



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP/YOI Sudbury

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

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Contents

Introductory sections 1 – 3	Page
1. Statutory role of the IMB	3
2. Description of establishment	4
3. Key points	5
 Evidence sections 4 – 7	
4. Safety	9
5. Fair and humane treatment	11
6. Health and wellbeing	17
7. Progression and resettlement	21
 The work of the IMB	
Board statistics	27
Applications to the IMB	27
 Annex A	
Service providers	28

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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/YOI Sudbury is an open, category D resettlement prison for young adults and adult men in Ashbourne, Derbyshire. The population at the end of the IMB reporting year was 507¹. The construction work on building new accommodation units and a new multi-faith facility has been ongoing throughout the reporting year and completion has been delayed several times. It is expected that the new buildings will be ready for prisoner occupation by July this year. The prisoner capacity is eventually expected to reach 661.

The age range profile of the population at the end of the IMB reporting year was 18-75-plus. A total of 19.5% of prisoners had disclosed some form of disability, of which the largest proportion were learning disabilities and mental illness. Only 2.7% of the 507 population disclosed that they had reduced mobility or physical capability.

Despite the addition of new living accommodation units, it remains the case that most dormitory buildings date from the time of the Second World War and are extremely challenging to maintain in good repair and in line with modern standards. Most rooms house two prisoners. However, the new accommodation due to come on stream comprises single rooms.

The prison is located in a rural location, but is well connected by road to several large towns.

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

- There were no deaths in custody in the reporting year and very low numbers of self-harm incidents reported.
- There were a low number of incidents in which force was used.
- Ingress of illicit items remains a challenge, given the number of prisoners undertaking daily employment off site, but some prisoners have cited the availability of drugs as a reason to request transfer back to closed conditions.

Fair and humane treatment

- Poor standard of dormitory accommodation remains an issue.
- Insufficient provision of kitchen appliances on dormitories and, in particular, a lack of halal-specific microwaves.
- Some prisoners report a lack of sufficient support in adjusting to open conditions on transfer into the prison which, perhaps, links to concerns also raised about some lack of contact with initial point of contact (IPOC) officers.
- A focus during the year on the specific needs of different cohorts of prisoners has resulted in a training input for staff on handling the needs of prisoners who are care leavers.
- It remains the case that most prisoners are able to be allocated to, and retain, an enhanced status in the incentives scheme, which underpins the good management of the prisoner population.
- There has been an improvement in the reporting year in the efficiency of response in dealing with prisoner complaints.
- Loss of prisoner property on transfer remains a significant source of prisoner concern.

Health and wellbeing

- It is encouraging to report that the healthcare response to one individual prisoner with a terminal diagnosis was extremely effective, with a care plan and good liaison with other prison functional areas to provide a single dormitory room.
- There were no applications (prisoners' written submissions) made to the IMB this year concerning the healthcare provision and only one complaint through the healthcare provider's system.
- It has been noted by the IMB that the number of prisoners with complex mental health needs has increased in the reporting year, but we also acknowledge that progress has been made in respect of providing access to psychologist support one day a week.
- The Board has been encouraged to report that the compliance based drug testing (CBDT) system is now partially implemented and that it represents a more supportive system of monitoring prisoners' substance misuse.

Progression and resettlement

- There has been very little progress in improving connectivity to support prisoners' learning.

- The improved focus on challenging prisoners' failure to attend education classes has been effective.
- IMB members have received regular positive comments from prisoners on the quality of education staff.
- The work of the charity, Prison Advice and Care Trust (Pact), in delivering regular family day experiences (which bring together prisoners and their families outside of their statutory entitlement to social visits, usually in more informal settings) has been excellent and much appreciated by prisoners.
- The work of the resettlement teams in preparing prisoners for their release has been effective.
- In the Board's view, the resettlement functional area has continued to deliver an impressive number of outwork employment places.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- When will sufficient resources be made available to ensure that the poor-quality dormitory accommodation at Sudbury can be significantly upgraded or replaced?
- Will it be possible to support the essential resettlement commitment to prisoners at Sudbury in terms of providing resources for improvements in technical connectivity such as they will be required to use in the community on release?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- Opportunities for resettlement activities remain compromised by lack of connectivity affecting Wi-fi availability. When will this be addressed?
- Continued late arrivals of prisoners after usual working hours continues to be an issue. How does the Prison Service plan to encourage prisoner escort contractors to improve this situation?
- As is usual in the IMB's annual report, we comment this year on the continuing poor standard of dormitory accommodation for prisoners. What will the Prison Service do to improve the lived experience of prisoners at Sudbury in this respect?
- Another recurring theme of IMB reports is the issue of prisoner property being mislaid or not supplied at all on transfer into Sudbury. How will the Prison Service improve this situation?

TO THE GOVERNOR

- The Board has continued to note that some prisoners perceive there to be inconsistencies between the OMU staff, in terms of processing ROTL applications, but also acknowledges the recent changes to the systems in use and the appointment of additional management in the area. An ongoing concern raised by prisoners is the lack of regular communication between them and the staff processing their applications. What will you do to address this issue?
- The Board has experienced comments from some prisoners about the lack of activity for them to engage in outside usual working hours and notes that some work to address this has been begun. What timescale is in place to

introduce activities that prisoners can access in their downtime and what will be done to expand the range of these activities to broaden the prisoner experience?

- It has been observed in previous IMB reports that some prisoners say that they either do not know who their IPOC officer is or have little contact with them. How will you improve the delivery of the IPOC system to ensure that prisoners have regular contact with their IPOC officer?
- When will the education and training offer be broadened and refreshed to better reflect the range of employment opportunities now available in the community?

3.3 Response to the last report

Issue raised	Response given	Progress
To the Prison Service and the Governor Length of time to process ROTL (release on temporary licence) applications.	Head of offender management delivery's weekly review of overdue applications. Data base tracker to track due dates. More staff trained to reduce backlog.	The data base tracker is functioning well. As yet, it seems to be too early to observe any clear improvement in the time taken to process ROTL applications. The appointment of an additional senior leader in the offender management unit (OMU) area is acknowledged. In addition, it is noted by the IMB that recent responses to the national prison population issue has triggered many fluctuations in the transfer of prisoners to open conditions and associated workload within the OMU at Sudbury. The concerns over perceived differences in timescales for processing applications remains. The Board has noted that there is no data system to show timescales for completion on ROTL applications.
To the Prison Service Ingress of illicit items.	Increases to staffing levels. Risk and capabilities unit support to the prison. Head of wellbeing and drug strategy	The focus on the issue via the senior leadership post appears to be having some positive impact. The IMB notes that the ingress of illicit items will

	appointment in the senior leadership team.	continue to be a potential issue, given the substantial number of prisoners in employment outside the prison each day. The Board appreciates the irony of this situation, given that the prison's major function is to prepare and support prisoners for successful release and reduce the likelihood of them reoffending.
To the Prison Service Static range of education courses and availability of Wi-fi.	Governor to continue to ensure prisoners attain Levels 1 and 2 English and Maths.	There has been very little development in the range of courses available in the education contractor's offer in the reporting year. Qualifications in workshop areas run by the prison are in development.
To the Prison Service Prisoner transport late arrivals to the prison.	Monitoring of prisoner escort contractor services.	It remains the case that some prisoners arrive at the prison outside usual working hours, which means that not all the usual processes can be completed that day. Population transfer fluctuations in the last part of the reporting year have obviously had a negative impact.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

4.1.1 Prisoners arriving at Sudbury are almost unanimous in their appreciation of the considerate and helpful attitude of the staff in reception.

4.1.2 Many prisoners speak to IMB members about the difficulties they face in adjusting to the regime in an open prison. This often begins with the difference in environment compared to closed prisons and continues as they try to develop the self-reliance required of them.

4.1.3 The prisoner induction programme provides information and introductions to key personnel in the prison. However, there is a danger that the presentation of the necessary aspects of the things they need to know can risk overloading them with information. The IMB has noted that some sessions in the programme vary in the quality of their delivery.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

4.2.1 There have been no deaths in custody at Sudbury during the reporting year. There have been five recorded cases of prisoners self-harming throughout the year. Given that there are no healthcare beds at Sudbury, prisoners who have self-harmed may be returned to closed conditions where appropriate facilities are available. This is the case if an assessment of the individual indicates that they cannot be managed safely at Sudbury. Very small numbers of prisoners allocated to Sudbury have a history of self-harm recorded on the national offender management information system (Nomis).

4.2.2 Prisoners who are identified as vulnerable to suicide and self-harm are subject to an assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) plan. This document is opened in response to any signs of vulnerability and is live, requiring all staff in contact with the prisoner to monitor and record observations on the man's situation. Information derived from the ACCT process is carefully tracked and reported. The number of occasions on which a prisoner needs to become the subject of an ACCT document has fallen again in the reporting year, from 18 in 2022-2023 to 15 in 2023-2024. The Board notes that the ACCT documents seen by members have been efficiently completed by staff.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

4.3.1 The nature of Sudbury, as a prison with open conditions, can result in the transfer of prisoners who are found to have broken regulations. It is sometimes possible to give such prisoners the chance to demonstrate that they can successfully operate in the open prison environment, so they do not end up being transferred out. However, in the instances of being repeatedly found in possession of certain illicit items, such as drugs and mobile phones, it is more likely that they will be returned to closed conditions, following a suitability assessment. Possession of illicit items accounted for 29% of cases in which prisoners were transferred back to closed conditions in the reporting year. Failing a suitability review was the reason for 28% of returns to closed prisons. This shows the number of men whose behaviour fails to

meet the standards required for prisoners in an open environment, within which they need to demonstrate self-control and reliance in preparation for release.

4.3.2 The number of assaults recorded in the prison in the reporting year was marginally higher than last year, with three assaults by prisoners on staff and six assaults by prisoners on other prisoners. This represents an increase, as there were nine assaults in the reporting year compared with seven assaults last year.

4.4 Use of force

4.4.1 Use of force in the management of prisoners does not occur frequently. IMB members have occasionally witnessed such incidents and have noted that staff have acted with care and respect in potentially difficult situations. In the reporting year, there were 42 incidents where force was necessary. This included occasions when ratchet handcuffs were deployed in order to locate prisoners to the secure accommodation unit (SAU). This eventuality is always underpinned by a dynamic risk-assessment process to ensure that it is used only when necessary.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

4.5.1 The Board remains concerned about the number of illicit items found during regular searches in the prison. Of most concern are any sort of drugs, as well as technical items, such as smart phones, which could allow prisoners to connect to the internet. As an open prison, it is easier to bring in illicit items to Sudbury than it is in a closed prison. The prison regime at Sudbury is designed to enable suitably risk-assessed prisoners to leave the prison for real employment on temporary licence and more than 150 do so every day. When combined with prisoners leaving the prison for domestic ROTL and other appointments, over 3,000 temporary licences are issued every month. All these factors potentially increase the risks that illicit items could be brought into Sudbury as prisoners return.

4.5.2 The IMB has noted that some prisoners cite the availability of drugs at Sudbury as a reason for requesting a return to closed prison conditions.

4.5.3 The age of the prison does not support phones in prisoners' rooms and the cost to them of the credit to use the PIN phones provided is high. It is likely that that these factors contribute to the high number of illicit mobile phones and accessories that are found.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

5.1.1 The number of prisoners allocated to Sudbury under the recent early release schemes has had an undoubted impact on the establishment's population. There has been some increase in the instances of drug taking, non-compliant and antisocial behaviour and refusal to work amongst prisoners arriving at the prison on shorter than usual sentences. Some prisoners have arrived with only days or weeks of their sentences remaining. Their unsatisfactory attitudes have had an unsettling effect on prisoners already at Sudbury who have been generally compliant with the resettlement aims of the prison regime.

5.1.2 The standard of dormitory accommodation continues to be a source of negative comment from prisoners and a concern for the IMB. Even in areas that have been refurbished, there is evidence of renewed deterioration. Some prisoners have suggested to IMB members that more effective cleaning materials would be advantageous.

5.1.3 The new dormitory building is still not ready to be occupied. The accommodation will be of a higher standard than the existing dormitory areas and will have ensuite facilities. Given the aged status of the existing living accommodation, the prison does as much as possible to maintain and improve prisoners' experience, but the limitations of the site make it difficult to achieve much success. Traditionally, there has been a scheme to use prisoners with the necessary craft qualifications to undertake improvement works around the site. However, the scheme was suspended for most of the reporting year because there was no supervisor. It has now started up again but there are not enough painters to make as much progress as is needed with redecoration. In the reporting year, all dormitories have had replacement double-glazed window units, which has helped to reduce the impact of the poor insulation of the buildings.

5.1.4 All dormitory areas have access to a shared kitchen area, with fridges, a toaster and a microwave. However, because of limitations with the electrical supply across the site, it is not possible to supply additional equipment, which creates some dissatisfaction among prisoners. There may be up to 35 prisoners in the main dormitories, so sharing only one toaster and microwave can cause frustration at busy times. In addition, the IMB has noted concerns raised by prisoners that the limit on the number of microwaves means that there is no provision for halal-specific equipment. The prisoner-staff communication group has been effective in providing an opportunity for prisoners to raise concerns, such as the accommodation. It is usually well attended by prisoners and key staff members associated with the focus area for each monthly meeting.

5.1.5 The surveys required by a fire safety inspection carried out during the reporting year have taken place. However, the work that needs to be undertaken has not yet been completely allocated. Funding bids have been submitted for the refurbishment works and will be allocated if successful.

5.1.6 The Board has noted that staff in the area receiving prisoners on arrival regularly make strenuous efforts to obtain clothing for those who arrive with very little.

5.1.7 The situation regarding the presence of vermin across the site has improved greatly since our previous report.

5.1.8 The Board has continuously raised the issue of the washers and dryers in the laundry being out of order. Machines are regularly broken. The prison has informed us that they have sourced potential newer, more environmentally friendly machines but they are still awaiting the outcome of a bid for funding to replace the ageing equipment.

5.1.9 Members of the Board have observed a reasonable range of food on the menus provided to prisoners. The lunchtime offer is, generally, filled baguettes and wraps. The evening offer is a hot meal and there is always a good choice, which caters for dietary preferences and needs. IMB members regularly taste the food being served to prisoners and have found no issues of quality.

5.1.10 Faith-based festivals have been catered for and, where possible, prisoners are involved in the choosing of menus for these occasions. Kosher meals are bought in to ensure appropriate cultural support.

5.1.11 There have been no applications regarding food issues made to the IMB during the reporting year. Members check the food comments' log in the dining hall. There have been a low number of comments and these are being responded to in the log by the supervising kitchen staff.

5.2 Segregation

5.2.1 Sudbury does not operate a segregation unit but does have a secure accommodation unit (SAU), comprising two secure cells in which prisoners can be located when the need arises. Both cells have screened-off toilet facilities and a TV. They have both been redecorated recently. Members visit the unit on each monitoring visit to the prison. We have regularly commented in our reports on the effective communication between staff in the unit and prisoners located there. Given the nature of the open prison, prisoners spend only short periods of time in the unit before either being returned to their usual location or transferred elsewhere if necessary.

5.2.2 Typically, the number of prisoners who need to be located in the SAU is relatively low. For example, between January 2024 and the end of March 2024, 76 prisoners needed to be located in the unit. Analysis of the data available shows that numbers of prisoners from each of the protected characteristics groups (such as race, religion, sex, disability, age, gender reassignment and sexual orientation, which it is unlawful to discriminate against) are broadly in line with the number of those groups in the total prison population.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

5.3.1 From its observations, relations between staff and prisoners seem generally good, with most staff treating prisoners with consideration. However, some prisoners have told the IMB members that some staff do not seem to appreciate the shock of transition to category D conditions. These prisoners feel that more assistance from staff in the first weeks after arrival would be helpful. Encouraging prisoners to become less reliant on staff and more independent may seem unhelpful to some prisoners. Some prisoners have said that staff can seem remote from them in the dormitory staff offices. Prisoners sometimes say they would like officers to be out

and about more, engaging with them. Some prisoners have told IMB members that they found it easier to ask other prisoners for information and help rather than staff.

5.3.2 Each prisoner is allocated an initial point of contact (IPOC) officer. The IPOC officer should see each of the prisoners allocated to them twice in the first month they are at Sudbury and then monthly after that. The nature of the open prison regime means many prisoners will be off site during the day, when most staff are on duty, and this seems to make regular contact more difficult. In April 2024, prison data shows that 80% of prisoners were recorded as having an IPOC contact. However, some of these appear to have been the result, not of actual face-to-face contact, but IPOC officer observations. It has been the experience of IMB members that many prisoners state they do not know who their IPOC officer is or have had little contact with them.

5.3.3 The IMB has been pleased to observe that the prisoner community council (COMCIL), which now drives communication between prisoners and staff, has continued to operate effectively and has had a positive effect, in general, on staff and prisoner relationships. Board members have observed various monthly COMCIL meetings, which are themed according to concerns raised by prisoners and which prison leadership team members attend. The participation of staff in COMCIL activities has driven the improvement in prisoner and staff relations.

5.4 Equality and diversity

5.4.1 There have been two early release schemes devised by HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) in response to the national prison population pressure during the reporting year. As a result, Sudbury has experienced fluctuating numbers of prisoners allocated, but the overall makeup of its prisoner population, in terms of the protected characteristics groupings, remains generally unchanged.

5.4.2 The diversity, inclusion and engagement lead continues to take the lead on monitoring the prison's commitment to ensuring that prisoners are treated fairly and with respect. Focus on ensuring that prison procedures are not unfairly disadvantaging members of the protected characteristics groups is driven by regular reporting to the quarterly diversity and inclusion committee and chaired by the Governor of the prison. This group includes prisoner representatives. The data presented at the meetings enable IMB members to scrutinise any indication that members of any protected characteristic groups are being negatively affected by prison systems and procedures, so that this can be challenged and remedied.

IMB members monitoring the meetings have observed the scrutiny of data showing access to opportunities, including release on temporary licence (ROTL) and external employment, which can be challenged and interrogated when necessary. A recent issue was flagged up through this analysis of data, which seemed to indicate a slight increase in the number of mixed ethnicity prisoners, black prisoners and young adult prisoners being transferred back to closed conditions. Investigation into these trends did not reveal any pattern regarding staff placing prisoners on report or the reasons prisoners were being transferred. Written justifications made at the time of transfer were seen by IMB members and found to be sound.

5.4.3 Prisoners and staff concerned that they may be experiencing discrimination based on their protected characteristic can use the discrimination incident reporting form (DIRF) process to bring this to the attention of the appropriate prison managers.

Staff must complete an initial investigation into the issues raised within 14 working days and there must be a completion of the DIRF in a further 28 days following that. This process is overseen by senior managers and is subject to quality standards, in terms of the response and its timeliness. In the reporting year, 12 DIRFs were submitted, the majority of which were related to race. The Board noted that some DIRFs have taken a long time to be processed and a response to the prisoner provided. This issue has been raised by the Board with the Governor and members are monitoring the impact of some adjustments to the system to avoid excessively lengthy responses. All DIRF responses are quality assured by the Governor and Deputy Governor. The charity, the Zahid Mubarek Trust, oversees the DIRF system at Sudbury in the capacity of 'critical friend'.

5.4.4 There has been an initiative developed this year to focus on specific cohorts of prisoners, in terms of their needs and experiences of the prison regime. The cohort lead works directly, and includes various groups, such as young adults, foreign national prisoners, indeterminate imprisonment for public protection (IPP) sentenced prisoners, life sentence prisoners and prisoners affected by modern slavery. A care experience breakfast is held monthly, with guest speakers from support agencies, who provide information about support services and access to resources. An armed services veterans' breakfast is also a monthly event, with two veterans' support agencies in attendance. IMB members who have observed these events note they are well attended and much appreciated by prisoners.

5.4.5 The diversity, inclusion and engagement manager has, this year, initiated a focus on prisoners who are care leavers. A social worker has provided an input at a full staff meeting to raise awareness of how trauma may present in a prison setting, and training on dealing with difficult situations has been delivered.

5.4.6 The IMB notes that this diverse range of focused activities contributes positively to the general atmosphere of tolerance and support at Sudbury.

5.4.7 The prison has two adapted dormitory rooms, which will accommodate wheelchair users. There are two disabled-access shower and toilet areas. All dormitory blocks have ramp access at both ends of the building. There are no buildings in use for education and training that are not accessible to wheelchair users. Recently, a prisoner using a wheelchair too wide for the door to the classroom being used was accommodated when the activity was relocated to another classroom. The new dormitory accommodation, due to be in use by the end of July, has four well-adapted rooms to meet the needs of prisoners who use wheelchairs.

5.4.8 IMB members who have observed the segregation, monitoring and review group (SMARG) meetings have noted that careful analysis is carried out on the profile of prisoners located in the SAU and those receiving adjudications (disciplinary hearings when a prisoner is suspected of breaking prison rules) for transgressions of regulations. Therefore, any trends that indicate increased numbers of prisoners experiencing these processes, which are outside the numbers of the groups in the total population, are flagged and can be scrutinised.

5.4.9 The roll-out of procedural justice training for staff was interrupted in the early part of the reporting year, but it has now been recommenced.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

5.5.1 The chaplaincy department continues to offer support to prisoners of all faiths and none. The managing chaplain is of the Muslim faith, with part-time Church of England, Free church, Roman Catholic church and Sikh chaplains to assist.

5.5.2 Jewish, Hindu and Pagan chaplains attend the prison on a sessional basis.

5.5.3 A range of prisoner orderlies (trusted prisoners who take on work to provide services that contribute to the running of the prison) work within the multi-faith department and their faiths reflect the diverse religious base of the prison population. The multi-faith area hosts all festivals throughout the year, as necessary.

5.5.4 The new multi-faith building has had a number of technical issues, which delayed its readiness, but it is now in use.

5.6 Incentives schemes

5.6.1 The incentives scheme features basic, standard and enhanced levels. The proportions of prisoners occupying the three levels of the incentives scheme are, generally, fairly static. In the last week of the reporting year, there was only one prisoner on the basic level and only 7.5% of the population on the standard level. A total of 92.7% of the Sudbury population at that time had enhanced status. The incentives scheme system is the primary mechanism for managing prisoner behaviour and incentivising improvement, given that there is no accommodation to segregate prisoners who display unacceptable behaviour. The Board notes that transfer back to closed conditions remains the ultimate penalty for transgressing the rules with regard to the possession of illicit items. However, there have been examples of staff working closely with prisoners found in possession of these items to attempt to help them remain at Sudbury.

5.6.2 The Board observed that the drive to encourage staff to flag positive as well as negative comments about prisoners has continued. Data showing the numbers of both categories of comment are included in management information systems. We noted some improvement in the number of positive to negative comments recorded on prisoners' records, with a typical example showing 66 positive comments and 29 negative comments in one reporting week. This indicated that each negative comment was balanced by 2.2 positive comments.

5.6.3 It has been an objective of the prison to explore ways of making the incentives system more incentivised for prisoners, and work continues with this. Providing incentives for prisoners in open conditions and with very little resourcing implications for the budget remains a challenge.

5.7 Complaints

5.7.1 The prison's response rate to prisoner complaints improved over the reporting year. Between November 2023 and April 2024, 89% of complaints were responded to within the required timescale. Responses sampled by IMB members have been satisfactory.

5.7.2 Throughout the reporting year, the majority of complaints from prisoners have been about offender management (22%) and canteen issues (26%). However, the Board has noted that, in the last three months of the reporting year, the number of complaints concerning offender management rose to 32% of the total received. This

represents a significant decrease in the level of prisoner satisfaction with the offender management unit (OMU). Feedback from prisoners to IMB members appears to indicate that these issues relate mainly to the length of time taken to process applications for ROTL.

5.7.3 Complaints from prisoners according to their ethnicity and religion are in line with the proportion of their protected characteristics groups in the Sudbury population. In the last quarter of the reporting year, there was a disproportionate number of complaints from the 25 to 44 age group.

5.8 Property

5.8.1 Property transfer remains one of the biggest grievances of prisoners. Property loss on transfer made up 37.5% of complaints made to the prison in the year to March 2024. A total of 80% of these were made by prisoners who were transferred to other prisons. In March and April 2024, 25% of these complaints were upheld. The Board has also received a number of applications about property loss from prisoners in Sudbury. It is apparent from enquiries made by IMB members in other prisons, following requests from IMB colleagues at Sudbury, that prisoner property is, at times, mislaid and not sent on. A particular concern is when this relates to items of personal importance to the prisoner. Prisoners arriving at Sudbury frequently have several bags of property, which do not accompany them and are sent on afterwards. The contents of these are not listed and there is no transfer of the prisoners' property card. This makes difficult attempts to trace missing property.

5.8.2 The Board observed diligent handling and recording of prisoner property by staff when prisoners arrive. Procedures for the receipt of property are in place, although we came across one case where they did not appear to have been correctly followed.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

6.1.1 Physical and mental healthcare, including pharmacy services, is still provided by the Practice Plus Group (PPG). Physiotherapy and chiropody are provided by PPG MSK. Time for Teeth provide dental services. Derbyshire County Council is the agency meeting the social care needs of prisoners. The healthcare team appears to be effectively managed and has coped well with the increased demands of the erratic influx of prisoners on early release arrangements.

6.1.2 Waiting times for appointments can vary, but the services with the longest wait times at the time of reporting are dental and physiotherapy. The dental waiting list at the end of the reporting period has 81 prisoners, while the physiotherapy list has 13 prisoners waiting for an appointment. During the reporting year, funding has been provided for additional dental sessions to help reduce the waiting times. Prisoners who are able to visit their homes when they are on ROTL are encouraged to try and see a dentist in their area, but there are also very long waiting times in the community. The average waiting time for a non-urgent GP appointment during the reporting period was three weeks.

6.1.3 The healthcare centre is open during the day, seven days a week, with one evening surgery for prisoners who are working outside the establishment in the daytime.

6.1.4 A bid was made for additional funding to support an increase in staffing of the department, but this was unsuccessful. In the later part of the reporting year, the healthcare team experienced an increased number of initial health assessments to be made for new prisoners arriving, due to the early release schemes. This placed pressure on the team, when added to their daily routine work. The department will shortly undergo a health needs assessment, which should reflect the increased number of initial prisoner assessments.

6.1.5 The healthcare team has worked effectively with the prison to make arrangements for a terminally ill prisoner, which included a well-managed care plan. There are four prisoners who need to use a wheelchair. and one prisoner who receives daily social care assistance.

6.1.6 Prisoners can raise complaints about their experience of healthcare directly with staff, while formal complaints are dealt with by the PPG, in accordance with its policy. Only one complaint was made during the reporting year, which was not upheld. Prisoners can also raise concerns with healthcare staff face-to-face and also use the prison's complaints procedure. To date in this calendar year there have been no prisoner complaints about their healthcare experience through the prison's complaints process.

6.2 Physical healthcare

6.2.1 Access to a registered nurses is provided daily and, where necessary, referral to appropriate healthcare professionals can be made.

6.2.2 One GP attends the prison for 12 hours each week, which is supplemented by another GP for five hours a week. Urgent prisoner health issues are referred to local NHS facilities, such as accident and emergency departments of local hospitals or

urgent care centres. The healthcare nurse team does not include anyone trained to prescribe medication.

6.3 Mental health

6.3.1 The number of prisoners with complex mental health needs has increased over the reporting year. A psychiatrist has a caseload of prisoners needing mental health services and makes a visit to the prison every two weeks. New cases are seen first by one of the healthcare team's mental health nurses. The healthcare team is fully staffed with mental health nurses. Mental health appointments cannot be offered in the evenings.

6.3.2 In our previous report, it was noted that there was no access for prisoners to psychologist support, but the situation has improved and psychologist support is now available one day each week.

6.3.3 During the reporting year, the prison appointed a neurodiversity support manager (NSM), who is now fully embedded in the prison organisation and provides accessible support for prisoners with neurodiversity needs.

6.4 Social care

6.4.1 There is only one prisoner who receives daily social care support.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

6.5.1 Prisoners at Sudbury enjoy the freedom provided by an open establishment. The prison has made positive efforts to improve the external environment, such as with the provision of outdoor seating and tables, for example, which continue to be well used, weather permitting. The grounds are carefully maintained and look attractive. A small wildlife garden has been constructed but is now in need of further maintenance. A link to local wildlife trusts would be beneficial in terms of exploring the potential offered by the rural site. Possible education and training activities suitable for the conservation sector may be a useful addition to the employment routes already offered.

6.5.2 All prisoners have the opportunity to attend gym sessions. Frequently, this seems to be restricted to weights work, although various activities, such as badminton, are offered in the evenings. Staffing issues have restricted the provision of a wider range of indoor and outdoor activities. Unfortunately, it has not been possible this year to run a football team to play in the local league, but it is hoped that the prison can join the local league for the coming season. Further outdoor gym equipment was purchased early on in the reporting year, but has only been in use since May 2024.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

6.6.1 The substance misuse service (SMS) team sees all prisoners at their induction and provides any prisoner who misses the session with an information pack, detailing the services and support available to them. The prison supports the important initial contact between prisoners and the SMS by ensuring that they either attend the induction session or return the acknowledgement slip verifying the receipt of their information pack. Failure to do either results in prisoners being placed on report.

6.6.2 The team offers a wide range of sessions and activities on awareness of substance misuse issues and there is a good range of support available.

6.63 The incentivised substance free living (ISFL) dormitory, allocated to those prisoners who contract to remain free of substance misuse, provides a number of incentives to prisoners who agree to be regularly tested to confirm they are substance free. Despite some issues earlier in the reporting year with the perceived accuracy of the swab testing being used, it has continued to be a fairly popular provision in the prison. Early in 2024, the Board observed that prisoners occupying the ISFL dormitory lost confidence in the accuracy of the regular swab testing required to verify they were substance free. The concerns appeared to be well founded, when a batch of the tests were recalled by the manufacturer. Concerns raised with the IMB by prisoners on this issue prompted the Board to consult with other Boards in open establishments, which confirmed that this was a wider issue. The Board was disappointed that, despite the swab testing being suspended in some other prisons, the decision was made to continue with them at Sudbury. The significant implications for prisoners of an inaccurate positive result were a major factor in the levels of concern raised by prisoners with the IMB.

6.6.4 It remains challenging for the prison to limit the ingress of illicit substances to the prison, given the open conditions. This means it remains potentially difficult for prisoners wishing to become, and remain, substance free. However, the SMS team works effectively to support prisoners in a wide range of ways and the Board has noted comments from individuals, which demonstrate that they appreciate this work.

6.6.5 Between July 2023 and May 2024, there were 237 positive mandatory drug test (MDT) results. This figure demonstrates a monthly average of 21 positive tests. However, data provided by the prison show that monthly figures actually vary quite widely, with a peak of 44 positive results in November 2023 and a low point of only six positive results in September 2023. Results across the 11 months show that cannabis was, by far, the most frequently detected substance. Whilst the numbers showing that cocaine had been taken were consistently lower, the Board noted that cocaine use was detected in 10 of the 11 months.

6.6.6 Part of the strategy to encourage prisoners to resist the use of illicit substances and to combat the ingress of these has been the plan to introduce compact or compliance based drug testing (CBDT). This has been designed to create greater confidence with prisoners and to be a supportive, as opposed to punitive, system of monitoring prisoners' substance misuse. The system has been in successful operation for three months, with prisoners occupying the ISFL dormitory. Once the new staffing profile is operational, at the end of July 2024, it should be rolled out across other groupings.

6.7 Soft skills

6.7.1 Prisoners are encouraged to develop self-reliance at Sudbury, as they approach release into the community. This adjustment is challenging for some prisoners and allowance is made for this in the first weeks after arrival. A three-stage work skills programme is in place, with incentives for the completion of each stage. Prisoners are required to complete all three stages before their application for ROTL can be approved. The programme includes various aspects considered necessary to become ready for employment, such as timekeeping, respect and communication, and working in a team. Most prisoners will complete this programme through

attending a prison-based work activity. Punctuality and regular attendance are key parts of the programme.

6.7.2 The prison has been working to develop an enrichment provision following the issue being highlighted in the HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) inspection in August 2023. There has been very little organised activity for prisoners outside of the usual working day. IMB members have been told by prisoners that they struggle with boredom and a lack of recreational activities when they are not at work or in training. Prisoner representatives have been involved in discussions and planning meetings with staff. A needs analysis survey has also been carried out. By the end of the reporting period, the outcome largely focused on activities already existing, although new ones are planned, such as an inter-dormitory football competition. The plans so far seem to centre on satisfying existing prisoner interests rather than encouraging the development of new ones. There is no art, music or choral activity planned and no nature-based activity, even though the Sudbury site offers opportunities for this.

6.7.3 There were no entries this year to the Derby book festival competition, although some prisoners did submit entries for Koestler Awards for arts in criminal justice.

6.7.4 The peer support worker (PSW) programme has been revised to provide PSWs with qualifications. In several areas of the prison, staff have been very complimentary about the contributions made by PSWs, which have also been observed by the IMB.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

7.1.1 Education is delivered by People Plus. The two education buildings are welcoming and regularly refreshed in terms of the display material throughout. The facilities are well maintained and all areas are accessible. Functional skills courses in English and Maths are provided at entry level and levels 1 and 2. Digital skills has now replaced information and communications technology (ICT). A small number of prisoners are following Open University courses and other distance learning courses. Computers are available for prisoners to use in the education buildings, the library and the TTG building. Suitably adapted laptop computers have been provided to prisoners who are studying courses full-time. Coracle laptops, which are not linked to any network, are available to prisoners working full-time outside the prison who cannot access the computers available in the evenings and at weekends.

Since the introduction of early release schemes, some prisoners arrive at Sudbury with as little as four weeks left to serve. A digital progression framework has been devised for these prisoners, consisting of content that will be useful in helping to prepare them for future employment, such as health and safety awareness, managing finances, CV creation and writing disclosure letters for future employers. IMB members have received comments from some newly arrived prisoners who have previously been held in more modern prisons, where they often had access to modified laptops in their cells. This makes Sudbury seems technologically ill equipped in comparison. Unfortunately, lack of funding has prevented the development of a more progressive Wi-fi and laptop plan for Sudbury. This is particularly regrettable, given the rapid development in digital technology in the community and which prisoners will need to be competent to use once they are released.

7.1.2 People Plus staffing across education has been relatively stable over the reporting year. Where classes have had to be covered by replacement staff, the quality of the prisoners' experience has been high. Board members have observed very good relations with teaching staff, with prisoners talking positively about their teachers and the support they are given. Classes have a learning support teacher specifically to work alongside the class teacher. Learning support needs are assessed when prisoners are inducted and the necessary information provided to all teaching staff. The quality of teaching is assessed regularly, with consistently high results, and staff are well supported.

7.1.3 The primary aim of most prisoners arriving at Sudbury is to access vocational training or external employment opportunities, so education activities are not seen by many prisoners as a priority. For many prisoners, the length of stay at Sudbury is relatively short. In March 2024, 48% of prisoners had less than 12 months left to serve and 83 men had less than two months' remaining. This situation discourages prisoners from considering longer-term courses. The early release schemes have made this problem worse, with some prisoners arriving whose remaining time to serve has been very short and, occasionally, as little as a few days.

7.1.4 Prisoners are given an outline of education opportunities available at induction and are also notified that achieving English and Maths at a minimum of Level 1 is a requirement to apply for external employment. There remains some concern about

the low levels of achievement in English and Maths of many prisoners arriving at Sudbury. In May 2024, 21% of arrivals at Sudbury were below Level one in English and 22% were below Level 1 in Maths. Ten prisoners in this group of arrivals had not even achieved entry level two in English and four in Maths. Despite efforts in the prison to liaise with many of the regular sending prisons regarding the importance of achieving Level 1 before they arrive, many prisoners do not realise that without this level of achievement, many opportunities in an open prison remain inaccessible to them.

7.1.5 Success rates in English and Maths for those completing courses are consistently good. Between September 2023 and February 2024, 84% of prisoners taking English and 72% of prisoners taking Maths were successful. Success rates for neurodiverse prisoners were marginally lower than other groups. However, there was a significantly higher percentage of prisoners in the neurodivergent group withdrawing from their courses. Withdrawals by prisoners of black ethnicity were also proportionally higher.

7.1.6 It remains the case that having achieved the minimum functional skills levels required to allow them to apply for external employment, only modest numbers continue to Level 2.

7.1.7 The education and training provision at Sudbury remains largely as it was in past reporting years. Labour market intelligence and prisoner needs analysis are taken into account in planning and developing the provision, but these seem to have influenced the content of provision very little. During the reporting year, a forklift truck qualification has been introduced, which has proved popular and, despite some staffing issues, has attracted good numbers of applications from prisoners. Unfortunately, it has not proved possible to run this on a regular basis.

The Rail Track engineering course continues to run several times a year. It would assist prisoners in securing employment on release if other developing vocational areas could be explored, such as biodiversity, conservation and the expanding demand in the environmental management industries. It remains the case that there is no specific provision for English as a second or foreign language (ESOL) and those prisoners for whom English is not their first language are usually supported by the class learning support tutor. There is, as yet, still no curriculum designed to meet the needs of older prisoners for whom employment-focused activities may be inappropriate.

7.1.8 A very small number of prisoners are following courses off site. Attempts to develop successful relationships with organisations that can offer apprenticeship schemes to prisoners have been frustrated frequently by conditions imposed by employers.

7.1.9 There is no provision to support prisoners who want to study in their rooms. Attendance rates at education and training activities have become a focus of monitoring for the prison and failure to attend is now challenged effectively. There remain a number of failures to attend due to clashes with other legitimate regime activities.

7.1.10 The library service is provided by Suffolk Libraries. The library is a welcoming and well-resourced environment, which appears to be well used. It provides books, DVDs, newspapers and magazines, as well as a range of materials required by

statute to be available to prisoners. There have been some significant staffing issues in the reporting year, when the library has had to rely on volunteers to keep the provision open. This has impacted mostly on a number of Saturdays, when it had to rely on prisoner support workers in order to open, meaning that a full library service was not available to users.

7.1.11 Storybook Dads is now operating again and is used by a small number of prisoners every month. Despite encouragement from library staff, there have, so far, been no prisoners taking part in the Reading Challenge. Equality issues are regularly showcased in library displays, in addition to current events and World Book Day.

7.1.12 The monthly footfall in the library usually exceeds 3,000 visits. Overall, just over half of all Sudbury prisoners use the library at some point. A total of 75% of library loans were for DVDs. Compared to the total Sudbury prisoner population, black and Pakistani prisoners didn't use the library as much as white prisoners.

7.2 Vocational training, work

7.2.1 Vocational workshop activities internal to the prison available to prisoners provide qualifications in bricklaying, painting and decorating and catering. Also available are rail track engineering, step into construction and employability. There are a number of other internal workshop activities, which do not yet lead to recognised qualifications, including the Recycling Lives project. This involves electrical equipment being broken down for recycling, market gardens and wood assembly work.

Prisoners can also work in the kitchens, laundry, recycling and as dormitory cleaners. The prison acknowledges that in some areas, the qualifications offered need to be reviewed and improved to better enhance prisoners' employability. During the reporting year, a large workshop has been repurposed to accommodate a repair operation for outside event matting sponsored by the Sunbelt company. Some welding training is given to prisoners in this workshop and the pay is productivity based, with some opportunities for employment on release. Feedback to IMB members from prisoners working in this area has been very positive. There have been a few issues with a fall in the amount of work available when the host company is not able to deliver sufficient work to keep all prisoners occupied, which affects local pay levels. Prisoners have commented positively to IMB members about the support offered by the workshop instructors in many, though not all, areas.

7.2.2 The fully functioning café outside the main gate of the prison provides an authentic, public-facing, front-of-house experience for the prisoners who work there. The café has within it a barista coffee provision, sponsored by a national coffee house chain. Prisoners working in the main kitchens and the café area are able to pursue recognised catering qualifications. Adjoining the café is a garden shop, staffed by prisoners and selling produce grown within the prison among other things. Both these outlets are open to the public, who regularly comment positively on the standard of service they receive from prisoners.

7.2.3 The prison aims to complete a learning plan for each new arrival as soon as possible. The plan will be used to guide and direct prisoners into appropriate pathways in education and training, which will assist them in achieving their employment goals. The backlog in completion of the plans has largely been

addressed, but it remains a concern for the Board that so many prisoners arrive at Sudbury without having a learning plan set up in their previous prison(s).

7.2.4 Whilst most prisoners who speak to IMB members are satisfied with their experience of work activity in the prison, there is clearly an element of dissatisfaction in some workshop areas, in that the amount of work available appears to be insufficient to keep all those employed there fully occupied. It seems also to be the case that in some areas very little training is being delivered. It has been noted by the IMB that the tendency for different areas to adopt inconsistent policies on sending prisoners back to their dormitories when work is insufficient to occupy them all results in a level of resentment.

7.2.5 The IMB have been impressed with the work of staff in the resettlement area in seeking to establish effective collaboration with a range of employers to provide an excellent number of employment opportunities for prisoners on a ROTL basis whilst serving their sentence. Staff have produced a very informative guide to encourage prospective employers. There has been no shortage of warehousing and distribution vacancies within the scheme, but far fewer office and administration, fitness industry or catering opportunities. Prisoners often report feeling frustrated with this situation, although the prison has been able to make some progress in agreeing catering employment opportunities. Before Covid-19, the outwork scheme included a number of placements in charity organisations, but these have been very slow to reappear. The number of prisoners with outwork experience who have employment on their release is consistently high. In April 2024, 14 of 15 prisoners who had been in outwork had employment when they were released.

7.3 Offender management, progression

7.3.1 Staff in the offender management unit (OMU) have been under increased pressure as a result of HMPPS's response to the national prison population situation. Early release schemes have been introduced, resulting in erratic flow of prisoners from closed conditions to open conditions and much shorter sentences left to serve for many arrivals at Sudbury. Despite this, prisoners have been receiving their initial interviews with their prison offender manager promptly and within the required timeframe.

7.3.2 Issues relating to offender management made up 22% of complaints through the prison complaints system during the reporting year. Between March and May 2024 complaints about offender management accounted for 32% of all complaints. Board members often receive approaches from prisoners about the length of time it is taking for their applications for ROTL to be processed. Offender management issues were the subject of 25% of formal applications to the IMB in the reporting year.

Whilst many prisoners express appreciation for the work done on their behalf by prison offender managers and case workers, it remains the case that some prisoners feel there is a lack of consistency between staff in terms of processing their ROTL applications. It is noted by IMB members that the highly complex nature of the work required to securely approve applications to release prisoners on temporary licence is both time consuming and frequently delayed by the lack of responses from external agencies for information. However, it seems that many prisoners find these factors difficult to accept. IMB members have sometimes observed that the issue seems often to be one of a lack of effective communication on the progress of their

application between OMU staff and prisoners. Staff who communicate with prisoners regularly frequently receive praise from them. The Board notes that during the reporting year, the early morning drop-in sessions for prisoners to access OMU staff have been discontinued, which seems unfortunate. The recently introduced OMU application scheme does provide prisoners with a mechanism to contact OMU staff efficiently. Communication between the IMB and the Governor on this matter has revealed that a focus on the issues that often hold up the eventual final sign off of ROTL applications has resulted in some adjustments to the system, which are hoped will improve matters. Whilst the OMU has improved its monitoring of individual ROTL applications, overall data on the length of time taken to approve applications are not available.

7.3.3 The early release schemes previously referred to in this report have sometimes resulted in prisoners being located at Sudbury, which is distant from their home. This makes family contact difficult once ROTL has been approved, which has often been mentioned to Board members.

7.3.4 Prisoner compliance with ROTL requirements at Sudbury is good. Only 0.2% of prisoners approved for ROTL have failed to comply with all their licence requirements.

7.4 Family contact

7.4.1 Activities that encourage and include prisoners' families continue to be delivered by the Pact. IMB members have noted their excellent work in organising family days during all school holidays. These occasions have been extremely well organised and attended. Each occasion is usually based on a theme and the day provides a range of appropriate activities for children to get involved. On a recent visit to a family day, a Board member observed children making small aeroplanes, then going into the prison grounds to see whose plane would fly furthest. The Make Some Noise charity has been involved in some days, enabling the children to make music together.

7.4.2 A kids' breakfast event is organised once a month and prisoners' children are encouraged to bring with them homework or other school-based activities that their Dad can get involved with.

7.4.3 Prisoners who receive no social visits are also supported by Pact workers at a monthly coffee morning. Quizzes and other suitable activities are organised.

7.5 Resettlement planning

7.5.1 The number of prisoners released from Sudbury who are in employment six months afterwards has been generally around 40 to 60% during the year. Support for prisoners in finding work on release includes accompanied visits to job clubs in local libraries and meetings organised in the prison with prospective employers. Prisoner journey events have been introduced, which include visits from former prisoners who can outline their career development since their release. Some of the company presentations organised have resulted in employers commenting on the good quality of applicants. The employment hub continues to offer excellent materials to help with finding work, as well as job vacancy details. It is well organised and presented in its new location of the through the gate (TTG) area.

7.5.2 The IMB has noted in previous annual reports that prisoners often find it difficult to open bank accounts whilst still in prison, which remains an issue. In March 2024, five out of nine applications to one high street bank were rejected. The TTG team has negotiated an arrangement with a new banking organisation. It is prepared to consider applications for accounts made in person by approving a ROTL arrangement and these prisoners can sometimes be accompanied by one of the TTG team.

7.5.3 The Board has noted the good levels of support provided by the TTG staff, which are frequently commented on by prisoners. A whole range of necessary arrangements for life on release can be supported by the team, including help with driving licence and passport applications, debt cancellation and court fines.

7.5.4 The prison makes strenuous efforts to support prisoners with securing accommodation on release. In the year April 2023 to March 2024, 96% of prisoners released from Sudbury had accommodation to go to. The Board has some concerns that the early release schemes in operation will create additional pressure on staff and accommodation resources. In March 2024, 12 early release prisoners required urgent accommodation support due to being homeless on release. Staff dealing with these issues share frustration at the lack of approved premises accommodation, which are now routinely being allocated to early release prisoners to the disadvantage of longer-term or paroled prisoners.

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	11
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	5
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	4
Total number of visits to the establishment	196

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	6	2
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	0	0
C	Equality	0	0
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	0	0
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	1	0
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	2	0
F	Food and kitchens	0	0
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	6	2
H1	Property within the establishment	1	0
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	4	5
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	3	1
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence), parole, release dates, recategorisation	6	5
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	0	1
K	Transfers	2	1
L	Miscellaneous	1	3
	Total number of applications	32	20

Annex A

Service providers

1	Maintenance	Amey
2	Prisoner transport	GeoAmey
3	Canteen	DHL
4	Education	People Plus
5	Through-the-gate services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• IAG• Pact
6	Library	Suffolk Library Service
7	Healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Practice Plus Group• Time for teeth (dental services)• PPG MSK (physiotherapy and chiropody)• Derbyshire Social Services (social care)• Inclusion (substance misuse service)



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