



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at Woodhill

**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 Woodhill is a category B training prison. The prison's operational capacity 504 at the start of the reporting year and 346 at the end of the reporting year¹.

There are six house units, two units are closed due to the implementation of an Urgent Notification (when a serious concern has been identified during an inspection) action plan.

At the end of the reporting year, three house units were open, as well as a segregation unit, a two-wing healthcare unit and a specialist unit that consists of a close supervision centre, a separation centre (mothballed) and a discrete unit.

HMP Woodhill was first opened in 1992. All cells are single occupancy and have in-cell phones. It is situated on a large site in a densely populated area in Milton Keynes.

In September 2023, the HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (HMIP) invoked the Urgent Notification (UN) process after an unannounced inspection of HMP Woodhill in August 2023. It was designated unsafe, due to unacceptable levels of safety, violence, self-harm and illicit drug use, alongside a lack of key working and training. There were significant staffing shortages. The Secretary of State for Justice committed to providing HMP Woodhill with support via the HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) national safety team and additional staff deployments.

A period of planning followed for the UN priorities to be addressed: reduce levels of violence; increase the number of prisoners engaging in education and purposeful activities; improve reception/first night/indication processes; improve quality and timelines of complaints; improve levels and quality of key working; and improve levels of cleanliness and decency, particularly in residential areas. During the period until Christmas 2023, 190 prisoners were decanted to other prisons, enabling two house units to be temporarily closed, with a proposed working operational capacity of 346 men. This report focuses on the six months since the decant. During this time, the prison has operated with 288 prisoners in three general house units, plus the segregation unit, healthcare facility and the specialist house unit.

Throughout this period, staffing levels have continued to be supported by officers detached from other establishments. This has greatly benefited the day-to-day running of the prison in terms of the regime but has impacted prisoner and officer work and support relationships. Newly appointed officers have been trained and are in post. The prison anticipated being 90% staffed by August 2024.

Staff training, clinical supervision sessions, strengthening of the safety team, coaching and up-skilling of the assessment, care and custody and teamwork (ACCT) processes, which are used to support those at risk of self-harm and suicide, and increased key working have all been identified and developed in the year. Use of force is scrutinised by senior managers in a weekly meeting.

An independent review of progress since the Urgent Notification is scheduled for July 2024. Ofsted and the care quality commission (CQC) inspections are due at the same time.

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

- Prisoner-on-prisoner assaults have remained among the highest in the long-term and high security estate. The safer custody team is proactive in supporting self-isolators and those men who self-identify as being at risk of self-harm.
- The number of ACCTs remains high, although there has been a focus in improving the use of the ACCT process with increased training and quality assurance checks.
- All prisoners have a named key worker, and the Board has witnessed this working effectively in the Segregation Unit.
- Regular key worker sessions began in January 2024. A target was set at 120 per week, but this was rarely met.
- Prisoners with mental health issues and/or neurodiversity are over-represented in adjudication panels (disciplinary hearings when a prisoner is alleged to have broken prison rules).

Fair and humane treatment

- The issue of laptops and the implementation of the Launchpad system (a platform providing prisoners with secure access to a content hub of information, entertainment and diversionary content, plus some transactional services, including applications, via a laptop in their cells) in February 2024 was well received by most prisoners. They value the immediacy of being able to update their phone credit, monitor and access their spending, order their menus and access to prison information.
- Because of the lack of staffing consistency, the development of positive relationships between prisoners and staff was challenging. The Board noted improved levels and quality of key worker interactions.
- The fabric of the buildings is showing signs of wear and tear. The showers in the majority of house units are of an unacceptable standard. But the closure of two house units during this period enabled significant upgrading of the spaces, with redecoration, flooring replaced or repaired, and showers cleaned.
- Cleanliness and decency were a defined focus, with standards set and objectives defined. These included cleaning priorities and schedules should be in place on the wings, identification of faults and repairs should be streamlined, and prisoners wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) for wing duties should be enforced. However, the Board noticed that, over the last six months of 2023, cleaning schedules were not always in place and implementation was variable.
- From the Board's observations, the Segregation Unit appeared to provide a fair and safe regime. However, a small number of men spent a very long time in the unit, with very slow progress regarding moves to more appropriate specialist settings.
- Concerns remained high concerning the number of men in the Segregation Unit who had complex and severe mental health needs.
- The Segregation Unit immediately initiated a re-integration plan when men were brought to the unit in liaison with the custody managers of other wings.

Health and wellbeing

- The health and wellbeing requirements of prisoners were generally met, although the Board is still concerned that caring for prisoners with physical illnesses alongside the severely mentally ill is not appropriate.
- A revised regime was introduced in January 2024. This resulted in time out of cell being increased with men on the standard and enhanced level of the incentives scheme given 30 minutes extra time out of their cells compared with prisoners on the basic level.
- Mental health services appeared to be valued and trusted by prisoners, but they struggled to cope with demand. Prisoners requiring severe mental health services waited too long for assessment and transfer.
- Family days (which bring together men and their families outside of their statutory entitlement usually in more informal settings) were not consistently re-introduced until the school holidays of Christmas 2023. Social visits and social video calls remained underused by the prisoners, but family days were very popular.

Progression and resettlement

- Access to education, library services and workshops seemed to improve since the 6 months since the decant.
- The appointment of a head of education, skills and work led to a focus on getting men into work and education.
- However, there were insufficient jobs and education opportunities, so part-time work was introduced to enable more men to be employed, while dual-rolling enabled men to engage in education alongside a work activity. Wing-based work and orderly roles remained full-time, while education and each workshop were allocated a full-time mentor.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- Will the Minister work with colleagues across Government departments to develop an improved plan for the recruitment and retention of prison staff?
- Will the Minister work with colleagues in the Department of Health and Social Care to consider how to address the mental health needs of prisoners, many of whom require specialist care alongside their punishment and rehabilitation?
- Will the Minister work with colleagues in the Department of Health and Social Care to address the needs of neurodiverse prisoners?
- Will the Minister work with Government departments to facilitate and provide appropriate training and resettlement for prisoners?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- Can the planned decrease in the operational capacity be monitored closely so that the significant gains made in safety, decency and culture at HMP Woodhill since 2023 are not lost?
- To review the daily spend for prisoners in the light of the rise in the cost of living.
- Will the Minister enable prisoners to earn more to match the increased costs of canteen purchases?

- Review how capital budgets can more effectively be used to maintain the fabric of the prison estate.
- To radically overhaul the property system within the Prison Service.

TO THE GOVERNOR

- To work with partners to improve the access to suitable offending behaviour programmes for the progression of long-term prisoners.
- To embed and extend the existing education, vocational training and work in the regime.
- To work with partners to increase the provision of contract workshops in the prison.
- To continue and develop the provision of meaningful data recorded and shared among teams, specifically regarding equality and diversity.

3.3 Response to the last report

Issue raised	Response given	Progress
To the Minister		
To work with colleagues across Government departments to develop a meaningful plan for the recruitment and retention of prison staff.	Woodhill staffing was supported by an increase in detached staff throughout the reporting year.	Staffing levels increasing and are anticipated to be 90% of requirement in August 2024. Staff training has been a priority, with one day per month allowed for all staff to learn together.
To work with colleagues in the Department of Health and Social Care to consider how the pathway through secondary care could be streamlined for prisoners who are transferred after their referral.	No response.	No progress.
To the Prison Service		
To review the daily spend for prisoners in the light of the current rise in the cost of living.	No response	No progress.
To review how capital budgets can more effectively be used to maintain the fabric of the prison estate.	No response.	No progress.

To overhaul radically the property system within the prison service.	No response.	The Prisoners' Property Policy Framework appears to have improved internal processes but not the transfer of property between establishments
To the Governor		
To ensure practical plans are in place to increase the access to meaningful activity for all prisoners within the current resources.	No response.	The revised regime gives men access to more work, education and vocational training.
To work with partners to improve access to suitable programmes for long-term prisoners.	No response.	No progress.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

The reduction in operational capacity reduced the throughput of prisoners and their property in reception.

When observed in reception and during their induction on the house unit, all the relevant checks, processes and assessments were in place and documented. The Board saw a high level of professionalism and care from staff. Where possible, a regular team of officers is now on the induction house unit to provide consistency.

All new prisoners are now placed on the same wing to help them settle in. After induction is completed, they are transferred to other house units, together with a newly implemented induction programme, which appears to help men who are moved between prisons.

When the Board interviewed some prisoners in their first few weeks, they spoke highly of the induction process and the support given, although men complained about delays in accessing their personal phone numbers and property sent with them. However, the issuing of laptops streamlined some processes.

New arrivals were seen by someone from the healthcare unit and from the chaplaincy team. All men arriving are body scanned and searched and many were found to have items secreted on their person. This, again, raises the question of how thoroughly they were searched on leaving their previous establishment.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

In the reporting period, the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) published three fatal incident reports relating to deaths in custody during the 2022-2023 reporting period. Two deaths were ruled to have been self-inflicted, while one was due to natural causes.

In this reporting year, there were three deaths in custody that occurred in July 2023, November 2023 and April 2024, one of which was believed to have been due to natural causes. At the end of the reporting year the PPO reports on the deaths had not been published.

Weekly safety intervention meetings (SIMs) reviewed ACCT and CSIPs (challenge, support and intervention plans, used to manage prisoners who pose an increased risk of violence). Complex cases and self-isolators were discussed individually.

In any given month in the reporting period, between 4.2% and 9.3% of the prison population was deemed to be at risk of self-harm or suicide, as evidenced by the number of open ACCT plans. These proactive interventions have an impact on the amount of time staff have for routine management on the wing and meaningful conversations with those in need.

Members of the Board reviewed ACCT documentation during monitoring visits. Most care plans and on-going records (including observation logs) were found to be up-to-date and contained meaningful information. However, occasionally, members noted that information in observation logs was missing (observations not completed or not signed for) or entries were made in too-regular intervals. This is a cause for concern for the Board, given the preventive purpose and importance of such observations.

Cell cards identifying the men were frequently not displayed on the wings. Evidence from monitoring visits suggests that there was some improvement but a lack of consistency, which is a risk in the case of emergency, particularly with inexperienced staff or those on detachment.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

HMP Woodhill continued to rely on the redeployment of staff from other establishments to maintain safe staffing levels. The Board witnessed occasions where all the officers on a wing were on detached duty, which limited the ability of the men to develop trusting relationships. Moreover, due to low staffing levels, some simple things and prisoner requests could not be handled in a timely manner. This led to frustration, which resulted in violence against staff. Issues with the regime were quoted as the most common reason for violence against staff and a decline in behaviour.

Conversely some prison officers on detached duty reported to the Board that the condition of HMP Woodhill made them worried about their safety and that they felt safer in their home establishments.

The mistrust and frustration about detached staff remained problematic for prisoners. A recent innovation, using a recognition app on Launchpad encourages prisoners to thank staff. The prison received an average of four 'thank yous' a week, which were shared in the weekly newsletter.

The rate of assaults, both on staff and other prisoners, was one of the highest in the long term and high security estate. The rate of assaults showed only a marginal improvement after the prison capacity was reduced.

From December 2023 to May 2024, there were 61 incidents of violence against staff and 39 against other prisoners. This was an increase in the number of assaults against staff, some of which were serious and required immediate medical care.

The ACCT process aims to support prisoners who self-harm. It was improved by increased coaching and training of staff, quality assurance checks and increased quality assurance by the safer custody team. There is some evidence that poor behaviour was increasingly challenged, resulting in a greater use of the incentives scheme policy and, therefore, an increased number of adjudications. The number of ACCTs opened during any given month averaged 20.

CSIPs support men and set out behavioural targets that require regular reviews. However, most referrals to CSIP were reactive rather than proactive.

The Board saw prisoners allowed into wing offices far too often and there was one incident when a prisoner was left alone in an office, which had significant security consequence.

In the UN of September 2023, the HMIP noted that: *'71% of prisoners said they had felt unsafe at some point during their stay at the prison and almost half said they currently felt unsafe. We found at least 26 prisoners who were self-isolating in their cells in fear for their safety.'* The Board is also concerned at the number of prisoners who chose to self-isolate, particularly those who self-isolated for very extended periods of time. At any one time, there were, generally, between 8 and 12 self-isolators, with a range of 15-357 days. Many men quoted debt or efforts to stay out of trouble as reasons for self-isolation.

The vigilance of the safer custody team in implementing the safer custody policy and visiting these men weekly is acknowledged. The Board is concerned about these

prisoners' lack of regular access to exercise and showers, although there has been an improvement in the availability of regime offered to self-isolators. Staffing issues is the reason given to Board members who question house unit staff about the lack of access to exercise or showers. Many self-isolators established working relationships with their assigned key workers. The Board acknowledges that for some men self-isolation is a hard habit to break.

The 'keeping the peace' strategy aims to address violence. It includes mediation training for all staff and a 'peace promoters' initiative. A total of 12 prisoners and 12 staff members were trained as peace promoters. They engage with men who are experiencing difficult or conflicting situations, are impartial and non-judgemental, and support those who seek a positive way forward. The safer custody team has increased resources, and consultation with prisoners is leading to increased incentives to promote pro-social behaviour.

4.4 Use of force

Weekly meetings scrutinised the use of force (UoF) and learned lessons from incidents. Analysis of the reasons showed that refusing to follow a lawful order, e.g. locate back to the cell, was the most common reason for UoF, with most incidents being spontaneous rather than planned.

At the time of the HMIP inspection in August 2023, the use of force against prisoners was amongst the highest in the adult male estate.

Data for UoF shows that the numbers (by percentage of the prison roll) have not decreased significantly since then. While improvements have been made, the Board is concerned that there are still a notable number of instances where the paperwork is not completed in a timely manner, although most is completed within 72 hours. This can have a detrimental effect on the internal audit procedures and negatively impact the quality of staff statements as, with the passage of time, the ability to accurately recall all factual matters related to a UoF incident is diminished.

Nevertheless, the Board is pleased to note that prisoner debriefs were increasingly completed in relation to all UoF incidents, giving prisoners feedback regarding the level of force used, as well as the justification and proportionality for it. Negative feedback is discussed at prison meetings and prisoners are advised of supportive avenues.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

This continues to be a challenging area for the prison. The use of illicit spice (a synthetic cannabinoid) increased and adapted vapes were being used as a way of taking drugs. 'Hooch', or 'prison alcohol', continues to be illicitly brewed and distributed.

The dedicated search team (DST) carried out searches on men and across areas of the prison, which resulted in finds of drugs, phones, electronic storage equipment and weapons, etc. In May 2024, an illicit items amnesty encouraged men to hand in items (drugs and weapons) without repercussions.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

Overall, the fabric of the prison is showing its age. The implementation of a clean living and working conditions strategy started to address this, following a comprehensive identification and analysis of the state of each unit. A group of men worked in the closed units to complete some remedial work, which will continue in other house units. Other objectives in the strategy are to train 'room ready' representatives to work with wing Insiders (trusted prisoners who can talk to other prisoners about the procedures in prison) to ensure all cells have the necessary furniture ahead of allocation to new prisoners and that stores of cleanliness and decency supplies are maintained. A deep clean of the serveries in each house unit was scheduled.

Effective arrangements were in place to report faults, identify, create and display cleaning priorities on each wing and ensure that appropriate PPE was available for wing cleaners and servery workers. Early observations by the Board frequently recorded that officers on the wing could not locate the cleaning schedules or demonstrate that they were operational.

The clean and decency programme, launched alongside this, has specific targets of addressing basic needs, such as the way food was served and the provision of decency boxes with toilet rolls and cleaning products. Privacy in the showers and their condition and cleanliness remained an issue.

Staff rest areas are scheduled to be kept clean, decorated, tidy and appropriately furnished. The Board approves of these proposals, having been frequently dismayed by the poor working conditions of staff and its impact on morale.

A quality assurance process, delegating responsibilities to supervising officers and other officers, will monitor this major improvement, following a comprehensive analysis. The Board will monitor this throughout the next reporting year.

All cells are single occupancy with in-cell phones. In-cell computers (Launchpad) were introduced in February 2024. Men acknowledged that this helped them to obtain phone credit more promptly and access in-cell activities.

A new online menu system was introduced in March 2024 and the charity, Food Behind Bars, has been working with the catering department to help improve quality and choice in the menu.

Vulnerable men continued to complain about perceived lack of equity in the distribution and allocation of laundry, clothing, bedlinen and food.

The condition of the serveries on the wings remained poor and the Board recorded many instances when the serveries were not supervised by officers at mealtimes. The food consists of a breakfast pack, cold sandwich/snack and one hot meal a day. Although the meals are often made with budget ingredients instead of fresh, the re-introduction of the market gardens (a popular workplace for prisoners) should help to improve the situation. The Board was frequently made aware of the number of men who requested sealed or special meals and the financial pressure this placed on the catering department.

5.2 Segregation

The Segregation Unit has 12 cells, plus a special accommodation cell (where items such as furniture, bedding and sanitation are removed in the interests of safety). It also has an attached extension, designated as an overflow to the main unit, which invariably held at least an extra three or four men. The constant need for this space, alongside the need for several men on four or even six staff unlock, added huge pressure to managing the regime.

During the year, men were also held on Rule 45 (exclusion from association for the maintenance of good order or discipline or in the prisoner's own interests) on the clinical assessment unit (CAU).

Men continued to report that they created a disturbance on the wings in order to be segregated, in the belief that this would speed up their transfer to another establishment. This is not true, but men become stuck, often refusing to relocate back to the main house units. There was always a prisoner in Segregation Unit for more than 42 days (the limit allowed without external authorisation), with one man being there for nearly three years. Together with the obvious mental disturbance of many of the prisoners who come to Segregation unit the overall concern of the Board was that Segregation is not a suitable environment for these men but the ability to transfer men to a more appropriate setting remained limited.

Staff training in the Segregation Unit included learning about neurodiversity and personality disorders. The Board observed that the implementation of protected time for key working, use of care progression plans and integration with house units were positive responses to the criticisms and findings of the HMIP Inspection that led to the UN.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

An action plan developed after the UN identified several strategies and processes. The 'keeping the peace' strategy addresses violence and includes mediation training for all staff, having peace promoters on the wings and increased resources in the safer custody team. Consultation with prisoners led to increased incentives to promote pro-social behaviour. Key working was relaunched in January 2024 with an identified need for a 1:6 ratio. By February 2024, all men had a named key worker, but delivery of key working sessions was only 20%. Each wing was supposed to complete eight key working sessions per day, but recording of work undertaken was poor. By the end of the reporting year, there was evidence of key working sessions being embedded into the regime and the Board was aware of more interactions being recorded. Men identified as a high priority had a key working session twice a month, while others were seen once a month. Many self-isolators established working relationships with their assigned key workers.

Prisoners either meet their prison offender manager (POM) or receive a written communication from them within the first three months of their sentence.

Weekly wing forums were scheduled to take place every Tuesday, chaired by a senior officer or custodial manager, and fed into the monthly prison council meetings chaired by the Governor or the Deputy. The Board will monitor the implementation of this.

The new Launchpad app encourages men to provide recognition, feedback and comment on their interaction with staff.

5.4 Equality and diversity

Equality and diversity remain an area that requires further development at HMP Woodhill. A new diversity and inclusion lead joined part way through the year but, at the end of May 2024 was on long-term sick leave and had been for several months. This left a supervising officer covering the function (supported by a prison officer). Combined with a recent change of functional head and the UN, this reduced the work in this area.

Diversity and equalities action team (DEAT) meetings, implemented in 2023, were held on a monthly or bi-monthly basis, and were attended by a range of stakeholders including Governors, chaplaincy staff and the safer custody team and were supported by the Zahid Mubarak Trust. Prisoner equalities' 'advocates', a recently implemented initiative, also attended. There are plans to continue to develop the advocate role, so they can participate in equality drop-in sessions, scrutinise appropriately redacted discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs) and support other prisoners with equality-related issues. In the Board's opinion, more advocates need to be recruited, as there were currently only four on one wing, and one each on two other wings.

The Equality Analysis Policy Framework, provided by HMPPS, is temporarily unavailable. It should have been issued in early March 2024, but it still had not been published by the end of the reporting year. The Board was not provided with the requested information about whether or not equality impact assessments were being carried out when changes or decisions were made, or with any examples if they were being completed.

Governors and other senior members of staff act as 'leads' for the different protected characteristics (these include race, religion, age, disability, sex, gender reassignment and sexual orientation, which it is unlawful to discriminate against) and support the Equality staff to facilitate community events on the Woodhill diversity and inclusion calendar for different awareness days/weeks/months.

Age

At the end of the reporting year, prison data showed that representation of age groups across basic, standard and enhanced levels of the incentives scheme were consistent with the overall population, with only three variations of over 2%:

- 18-25s were 15% of the population, but accounted for 9% of those on basic (under represented);
- 26-35s were 40% of the population, but made up 44% of those on basic (over represented); and
- 46-55s were 11% of the population but accounted for 16% of those on basic (over represented).

Representation of age groups was inconsistent with the overall population, with most groups either over- or under-represented. The data for this were derived from DEAT meeting slides, which used different age group categories to the data on Nomis (the internal computer system). The Board suggests that data categories should be standardised across all protected characteristics so that datasets can be compared.

There were no significant inconsistencies in representation in adjudication reports, but 36-45 year olds were over-represented on proven charges: they made up 43% of proven charges, but only 34% of adjudication reports and 30% of the population.

Disability

Data from the equality team showed that 59 prisoners - about 18% of the population - had some form of mental illness, a reduction of 13% since last year's report. The Board is concerned that some prisoners with significant mental health issues remain on the wings, due to lack of capacity in specialist facilities

The appointment of a neurodiversity support manager (NSM) has led to an increased focus on this condition in Woodhill, with 137 (42%) prisoners having a declared or screened neurodivergent condition. These include ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), autism, acquired brain injury, dyslexia, developmental co-ordination disorder (dyspraxia) and learning difficulties. The data provided also included three prisoners with a hearing impairment in the breakdown of the figures of those who are neurodiverse, which the Board does not believe to be appropriate. Neurodivergent prisoners have a needs-based assessment, which should help identify and provide appropriate support.

Personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs) remain an area of concern for the Board, with wing staff frequently unable to locate the files in the offices, and still no centralised record of them. There were 18 prisoners with a PEEP on Nomis, but a further 10 with an identified need, who had no PEEP in place. This could be a serious issue in the case of an emergency.

In a snapshot at the end of the reporting year, data showed some inconsistencies in representation across basic, standard and enhanced levels of the incentives scheme between those with a recorded disability, those without, and the 'unknown' group.

Those with a recorded disability are 16% of the population, but 22% of those on the basic level of the incentive scheme (over-represented). Prisoners with no recorded disability are 55% of the population, but 69% of those on basic (over-represented). Men in the unknown group are 29% of the population but make up 9% of those on basic (under-represented) and 40% on enhanced status (over-represented).

Filling the data gap here would give a better understanding of whether there is a need to investigate further into any large discrepancies between those with disabilities and those without. The Board is particularly concerned that 29% of prisoners were in the 'unknown' category, regarding whether or not they have a recorded disability on Nomis, and that 53 prisoners were recorded as having a disability, yet the equality team data showed at least 59 with a mental illness.

The data on Nomis also showed 193 prisoners (53%) with 'a learning disability and other challenges (LDCs)', which was inconsistent with the data the equality team had on neurodiversity. There is room for improvement in how data is categorised, stored, accessed and displayed.

Those with LDCs are significantly over-represented in both adjudication reports and proven charges (65% of reports and 75% of those proven, compared with 53% of the population), which is also a concern for the Board.

Ethnicity

In a snapshot, data showed that representation of ethnicity groups across basic, standard and enhanced levels of the incentives scheme were consistent with the overall population for Asian/Asian British and 'other' prisoners (all with variations of 3% or less), with less consistency across black/black British and white prisoners:

- Black/black British prisoners were 25% of the population but made up 16% of those on basic (under-represented) and 29% of those on enhanced (over-represented).

- White prisoners were 52% of the population but accounted for 66% of those on basic (over-represented), 59% of those on standard (over-represented), and 41% of those on enhanced (over-represented).
- When it came to adjudications and proven charges, Black/black British and Asian/Asian British prisoners were slightly under-represented in adjudication reports. White prisoners were over-represented, making up 67% of adjudication reports for the period while being 52% of the population.
- Black/black British prisoners remained slightly under-represented when looking at proven charges, but Asian/Asian British prisoners accounted for 18% of the proven charges while receiving only 6% of the adjudication reports (11% of the population).
- White prisoners were more accurately represented for proven charges, making up 59% of them.

Sexual orientation

The numbers in the population data are such that no representation comparisons can be made.

Data showed that representation of most religious groups across basic, standard and enhanced levels of the incentive scheme were consistent with the overall population (all with variations of 3% or less), with less consistency in a few areas: Christians were 39% of the population but made up 31% of those on basic status (under-represented).

Muslims were 41% of the population, but 23% of those on standard (under-represented) and 48% of those on enhanced (over-represented). Those of no faith were 12% of the population, but 16% of those on basic (under-represented), 18% of those on standard (over-represented) and 5% of those on enhanced (under-represented).

The prison celebrated a wide variety of faith and diversity events throughout the year: Black History Month, Diwali, Transgender Day of Visibility, National Autism Week, Vaisakhi, LGBTIQ+ History Month, Chinese New Year and Eid.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The chaplaincy staff, supported by volunteers, continued to provide high-quality services, including pastoral and bereavement support for the prisoners' wide range of faiths and those of no faith. At the end of the reporting year, the population self-identified as 40% Muslim, 37.5% Christian, 11.5% other religions and 11% no religion.

Until February 2024, the largest faith groups were only able to meet fortnightly, due to staff shortages in the wider prison. The reduction in the number of prisoners then allowed all faith members to attend at once. Friday Muslim prayers averaged about 85 attendees, the Anglican service attracted about 22 participants and the Roman Catholic service about 14.

5.6 Incentives schemes

The average number of prisoners on the basic level of the incentives scheme remained fairly constant throughout the year, at 21, which is around 6% of the population. For comparison, an average of 165 (49%) were on the enhanced status. Both these figures represent an improvement on the previous year. The improved use of the incentives policy framework for non-adherence to prison rules initially resulted in retaliatory behaviours: for example, men found 'under the influence' of drugs or alcohol had a 24-hour restriction imposed but then they maliciously set off fire alarms or increased their

self-harm. The prison hopes this behaviour will settle down as the men adjust to the proper framework being enforced. Data for the number of adjudications for the first six months of the reporting year showed a 15% increase on the previous year; then, for the subsequent six months of the reporting year, there was an increase (adjusted for the reduced prison population) of 20% on the previous year.

5.7 Complaints

HMP Woodhill received 3,779 complaints in the reporting year, which represents a decrease from the previous year. The key performance targets for responses were not met, on average fewer than 50% of responses were generated within the set time. Complaints concerned with prisoner property remain the highest number of complaints received followed by: confidential access, staff (attitude/conduct), residential and security.

5.8 Property

Due to the reduction in the number of prisoners at HMP Woodhill, there were fewer complaints about property. However, prisoners continued to arrive at the prison with large amounts of property: more than the three 15kg bags they were allowed, with some often left behind. IMB applications (prisoners' written representations to the Board) related to property lost during transfer to HMP Woodhill are time consuming and lengthy, as they can involve more than one prison. During the reporting year, the IMB was contacted by a few IMB Boards about property issues that had resulted from transfers out of HMP Woodhill, although more for, apparently, lost items, such as trainers.

The property framework has improved recording systems and storage of property but has made very little apparent difference to the lives of prisoners. Staff shortages in reception were persistent throughout the reporting year and affected the timely access of property by prisoners. The appointment of new staff should help resolve the situation. In the Board's view, a radical overhaul of the system across the whole prison estate is needed for it to run efficiently.

During the decanting of prisoners from HMP Woodhill, staff arranged for prisoners' property to be delivered directly to their new location within five days. This helped reduce the number of complaints about property after leaving the establishment.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

Healthcare is provided under contract to the Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, which sub-contracts to the Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust (CNWL) for the delivery of the service in the prison.

The clinical assessment unit frequently holds men for lengthy periods of assessment, so admission of new prisoners is delayed.

Occupational therapy is provided by the mental health team. Physiotherapy is sub-contracted, and an out-patient service is provided twice a month. The dental service is also contracted out.

Again, as noted in our previous report, there were occasions when cells in the clinical assessment unit (CAU) and compass unit, which provide specialist programmes for men who find it difficult to cope on the main wings, were put out of action by the occupants. This resulted in considerable operational difficulties and admission delays.

Prior to the reduction in the number of prisoners in late 2023, the service struggled due to a lack of staff, both in healthcare and in the rest of the prison. Lack of escort staff resulted in some prisoners being unable to attend healthcare appointments. From January 2024, healthcare staffing improved, and escort staff became available. Attendance at appointments and, therefore, treatments improved as a result. However, in the first half of 2024, HMP Woodhill received a higher number of prisoners with very complex health needs. This was partly due to the healthcare service having a good record of managing such cases and also because the reduced number of prisoners freed up staff resources to deal with them.

At the end of the reporting year there was a notable increase in the use of Spice and other NPS (new psychoactive substances, which mimic established recreational drugs) use. There were 30 medical emergencies during one weekend in May 2024, due to Spice use. Some healthcare (and other) staff were affected by being close to users and they, too, needed medical attention.

The Governor and the head of healthcare meet regularly to review operations and progress. Relationships appear to be good and mutually beneficial. A healthcare forum with prisoners shares health promotion strategies.

A joint inspection of healthcare in summer 2023 resulted in the issue of some improvement notices, but they were mainly of secondary importance.

6.2 Physical healthcare

Prior to the reduction in the number of prisoners, waiting times for all appointments were, in the Board's view, longer than they should have been. Since the reduction, waiting times have gone back to 'normal' and appear comparable to those in the wider community. Nevertheless, prisoners complained about delays in accessing medical, dental and mental health care.

Across the prison service accessing secondary care was challenging, particularly where a prisoner moved prison part way through assessment or treatment. The transfer required a referral to be made to a new secondary care provider, often causing significant delays. Most of the patient safety incidents during the year resulted from the use of Spice by prisoners.

6.3 Mental health

Most prisoners are assessed on the same day as referral, although the requirement is 48 hours for urgent referrals and five working days for those that are non-urgent.

Prisoners spoke positively about the support they received from the mental health nurses, but there was often frustration over the length of time they had to wait for psychiatrist appointments.

Demand for the specialist care provided by both the clinical assessment unit (CAU) and the COMPASS unit was higher than could be met. The Segregation Unit was required to keep men who would benefit from the support of CAU or the COMPASS unit, but who could not be housed there. They were not able to access group work, which might be beneficial to them. Individual work was done with men on the compass unit, but prisoners could not always be moved on as quickly as necessary, which blocked places in the Unit.

As in previous years, transfers of men to secure mental institutions generally took far too long, often resulting in lengthy periods in the Segregation Unit and deterioration in their mental health.

6.4 Social care

Social care assessments for specialist equipment for prisoners with disabilities were carried out by Milton Keynes City Council's occupational therapy service.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

A new core day began in January 2024, with a renewed focus on purposeful activity. The intention was that men should be fully occupied when the wing was 'open' as wing workers or in education, work or activities off the wing. They would be locked up during a 'closed' session. A wider range of regime was available, which depended on a prisoner's incentives scheme status. Prisoners with full-time or dual roles were out of their cells for 6.75 hours per day, those with part-time roles were out for 4.25 hours per day and unemployed prisoners (not in work or education) were out for 1.75 hours per day. Exercise time has not yet returned to one hour per day

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

This is managed by the addictions team in the healthcare department, comprising a psychosocial and a substance abuse team. Complex cases, often involving prisoners dependent on prescribed painkillers, are reviewed in a fortnightly complex case meeting. Referrals to the service are made from house units or can be by made by the prisoner himself. One-to-one sessions and in-cell workbooks were used until December 2023, when the prison staffing levels were sufficient to facilitate recovery steps group work. A total of 18 group sessions have been facilitated since then; 162 prisoners were invited, and 89 men successfully completed their chosen recovery steps' group sessions, others continued with 1:1 sessions of in-cell workbooks. 7 men completed their care plan and were discharged from the service.

The service recognises that not all drug users in the prison have any interest or motivation to change their behaviour. The success rate for complete detoxification is only about 3%. Currently there is a high use of vaping across the prison with little or no demand for smoking cessation courses. The service had planned to introduce Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous help, this has been hindered by the need for counter terrorism security clearance.

6.7 Soft skills

Wellbeing resources are signposted on noticeboards. Wings have appointed Listeners (trained prisoners), who work with the Samaritans and Insiders to provide support to their peers. However, Listeners tell us that they sometimes are not unlocked to support men in need, which they find very frustrating.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, Library

Education is provided by Milton Keynes College. A variety of courses were taught, including English, maths, music, art, information technology, catering and construction. Classes were held from Monday to Thursday: part-time classes for education and full-time classes for catering and construction.

From the beginning of January 2024, there were 68 places in education and multi-skills (construction) courses, although the multi-skills workshop did not re-open until April 2024. Additional English classes allocated 20 more men into classroom base learning. However, the target set, of 100% attendance by April 2024, was not met. The total allocation was 73 men: 51 in education and 22 in construction. The attendance rate was 72% allocation, but the actual attendance at the end of the reporting year was 47 men in the morning and 57 in the afternoon. Art and music remained very popular. The education team reported that prisoners spoke highly of how these subjects helped support their mental health. Art projects were exhibited in the prison and works of art and literature were entered for the Koestler Awards for arts in criminal justice.

The number of men studying with the open University increased to about 10.

The multi-skills training facility trained up to 22 men in painting and decorating, plastering, plumbing and tiling. Success can lead to a Level 2 diploma in maintenance operations. It is hoped to include a virtual reality welding course in the next year.

The Ways into Work and Ways into Reading programmes held a three-day event in January 2024, showcasing the availability of education, industries and the Shannon Trust. It was attended by 60% of the prisoner population.

Reading corners were set up in education. Assisted reading spaces and reading champions were appointed on the wings in December 2024 and books were donated. From the Board's observations, these spaces were well used and well maintained on most of the house units. The reading and literacy focus was supported by an initiative that financially rewarded prisoners for referring another prisoner and on completion of the course.

The library re-opened in September 2023 on a part-time basis for the first time since the implementation of Covid restrictions. By January 2024, there were 172 registered borrowers. Capacity and accessibility increased so that the men could go to the library twice a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, for 45 minutes. However, actual numbers attending during these times remained low, with often only 2-5 men per session. The Board was told by prisoners that if session timings overlapped, they chose the gym over the library. If they were delayed in being escorted back from the library, they risked missing their gym session. The more distant areas of the prison (Segregation/CAU, house unit 6) were visited around the designated wing times. At the end of the year, the library had 260 borrowers. Registered poor readers (about 20 at any one time) were identified by the wing reading champions. Many men were reluctant to admit reading difficulties. There is a monthly meeting in education with the reading champions, to plan initiatives to encourage and reward reading.

There is no process for library staff to be notified of men who, during induction to the prison, self-identify as being poor readers or have English as a second language.

Men who self-isolate and those in the healthcare unit are often voracious readers. All prisoners can use their laptops to send their requests to the library and find information about learning opportunities.

7.2 Vocational training, work

In September 2023, more than 100 out of 504 prisoners (20%) were unemployed. However, at the end of the year following the decant, it was 50 out of 346 (14%). This number included self-isolators, men deemed unfit to work and those waiting to be allocated to work or education. The prison had the capacity to provide 225 part-time work and education placements. By the end of the year, the allocation into purposeful activity of all types had increased from 64% to 80% as a percentage of population.

Orderly roles in gym, chapel and Segregation unit became full-time and wing-based work became full-time, with specific job titles of landing cleaners, servery workers, wing painters/shower cleaners, Insiders and wing launderers. New wing-based roles were introduced, including reading champions, digital mentors and PIAG workers (prisoner information, advice and guidance).

However, ad hoc checks showed that actual work attendances were lower. Laundry and recycling were well attended, as they were seen by the men as being sociable places, the kitchen less so. The market gardens and gardens are also popular, with the men telling the Board they would like this work to be linked to a qualification.

Initiatives to encourage men to work include an employee of the month/quarter bonus and a stay in work for one month/three months' bonus. The retention rate for men in work or education improved and fewer men were now removed for minor infringements of discipline.

7.3 Offender management, progression

At the beginning of the reporting year, 116 men had outdated OASys plans (which are used to analyse the risks and needs of prisoners). The appointment of two prisoner offender managers (POMs) to specifically to clear this backlog, reduced the number to 14.

The number of probation officer offender managers increased, providing greater opportunities for one-to-one meetings with prisoners. They worked with the prison's programme team towards all men having a completed programme needs assessment.

Access to offending behaviour programmes for sentence progression was very limited at Woodhill. The two key programmes are Kaizen and Thinking Skills. Men identified as needing access to other rehabilitation programmes must wait to be transferred to establishments offering those programmes.

7.4 Family contact

Family contact through social visits and social video calls have worked well, particularly the newly implemented weekend sessions. But sessions were not utilised to full capacity and the 45-minute social video calls were never fully booked. If the start of a session was delayed, the fully allocated time was still allowed, which was appreciated by families and prisoners and avoided frustration and complaints. Family days were re-designed to take place outside of the visitors' hall; to date, they have been successfully held in the gym, on the astroturf, in the gardens and market gardens and in the chapel

All cells now have in-cell phones, which makes family contact easier. However, there were isolated instances of significant delays in allocating authorised phone numbers, usually, if there was a delay in obtaining consent from the person that they would accept calls from the prisoner.

The issuing of laptops means that prisoners can request top-ups of phone credit and can have phone numbers added and removed without having to use paper forms, which often get lost or delayed in transit. However, prison social visits cannot yet be requested using the Launchpad system: the paper systems remain in place and requests for social visits must be generated by the prisoner.

Foreign national prisoners could still access phone numbers to contact family in their home countries and key workers started to help with this, which saved time.

7.5 Resettlement planning

As a primarily category B training prison, relatively low numbers of prisoners (72 men) were released directly into the community, although this was a significant increase on the previous year. Risk management meetings are held for men who are due to be released within six months. The main issues identified were a mismatch between the location of available accommodation and the potential for local employment opportunities. The offender management unit (OMU) had established a link with other pre-release prison teams, providing a useful point of contact for information sharing. Men have greater employment opportunities if they can be re-categorised and moved to category C prisons .

The Board is concerned that support for resettlement is not adequate for most prisoners. Many have requested help, with varying degrees of success: rather than easing transition into the community, a lack of support increases the risk of reoffending.

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	18
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	6
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	8
Total number of visits to the establishment	362

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing and ablutions	10	9
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives schemes, sanctions	12	9
C	Equality	1	0
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	6	7
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	6	11
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	0	3
F	Food and kitchens	8	4
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	13	14
H1	Property within the Establishment	15	14
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	19	18
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	0	0
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence), parole, release dates, re-categorisation	5	5
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	19	33*
K	Transfers	1	1
L	Miscellaneous	9	13
	Total	124	141

**A number of these were found to be vexatious applications from a group of men.*

Annex A

Assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) data

Last day of:	Prison roll	Number of open ACCTs	% of population on ACCT
June 2023	504	30	5.95%
July 2023	514	31	6.03%
August 2023	514	35	6.81%
September 2023	488	28	5.74%
October 2023	415	24	5.78%
November 2023	327	16	4.89%
December 2023	309	13	4.21%
January 2024	312	22	7.05%
February 2024	325	21	6.46%
March 2024	331	16	4.83%
April 2024	328	26	7.93%
May 2024	338	27	7.99%

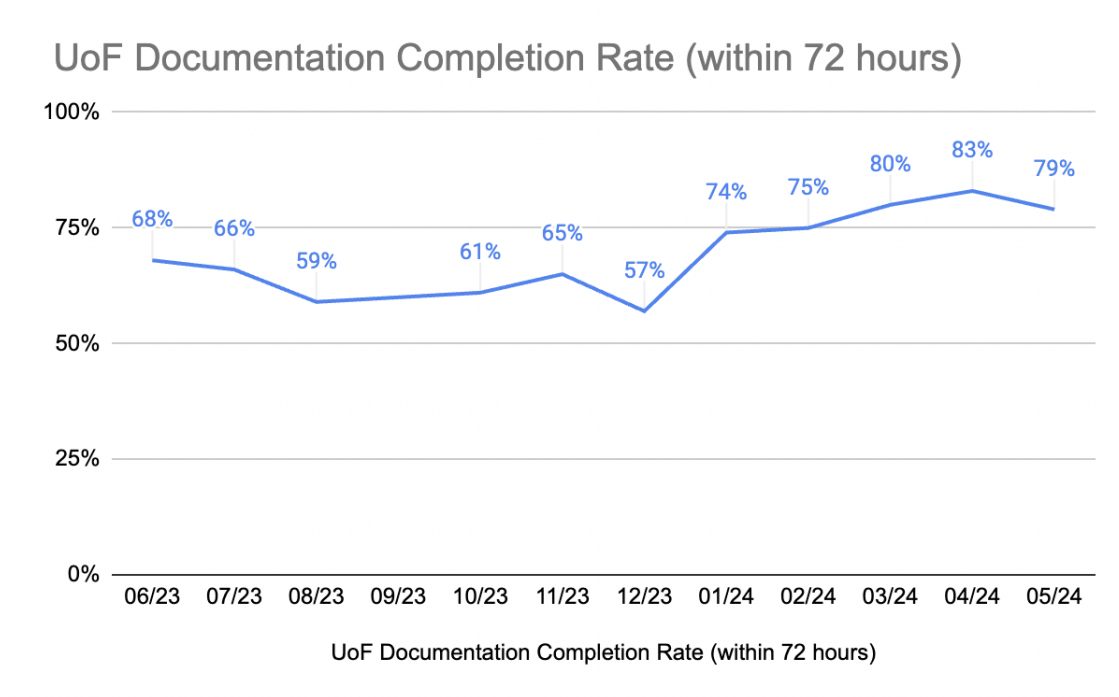
Annex B

Use of force data

Last day of:	Number of UoF incidents	Number of prisoners involved in UoF incidents	Prison roll	Number of UoF incidents per 1,000 prisoners
June 2023	73	60	504	145
July 2023	73	40	514	142
August 2023	109	68	514	212
September 2023	no data	no data	488	No data
October 2023	71	46	415	171
November 2023	64	40	327	196
December 2023	55	41	309	178
January 2024	70	51	312	224
February 2024	57	32	325	175
March 2024	39	24	331	118
April 2024	42	34	328	128
May 2024	68	42	338	201

Annex C

Use of force documentation completion rates





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