwise secreted, prohibited items.

There were 2,464 adjudications in the reporting period. Of these:

- 480 resulted in no further action/confinement (reasons included charges dismissed/dropped or adjudication having invalid outcome.)
- 72 offences were referred to the police. Of these, 48 remain with the police/Crown Prosecution Service, or involve prisoners subsequently transferred to other prisons. The remaining 24 were not accepted by the police. (This may happen when the accused prisoner is, for example, already serving a life sentence. Two charges were dismissed and a further two referred back to prison to be dealt with by the prison or by the independent adjudicator.)

The Board is concerned that although the prison prepares and forwards details of cases of staff assault for review by the police and CPS, too many do not proceed.

Stays in the CSU were usually between 8 and 15 days, with very few extending over 42 days. Those stays over 42 days had good reason to be held in segregation.

Staff in the segregation unit work well with prisoners placed there and frequently de-escalate the volatile behaviours of residents to settle them down prior to a move to a wing.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

Staff absences, as noted earlier, have adversely affected the number of key worker sessions completed. It is not at all unusual to ask a prisoner if he has discussed an issue with his key worker and to hear: 'Who is my key worker?'

The prison created priority groups for key worker session in the early part of the reporting year, but these were disbanded in the summer of 2023. The prison set a target to complete 80% of key worker sessions in 2023-2024, but only achieved 12.4%, due to resourcing pressures.

5.4 Equality and diversity

From its observations, the Board believes that issues raised about equality and diversity are handled sensitively and professionally. Concerns that prisoners have in relation to equality and diversity are seldom heard by Board members.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The chaplaincy staff continue to provide excellent support to prisoners across the prison and are one of the key strengths of Swinfen Hall. Their work and support are generally regarded very favourably by prisoners across the various faith groups. Staff members interface positively with lay groups to provide services and to facilitate visits to prisoners where needed.

5.6 Incentive schemes

In general, there is little prisoner comment on the bronze, silver and gold levels of the incentives scheme. There is also a platinum level and it is a regular occurrence to be advised by a prisoner that platinum status has no added benefit for them as the additional benefits are negligible.

This is acknowledged by the senior leadership team (SLT), as follows: Prisoner forum minutes noted that: *‘Over time, there will be an incentives scheme. However, at this time, we are focused on the confidence and competence of staff.’*

5.7 Complaints

Swinfen Hall has a robust complaints process in place and it is evident to the Board that, for the most part, the policy is adhered to, although there is scope for improvement. The prison operates a sound qualitative and quantitative analysis of complaints. Positive feedback, good practice and learning points are all identified.

The themes that are emerging include:

Good practice Overall, responses were well written. They clearly addressed the points and were able to provide evidence of the investigation into complaints.

The Board noted evidence of good practice where prisoners were seen in person to discuss the complaint or explain outcomes. However, it was also evident that a larger proportion were not seen, as evidenced in the top sheets, response forms and complaints log.

Swinfen Hall also identified that it is best practice to provide typed responses to prisoners rather than handwritten responses, although this is not always practiced in the workplace.

From the Board’s sample analysis, 18 responses were handwritten, a number of which were difficult to read. Of the additional five cases reviewed, three responses were handwritten and difficult to read.

Learning points Swinfen Hall recognises that there are areas for improvement. The main findings are:

- Staff should use the correct paperwork/templates.
- Forms were not always completed fully, with essential information missing.
- Back forms were missing in the majority of cases, including ‘What will happen to my complaint?’ not completed in most cases.
- Responses are best typed and not handwritten.
- Prisoners should be referred to by name.
- Responses often fail to refer to the original response (appeals). The prison should make clear if the original decision still stands or has changed.
- The name of the person who responded to the complaints was not always provided. This is an essential requirement if an appeal has taken place or further investigation is required.
- Outcomes were not always recorded on the paperwork and the rationale for decisions not clearly identified in the responses to prisoners.

Board members completed a dip study into complaints received by the prisoners. This was based on a short analysis of 63 complaints received between November 2023 and February 2024.

The nature of the complaints covered a range of subjects, including transfers, education/work, incentives scheme, social visits, property and finance, bullying/harassment and health. Of those identified here, most complaints related to property (16 in total) and nine complaints relating to transfer requests.

Following investigation, 14 complaints were upheld, 27 were rejected and 22 deemed neither. A total of 13 complaints were recorded as not being within timescales. However, the majority of these were the subject of an interim timescale where timescales were met.

Whilst areas for improvement have been identified by Swinfen Hall, the Board would like to see how these are progressed in terms of managerial oversight. It was noted that the spreadsheet includes a column for senior managers' comments, although there was no visible comment in respect of any of the complaints received.

There is evidence that good practice exists in the way most prisoners are responded to following a complaint being raised. It is evident to the Board that some of those investigating complaints will take the time to see the prisoner in person. This face-to-face approach is one to be commended and should be cited as good practice in all cases. Furthermore, there is evidence that responses can be detailed and show the extent of the investigation. Although not evident in all cases, it was positive to see that the majority of cases reviewed were dealt with in the timescale. However, it was not possible to see from the evidence provided if prisoners were duly informed of how their complaint was progressing/delays in response, etc.

5.8 Property

Concerns raised in previous years over delays to handling prisoner property in the prison were resolved with the appointment of a new manager, who focused on process and fairness. There remains a concern about the increasing issues of property lost on transfer between establishments, as evidenced by the number of applications (prisoners' written submissions to the IMB) increasing from six last year to 22 during the reporting year.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

Healthcare is provided by Practice Plus Group (PPG). It is integrated with mental health and psychosocial substance misuse services, which are contracted to the Midlands Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust provided through its 'inclusion' team.

The Board is satisfied that prisoners have good access to urgent medical care and can access routine clinics in a reasonable timeframe. However, some regime restrictions have notably increased the number of prisoners not attending appointments.

The IMB received 17 applications relating healthcare issues, up from 14 in the previous year, which represents 7% of the overall number:

IMB healthcare applications from May 2023 to April 2024	
Primary care	6
Hospital appointments	4
Dentist	1
Mental health issues	3
Other, wider health-related issues	3

Practice Plus Group seems to respond quickly to all issues raised via the Board and provides relevant information so the IMB can respond to the prisoner. In many instances, PPG will also visit prisoners in person to ensure they are fully satisfied with the response/update.

In the same period, PPG has not dealt with any stage 1 complaints and all issues raised have been dealt with as concerns.

PPG carried out patient surveys on a monthly basis from June 2023 to March 2024. The only time when prisoners would not recommend the service was in February.

In 9 out of 10 months approval ratings were on average 93% but in February 2024, out of 11.6% of the population who completed a survey, 3% didn't recommend the service but 80% did.

The Board continues to monitor the night cover out-of-hours GP service, as concerns persist that actual visits do not take place when appropriate.

6.2 Physical healthcare

	Urgent Appts	Routine appointment wait			Actual at 30 April 2024	Clinic utilisation		Did not attend (DNA)	
		Shortest	Longest	Average		Average	At 30 April 2024	Average	At 30 April 2024
GP	2 days	3	29	15	36	71%	60%	3%	0.5%
Dentist	2 days	6	43	19	32	70%	70%	12%	11%
Optician	n/a	0	36	16	12	70%	60%	13%	27%*
Physio	n/a	14	43	24	21	70%	57%	9%	14%
Podiatry	n/a	1	12	5	6	80%	67	1%	0%*

**Optician and podiatry percentages are distorted by low appointment numbers.*

Waiting times for all clinics varied across the year but, overall, there are no trends for concern. With the exception of the optician clinic, all have shorter wait times, improved utilisation and lower numbers not attending. There is no out-reach for dentistry and optician, so prisoners have to attend in person. This makes clinics more vulnerable to prison staffing issues, as in, escorts are not available. The prison is supportive of PPG and is addressing the escort issues.

Trained health and recovery champions for each wing have helped with information and messaging direct to prisoners.

Hospital appointments	May 2023	Apr 2024	Highest	Lowest	Average
Appointments booked	40	31	51	31	40
Emergency escorts	11	11	17	7	13
Escorts delivered	45	36	57	36	45
Total cancellations (patient)	6 (2)	6 (3)	13 (7)	5 (3)	8 (3)
Bed watch nights	3	6	10	0	4
Prisoners on bed watch	2	2	15	0	3
Bed watch hours	63	154	231	0	94

The average number of booked secondary care appointments has increased from 35 in the previous reporting year to 40 in this reporting period. Emergency escorts have remained static, with an average of 13 per month.

The number of cancelled appointments in this reporting year is broadly the same as in the previous year, but a much larger number are due to prisoner transfer/release (up from 9 to 24 in the current year). Prisoners on a hospital waiting list in another part of the country are penalised when moving into Swinfen Hall, as they must then join a new waiting list at a hospital in the area.

Bed watch hours varied across the reporting year, but the monthly average is vastly reduced from 211 in 2022-2023 to 94 in the 2023-2024. However, this is still much higher than the average of 59 in the previous reporting period. The average number of monthly bed watch nights has reduced from 9 in 2022-2023 to four in the current year, although there was a peak of 15 prisoners on bed watch in October 2023 (the average of all other months was two).

6.3 Mental health and neurodiverse prisoners

Information gathered by the prison in December 2023 recorded that there were 332 individuals with either an identified neurodiverse condition or who presented with indicators that required additional assessment. This equated to 55% of the overall population of the prison.

6.4 Social care

There was no social care delivered during the reporting year, although one referral was completed.

During the reporting period, the prison held 210 people who had declared that they were care experienced, which is 34% of the current population. A total of 17 young people transitioned from the juvenile estate and all were recorded as 'looked after' children.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

The figures below show the numbers of prisoners engaged in such activity on a typical day.

	Activity Area	Capacity	Allocated	Attended	%
AM	Learning and skills	74	65	52	70%
	Services	213	161	149	70%
	Industries/work	110	83	60	54%
	Interventions	34	34	29	85%
	AM Totals	431	343	290	
	Not in <i>paid</i> activity			320	
PM	Learning and skills	64	54	46	72%
	Services	204	162	155	76%
	Industries/work	110	82	59	54%
	Interventions	19	19	19	100%
	PM totals	397	317	279	
	Not in <i>paid</i> activity			331	

This 'snapshot' day also saw 92 sessions where prisoners were engaged in *unpaid activity* (gym sessions, social visits, legal visits and soft skills' areas). The Board can draw numerous conclusions from these figures, but notable amongst them are that:

- Around half of the prison population is not engaged in purposeful activity during any session. (As many prisoners work full-time, it can be concluded that many of them engage in little or no purposeful activity.)
- The number of prisoners is significantly greater than the capacity of activities to engage them.

The Board is concerned by the number of prisoners unable (or unwilling) to gain employment or access a place in education and who, therefore, spend far too much time confined to their cells.

The high levels of staff absence (see 3.1) have had a serious impact on many aspects of the day-to-day life of prisoners. In recent months, wing closures, necessary to ensure prison safety when adequate staffing levels cannot be delivered, have become a common feature of the regime at Swinfen Hall. It has become 'normal' for wings to be shut down at some point in the week and particularly during the weekends. On weekdays, prisoners can be left frustrated by

being unable to attend work or education or by missing out on evening association. The curtailment of weekend regime (association time) is, undoubtedly, the most common complaint amongst prisoners.

Prisoners have access (usually weekly) to a well-run gym and clearly look forward to their sessions. In addition, there are a limited number of other activities that offer prisoners the opportunity to come together co-operatively, such as football, basketball, reading groups and a choir, for example.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

The drug strategy lead manager appears to have a clear understanding of the influence of drugs in the prison and has a positive plan to address the concerns raised to support rehabilitation. The IFSL wing has made limited progress in the year, but has been adversely affected by prisoners being placed on the wing who have not expressed a desire to live a drug-free lifestyle.

Between August 2023 and January 2024:

- There were 88 reported incidents of prisoners suspected of being under the influence of illicit substances. This is for 54 separate prisoners, with three prisoners accounting for 28% of the 88 incidents.
- There have been 10 instances of a code blue (emergency code for when a prisoner is not breathing, so an ambulance is called) being called for substance misuse, one of which required hospital treatment.
- On the IFDS wing, 432 oral swab tests have been completed in this period as part of compact-based drug testing; 11% of the 432 tests have been positive.
- Qualitative review of prisoner consultation reveals that the drug of preference for the Swinfen Hall population is cannabis. This is related to two main themes: cannabis being culturally accepted as 'the norm' for young adults both in the community and in prison; and cannabis being perceived as a 'safe' drug to take (akin to alcohol) by the prison's population.
- Peer support has recently been reinvigorated. This is based on research that suggests peer relationships are the most influential that young adults have, and peer support being a key ingredient for recovery.
- The prison has moved away from a largely punitive approach to substance misuse. The prison is now focusing on exploring the drivers for use and signposting to support, as opposed to removing TVs and automatically downgrading people to the bronze level of the incentive scheme.

The number of prisoners reported to be 'under the influence' has increased during the reporting year. An increase in security reports regarding availability of cannabis supports this.

6.7 Soft skills

Swinfen Hall has a group of Listeners, trained by the Samaritans, who support other prisoners who are in crisis and/or need someone to support them. There is a dedicated Listener suite, where Listeners can talk to their peers out of cell if necessary. The scheme has potential and is supported by the leadership team, but on occasion (anecdotally, at night) residential managers fail to meet its stated objectives.

Listeners appear to find their involvement fulfilling and beneficial to their own personal development and that of their peers. However, they feel they are underused, which they find frustrating.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

The library service offers the following:

- Storybook Dad recordings (where prisoners can record a reading on CD or DVD for their children) once a month, as well as bespoke recordings for Mother's Day, Father's Day and Grandparents' Day.
- Craft sessions for men to send their work to their families.
- 'Making a book' new initiative.
- Six book challenge (Reading Ahead).
- Book clubs (library and prisoner led).
- New Chapters (with the National Literacy Trust).
- Books unlocked (established readers' group): collaborative work with a charity, the Shannon Trust.
- Ten by Ten (creative writing event).

The library is a much-valued resource among prisoners but, as with other functions in prison, the service has been severely curtailed due to staffing shortages. For instance, in March, 29 sessions were scheduled, but only 41% took place. In February, the figures were 48% of 31 scheduled sessions. Despite this, the library averages between 300 and 400 prisoner visits per month. Attendance is steadily improving, although numbers are still significantly down on pre-Covid figures.

Swinfen Hall is supported by the Shannon Trust in developing literacy and numeracy. A new member of staff was recruited to oversee Shannon Trust activity in January 2024 and they inherited a programme in decline. Following their intervention, each wing has at least one mentor. Potential mentors are referred to the Shannon Trust by education staff, although some self-refer, especially when awaiting for a parole board hearing or to support category D (open prison) applications. Mentors find the activity fulfilling, but some are frustrated, as they feel they are underused due to issues with staff not being available for escorting duties. For much of the year this programme was largely ineffective, as mentors were unable to spend sufficient time with their mentees to support learning. However, post the reporting period in September 2024, Ofsted noted the positive impact the recently introduced three day a week commissioned Shannon Trust programme was having on learners.

7.2 Vocational training, work

A total of 30% of prisoners spent less than six months at HMP/YOI Swinfen Hall, so it is unlikely they would have been able to engage in any high-intensity programmes if these were required as part of their sentence plan.

Leaders and managers have failed to ensure there was an increase in sufficient quality work, skills or education places for the entire population. There are around 840 part-time work places for a population of around 620 prisoners.

Although there are 840 part-time work placements identified, allocation levels often fall short of 100%. (For example, there may be, say, 20 roles available to work in grounds but only 17 prisoners allocated work placements.) Even of those allocated places, attendance by prisoners is typically less than 90%. There is a drive to ensure that maximum use is made of the available work placements.

7.3 Offender management, progression

The Board notes frequent complaints from prisoners that their sentence plans have not been completed, so they cannot progress. The OMU records indicate a delay of around five months in preparing these reports. Part of the reason for the delay is that Swinfen Hall, as a training prison, receives prisoners following their sentencing from reception prisons. Many new reception prisoners will have had a very short window of time before their transfer for a sentence plan to be prepared.

Additionally, the increasing complexity of the prisoners arriving on long and life sentences (see table that illustrates the increasing number of prisoners serving life sentences) also requires more time in the preparation of each plan. During the reporting year, the prison increased staffing to address this need. However, the Board's view is that as the number of prisoners on life sentences increases annually and other prisoners with complex needs are identified, there is a need to increase the staffing provision to address the complexity of the men in the prison.

The Board believe that the prison senior leadership team (SLT) recognises its duty to ensure prisoners have realistic, achievable, and beneficial objectives set for them, considering their maturity levels and life experiences. However, staff resources, along with staff absences, have a negative impact on this objective.

The prison does not offer any release on temporary licence (ROTL) opportunities to prisoners.

7.4 Family contact

Various family days (which bring together prisoners and their families outside of their statutory entitlement, usually in more informal settings) have been organised, including those for Listeners and for men held on the PIPE (psychologically informed planned environment) wing, which supports the rehabilitation of prisoners with personality difficulties. Football matches against local teams have proved popular.

The prison holds a significant number of prisoners who are care leavers, with around 200 or more recorded at any date. Based on conversations with prisoners, the Board is concerned that many care leavers aged between 18 and 21 (who are, or should be) subject to pathway plans do not receive the support they are entitled to from the local authority.

7.5 Resettlement planning

The Board is concerned that, as Swinfen Hall expects to release up to 80 prisoners directly to the community in the next year, more will be released with no fixed abode.

Although the prison is not funded to provide support for direct release, the Governor has redirected funds from the prisons' budget to fund a part-time role, whose job is to provide ID and national insurance details.

In the reporting period, one prisoner was released with no fixed abode. The prison struggles to find places to resettle prisoners wanting to go to the north and northwest.

If a place in a resettlement prison is not confirmed 10 months before release, Swinfen Hall supports prisoners for a local release unless a place is found.

Release

- Swinfen Hall works with a variety of partners to prepare prisoners for release. This includes the IAG (information, advice and guidance) service, which helps support prisoner to find work, write their CV, and victim awareness; the Job Centre, which visits the prison once a month to hold forums with prisoners; Inside Jobs, an initiative started by an ex-prisoner to help provide job support to prisoners; and the Reese Foundation, which provides support for prisoners who have experience of being in the care of a local authority.
- Community probation services are under a duty to refer prisoners due to be released without licence to local councils. The OMU and the resettlement teams in the prison can support and assist with this. It is then the responsibility of the council to help prisoners find accommodation so that they do not end up homeless.
- Board members have noted that the situation is much better for prisoners released on licence. Swinfen Hall's case administration team extensively liaises with probation to ensure suitable accommodation is in place on release. The IMB understands that the case administration team is made up of five full-time staff, and two part-time staff in the prison.

Category D applications

- Members are confident that staff prepare category D applications thoroughly, taking into account many factors related to each prisoner.
- The Board regularly hears complaints from prisoners who are frustrated about their place being moved back when on a waiting list for a programme that is a requirement for release or for a move to a category D prison.
- There were no reported issues with regard to spaces in category D prisons, The Board was told that prisoners are given a choice of three establishments in their area of release and prisoners generally get their first choice.
- The Board positively notes that the prison works well with eligible prisoners to progress them to a successful category D decision.

Foreign national prisoners

A total of 67 people were recorded on Nomis (the internal computer) as foreign national prisoners. Of these, there were 33 different nationalities.

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	14
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	5
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	7
Total number of visits to the establishment	249

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	7	9
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	7	16
C	Equality	0	0
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	20	33
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	5	13
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	14	6
F	Food and kitchens	2	3
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	14	17
H1	Property within the establishment	37	38
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	6	22
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	9	4
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence), parole, release dates, re-categorisation	23	13
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	22	29
K	Transfers	26	33
L	Miscellaneous	1	8
	Total number of applications	193	236



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