



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Wealstun

**For reporting year
1 June 2023 to 31 May 2024**

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Introductory sections 1 – 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

The Prison Act 1952 requires every prison to be monitored by an independent board appointed by the Secretary of State from members of the community in which the prison is situated.

Under the National Monitoring Framework agreed with ministers, the Board is required to:

- satisfy itself as to the humane and just treatment of those held in custody within its prison and the range and adequacy of the programmes preparing them for release
- inform promptly the Secretary of State, or any official to whom authority has been delegated as it judges appropriate, any concern it has
- report annually to the Secretary of State on how well the prison has met the standards and requirements placed on it and what impact these have on those in its custody.

To enable the Board to carry out these duties effectively, its members have right of access to every prisoner and every part of the prison and also to the prison's records.

The Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT) is an international human rights treaty designed to strengthen protection for people deprived of their liberty. The protocol recognises that such people are particularly vulnerable and aims to prevent their ill-treatment through establishing a system of visits or inspections to all places of detention. OPCAT requires that states designate a National Preventive Mechanism to carry out visits to places of detention, to monitor the treatment of and conditions for detainees and to make recommendations for the prevention of ill-treatment. The IMB is part of the United Kingdom's National Preventive Mechanism.

2. Description of the establishment

HMP Wealstun is a category C training and resettlement prison (which houses those whose escape risk is considered low but who cannot be trusted in open conditions), for men, situated in a semi-rural area near Wetherby, West Yorkshire. It now has an operational capacity, or OpCap (the maximum number of prisoners that can be held without serious risk to safety, security, good order and the proper running of the planned regime), of 908¹.

There are 11 residential units, built at different times, and a segregation unit. The units include 40 rapid-deployment cells, which opened in January 2024. The site also comprises a kitchen, visitors' centre, chaplaincy, gym, library, healthcare centre, College and a number of workshops. A reception area for prisoners' visitors is located outside the main gate.

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

3. Key points

3.1 Main findings

Safety

- Due to population pressures, the prison has increased capacity significantly. The number of receptions has risen by 21%, which has impacted reception and induction processes.
- The level of self-harm is quite high but tends to be by prolific self-harmers. The number of open assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) plans is usually low. The Board has observed good interventions between staff and vulnerable prisoners.
- Despite increased security, illicit materials, such as drugs and mobile phones, for example, continue to enter the establishment.
- Due to the prevalence of illicit materials, which are often associated with debt, bullying and violence between prisoners has risen over the reporting year.

Fair and humane treatment

- The condition of the older wings remains a concern, as they need to be replaced.
- The Board has observed some good examples of interaction between staff and prisoners in the segregation unit.
- The number of key worker sessions remains very low and the decision to measure the performance by quality rather than quantity indicates there was insufficient funding for staff when the offender management in custody (OMiC) system was introduced.

Health and wellbeing

- The prison and healthcare teams have been observed by the Board to work together well and generally speaking, issues are resolved quickly.
- Attendance at appointments has improved and there is little delay in getting an appointment.
- Despite improved staffing levels and a strong leadership team, the Board remains concerned about the regime, which mainly offers part-time work and continues to provide only a limited amount of time out of cell, especially at weekends.

Progression and resettlement

- The increased churn of prisoners and the decision to transfer in a significant number of prisoners with only a limited amount of time left to serve have put considerable pressure on the offender management unit (OMU).
- The Board remains concerned about the lack of education and training places available. Prisoners generally work only on a part-time basis, which has a negative impact on their rehabilitation prospects.
- Imprisonment for public protection (IPP) prisoners continue to be held at Wealstun, with some additional support provided. However, IPP prisoners and those serving life sentences, are given the opportunity to live on the new K wing, where there is a more relaxed regime.

- The number of prisoners arriving at Wealstun with little time remaining to serve, together with the introduction of the early release scheme (to address capacity pressure on prisons), have had a negative effect on the amount of time the prison has to plan for prisoners so that they are prepared for successful and sustained resettlement.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- As referenced in our previous report, what steps will the Minister take to ensure that prison is not used to house severely mentally ill people whilst they await a place in a suitable institution?
- When will the Minister end the inhumane treatment of prisoners imprisoned for public protection (IPP) across the prison estate and release all remaining IPP prisoners with no conditions?
- How will the Minister ensure that budgets for prisons include sufficient funding to meet the additional costs caused by the increase in prison population, early release scheme and considerable churn of prisoners?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- As referenced in our last report, what is the prison service doing to ensure that two prisoners are not housed in double cells, as this is inconsistent with the obligation to provide high standards of decency for prisoners, particularly in respect of toilet facilities?
- As referenced in our last report, when is it planned to consider a complete refurbishment or replacement of the older wings (A and B wings)? It is increasingly apparent that this accommodation, built in the 1960s, needs significant remedial action for a number of reasons and is not a humane environment for prisoners.
- How will the prison service ensure that prisons receive appropriate funding for staff in all functional areas and not just additional officers when populations are increased? This includes OMU, the business hub, resettlement, workshops, education and the healthcare department.
- How will the prison service ensure that prisons receive appropriate funding to cover the considerable amount of extra work caused by the increased churn (reception, OMU, finance, resettlement) so that prisoners are able to access everything they require throughout their sentence?
- How will the prison service ensure that additional funding is made available as the population increases to cover any additional costs such as prisoner wages, clothing and workshops.

TO THE GOVERNOR

- How will the Governor ensure that information in an ACCT file only includes paperwork for one week whilst archiving and storing the remainder, as stated in the response to the 2022-2023 annual report (see 'response to the last report', below)?
- How is the Governor planning to increase time out of cell for prisoners by increasing the regime and providing more work and education opportunities, as this would help with their progression?

- How is the Governor planning to increase workshop and education capacity so that prisoners are able to work full time, with multiple benefits including wellbeing, in addition to more money for canteen (where prisoners can buy snacks, drinks, toiletries, etc)?
- How is the Governor planning to ensure that the change of responsibilities for equality and diversity to the safer custody team does not impact on the importance of this area of work?

3.3 Response to the last report

The Board is disappointed to report that several of the issues raised in the last report continue to remain a concern and have been raised again.

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- To carry out a review of the ACCT documentation introduced in 2021, as it is cumbersome and difficult to review.
The response explained that the new documentation had been piloted before being introducing nationally and that HMP Wealstun has undertaken a number of measures, including retaining paperwork for only one week. This has not been observed by the Board and has been included in the main areas for development above.
- To consider that, when approval has been given to over-recruit, the number of officers to go on detached duty should be calculated after the non-effectives (at College/education, long-term sick) have been deducted, thus enabling full regimes and key working to be delivered.
The process has not changed and officers are still being sent on detached duty, leaving staffing issues at times.
- To consider whether food budgets should be set at a national level and regularly benchmarked, particularly in times when inflationary pressures are clear, to ensure they remain adequate.
Food budgets have increased but remain inadequate.
- To ensure that prisoners with less than 15 weeks before release are not sent to HMP to Wealstun, as it does not allow sufficient time to prepare them for release.
The national pressure on prison capacity has meant that this problem has increased and not reduced.

TO THE GOVERNOR

- To consider increasing prisoner rates of pay in line with inflation.
This has not happened and is exacerbated by the fact that the increases in the OpCap did not include additional funding for prisoner pay.
- To consider installing 'dry' cells in segregation to allow prisoners to demonstrate their innocence when there is a possible item shown on the body scanner.
This has been considered by the Governor. However, improvements in analysing images by staff have improved.
- To consider returning to full-time work/education, increase workshop instructors, etc.

Work continues to look at opportunities to return to full-time work/education, but there has been little progress due to a lack of funding.

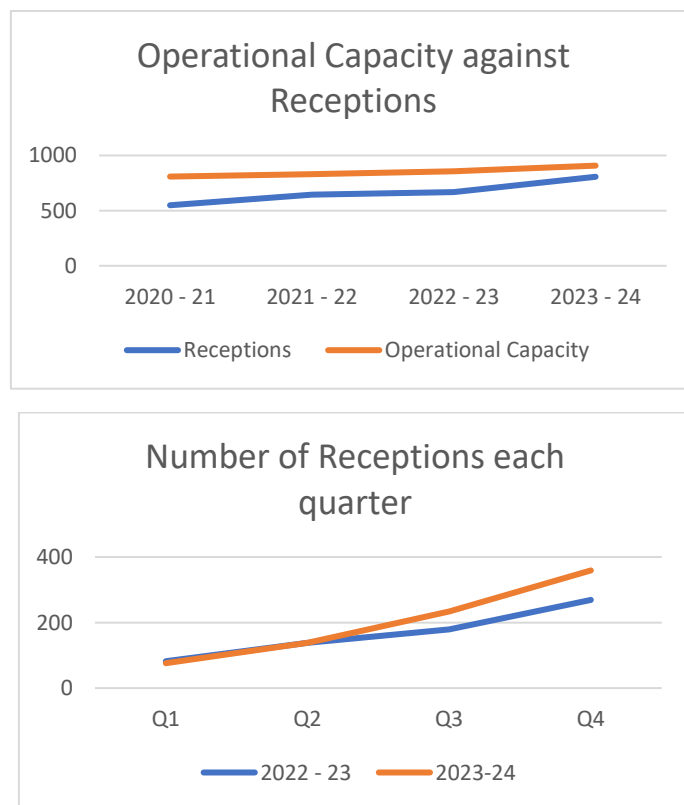
- To ensure that prisoners get more time out of cell, especially at weekends. Where association/domestics time clashes with a prison appointment, prisoners should get more time out of cell.
Small improvements have been made, but prisoners still have limited time out of cell, including at weekends.
- To ensure that priority is given to increasing key worker sessions as soon as possible.
No improvement has been seen. Sessions are aimed at the most vulnerable prisoners.
- To consider doing a check of the healthcare complaints' process to address concerns relating to delays.
Delays do seem to have reduced.
- To consider reinstating the mental health sessions in the gym.
After prisoner consultation, the gym rota has increased to three sessions per prisoner per week. There is no flex in the PE programme for specialist sessions.
- To ensure that forum meetings for IPP prisoners and those serving life sentences are set up as soon as possible.
Two 'lifer'/IPP forums have been held in 2024 and will continue.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

4.1.1 There were 807 receptions during the reporting year, an increase of 20.8% on the previous year (668). With an operating capacity of 908 (up from 856 in the previous year), the number of new receptions continues to represent a very high proportion (89%) of the total prison population. As the Board noted in 2021-2022 and 2022-2023, this presents a range of operational challenges for the prison. It was noted in last year's report that if the reception rate experienced in 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 remained at such high levels, the Board had concerns that it would impact negatively on both prisoners and staff. Sadly, the upward trend has continued; indeed, it has accelerated, reflecting the overall pressure on prison places across the country. In fairness, part of the increase is a result in the increase in operating capacity following the commissioning of a new residential wing (K wing) and the ongoing conversion of single cells into double cells, where this has proved feasible.



Previous location of prisoners received

Prison	2022-2023	2023-2024
HMP Leeds	394	669
HMP Doncaster	108	30
HMP Hull	57	25
21 other establishments	109	83

Prisoners received

	2022-2023	2023-2024
Sentenced	394	669
Recall	108	30
Indeterminate	57	25

4.1.2 As in previous years, the vast majority of new arrivals at HMP Wealstun are transferred in from HMP Leeds (83% of receptions), although in the reporting year, prisoners arrived from a total of 24 other establishments. More than a quarter of new arrivals are on recall, raising further concern about preparation for release and the effectiveness of post-custodial supervision support, especially as early release programmes have gathered pace in recent months.

4.1.3 On arrival, prisoners are escorted off the bus, their photo is taken and the body scanner and metal detectors are used to check all new receptions for unauthorised and secreted items. In cases where scan images appear to show that a prisoner has secreted items within his body, he is segregated in the segregation unit on the authority of the Duty Governor or an operational manager. Prisoners who refuse to be scanned are also segregated and immediately subject to an adjudication.

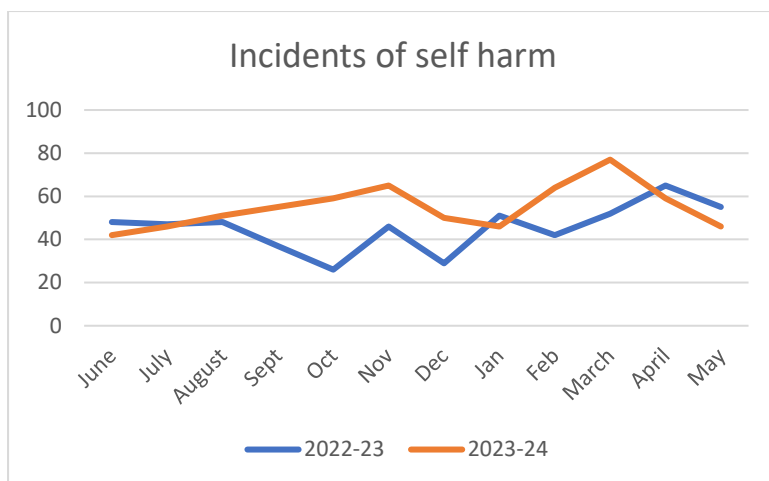
4.1.4 Prisoners arriving at Wealstun are all moved to I wing initially, prior to being dispersed to other locations around the prison. I wing conducts induction briefings and ensure that 'first night' checks are properly conducted. In the reporting year, the induction slide presentation and documentation were updated and provide a comprehensive introduction to what prisoners can expect during their time at Wealstun. Healthcare, mental health and substance misuse service workers also visit or phone new prisoners. Officers explain how the prison regime works and identify any existing issues or concerns with new prisoners. The volume of new arrivals continues to place strain on all parts of the prison, including reception, the OMU and the business hub.

4.1.5 Reception is profiled to manage 25 movements each week but is often dealing with more than double this volume, given the high number of arrivals and the need to manage escorts and releases.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

4.2.1 There was one death in custody (apparently from natural causes) and two deaths following release (which were, apparently, drug related).

4.2.2 The number of ACCTs in the prison throughout the year has reduced slightly in comparison with the previous reporting period, at around 15-18 each week. Board members have observed ACCT reviews being carried out and have noted that they are performed respectfully and provide good information whilst enabling the prisoner to have his say. The safer custody team carries out staff training, especially of band 3s, 2s and operational support grades (OSGs), in safety awareness and how to complete ACCT documentation. The training pack given to staff carries clear and concise instructions.



4.2.3 However, the levels of self-harm by prisoners have increased in this reporting year (see graph, above) and remain high, resulting in the prison having the seventh highest figures in the comparison group of category C resettlement/training establishments in April 2024.

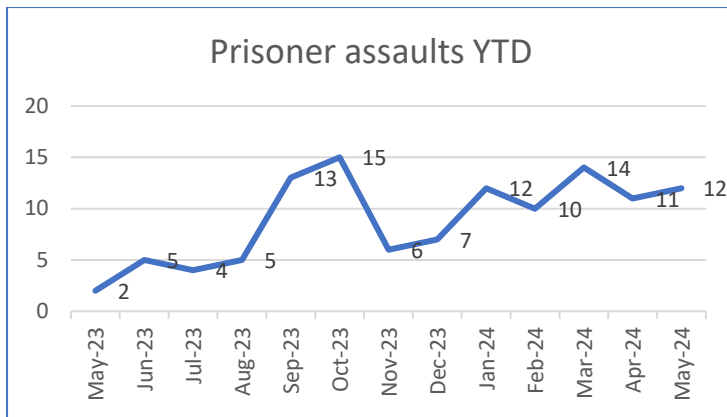
4.2.4 A safety intervention management (SIM) meeting is held weekly and Board members have observed occasionally. The meeting discussed all prisoners on open ACCTs, challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs) and those that are self-isolating, with the input of wing custodial managers (CMs) and mental health staff. Notable new arrivals were also discussed, together with nominals and cell share risk assessments. The single case management system appears to work well, with the prisoner and case worker able to form a stable working relationship. Those prisoners who are self-isolating, perhaps for debt or gang-related issues, are also discussed. It was evident that everyone involved is trying to be as supportive as possible to these prisoners, and a positive sense is felt when progress is made. Unfortunately, not all vulnerable prisoners are getting regular key worker sessions, which is a concern to the Board. The band 3 violence reduction officer/use of force (UoF) co-ordinator is allocated six vulnerable prisoners, identified through the SIM to provide weekly key worker sessions.

4.2.5 One concern that has been noted is that inexperienced staff lack the know-how in de-escalating possible incidents, which can result in a prisoner getting distressed or even being violent. The prison is aware of this issue and has provided additional guidance on how to deliver unwelcome messages to prisoners. The Board will continue to monitor this as part of monitoring safety and the use of force.

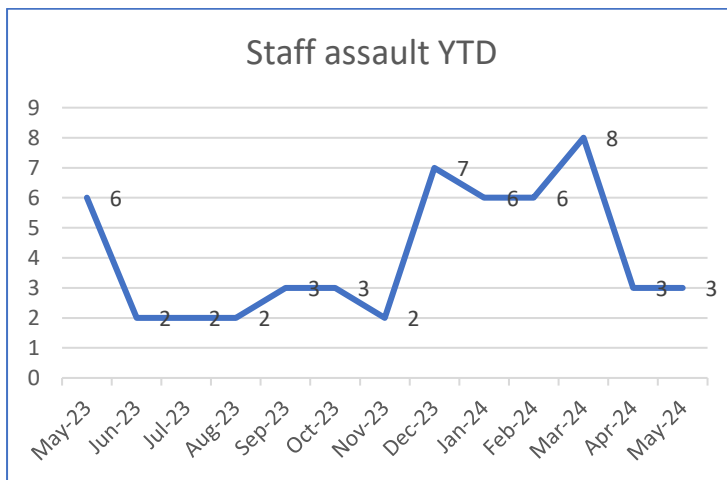
4.2.6 There are 25 trained listeners, who are managed by the safer custody team. Listeners are carefully selected prisoners who have received eight weeks of training from Harrogate Samaritans so they can offer peer-to-peer support. Listeners are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The ratio of listeners to prisoners is 1:50. One of the challenges faced is losing listeners due to early release and category D (open prison) transfers.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

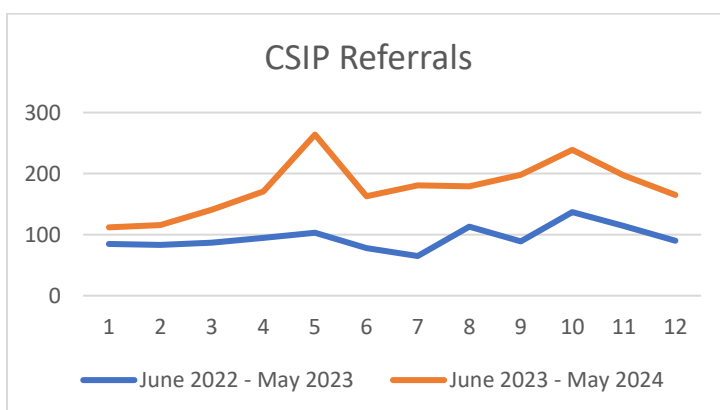
4.3.1 The number of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults has risen over the reporting year and is significantly higher than during the previous reporting year, as well as being the second highest in the comparator group.



4.3.2 Prisoner-on-staff assaults are low and are usually low level.



4.3.3 The number of CSIP referrals is 1,046 in the reporting period, a considerable increase on the same period last year, which is indicative of the instability in the prison. The Board has observed discussions between CMs and prisoners and there were no concerns. CSIP management seems to be thorough and prisoners on CSIPs discussed at the weekly SIM meetings.



4.3.3 The number of prisoners self-isolating fluctuates, with no obvious reason. The self-isolating prisoners are discussed at the weekly SIM meeting and the next steps agreed.

4.3.4 The prison has put a number of things in place to help address the violence, including 22 safety champions, two violence reduction reps, 125 prisoners who have completed the clear mind debt workbooks and 12 problem support mentors.

4.3.5 In the Board's view, the availability of illegal substances throughout the year will have caused the increase in violence, as prisoners appear to be getting into debt. This is an area the Board will monitor closely in the next reporting period.

4.4 Use of force

4.4.1 The total number of use of force (UoF) incidents, including employing handcuffs, over the reporting year was 363 unplanned and 46 planned. It was observed that the spikes tended to occur when there was a large quantity of illicit substances available in the prison. There were 248 unique offenders. PAVA incapacitant spray use remained low, with four occasions when PAVA was drawn and used and three incidents when it was drawn but not used. Batons were drawn on four occasions but were not used.

Number of unplanned UoF incidents

Date	Number
June	23
July	21
August	27
September	39
October	47
November	26
December	31
January	41
February	29
March	52
April	33
May	35

4.4.2 The monthly use of force meetings now include the control and restraint instructors, as well as the Deputy Governor. A considerable amount of data is presented, together with full details of any incidents. There are also weekly scrutiny meetings to provide initial thoughts on the use of force incidents. All incidents are viewed at the use of force meetings and management investigations are undertaken where necessary. The Board has seen no incidents where the use of force was excessive, although we are pleased that advice is given to officers when any concerns or opportunities are identified for improved prisoner control or restraint.

4.4.3 Of significance is that the statistics show that 80% of the need for force has arisen due to a downgrade of the Incentive Policy Framework (IPF). High rates are also seen amongst those unemployed and on the basic, or bottom, incentives scheme level. There also seem to be indications that where inexperienced staff are on duty, the use of verbal de-escalation may sometimes be less successful, with a higher chance that the episode will result in forced being used. This is being addressed by reminding new officers about what they should be doing.

4.4.4 The use of body worn video cameras (BWVCs) in incidents involving force has risen steadily over the year, from 64.5% in June 2023 to 98% in May 2024 due

to numerous reminders to staff by the Deputy Governor. The Board has observed footage from BWVCs on a number of occasions and found that it allows for much better scrutiny than footage from CCTV. Of merit is that 100% of prisoner debriefs following an episode of use of force take place.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

4.5.1 The Board has continued to monitor the actions that HMP Wealstun has taken to ensure that illicit items, such as drugs and mobile phones, do not enter the establishment. However, despite the actions taken, illicit items continue to enter the prison and lead to debt, bullying, violence and self-harm. The conveyance of illicit items undermines safety, security, public confidence and rehabilitation. Members have observed a number of the prison's security committee meetings during the reporting year, in order to understand the overall local strategy and how it is addressing security risks. As part of monitoring visits during the year, the Board informally spoke to prisoners and staff about their perception of how security risks and issues are managed within the prison.

4.5.2 There is a multi-agency approach to managing security risks and issues involving HMP Wealstun, HM Prison and Probation (HMPPS) regional teams and West Yorkshire Police. This includes the multi-agency response to serious and organised crime (MARSOC). A dedicated search team (DST) is based at HMP Wealstun, complemented by specialist dog handlers from the Yorkshire Area Search Team (YAST). Mandatory drug testing (MDT) of a random 5% of the prison population is undertaken each month, using a list autogenerated from Nomis (the internal computer system). Security searches are also undertaken where the prison has additional intelligence relating to particular prisoners. Where there is intelligence that a cell search is required, it has to be approved by a security manager.

4.5.3 Developments to improve security at Wealstun during the reporting period included:

- Installation of a new X-ray machine in reception to enable the improved searching of packages.
- Relocating the former reception Rapiscan X-ray baggage scanner machine to stores to strengthen searches of goods received into the prison.
- Policies to ensure clothing parcels sent into the prison are from approved suppliers.
- A razor exchange programme.
- Key forensic test laboratory services: drug testing services routinely used for assessing seized items.
- Mobile phones, SIM cards and USB devices found during searches are routinely sent off to the digital media investigation unit for forensic analysis and interrogation.
- Enhanced perimeter security by additional installation of CCTV cameras and improved perimeter lighting, as well as enhanced CCTV camera coverage in the visits' hall.
- The illicit economy, such as suspicious money transfers (internal and external), are closely monitored by the prisoner monies compliance team, the financial investigation unit and West Yorkshire Police.

4.5.4 The highest levels of cell security finds in the reporting year were for tampered vape devices and synthetic cannabinoids, such as Spice, followed by diverted prescription medications (e.g. Mirtazapine and Espranor). There was continuation of proactive search operations to disrupt, prevent, intercept, and prosecute individuals involved in the supply and distribution of illicit items.

4.5.5 Several large search operations were conducted during the reporting year, including prisoner and cell lock down searches, and a county lines intensification week. The multi-agency search operations (prisoners, cells, areas and grounds) involved HMP Wealstun local staff, HMPPS staff from YAST, northern and Midlands DST, counter corruption unit, serious organised crime unit and West Yorkshire Police forensic management team and West Yorkshire Police search team with the police media dog search team. West Yorkshire Police has also continued to support the prison by resourcing regular overt vehicle patrols and via Operation Gartley, where cells, visitors, staff and the exercise yard were searched and vehicles were swab-tested.

4.5.6 The period from July to September 2023 saw an increase in the MDT positive rate, the number of drugs' finds and also the percentage of prisoners found to be 'under the influence' (UTI). This also led to an increase in the number of prisoners who were segregated for secreted items. Overall, this impacted on the prison's general stability. One of the causes of this increase was tracked to illicit items being conveyed into the prison by a contractor. This was subsequently addressed, and the source route closed down through co-ordinated action between HMP Wealstun and West Yorkshire police. The Board noted that the incidence of positive MDTs reduced during the early months of 2024. There was also ongoing activity by the prison during the year to intercept and recover parcels thrown over the prison walls or conveyed by drones.

4.5.7 In previous reports, the Board has raised concerns about the scanning process due to the high proportion of positive scans and the consequent number of prisoners being segregated. However, the prison has implemented a number of changes to the process and the Board is satisfied that the process is managed fairly and appropriately. Of course, some prisoners arriving at Wealstun continue to be subject to segregation as a result of the scanning process, but the Board is satisfied that the process and resulting decision making are much more robust.

4.5.8 On body scanning specifically, the Board met with the HMPPS regional lead from the physical countermeasures team, which oversees and supports local prisons with the appropriate and effective use of body scanners. The team also undertakes an external audit of body scanning within prisons and the Board has received copies of the audits undertaken for Wealstun. The audits indicated that the accuracy of scanning at HMP Wealstun was within acceptable national parameters. HMP Wealstun uses a Nuctech body scanner, introduced in 2019 as part of the '10 Prisons Project', which is expected to have a lifespan of around 10 years. The Board understands that the Prison Service has subsequently been rolling out the Linev body scanner in other establishments, which provides higher resolution scans. The Board would encourage HMPPS and HMP Wealstun to have a clear plan for replacing the current scanner with a newer model before the end of its expected operational life.

4.5.9 The Board recognises that there will always be a small risk of 'false positives' with body scanning, and it can be a cause of significant distress for prisoners who argue they have not secreted anything. However, the Board is unable to independently assess individual cases. Overall, we were reassured by the combination of local oversight by senior management, plus regional external assurance aims to minimise false positives wherever possible and to embed a learning culture to continuously improve the quality of scanning.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

Accommodation

5.1.1 The need to accommodate more prisoners at Wealstun, due to a lack of prison spaces across the wider prison estate, places pressure on the processes established to improve standards of decency. Decency checks on cells are completed by senior management team (SMT) members on a rotational basis and reports are used to recognise deficiencies and progress repair. These are tracked through the Governor's report database, where CMs can monitor the feedback and identify any common themes, which inform staff briefings, training refreshers and escalation to senior management.

5.1.2 Population pressures continue to place a strain on accommodation. In the last two annual reports, the Board drew attention to the requirement to utilise the 24 double cells located across the prison. Operating capacity has been increased during the reporting year, from 856 to 908. It remains the view of the Board that the operating capacity calculation should exclude any requirement to house two prisoners in one cell, as this is inconsistent with the obligation to provide high standards of decency for prisoners (particularly in respect of toilet facilities). Preliminary work has also been undertaken to establish whether wing laundry rooms and other similar spaces can be repurposed to become additional cells. It is the opinion of the Board that this would represent a further retrograde step and is likely to lead to increased prisoner dissatisfaction.

5.1.3 Forty rapid deployment cells were commissioned during the reporting year, providing a new residential wing (K wing). The Board was dismayed at the slow speed of the build, given their title. They should have been opened six months earlier. However, this was a welcome addition to the stock of accommodation. The single cells are well appointed and the Board has spoken to staff and prisoners on the wing who are all positive about the quality of the accommodation and the more relaxed regime that can be offered to the men who are trusted to respect this facility properly.

5.1.4 All prisoners located in double-occupancy cell accommodation are thoroughly risk assessed using the cell share risk assessment. It remains the case that, whenever possible, prisoners are located in single cells, although it is noted that sometimes prisoners prefer to share, where it supports their mental wellbeing and is their preferred coping strategy.

5.1.5 The small works programme, managed by Amey, continues to operate smoothly. Amey allocates 40 hours of work each week to be carried out by a handyman. A monthly review meeting monitors the work against the list of required minor repairs and a plan is agreed for any outstanding items. The heads of residence have a good working relationship with AMEY, which is evident in the low numbers of out-of-action cell accommodation and the swift response to minor repairs.

5.1.6 Once again, the Board draws attention to its concerns in relation to conditions in the older A and B wings. This accommodation is also deemed unusable for prisoners who have an 'arson flag' on their record, and therefore constrains options

for locating prisoners. We have flagged our concerns about A and B Wings in each annual report since 2020-2021, as it is increasingly apparent that this accommodation, built in the 1960s, needs significant remedial action or reconstruction/replacement. Monitoring visits during the reporting year have identified problems with temperature control, which is exacerbated by poorly fitting windows. It is noted, however, that the prison works hard to ensure that facilities on these wings are as clean and decent as possible.

Clothing

5.1.7 Clothing stocks continued to be adequate for the establishment, with stock levels maintained to meet requirements.

5.1.8 The prison operates a charity clothing project, which supports prisoners who do not receive any money from their families and who are unable to buy new clothing items.

Canteen

5.1.9 The continuation of part-time work and, therefore, reduced pay, remains of concern to the Board, particularly as the cost of items available via the canteen has continued to increase significantly in the reporting year. Although some prisoners may have private funds or family who can send them money, there are many who are not so fortunate, so are unable to afford even basic items such as vapes and phone credit. Debt is a source of trouble in prisons and the Board is concerned that the lack of ability to earn enough to fund basic canteen purchases could increase the risk of unrest.

Food

5.1.10 As has been the case for a number of years, the Board continues to applaud the catering manager and their team for the good standard and variety of food produced for prisoners, particularly given the ongoing budgetary constraints.

5.1.11 For a number of years, the Board has noted its concern that the daily food allowance (DFA) is an extremely small amount to provide an adequate diet for adult men. Although the DFA has risen from £2.62, at the end of 2022-2023, to £2.75, it remains our view that this is insufficient to provide a balanced and nutritious diet.

5.1.12 The in-house bakery facility remains an important part of the effort to maximise effective use of the catering budget. The bakery produces bread, bread products and cakes, which are an important component in the daily menu choices available to prisoners.

5.1.13 The kitchen team continues to work closely with the farms and gardens team to ensure a supply of fresh produce, which can be used during the summer months. This is another area that has benefited from increased funding from the Governor to mitigate the impact of food price inflation.

5.1.14 In last year's report, the Board drew attention to the fact that, in recent years, prisoners with money in their account have been able to supplement their diet with purchases from the canteen but that inflationary increases were causing increasing concerns about the ability to source desired items within their 'spends'. This issue has been exacerbated by the fact that prisoners only have the opportunity to work

part-time which, naturally, has negatively impacted their ability to earn. This continues to be an area of concern for the Board.

5.1.15 The kitchen caters well for religious diets, festivals, special dietary requirements and allergies. Every Monday evening, the kitchen offers a menu option that is designed to support diversity awareness through themed culinary dishes and/or celebrations. Prisoners are encouraged via Wayout TV to submit suggestions for Monday evening menu options.

5.1.16 A new Athena food system has been launched, which allows the pre-select menus sent to each prisoner to have more information on each dish (including nutritional information and allergy information) prior to making their meal selection. The system also allows the catering team to use standardised recipes for all dishes produced.

5.1.17 Each wing has an appointed 'servery lead prisoner', whose role is to ensure assurance and upskilling of servers at meal service times. The servery leads also attend monthly food council meetings, which are chaired by the catering manager. The approach appears to work well and also contributes knowledge to the decency committee, which is chaired by the Residential Governor.

5.1.18 It is of particular note that, despite the budgetary pressures outlined above, the Board only received eight applications (prisoners' written representations to the IMB) relating to food and kitchens during the 2023-2024 reporting period.

5.2 Segregation

5.2.1 The segregation unit is a purpose-built building with cells for 13 prisoners, including three short-term holding cells for prisoners awaiting adjudication (disciplinary hearings held when a prisoner is suspected to have broken prison rules). There is one constant watch cell and one robust cell (built in such a way as to be unbreakable). The unit is reasonably well maintained and there is a cleaner present on the unit most days.

5.2.2 Prisoners in the unit are visited each day by the Duty Governor, the chaplain and a member of the healthcare unit staff. They are visited by a GP every three days and weekly by the IMB and the Governing Governor. The Board considers the unit to be well-run most of the time, with an experienced core of officers. A new CM has been appointed during the report period. Prisoners often praise individual staff on the unit, and say that they feel they are listened to.

5.2.3 There have been periods when the unit has been in a 'patrol state', as was the case in August for four days. This meant there were insufficient staff to allow showers, exercise and doors to be opened. The Board believes this is unacceptable but can understand that it was caused by a lack of staff across the prison and the need to ensure as many prisoners as possible get time out of their cells.

5.2.4 The Board has noted that when guest staff work in the unit the paperwork is not always completed accurately. On several occasions when the Board visited the unit, it found that the names on the computer list did not correspond with those in segregation. For example, seven prisoners were recorded one day in November but only three were in cells when Board members visited. This could be understandable, as prisoners are moved off the unit throughout the day, but the office whiteboard and blue file recording daily history was inaccurate, too.

One day in September, the folder holding the daily records was empty, with no recorded visits. The Board was informed that staff on nightshift were responsible for updating paperwork but sometimes forgot. These inconsistencies were highlighted to the prison. Processes were put in place to try to improve the situation and with a more settled group of staff, the Board has seen improvements.

The incorrect data is rather concerning, as this information forms the basis of the segregation monitoring and review group (SMARG) report and is sent to the Yorkshire Prisons Director. However, there were a number of instances when problems were encountered and raised with the Governor. They explained that there were insufficient numbers of staff, that more permanent people were being recruiting and that guest staff did not always complete the paperwork accurately.

5.2.5 There have been occasions when only three cells were occupied. Eleven occupied cells have been witnessed on a couple of occasions, but half a dozen prisoners is the average. When the full prison search took place in September, the Board observed many men being segregated after searches, so the unit was extremely busy. The following day, the unit was in disarray and, apart from the increased number of men, there was also a man causing trouble by smashing his cell, cutting himself and throwing blood out of his cell.

Throughout the next month, the Board observed disarray on the unit. By the middle of the month, the Deputy Governor had explained that antagonisms, threats and challenging behaviour had exposed the unit to a toxic mix. Gradually, this reduced as numbers decreased and, by November, all was calmer. The man who was mentally ill (smashing his cell and cutting himself) was observed in a very worrying situation by a member of the Board. However, that same member saw the most compassionate and kind treatment of the prisoner the next day, as his mental health improved.

5.2.6 The Board is concerned about prisoners who have spent a considerable time in segregation. Yet again, despite the best efforts of the prison and the Yorkshire Prisons Director, one prisoner spent 113 days in the unit, even when categorised for a secure mental health bed, as it took weeks to find a suitable place. Another prisoner was also referred to the prison group staff because he refused to leave the unit and would not co-operate with the small steps, educational provision or mental health input suggested to him. Even prisoners recategorised to category B have had to wait weeks for places to become available. In January, the Board was told about a man who had been segregated for 42 days (the limit allowed without external authorisation) would not be accepted on transfer by many other prisons. These issues are caused by the population pressures.

5.2.7 The Board has observed that several prisoners damage cells or deliberately behave badly so they can be segregated. Sometimes this is because they think it will help with a transfer out of Wealstun or they prefer the individual attention they receive from the staff in a smaller unit. One prisoner was upset that the search for secreted items took place unexpectedly, because he had been using positive seclusion as a means of staying in the unit. Discussion of forbidding vapes in Segregation is underway as a method to discourage prisoners attending the unit. This is planned to begin in July, for the next reporting period.

5.2.8 Reports of ants in the unit are common, especially when prisoners leave sweet goods on windows, which encourages the insects. Measures are taken to deal

with them, particularly in warmer periods. During the Christmas season, there were insufficient pillows for every prisoner. This was resolved by January. The Board was concerned that a fault meant cells bells were not heard in the office. This has now been rectified. Prisoners reported to the Board that the radios they were supplied had poor reception on the wing. On further investigation, it appears this is the case on other wings, too. This is still waiting to be rectified.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

5.3.1 The Board considers key worker sessions to be critical to improving prisoner safety and building relationships between staff and prisoners. All prisoners in the male closed estate should be allocated a key worker to help them progress through their time in prison. This role is important for a resettlement prison such as Wealstun. Key workers should spend 45 minutes each week with their designated prisoner. Throughout the reporting year, the majority of prisoners had a key worker allocated within seven days of reception.

5.3.2 The performance measure for key worker sessions changed from quantity to quality in January 2024, as nationally it was recognised that the target could not be met with the resources. This resulted in the prison having to review its key worker strategy, which was updated in May 2024. It has, therefore, been difficult for the Board to understand the requirements for key working. We have seen that there are very few sessions taking place and prisoners often report that they don't know who their key worker is. The new performance measure on quality is also one of the lowest in the comparator group.

5.3.3 The Board is aware of the fact that the volume of prisoners arriving at Wealstun with a short sentence/short time left to serve limits the ability of staff to engage in constructive work with them. The churn of prisoners may, in time, have a detrimental effect on the ability of staff to build meaningful relationships with prisoners. That said, the Board has observed some positive staff and prisoner relationships, especially with the most vulnerable men.

5.4 Equality and diversity

5.4.1 The equality lead is responsible for identifying and training diversity representatives from the prison. Due to a change in staff, this work has moved to the safer custody team. The Board is concerned this change will mean that this key work is not given the priority that it deserves, and we will be monitoring the situation closely.

5.4.2 The prison has allocated a senior member of staff to be the protected characteristics lead. Effectively, each Governor represents one protected characteristic. These work alongside prisoner diversity reps (of which there are 13) to effectively represent prisoners with protected characteristics (these include age, disability, race, religion, sex, gender reassignment and sexual orientation, which it is unlawful to discriminate against).

5.4.3 Senior managers and prisoner diversity reps hold a bi-monthly IDEAL (inclusion, diversity, equality, access and leadership) meeting. During these meetings, they review discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs) and equality monitoring tool (EMT) data, and work on the equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

action plan. However, this meeting is now quarterly, which is a concern for the Board (see 5.4.1)

5.4.4 Complaints relating to protected characteristics should be reported on a DIRF. The prison received 139 DIRFs during the reporting period. The DIRF process has been reviewed and now every DIRF the prison receives is quality checked by the Deputy Governor. This is to ensure that all DIRFs are fully investigated, and the outcomes of the investigation are effectively communicated to ensure all issues raised in the complaint has been addressed. Some DIRFs are subjected to scrutiny from an outside agency, such as the Zahid Mubarek Trust. During the reporting period, prison data suggests that black/mixed black heritage and muslim prisoners are disproportionately likely to submit a complaint to the prison.

5.4.5 During the reporting period, up to 14% of incoming prisoners declined to disclose their sexuality on arrival at Wealstun. Prisoner feedback suggests that many prisoners do not feel comfortable sharing their sexual orientation. This might prevent some from getting the support they need during their time at Wealstun.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

5.5.1 The chaplaincy team is made up of: Anglican, Catholic, Free church, Buddhist and Jewish chaplains. There is no provision for the following faiths: Sikh, Hindu, Mormon, Pagan and Rastafarian. The Board is of the opinion that the chaplaincy team continues to make a positive contribution to the life of the prison. The team visits prisoners (regardless of their religion or lack of a belief) as part of their induction, often meeting with those close to release, and visits the Segregation Unit on a daily basis.

5.5.2 Chaplaincy offers weekly services and training courses/groups such as: discovering Christianity, Sycamore Tree Prison Fellowship (restorative justice), Faith Inside, journey through the Bible, Quran studies and the basics of Islam.

5.5.3 The Chaplains work diligently to support the grieving, the unwell, those concerned for unwell relatives, and those struggling to adjust to life in prison.

5.6 Incentives schemes

5.6.1 The prison continues to use an incentive scheme based on the local incentives policy framework (IPF). This means there are some differences across the prison sector, which can cause confusion amongst prisoners being transferred. The usual review timeframe for a prisoner on the basic (bottom) incentive scheme level is seven days. But when a prisoner arrives on basic, a review is undertaken the next day, with the aim to move as many as possible to the standard level to aid a fresh start. Where this is inappropriate, due to behaviour, a further review is offered at 72 hours.

5.6.2 The Board has received applications about incentives scheme levels and the lack of paperwork, and the prison continue to check to ensure fairness. One of the main issues is that there is very little difference between the enhanced and standard levels, which means that prisoners can't always see the positives of being on the enhanced status.

5.6.3 The main issue is about prisoners on the basic level. At the start of the year, all prisoners arriving on basic level were allowed a TV on the first night to help them

settle. However, this caused frustration and confusion when it was removed the following day, if the prisoner remained on basic. This has now been amended so that TVs are not given out on the first night if the prisoner has arrived on the basic level.

5.6.4 The removal of TVs when being downgraded to basic level has been a cause of violence within the prison and is under review. Options are being considered, including offering alternative basic TVs with limited channel but still allowing access to the Wayout channel, which provides vital communication. The default position is that a radio is supplied to those on basic, although the Board has noted that there has been, at times, shortages of radios and poor signal coverage.

5.7 Complaints

5.7.1 The administration of the complaints continues to be a well-managed process, following the introduction of a new member of staff. The Board's evidence during monitoring would not indicate undue delays in response times.

5.7.2 During the reporting year, there was a marginal reduction in the number of overall complaints. There appears to be no significant trend in terms of their distribution over the year. Property and residential continue to dominate the subject of complaints (accounting for over 30%). In fact, the number of property complaints has fallen since last year (from 441 to 378), whilst residential have increased (from 181 to 279). Other notable changes are the reduction in complaints regarding canteen and an increase in complaints relating to staff issues.

5.8 Property

5.8.1 The number of applications received by the Board regarding property remains high. Clearly, the high number of prisoners arriving and leaving Wealstun in a year will have the effect of increasing the number of complaints. The fact that not all of a prisoner's property travels with him will also increase the probability of missing or lost items.

5.8.2 Whilst the level of complaints received by the prison relating to property remains high, in the Board's reporting period the number of property-related complaints received by the prison has declined from the previous year.

5.8.3 The Board has also dealt with an application for compensation for property that was lost by the prison, where the offer was felt to be unreasonable, given the circumstances.

5.8.4 The Board would also acknowledge that during our frequent visits to the reception area, where we might enquire about a prisoner's property, we find the staff dedicated and keen to resolve issues.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

6.1.1 Healthcare services at the prison are provided by the Practice Plus Group. This includes support for physical health, mental health and substance misuse.

6.1.2 The prison receives GP services through a local GP practice based in Wetherby. Psychosocial services, psychiatry and psychology services are subcontracted through Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. Also subcontracted are:

- Dental services, provided by Time for Teeth
- Physiotherapy and podiatry, provided by Premier Health
- Optical care, provided by the Prison Opticians Trust
- X-ray and ultrasound, provided by Global Diagnostics

6.1.3 The last HM Inspector of Prisons (HMIP) inspection of HMP Wealstun, in October 2022, was generally complimentary about the healthcare services. However, it did highlight waiting times to see a dentist as a key concern. Also mentioned in the report were:

- Access to healthcare services was problematic because of the unreliability of the internal postal system to deliver appointment notices, as well as a shortage of prison staff to escort patients to appointments.
- Staffing was extremely constrained, with the small primary care and pharmacy teams carrying several vacancies, which resulted in the regular use of agency staff.
- The availability of only one medicines dispensing hatch led to delays and a subsequent knock-on effect on the regime.

6.1.4 As of March 2024, healthcare services comprised the following staff:

- Management and admin: 4 staff in post and no vacancies.
- Mental health, substance misuse services (SMS), drug and alcohol recovery service (DARS): 13 staff in post and 1 vacancy.
- Pharmacy: 9 staff in post and 6 vacancies.
- Primary care team: 10 staff in post and no vacancies.

6.1.5 Healthcare forums are held every 6-8 weeks. Participants are chosen at random and asked if they would like to attend and offer their opinions on the healthcare service. They are reportedly well received by those who take part.

6.1.6 During the reporting period, the Board received 21 applications from prisoners that were either directly about healthcare matters or where healthcare was one of a set of related issues raised in an application. Of these applications, six were medication related, five were about the complaints' system, four were appointment related and three related to mental health care. This is similar to previous years and no obvious trend could be seen in the complaints made.

6.2 Physical healthcare

6.2.1 Primary care is fully staffed, although pharmacy has a number of vacancies. Some of the vacancies are related to the opening of a second medication-dispensing

hatch. A business case was submitted and approved for two extra staff. In the interim, agency staff are being used to fill the vacancies.

6.2.2 Waiting times to see the GP (non-urgent cases) are around two weeks and four to five weeks for a dental appointment. This is in line with waiting times in the community. Waiting times to see the dentist have improved significantly from the start of the reporting year, most probably related to the appointment of a new dentist.

6.2.3 The installation of a second medication-dispensing hatch was completed early in 2024. This has improved access to medications and relieved pressure on staff. Previously, delays with dispensing medication had an impact on the timings of the regime, with a knock-on effect on other areas, such as healthcare and education.

6.2.4 There has been a push to improve attendance at healthcare appointments. Escorting officers monitor attendance and record non-attendance (DNAs). Incentive scheme warnings can be given for refusing to attend an appointment if there is no reasonable reason. Also being monitored are appointments where the patient is not available (NAV). This can be for a variety of reasons, including the patient not being in the location they are supposed to be and a shortage of officers to escort patients to healthcare.

6.2.5 A concern was raised to the Board that dedicated officers were not always present at the medication stations on certain wings when medications were being dispensed. It was felt that this potentially left healthcare staff in a vulnerable position and allowed for diversion of medication.

6.3 Mental healthcare

6.3.1 Mental health, substance misuse services (SMS) and the drug and alcohol recovery service (DARS) are almost fully staffed. There was a problem at the start of the reporting period as the psychiatrist, contracted to the prison, was on extended sick leave and no replacement was forthcoming. This led to a significant backlog in cases. This was resolved with the appointment of two new psychiatrists, who now cover the hours previously contracted to a single psychiatrist. Extra hours were worked initially to cover the backlog. Waiting times for an appointment to see a psychiatrist are five days, but urgent appointments are generally seen on the same day. A triage system at reception is very helpful in identifying people with mental health needs and ensuring they receive care in a timely manner.

6.3.2 In previous years, there have been delays in transferring patients to secure hospitals. One patient in this reporting year waited a significant length of time before being transferred. However, since this incident, all further referrals have taken place in a timely manner and within the 28-day window.

6.3.3 As with other areas of healthcare, there has been increased pressure on the mental health team due to increases in the prison population. Business cases have been submitted over the last year and approved, which has increased the staff in the mental health department, as well as pharmacy and primary care. However, there will be a need to finance more healthcare staff if the population at HMP Wealstun continues to increase.

6.4 Social care

6.4.1 There is not a huge demand for social care at HMP Wealstun. However, if a prisoner does have any social care needs, they will be assessed by a social care assessor based at HMP Leeds. Patients who require a social care assessment would usually be identified at reception. The assessor would then carry out an assessment and provide any equipment the patient required. There is a small stock of equipment at the prison, which can be used in the interim, such as walking aids, raised toilet seats and shower chairs. There is one prisoner with social care needs in the prison and he is on K wing, even though it is not specifically designed for wheelchair users. There are two disability cells on J wing, which are suitable for wheelchair users, having bigger doorways, lower sinks, handrails around the toilet and lower call bells but these are not occupied by wheelchair users. However, as the prison does not provide 24-hour healthcare, it is not able to accept any patient who requires assistance with their daily needs.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

6.5.1 Although it is reported that the prison is nearly fully staffed, the time out of cell remains a serious concern for the Board and was also noted in the HMIP inspection in October. Time out has gradually increased over the year, but the regime is very strict with little flexibility. The majority of the prisoners only work part time (am or pm). They then have association, structured on wing activity (SOWA) and domestic time for 2.5 hours. There is also an hour, 17.30-18.30, when prisoners can leave their cells some evenings a week. The time out of cell at weekends has increased to 2.5 hours a day. Prisoners on the basic level of the incentives scheme get 30 minutes exercise and 30 minutes domestics each day. So, if they are not in work or education, they could be locked up for 23 hours.

6.5.2 The concern is that if a prisoner has a visit booked, a healthcare appointment, meetings with prison staff, etc, during their association time, there is no flexibility to make up for the association time lost. There is also an issue where a prisoner who is lucky enough to work full time in the gardens has no opportunity to shower when they get back to the wing.

6.5.3 Prisoners generally have a positive view of gymnasium facilities. After the restrictions of lockdown were lifted, access to gym sessions has been good, following a consistent regime, with three sessions per week being available (am or pm, alternating with work). Gymnasium staff have previously offered mental health sessions (staffing levels permitting) and the Board recommends that these be reinstated, if at all possible.

6.5.4 The Board would like to see an increase in time out of cell for prisoners by increasing the regime and providing more work and education opportunities, as this would help with their progression.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

6.6.1 The incentivised substance free living (ISFL) unit continues to bring a sense of recovery to those in custody. As well as meals from the staff mess, the occupants of the ISFL also receive ISFL only The Men's Room groups, along with The Recovery Community Group. The ISFL wing often holds competitions, organised by the wing staff and offering prizes such as soap, body wash, etc.

- The Men's Room is a peer-led mental health support group that aims to be a safe space for men to talk openly about any struggles regarding their mental health and how they may overcome these.
- At the Recovery Community Group (RCG), men can discuss what they have overcome in the week, any urges/cravings they may have had and again, how they overcame these. The RCG is set out with a 'check in' to begin the group and ends with 'goals for next week'.

6.6.2 Unfortunately, HMP Wealstun was unsuccessful in securing extra funding to explore a drug recovery wing. The drug and alcohol recovery service (DARS) is in the process of installing a community feel on C wing to help men feel inspired in their recovery. They aim to do this by basing more groups on C wing and have started by hosting an RCG there on a Wednesday evening. One recovery worker is also based on the wing every day to strengthen ties with staff on the unit, along with providing additional support for the men. DARS is working alongside the Drug Strategy Governor and the drug strategy CM to provide suggestions about what this year's ISFL budget should be spent on. This is ongoing.

6.6.3 Recognition in recovery days are still ongoing. The drug and alcohol recovery team (DART) has a specialist family engagement worker, whose lead role will be to strengthen family ties for those in addiction/recovery. This lead role includes writing family report cards, facilitating prisoners' phone calls home and organising all recognition in recovery days.

6.6.4 A breakfast club has been introduced, which is facilitated in the Men's Room groups. It was the initiative of a male officer on the ISFL unit, who considered how beneficial it could be for the men to talk about their mental health in a less formal setting. Men who attend the Men's Room can select a cooked breakfast from the menu every four weeks. Service user forums continue to run, along with 'You said, we did'. There is also a recovery worker whose lead role is 'service user wellbeing'. This role looks at how the men can be empowered to take care of their wellbeing, by delivering low-level interventions regarding someone's wellbeing such as one-to-one emotional regulation work and or/group work.

6.6.5 DARS continues to have strong relationships with all agencies in the prison, and ties have been strengthened with the community drug and alcohol services. There are now prison link workers, who come in from the community drug service and complete assessments on the men prior to their release. This enables the men to build a rapport with DARS prior to release. It also allows them to focus on other important assessments they may need to attend on their release, such as the Job Centre and/or the Probation Service. DARS is above the national average for the continuity of care figures, and the aim is to continue improving the attendance rates. (Continuity of care figures relate to how many men have left HMP Wealstun in structured treatment with the drug service, then go on to receive structured treatment from a community service.)

6.6.6 There has been a particular focus on nitazines (synthetic opioids): DARS is in the process of circulating harm minimisation specifically relating to nitazines. They have worked alongside people with the charity, Lived Experience, to ensure the material being sent out is appropriate.

6.6.7 DARS continues to work alongside the Drug Strategy Governor and it is recognised that there is a delicate line between punishing substance use and supporting people to stop using illicit substances. Therefore, a re-approach pathway has been adopted. This is used when people are frequently under the influence and decline support. The men are then re-approached after a week, and offered support again. There have been a number of successes since adopting this pathway. This allows the men to reflect on their substance use, prior to completing meaningful work with a DART recovery worker.

6.6.8 Around 20% of the prison population is on opiate substitution treatment (OST). There has been an increase in buprenorphine prescriptions, which have been transferred in from other establishments. The substance misuse team has recently undergone Buvidal training, and will, therefore, be looking to switch those on oral buprenorphine to a Buvidal depot.

6.6.9 The introduction of the early release scheme has had a significant impact on DARS, as it has very little awareness of who is eligible for release. This makes it extremely difficult to plan for a set release date. Often, DARS is informed of a release the day before the prisoner is due to be released, which makes it extremely difficult for the service to ensure that all the necessary preparation has been done. In March and April, DARS was not able to deliver as many group work interventions to ensure that they were prioritising release planning, which has had a huge impact on delivery. Particular concerns include:

- Issues with doses of methadone not being stable in a reduction programme, as the prisoner suddenly receives short notice for release and the dose has not had the chance to become stable.
- Issues with trying to source community follow-up at very short notice.
- Examples of several prisoners declining early release due to issues around dependency and anxiety about early release without time to process and be assured of support.
- The gate pick-up service offered for some prisoners from the Leeds dependency service has been unable to be arranged for some prisoners due to the short notice.

The Board will continue to monitor this situation.

6.7 Soft Skills

6.7.1 Soft skills refer to programmes and activities available to prisoners that, for example, help them to communicate effectively, develop approaches to resolving conflict and problem solving, parenting skills and initiatives that support wider wellbeing. Whilst the yoga courses introduced in 2022-2023 (and referenced in the Board's previous annual report) were paused, because prisoners wanted three sessions of gym each week instead, the Board is generally impressed with the number of initiatives available in these areas. These include:

- The Life and Living course covers cooking on a budget, food safety, making beds and ironing and continued over 2023-2024. It was adapted further from April 2024 to enable prisoners to progress from an unaccredited course onto an accredited version, and there has been double the number accessing this course.

- A problem-solving mentors' group, which received extra funding to continue. Focused delivery of peer mentoring is also in place to support mentors within work areas. This will form part of a wider peer-mentoring strategy.
- The parenting skills' activities offered by Jigsaw have continued, including one-to-one case work, family days and family learning workshops.
- A new reintegration course was added from April 2024 to support isolating prisoners to re-engage with the regime.
- The Sycamore Project, which is run through the chaplaincy, supports with victim awareness and developing motivation to change lifestyles.
- A twinning project with Harrogate Town, which develops communication through coaching qualifications.
- An education enrichment calendar supporting prisoners to learn about different cultures and experiences.
- A Yorkshire Ambulance course in the employment hub, covering mental health, first aid and employability skills.
- A new music production course.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

7.1.1 The Board has seen considerable change over the reporting year in this area. The education building, College, gradually came back into use through July 2023, following repairs after the collapsed ceilings. In August, a new post of head of education, skills and work was introduced, as well as a new local educational manager (Novus) and a learning and skills manager. Consequently, reviews were initiated into the education and vocational areas. The regime design and data analysis were reviewed and prisoners and staff were consulted. One result of the new management has been the introduction of thorough daily recording of all work and education attendance. Wing managers are responsible for these figures, which are looked at every day.

7.1.2 There are three sections of educational courses: Maths and English; vocational; and wider engagement and support. Different levels of Maths and English take place in the College or in workshops 2, 3, 4 or 23, with outreach for men who are reluctant to attend with others. Accredited vocational courses in food safety, hospitality, CSCS (construction skills certification scheme), mentoring, business enterprise, digital functional skills, construction skills (multi and groundwork), independent living and creative media are provided. Healthy living and art courses are unaccredited. For wider engagement and support, there are assessments for Maths and English and Open University and distance learning availability in college. Skills for engagement, reading support and the library reach out throughout the prison.

7.1.3 Early release schemes cause many complications: the choice of course is restricted; courses cannot be completed; and prisoners don't focus on taking exams or tests to complete their results, because they are looking to their departure. Prisoners find out about their release a week before it happens. Their mindset, then, is on housing, employment and arrangements, but not on taking exams. From March to June 2023, four men left courses through early release/transfer. Between March and June 2024, there were 26 withdrawals from courses because of the early release scheme. Staff morale is affected by this changed dynamic, as course/exam failure rates have increased. Staff make efforts to stretch prisoners to complete examinations but are seldom successful, as prisoners are involved in other preparations. Consequently, the service level agreement between NOVUS and HMPPS benchmark of 55% success in English has not been met in some months.

7.1.4 Data shows that 86% of the population has less than 12 months to serve. This compares with previous years, where approximately 65% had longer to serve. Hesitant, insecure learners need encouragement and time to achieve educational goals. Short sentences and early release dates do not enable successful progress and mean several courses take too long to complete.

7.1.5 Data shows that 80% attendance or above for prisoners in education had been seen consistently. The Board discussed with new managers how closures for leave are planned into delivery hours, which is closely monitored on a weekly basis. Sickness is now covered by hub managers, where possible. Managers base course decisions on curriculum reviews and meeting the ever-changing population needs. Education is provided in classes, in workshop vocational settings and on outreach

across the site which sees some places less populated during morning periods to accommodate a blended approach. Prisoners struggling in classroom environments prefer learning in workplaces or individually. The new reading support worker and Shannon Trust organiser work together to support and encourage reading across the site.

7.1.6 Examination of data produced by the Prison Service showed HMP Wealstun had fewer prisoners achieving progress in English or Maths. Discussion with managers revealed an extremely complicated data collection process, in that those prisoners who arrive on site and complete their English and Maths qualifications are not always in scope, or that any prior attainment levels achieved, where no initial assessment score is recorded, are also not taken into consideration. The 'curious system' does not always clearly identify what English and/or Maths prior attainment levels have been achieved when prisoners first enter a custodial environment. It was almost impossible for the Board to understand the system, as described in detail by managers, and we are following up this unsatisfactory data requirement with the Prison Service and regional managers.

7.1.7 The Board is pleased that success is recognised in other ways. Quarterly celebrations note individual progress in reading, perseverance, building resilience, becoming a role model, supporting prison staff in dealing with unruly fellow prisoners or becoming pillars of the community. This does not recognise qualification but a willingness to change.

7.1.8 The library was visited 842 times during May and this includes planned visits for all education courses. Books are available in workshops and full-time workers can access the library on Friday mornings. Every wing gets two opportunities to visit. There is a library officer to collect and escort the men. One full-time and two part-time staff work there.

7.1.9 All prisoners are offered a free book, distraction materials and crayons when they are on the induction wing. Staff visit them to gain contact, provide an information sheet and explain their service.

7.1.10 It is becoming necessary to start fining men for missing books. Borrowers of overdue books will receive notices and permission has been given to take off the monies from finances. The process has not yet started but signals, perhaps, the higher profile given to books.

7.1.11 Authors have been invited into HMP Wealstun to talk about themselves and their books. Fifteen men attended to one session.

7.1.12 Clink Kitchens has been working within the main kitchens to offer training to prisoners to NVQ levels in hospitality. They also support graduates for up to a year on release. This funding is due to end in the next reporting year, which will be a loss. The education department hopes it can continue to invest in training using the kitchen facilities to prepare for events, teach food hygiene and gain Level 1 qualifications.

7.1.13 The new class for healthy living prepares prisoners for managing on a budget when released. Simple, cheap meals, such as stew and lemon drizzle cake, are used to demonstrate how limited equipment can provide nourishing food. These

courses are extremely popular with prisoners. Another new sought-after course is construction multi-skills, which includes painting, plumbing, grounds maintenance and guttering and drainpipes.

7.2 Vocational training, work

7.2.1 There are a number of workshops at HMP Wealstun, including:

- Waste management
- Textiles
- Industrial cleaning
- Gardening
- Q Branch, which provides a team of prisoners able to do small maintenance and repair work
- Sewing machine repair
- Logistics
- Tea packing
- Laundry and textiles
- NifCo (car parts),
- Wastecare (TV repair) and
- Zixtel (dismantling)

7.2.2 The Board remains concerned that most work is part time (four or five sessions per week). There are some full-time positions (7-9 sessions a week) in each workshop for roles such as mentoring. Q Branch and waste management are full-time positions. The Board has been told that half-time work is necessary to create spaces for the majority of the population to maintain the culture of everyone being in work or education. The Board thinks this is unacceptable and that, if sufficient funding is not made available to provide full-time work for all prisoners, it will get worse as the population rises.

7.7.3 The Board has been told that there is insufficient space and money for all prisoners to have full-time work and that there are difficulties recruiting instructors. However, we have also been told that HMP Wealstun has been selected as one of five prisons to receive a shared £16 million to extend the working week. Many questions need to be resolved about how to put this into action: does everyone work longer/will more staff be provided/how will it be tied with regime design? The Board will watch carefully throughout the next reporting period.

7.7.4 Working part time also presents difficulties in some workshops because there is insufficient time for training. Learning to mend the industrial sewing machines used throughout the prison estate (HMP Wealstun having the only repair facility for those machines) requires consistent tuition and experience.

7.7.5 The Board has observed that some of the workshops are very basic; in fact, described as 'noddly' by one workshop instructor and prisoners complain about the boredom. Working towards qualifications provides more enthusiasm for work. Sandbags are now made in a workshop that previously made boxer shorts. The Board was told a new design of shorts was too difficult to teach and we wonder if it would have been easier with full-time training. Managers have identified that more prisoners with shorter lengths of stay, so an easier product means prisoners can learn how to make them quickly.

7.7.6 The early release scheme meant that courses were incomplete when some prisoners were released. This resulted in difficulties administering the provision or sending on of completed certificates.

7.7.7 The award of the Windlesham trophy last June to the garden section was a wonderful achievement. A muddy, waste area was made into a garden, where plants were grown from seeds and unused gravel, rocks and timber were scavenged and a quiet seating area created for staff relaxation and key worker sessions.

7.7.8 Connections have been made through the employment hub and the new commercial workshop for repairing TVs has been brought in, which opened in March and helps to supply training and jobs for the future. Links are being established with employers, in catering, for example, so jobs are available on release. This work is continuing. The kitchen manager received a Butler Trust Award this year.

7.3 Offender management, progression

7.3.1 Staffing in the OMU is fairly constant, with projected staffing of 7.5 probation offender managers and 10.5 prison offender managers (POMs). Although there are two vacancies, one person is due to start soon and the merit list has been activated for the other.

7.3.2 However, all the staff are under considerable pressure and stress, trying to deal with the early releases, especially given that only three weeks' notice of this scheme was provided. A total 195 prisoners have been released under the scheme to date. It seems most probation work is carried out in the last six months of a sentence, but the scheme is adding to the probation officers' workload. The caseload numbers, including the number of very/high risk cases is, on average, 40-50 cases for the probation POMs (a mixture of responsible and supported) and 50-55 cases for the prison POMs.

7.3.3 The pressure to create spaces in local prisons so that they, in turn, can accommodate more arrivals from the courts, has led to HMP Wealstun receiving prisoners who, realistically, will derive little or no rehabilitative support. In the reporting year, 44 new arrivals had 90 days or less of their sentence to serve. Of these, 24 had fewer than 60 days to serve, and six had fewer than 30 days to serve. One individual arrived at Wealstun with just one week remaining to serve. It is highly questionable that this is fair to prisoners and that it makes economic sense to transfer prisoners approaching the end of a sentence. The Board is concerned that any further increase in prisoners, either by increasing capacity or receiving more short-term prisoners, without the necessary resources in OMU, will result in men being ill prepared for release. This will, no doubt, result in an increase in the number of recalled prisoners.

7.3.4 The OMU staff have recently started to attend inductions, so that prisoners' expectations can be managed, given that many of those in the prison are young men in their 20s. Home detention curfew (HDC) releases are still going ahead, but 74 prisoners have been released to date, compared with 232 last year, meaning that the early release scheme is now taking priority. A total of 76 prisoners have, so far in 2024, been released to open conditions. There were 127 prisoners transferred in 2023. In May 2024, eleven prisoners were transferred to open prisons. Wealstun has good connections and communications with HMP Hatfield, in particular.

7.3.5 There are 60 IPP (imprisonment for public protection) and life sentence prisoners at HMP Wealstun. The Board has been asked by various prisoners when might there be an IPP forum. On speaking to staff in the OMU, the Board was given the impression that previous forums had not been structured enough. However, one forum was held earlier in 2024 to promote K wing and another was held on May, also on K wing. The plan is to open up these forums to the wider IPP population across the prison through applications to attend. It is hoped that these meetings will be held quarterly, with the next one being in July/August 2024. The Board has also spoken to prisoners who have indicated that they have not been able to access the courses that could support them in their parole bids. The opening of the new K wing is a real positive as IPP prisoners and those serving life sentences are given the opportunity to have a better regime.

7.3.6 The Board is pleased that the prison is taking part in the OMIC Refresh project, which will be looking at the OMIC model, as it is not as successful as it was hoped.

7.4 Family contact

7.4.1 After the staffing difficulties of 2022, Jigsaw, a charity that offers services and support to those visiting their loved ones in prison, appointed a senior family engagement worker from Leeds in November and they work with three others who are part-time. They have been given a seven-year contract and are in the second year.

7.4.2 Jigsaw provides one-to-one case work for prisoners who either self-refer or are referred by others, such as the OMU, induction staff, etc. They help prisoners with family issues and will liaise with probation, social workers and family solicitors. Jigsaw have 18 open cases and 15 on the waiting list.

7.4.3 The charity organises family days: 11 every year, for 12 men per session, with two sessions each day. They get hundreds of applications, but each one has to go to security to be risk assessed. These social events are always held on a Wednesday. Visitors can include one adult and up to five children. The events include organised arts and crafts, bingo, face-painting, pool and books, etc. They are staffed by four Officers and no problems have been reported. They are headed up by a Governor.

7.4.4 Jigsaw also organises family learning workshops, twice a month. They are held in a discussion forum for 10 men, talking about parental responsibility, transitioning back into the family environment, etc. The men have to opt to do it; they are given a certificate, but it is not accredited. There has been good feedback about all of the above events.

7.4.5 At one point Jigsaw ran Storybook Dads, but this is no longer included in their contract. Latterly, the prison activities department organised this but it has now ended due to the departure of a key member of staff.

7.4.6 The Board has observed the visits' centre on numerous occasions throughout the reporting year. We have been pleased to find that it is well used, with up to 20 families visiting their relatives on the two sessions offered most days. It has been noted, however, that the biometric system used to carry out checks on incoming visitors is not fully operational and the prison states that it will require considerable investment to bring it up to standard.

7.4.7 The previous problems besetting the social video calls were said by the prison to have been resolved. Each prisoner is allowed to book such a call once a month, with the calls taking place on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays on a first come, first served basis.

7.4.8 Prisoners have phones in their cells and are able to call their relatives, provided they have the phone credit to do so. Members are aware of some prisoners who do not have the necessary funds to make these calls and who do not receive social visits because, perhaps, they are out of their area and relatives cannot afford the travel costs. These prisoners are, therefore, not receiving any family contact at all, which is a concern to the Board, who will continue to monitor the situation.

7.4.9 Prisoners can receive letters from their relatives, although they are opened and checked by prison staff. However, prisoners are no longer able to receive parcels from their relatives, although a prisoner on the incentive scheme's enhanced status can apply for approval to have a clothing parcel sent in twice a year.

7.5 Resettlement planning

7.5.1 The prison operates a range of pathway activities for prisoners and works to build productive relationships with businesses in the community that may lead to employment opportunities on release. In partnership with St Giles Trust, which deals with referrals from POMs and COMs (community offender managers), accommodation needs for the first night of release (and, hopefully, beyond) are established. Other partnerships are used around specific pathway activities where required, e.g. drugs and alcohol support and mental and physical health.

7.5.2 Around 15 weeks prior to a prisoner's anticipated release date, his release plan will be discussed at the discharge board. The 15-week period is not always sufficient. One-to-one interviews need to be set up to organise help. The Board is concerned that due to population pressures, prisoners are often sent to Wealstun with fewer than 15 weeks to go before release, which does not allow sufficient time for preparation. Sometimes, decisions around prisoner support after release, especially accommodation, are not finalised until immediately prior to release. Whilst the Board understands that this might be due to circumstances beyond the prison's control, it notes that prisoners often find the period leading up to release to be stressful and that every effort needs to be made to prepare men for a successful transition into the community.

7.5.3 Links between prisoners, their POMs and community probation officers appear to be very fragile in far too many instances. The discharge board has been seen by the IMB to work conscientiously to help with accommodation, paperwork, employment and myriad other details. It has been observed to be successful.

7.5.4 The community integration scheme (CIT) is crucial to the work of the discharge board. They help to sort out many issues, including housing benefit, debt and housing needs, but they do not deal with sentence expiry dates and recall. CIT only deals with 20% of men, however, as not everyone has a POM or COM. Equally, those receiving help can be left vulnerable when POMs and probation officers have staffing or communication difficulties. Basic problems, such as no money to make a phone call or not having a contact number create communication issues.

7.5.5 The Board is pleased to note that funding has been made available for creating future opportunities (CFO) evolution wing and planning is in progress for this to start in August 2024.

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	15
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	8
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	12, including one on sabbatical
Total number of visits to the establishment	229

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	11	11
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	20	20
C	Equality	2	4
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	15	7
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	10	15
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	7	8
F	Food and kitchens	3	8
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	31	25
H1	Property within the establishment	16	25
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	20	17
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	0	2
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence), parole, release dates, re-categorisation	17	27
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	17	26
K	Transfers	7	8
L	Miscellaneous	24	29
	Total number of applications	200	232

Annex A

Service providers

- Novus: works, learning and skills.
- Practice Plus Group: physical and mental healthcare.
- GEOAmey: escorts.
- Amey: facilities management and site maintenance
- Jigsaw: family intervention services.



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