



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

**For reporting year
1 April 2023 to 31 March 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 resident 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

2.1 HMP/YOI Portland is a category C prison in Dorset for adult men with sentences of six months to four years. It is also a national resource for young adults (aged 18-21 years). It is a designated resettlement prison for residents with a home in Avon, Somerset, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire and, over the last year, further afield. Portland began the process to transition into a category C adult male prison in January 2020. At this time, Dorset became part of its catchment area.

2.2 The operational capacity (the maximum number of prisoners that can be held without serious risk to safety, security, good order and the proper running of the planned regime) of the prison is 538 residents¹. Accommodation consists of seven wings: Benbow, Raleigh, Drake, Nelson, Grenville, Collingwood and Beaufort. There is a free-standing care and separation unit (CSU). Grenville is assigned the role of first night centre. Young adults are populated in each of the wings. Beaufort houses enhanced residents and ISFL (incentivised substance free living).

2.3 Education, including some vocational training programmes, is contracted to Weston College. The prison operates a number of workshops, providing recognised skills and qualifications.

2.4 Healthcare have been delivered by Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust since late 2023. Resettlement services were transferred to staff directly employed by HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) in early 2023.

2.5 Charitable organisations operating in the prison include the Samaritans, Barnardo's, the Shaw Trust, Key4Life, the Shannon Trust, Turning Point and the 100 & First Foundation, which is a key provider in the rugby academy and resettlement services.

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

Background to the report

During the reporting year, the prison was often in stage 3 (restricted) regime, due to staff shortages; Covid is no longer a factor impacting the prison. Towards the second half of the reporting year, the prison moved primarily to a stage 2 (reduced) regime, although there were occasions when a restricted regime was in place. The biggest challenge for the prison was the change in Government requirements to accept more prisoners in Portland and move single cells into inappropriate double cells, as well as accepting prisoners from all over the country counter to those primarily based in south west.

3.1 Main findings

Safety

3.1.1 Staff shortages and inexperience negatively impact prisoner safety. During the 2023-2024 reporting period, violence increased by 35% and self-harm by 80% (4.3.1). This also impacts staff and prisoner relationships, as key work cannot be facilitated for all prisoners, only a small priority group.

3.1.2 The ingress of illicit substances continued to be an issue. This proved a challenge, although intelligence reports, spot searches and observant staff resulted in an increase of finds over the previous year (4.5.2). Prisoner debt increases the concern over self-harm.

3.1.3 Prison population pressures have exerted a significant strain in multiple areas of the prison, particularly resettlement.

Fair and humane treatment

3.1.4 This has improved significantly during the reporting period as the prison moved from restricted to reduced regime and new staff were hired and trained. Diversity initiatives continue to make a positive impact on keeping protected characteristics (including race, religion, age, disability sex, gender reassignment and sexual orientation, which it is unlawful to discriminate against) to the forefront in staff interactions and in reporting/monitoring the welfare of residents. (5.4.4)

3.1.5 In hot weather, the conditions in Beaufort wing, the most recently built wing, were completely unacceptable, yet successive bids for funds to address the issue are regularly turned down. Fans have been added to reduce the heat in the common areas but are still not sufficient, an issue raised in last year's report. (5.1.4)

Health and wellbeing

3.1.6 Although the healthcare provider changed over the reporting period, there appears to be no disruption to service and treatment is administered by an in-house doctor and part-time dentist.

3.1.7 With dynamic leadership, staffing levels increased over the year. To address the issue of the number of missed healthcare appointments, the senior leadership team (SLT) prioritises escorts to healthcare when treatment is required. (6.1.6)

3.1.8 The Grow project on Collingwood Wing was ring-fenced to focus on substance misuse-related initiatives during the reporting year, with men attending a 12-week programme. (6.5.4)

3.1.9 Transferring prisoners from HMP Portland to secure mental health units proved to be unsatisfactory and needs to be improved. (6.3.1). Although the prison has increased the staffing numbers for mental health, they are inadequate to treat the number of prisoners who have ongoing mental health issues.

Progression and release

3.1.10 The Board continued to see challenges in the resettlement process. HMPPS staff in the community offender management team and the housing accommodation team often responded with housing confirmation very late in the release process with, sometimes, only a day or two prior to release and, on occasion, not at all. This has also resulted in some prisoners being released without accommodation. The gap was filled by local Portland staff, who achieved housing for an average of 87.6% prisoners on release. (7.5.1).

3.1.11 It must be noted that the already stretched offender management unit (OMU) staff responded well in going the extra mile in order to make up for these systemic resettlement failures in housing and prisoner transfers (7.5.3). It should not be acceptable that the experience of the prisoners depended entirely on the goodwill of staff already working under great pressure. (7.5.6)

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

3.2.1 What will the Minister do to increase funding to address overcrowding in the prison and eliminate doubling up in cells designed for one individual, impacting personal decency and privacy. Overcrowding also impacts the ability of the prison to transfer prisoners to other prisons that offer the training required to support their release. (5.1.11)

3.2.2 Will the Minister address the serious shortcomings in the management processes in HMPPS, particularly with reference to the poorly planned early release scheme introduced to the service? (7.5.1)

3.2.3 What steps will the Minister take to ensure that the Prison Service is an attractive profession with competitive remuneration, training and professional development.

3.2.4 There continues to be national concern (raised in the draft Mental Health Bill) about the increase in residents with poor mental health and the way they are treated in law. Will the Minister undertake to work with other Ministers to ensure an integrated system to allow the humane treatment of such residents and provide facilities to transfer prisoners to more suitable establishments? (6.3.1)

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

3.2.5 In the Board's view, the early release scheme (ERS) has been poorly thought through and rolled out, relying on the offender management unit (OMU) to fill the gaps in the resettlement process without the staffing increase to accommodate the extra work. This has had an adverse effect on the quality of the service provided and

means that prisoners are not prepared for release. How will HMPPS ensure that the implementation is managed and delivered in a way that does not adversely impact on the safety, fair and humane treatment, health and wellbeing and progression towards a successful resettlement of all those entrusted to its care? (7.5.1)

3.2.6 What steps is HMPPS taking to address the poor service provided by external suppliers, with particular attention on the quality of service provided by Serco with regard to the transport of prisoners? (4.1.5)

3.2.7 What steps will HMPPS take to ensure there is adequate accommodation to allow for different prisoner cohorts segregated appropriately in order to address their specific needs? (5.1.11)

3.2.8 Will HMPPS, as a matter of urgency, arrange for the necessary funding to be made available to address the ventilation issues that exist on Beaufort wing during spells of hot weather and the funding to address the repairs required to re-open the laundry facility, which relies on another prison to deliver these services? (5.1.4 and 5.1.7)

TO THE GOVERNOR

3.2.9 What steps will the Governor undertake to ensure that key work is increased for all prisoners. (5.3.3)

3.2.10 Will the Governor continue to pursue funding for the ventilation issues on Beaufort and re-establish the in-house laundry facilities as a matter of urgency? (5.1.4 and 5.1.7)

3.3 Progress since the last report

Safety

3.3.1 Although data from the measuring the quality of prison life (MQPL) survey showed that residents' perception of their own safety has improved, there has been an increase in violence, self-harm and, at different periods in the reporting year, self-isolation. (4.0.3)

3.3.2 The monitoring of all use of force (UoF) incidents through the learning panels is fed back to staff to improve de-escalation tactics and, when necessary, arrange further training in correct UoF protocols. (4.3.1)

3.3.3 The ingress of illicit substances continued to be an ongoing problem, but the security team has improved protocols to make ingress and possession as difficult as possible. (4.5.5)

Fair and humane treatment

3.3.4 The introduction, management and supervision of assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documentation, used to support prisoners at risk of self-harm and suicide (4.3.4), and challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs), which support and manage prisoners who pose an increased risk of violence, continued to improve as these systems became embedded in the daily life of the prison. That said, the Board would like to see further improvement with ACCT plans.

3.3.5 The diversity and inclusion lead had a significant impact on safeguarding all protected characteristics. This was evidenced in the improved handling within established time guidelines of discrimination incident reporting form (DIRFs). (5.4.4)

3.3.6 From the Board's observations, the processes of segregation and adjudication (a disciplinary hearing when a prisoner is alleged to have broken prison rules) were sensitively handled by staff in the care and separation unit (CSU) and the staff demonstrate the ability to manage complex individuals in the unit. (5.2.2)

Health and wellbeing

3.3.7 Staffing levels within healthcare improved during the reporting year and, as of March 2024, the situation appeared acceptable, in the Board's view. The IMB would not expect staffing to be an issue in the 2024 reporting year. (6.1.6)

3.3.8 Positive procedures were introduced in the reporting year to address the problems arising from missed health appointments. (6.1.8)

3.3.9 With the new processes and procedures in place in the healthcare unit, the Board saw a decrease in the number of applications (prisoners' written representations to the IMB) related to this area. This can be attributed to healthcare representatives on each wing. (6.1.9)

Progression and release

3.3.10 The staff appeared to respond well to the pressures of the change in release policy to 30 days, but problems caused by seemingly poorly implemented changes, developed by HMPPS, led to concern among Board members. There is no holistic view of the release and settlement process, which led to increased uncertainty on housing prior to release; this burden was passed to already overworked prison staff. (7.5.4)

Performance of senior leadership

3.3.11 During the reporting period, there has been a change in leadership, with more emphasis on education and work placements, staffing to have a more consistent regime each day and increasing the number of mental health professionals in the prison.

3.3.12 Throughout the year, it was the Board's experience that all members of the leadership team took serious note of our observations and suggestions. This positive approach to the work of the Board filtered down throughout the staff. It was very rare for Board members to be met with anything but supportive and willing assistance.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.0.1 The safer custody team (SCT) regularly checked on all residents in the healthcare unit, the CSU and those on an ACCT plan.

4.0.2 Where family members contacted the Careline, expressing concern about their relative or partner, officers appeared happy to check on the resident concerned and either phoned the caller back or arranged for the resident to make a call to reassure.

4.0.3 Residents' perceptions of HMP/YOI Portland have improved significantly and they have communicated to the Board they are generally well treated and supported by staff.

4.1 Reception and induction

4.1.1 The reception area is clean and well-lit and the Board has witnessed the welcoming and engaging manner in which the staff accept new arrivals into the prison. Prisoners tell the Board they are well treated and supported by staff and that they spend the minimum length of time in reception.

4.1.2 Residents are initially assessed by prison staff after being identified and details checked. Prisoners are given a rub-down search, with some men reporting to the IMB that it is too intrusive. They are also body-scanned and if results are positive three times, they are housed in the CSU until the scans are clear. Some prisoners have complained about results, but the Board is satisfied that the procedure is done properly and fairly.

4.1.3 New arrivals were housed in Grenville, the reception wing.

4.1.4 Essential checks are carried out in reception, in private. Recovery workers, the chaplaincy, healthcare, education and offender management unit meetings take place on the wing rather than in reception.

4.1.5 There have been issues during the reporting year with late arrivals, after hours, to the prison, due to Serco transport issues. This resulted in some prisoners not receiving a first night health screening, creating the risk that health needs are not properly assessed until the following morning. Serco transport issues have also affected the prison regarding transfers to and from other prisons, which has meant that prisoners cannot transfer to a prison to obtain the training required prior to release and are reliant on the prison to facilitate their own transfers.

4.1.6 The Board observed that property in the possession of incoming prisoners is recorded accurately and treated with respect and that staff explain to prisoners what will happen to items, which are securely stored.

4.1.7 When first arriving in their cells on the induction wing, some prisoners have reported finding items of bedding or other essentials missing and those requiring clothing have often found their size was not available. However, this has been rectified over time.

4.1.8 A number of prisoners have said their initial induction didn't cover everything they needed to know about the prison and they would like to see this expanded.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

4.2.1 The incidence of self-harm was high. It increased from 416 incidents in 2022-2023 to 759 in the reporting year. Much of this was attributed to several prolific self-harmers. For example, 63 incidents could be attributed to just nine individuals.

4.2.2 The safety intervention meeting (SIM) was the key element in the support of residents with complex needs. It met weekly and was cross-disciplinary. It was chaired by the head of safer custody or their deputy and attended by:

- psychology
- psychiatry
- healthcare
- security
- allocations
- residential services

The Board observed the interventions to help residents, which were discussed, planned and implemented through this group. The SIM welcomed referrals from anyone in contact with residents: officers, non-uniformed staff, families, or the Board, for example.

4.2.3 There was one death in custody reported during the reporting year, several days after the prisoner's release into the community.

4.2.4 The number of Samaritan-trained Listeners (prisoners who offer confidential emotional support to other prisoners) increased and has been a key benefit for the prisoners.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

4.3.1 A selection of violent and use of force incidents were analysed at a weekly safety intervention meeting. As trends emerged, they were then fed into the diversity and inclusion panel for discussion in resident focus groups representing each of the protected characteristics. The average number of violent incidents per month was 21, compared with 15 in the previous reporting period.

4.3.2 The staff wear mandatory body worn video cameras (BWVCs). Such footage could then be used by the safer custody team (SCT) when reviewing incidents and as an aid to de-escalation and deterrence training for staff. Although, on occasion, the BWVCs were not turned on at the start of the incident.

4.3.3 Most cases of voluntary self-isolation that occurred were debt-related. After agreed interventions by the SCT, most residents were able to re-enter normal wing activity. The prison also operated a Lifting the Lid programme to help residents develop strategies for clearing debts and remaining debt-free.

4.3.4 Key work was prioritised for the complex residents (an average of 205 sessions per month). This is a critical part of building better relationships between prisoners and staff and is intended to improve safety and help people settle into the prison. The Board would like to see an increase in key work sessions in the next reporting period, as it was not achieved in the reviewing year.

4.4 Use of force

4.4.1 A selection of violent and use of force incidents were analysed at the weekly safety intervention meeting (SIM). This meeting fed into the UoF learning panel and the SIM in a 'circle' of communication. For the 2023-2024 reporting period, there were 584 UoF incidents (an average of 49 per month). In the previous period, the figures were 329 (an average of 27 per month), although the Board noted that the number of incidents dropped significantly in the second half of the year.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

4.5.1 Mandatory drug tests (MDT) were restarted in May 2023 on a sample basis of an average of 5% of the population and, whereas there were spikes of positive tests during the year, the average confirmed positive cases over the reporting period was 24.8%. It is not possible to make a comparison with the previous year because mandatory tests were suspended in November 2022. It has been announced that Portland will discontinue the random drug tests in the future and continue to test on a 'suspicion only' basis. The time and resources freed-up will be used to provide support and rehabilitation to prisoners via key workers.

4.5.2 Spice (a psychoactive substance) impregnated in paper and self-brewed alcohol ('hooch') remained the prevalent illicit substances of interest. Drones and 'throw-overs' (where people from outside the prison throw parcels over the walls containing illicit items, which are then picked up by prisoners) have not been material at Portland in this reporting period, compared with other prisons.

4.5.3 The security team maintained 100% searching and swabbing of incoming mail, internal mail and incoming parcels.

4.5.4 Drug use and supply in the prison decreased significantly, and residents at Portland reported that they were more likely to agree with the 'ordered regime' statements that their prison was 'well-controlled' and 'good at delivering personal safety'.

4.5.5 Increased vigilance during social visits has resulted in the interception of a number of 'passes', which lead to arrests, so that by March 2024, the levels of Spice had fallen. Another factor is the regular sweep by dog search teams and intelligence-led cell searches. The wings were noticeably more orderly at the latter end of the reporting period.

4.5.6 There was a zero-tolerance policy towards violence and drug use. An amnesty was held twice during the reporting year to encourage residents to remove all excess items that might be used for substance misuse or pose other risks, such as weapons, for example.

4.5.7 The implementation of the body scanner at HMP Portland helped to significantly reduce the levels of illicit articles entering the prison. Improvements to physical security enabled further free movement of residents around the establishment and increased feelings of normality in the prison setting.

4.5.8 The Board was not aware of any incidents at Portland involving synthetic opioids (netzines) or xylazines, nor were any reported by the prison. Security appears to remain vigilant regarding these toxic drugs coming into the prison.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

5.1.1 All residential units were clean and generally well-maintained. Cells in Beaufort wing have in-cell showers.

5.1.2 All residents were able to access notices, make medical appointments, make general applications and order food and canteen (a facility where prisoners can buy snacks, toiletries, stationery and other essentials using their allocated funds).

5.1.3 The prison maintained an excellent response to hygiene throughout the year, with many of the wings re-painted and some of the showers improved.

5.1.4 The Board received complaints about poor ventilation in hot weather in some of the wings, particularly in Beaufort. Despite the newest wing, the poor design meant that there was inadequate insulation and extremely poor ventilation. In summer, the temperature reached wholly unacceptable and inhumane heat levels, whilst the reverse was true in winter. Yet, on a number of occasions, funding bids to have this essential work carried out have been turned down, an issue raised in previous reports. The fans used to cool the wing in the summer months are inadequate and noisy, making it difficult to hold a conversation when they are running.

5.1.5 All cells had phones, which allowed prisoners to make external call and receive internal calls.

5.1.6 The time taken for staff to respond to cell calls improved, with the majority of calls being answered within 60 seconds. In the reporting year, 100% were answered within five minutes.

5.1.7 Residents wear their own clothes. Residents who arrive with little clothing can access a supply of clothing held by the prison. The in-house laundry facility was closed in October of the reporting year and prison laundry is now sent to HMP Guys Marsh, which has impacted both prisons sending/receiving/tracking laundry; on occasion, there are shortages of bedding and clothes in HMP Portland. One wing has no laundry facilities for washing and drying personal clothing and prisoners are washing their personal laundry in their cell and hanging it in the wing to dry.

5.1.8 There were few applications to the Board relating to food during the reporting year (0.03% of all applications received – see 8.3). Staffing levels in the kitchens were good and there were few problems with the supply of fresh ingredients. Special menus for cultural days and religious festivals were much appreciated. Special diets were catered for, although the Board received some complaints saying that they lacked variety. Work in the kitchens was popular and there was always a waiting list.

5.1.9 Some prisoners complained about quantity of food, which they felt was inadequate.

5.1.10 Canteen provision for residents with protected characteristics was good and staff seemed to show a willingness to listen to particular requests.

5.1.11 As far as budgets will stretch, there was a concerted drive to stay on top of regular maintenance and to convert as many of the unacceptable Victorian double cells to singles, where possible, in the first half of the year. However, given the

overcrowding imposed on the prison in the second half of the year, the inappropriate double cells have been re-instated and all the good progress reversed.

5.1.12 The Governor placed a high priority on the appearance and cleanliness of the prison. Regular Board observations established that common parts inside and outside were regularly and effectively cleaned, with working parties keeping flower beds attractive and the garden area with vegetables.

5.1.13 Staffing levels continued to be an area of concern for the Board. During the reporting year, a drive to recruit prison officers (POs) proved successful and, by the end of the period, numbers were almost at the required level. Recruitment is challenging, as pay and conditions were nowhere near attractive enough to compete with outside employment opportunities. At the year end, the position was as follows:

	Target	Actual
POs (prisoner officers)	122	122 FTE (full-time equivalent)
OSGs (operational support grades)	48	49 FTE
Physical education instructors (PEIs)	8	7.5 FTE
Instructors	16	13
Weston College staff	16	16

5.2 Segregation

5.2.1 The care and separation unit (CSU) has 11 cells, which are similar to those in the rest of the prison, including one special accommodation cell (where items such as furniture, bedding and sanitation are removed in the interests of safety). Occupancy of the unit fluctuated during the year, with monthly averages ranging from four to 10. Prisoners in the CSU are visited regularly by a member of the senior leadership team, chaplaincy and healthcare.

5.2.2 From the Board's observations, residents with complex needs and challenging behaviour were managed sensitively by staff, with a substantial input from the mental health in-reach team (MHIT) and a multidisciplinary programme reviewed by the segregation monitoring and review group (SMARG). Owing to their complex needs, some prisoners remained on the unit for long periods, with one individual in the CSU for well over 42 days (the limit allowed without external authorisation). All necessary reviews were carried out, as observed by the Board, such as the weekly good order or discipline reviews (GOoD). Staff demonstrated that they were making every effort to integrate all individuals back into the wings as quickly as possible. The Board noted, the particular care of staff when authorising continued segregation of a prisoner on an open assessment in care custody and teamwork (ACCT) plan. The Board is not aware of any new ACCTs being opened for segregated prisoners.

5.2.3 Staffing levels fluctuated during the year and shortage of staff did, on occasion, affect residents' time out of cell. There was a change of staff in CSU aimed at reducing compassion fatigue in this very demanding unit.

5.2.4 The Board observed multiple adjudications during the reporting period and were satisfied that they were conducted correctly. We welcomed the move to make

adjudicators aware of any prisoners who have various forms of neurodivergence prior to a hearing.

5.2.5 A wide range of interventions are being implemented to reduce the number of adjudications, including offering all prisoners purposeful activity and various courses, as well as forums held on the wings that consider if there are any particular themes occurring.

5.3 Staff and resident relationships, key workers

5.3.1 The Board heard many comments from residents about how 'safe' and 'well-cared for by the staff' they felt during the period.

5.3.2 Key work sessions have not increased during the reporting year in the way the Board had hoped, mainly due to staffing shortages. There is a plan to ensure this is prioritised over the next reporting period.

5.3.3 Key work sessions were limited to the most vulnerable, those on ACCTs and those soon to be discharged. The SLT amended its strategy and had dedicated key work for the most vulnerable, with an officer based in the wing so key work could be carried out with current staffing levels on the wings, which is more realistic.

5.3.4 Daily checks were carried out on all residents identified as more vulnerable and these were recorded on the daily brief.

5.3.5 All prisoners were allocated a key worker. Key worker sessions were recorded on the prison national offender management information system (PNomis). It highlights which resident had or had not have a session in any month.

5.3.6 The prison council continued to work during the year with a representative from each wing to discuss the concerns being raised by their peers collectively to a member of the SLT.

5.4 Equality and diversity

5.4.1 The equality and diversity lead continues to demonstrate a more inclusive and diverse workplace at HMP/YOI Portland for the prisoners.

5.4.2 Over the reporting year, there was an increased focus on protected characteristics. This drive was led by the Governor, the SLT and the R&D lead.

5.4.3 The following are some of the events that have been run in the prison:

- Black History Month
- LGBTQ+ month
- Disability Month
- International Women's Day
- International Men's Day
- Inclusivity Month
- Islamic Awareness Month

5.4.4 The DIRF process is impressively efficient and well-documented, and reports appeared to be well investigated by managers:

- Responses generally took 14 days but could take longer with approval from

the R&D lead; response times were monitored by the SLT.

- Findings were sent back to the resident, together with a feedback form.
- Every DIRF was reviewed and quality assessed by the R&D lead and a Deputy Governor
- The Board received feedback from prisoners after a review and we were satisfied with the investigation and the objectivity demonstrated.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

5.5.1 The chaplaincy consisted of five chaplains, both full- and part-time, and two sessional chaplains, as well as a volunteer offering support to various faith communities. They worked together to provide care to the prison community of all faiths and none.

5.5.2 During the reporting year, there was always at least one chaplain physically present. The duty chaplains supported prisoners of concern on the wings and communicated with them both by letter and in person. During the period when the Board was not physically visiting, the chaplaincy was very helpful in highlighting any potential areas or residents of concern.

5.5.3 Chaplains represented the following faith groups:

- Christianity (all denominations)
- Islam
- Judaism
- Sikhism
- Buddhism
- Hinduism
- Jehovah's Witness

5.5.4 Between April 2023 and March 2024, there was a staged return to full, all-wing, in-person worship and group work.

5.5.5 The chaplaincy team proactively engaged in a programme to link prisoners with appropriate local faith communities on release.

5.5.6 The Board heard positive comments regarding Christmas activities, Diwali and Ramadan, in particular, as well as other religious festivals throughout the reporting year.

5.6 Incentives schemes

5.6.1 The incentives scheme has moved the focus towards recognising achievements and acknowledging good behaviour, with three privilege levels (basic, standard and enhanced). Extras, such as social video calls with family, are provided for those with enhanced status (which includes prisoners on the incentivised substance-free living wing).

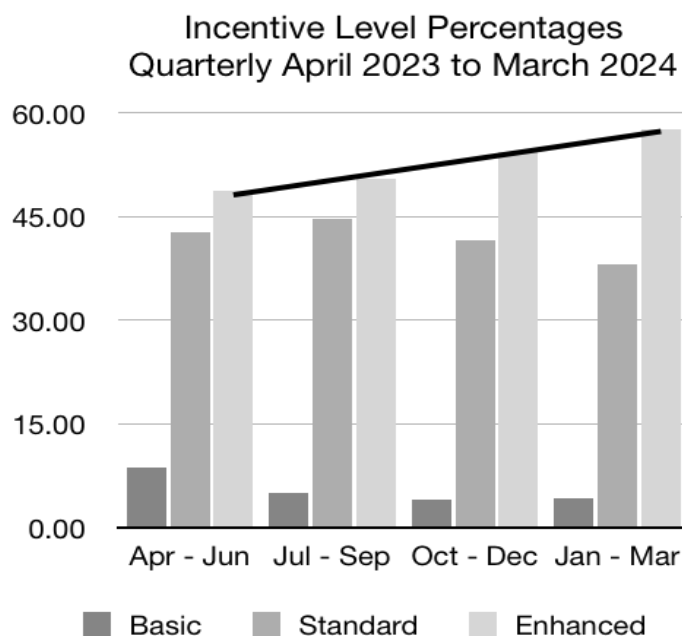
A new incentives scheme status, called 'super enhanced', has been introduced; it is suitable for residents in Beaufort wing and provides additional free time.

5.6.2 The Board observed that lack of time out of cell due to staff shortages contributed to prisoners not forming positive relationships with staff, which are recognised as necessary for an effective and successful behaviour policy. Some

prisoners reported a lack of consistency in the approach of staff in implementing the incentives framework. Although some men said they felt that there was more focus on punishment than on good behaviour, this is not reflected in the graph, below, which demonstrates an increase in the number of prisoners moving to the enhanced status.

5.6.3 Every resident had a TV and a phone in their cell. During the year, the conditions for those on the basic level of the incentive scheme were amended so that TVs would not be removed unless individually sanctioned by either the Duty Governor or the head of residential services.

5.6.4 The linear trendline on the graph, below, however, shows that the percentage of prisoners on enhanced status in each quarter increased at a steady rate. Also, in the second half of the reporting year, the number of prisoners on the basic level fell by around 39% and monthly averages were down from almost 7% to just over 4%.



5.6.5 There is a zero-tolerance approach to dealing with serious incidents at the prison and the Board is satisfied that no prisoner is placed on a different incentive level without a review by a supervising officer (SO) or higher authority.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

6.1.1 Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust is now in its second year of providing healthcare services to the prison. Staff shortages across almost all areas have been addressed, with the exception of two mental health professionals, where cover is provided by agency staff.

6.1.2 The healthcare unit is located in an early Victorian building that was never designed for purpose and is far from ideal. Efforts have been made to improve the patient waiting areas, decorating the building and remodelling the entrance. Additionally, there are three consultation/treatment rooms situated on the wings and three satellite pharmacies.

6.1.3 The Board is not concerned about the time prisoners wait to see a GP. The GP sees an average of 100 patients per month. Of the 500+ prisoners at Portland, over 300 are on some type of medication.

6.1.4 Covid has virtually disappeared; it is found only occasionally on the wings, but causes no disruption to service. A range of vaccinations are offered, which are declined by 30% of prisoners.

6.1.5 The Board believes that it was difficult to justify the inaction of the Government which, whilst designating prisons vulnerable places, failed to give prison staff Covid vaccination priority.

6.1.6 Under dynamic healthcare leadership, staffing improved over the year. A full-time psychiatrist and a part-time psychologist were joined by a clinical lead for mental health, an advanced nurse practitioner and leads for patient engagement and patient flow.

6.1.7 An innovation this year has been the provision of body worn video cameras for healthcare staff, who have welcomed their use.

6.1.8 With more services out onto the wings, the prisoners have immediate contact with healthcare staff. This system is less 'remote' and the number of missed appointments has fallen and now stands at around 10%. There are also staff available to escort the men to and from the healthcare building, which has also contributed to the decline in missed appointments.

6.1.9 The Board dealt with a number of applications related to healthcare, although this number dropped from 52 in the previous year to 29 in the reporting period (13% of the total applications received by the Board). This is attributed to healthcare representatives on each wing, who provide care paths and attend a monthly forum to discuss related issues with staff.

6.1.10 Where the Board was in attendance, in a monitoring capacity, healthcare was present at all ACCT reviews and safer custody meetings, and their input was clearly valued.

6.1.11 Serious medical emergencies are taken by ambulance to Dorset County Hospital in Dorchester, accompanied by prison staff. On average, there are 15 call-outs each month. All prisoners found to be involved with psychoactive substances and/or hooch are seen by healthcare within 24 hours and offered a range of support.

6.2 Physical healthcare

6.2.1 Dentistry is provided by one part-time dentist, with waiting times of 12-18 weeks, although a triage process ensures urgent cases are seen within two days. There are around 40 men on the waiting list.

6.3 Mental health

6.3.1 The Board was concerned over the protracted wait for accessing transfers to secure mental health units. The delays were detrimental to the prisoner and impacted negatively on the segregation regime. Whilst it was clear that staff made every effort to find more appropriate accommodation, the apparent lack of integrated working between the secure mental health unit and the NHS proved frustrating.

6.3.2 Mental health services have benefited from a consistent and committed team (albeit some agency supplied) and well-appointed and equipped accommodation. From the Board's observation, a more consistent therapeutic approach has benefited relationships, behaviour and the treatment of drug abuse. The mental health caseload seems high, at 110 in a population of around 500 men. The single psychiatrist has a significant caseload, and it is not uncommon for there to be a three-week waiting period before a consultation.

6.3.3 The Board has observed that the establishment is the highest in the region for prescribing antidepressants. To comply with NICE guidelines for talking therapy premedication, the service will have to make strenuous efforts to address this weakness.

6.3.4 As mentioned previously, self-harm remains worryingly high, with an 80% increase, from 416 in the previous year to 759 in current reporting period. However, many incidents are repeated behaviours with prolific self-harmers.

6.4 Exercise, regime

6.4.1 The prison maintained at least 30 minutes every day outside for all residents, even during restricted regimes.

6.4.2 A full gym programme is maintained, with men offered one gym session per week and some managing more. The gym and adjacent facilities are well maintained and efficient and are popular with the prisoners. The rugby academy continues to enthuse candidates and impress visiting teams.

6.4.3 The unlock time for prisoners across the establishment was a recurring challenge in recent years, which resulted in a cancellation or curtailment of activities. The establishment is now approaching full recruitment and the Board will continue to monitor this areas.

6.4.4 The current regime makes provision for all prisoners to have two hours out of cell for showers, domestics and exercise. The unlock time for prisoners in employment or education is around six hours, with workshops in both the morning and the afternoon. By mid-April, all activity/industry sessions were working at full capacity. Around 300 men were occupied full-time and 150 part-time, with the remaining prisoners either awaiting deployment or refusing to engage. The non-compliant cohort is reviewed by staff, who attempt to address the issues deterring engagement.

6.4.5 A new incentives scheme status, called 'super enhanced', has been introduced; it is suitable for residents in Beaufort wing and provides additional free time.

6.5 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

6.5.1 At reception in HMP/YOI Portland, all arrivals have a first night screening within 24 hours, at which they can identify any substance issues they might have. On day two, they have a one-to-one healthcare meeting in Grenville, the reception wing. Any prisoner on opioid substitutes is seen by a member of the recovery team within 24 hours. Any prisoner already in the establishment who requests a visit from the team should be seen within five days.

6.5.2 The established protocol for psychoactive substances use appeared to be well embedded in the regime. Prisoners thought to have been under the influence were monitored, interviewed and offered harm reduction advice.

6.5.3 Staff recruitment was a focus for the majority of the reporting year and by March 2024, there was only one recovery team position to fill.

6.5.4 The Grow Project, ring fenced on Collingwood wing, which was a 12-week course providing substance misuse support to those wanting to come off alcohol/drugs, started up again in June 2023 after a break of a few months, and is due to end in May 2024. The feedback was generally positive, with participants expressing gratitude for the help they had received from the recovery team.

Given the number of young offenders at Portland, Collingwood will be re-purposed as the Evolution wing. The strategy is to provide support to young people with complex drug and/or mental health issues in a wider context and will focus predominantly on the rehabilitation of young offenders.

6.5.5 The national early release scheme (35 days at the end of the reporting year) has put considerable pressure on the ability of the offender management unit (OMU), the recovery services and the healthcare teams to organise the safe release of those who need ongoing care and accommodation in the community. In the Board's view, the commitment of these frontline services at Portland is worthy of mention.

7. Progression and resettlement

During the reporting year, there was a significant increase in the number of activity spaces available to residents. Activities such as education, vocational workshops, industry workshops, offending behaviour programmes, the work of red bands (prisoners with a greater degree of trust and autonomy in their jobs in the prison) and orderlies (trusted prisoners who provide services that contribute to the running of the prison) who were not wing-based all increased. The expectation is that, by April 2024, these will be at full capacity.

7.1 Education and library

7.1.1 Education was delivered in the classroom using excellent workbooks in English and maths produced by the education team. All residents were encouraged to participate, as employers now have minimum entrance qualifications. Prisoners can carry on learning until they reach a certain grade. There are two groups: those aspiring to grades 7 to 5 and 5 to 3. After that, there is ample opportunity to go further and also try other subjects.

7.1.2 Education is not only about the classroom and Portland is well equipped to train prisoners in practical subjects such as fork lift trucks, welding, brick laying, polytunnel construction, plastering, horticulture, carpentry and other trades. The board observed the prisoners in attendance on these courses were enthusiastic about learning useful skills and appreciated that on some courses a certain level of maths and English were required.

7.1.3 During the reporting year, the number of unique learners doubled from 479 to 962, partly due to the increase in the number of courses offered and the additional investment in education by the establishment. A total of 1,400 prisoners achieved accreditation for the completed course, an increase over the previous year of more than 100%. Education is key to successful employment when released into the community.

<u>Learning outcomes</u>	<u>2022-2023</u>	<u>2023-2024</u>
Unique learners	476	962
Starters	820	1,498
Completed	693	1,416
Continuing	0	0
Achieved	674	1,400
Total withdrawal	127	82
Total withdrawal agreed	124	81
Awaiting results	0	1
Actual success	97.26%	98.87%
Pure success (achieved over starts)	82.2%	93.46%
Pure success less withdrawals	97.26%	98.87%

7.1.4 The Board observed that the recent revamp of the library has increased the number of visitors. It has also doubled in size, with new lessons, books and courses. Prisoners can also borrow DVDs and CDs.

7.1.5 The induction assessments, as outlined by the skills for work lead for Portland, has been revised and consists of a five-day initial induction carried out on Grenville (the induction wing). The participants then disperse to the wings and take part in a three-day Skills for Work programme in the education centre. Here they can take part in three domestic science classes, with three more available to them later on, if they so wish. One-to-one sessions are available for vulnerable individuals.

7.2 Vocational training, work

7.2.1 The number of industry opportunities has increased significantly in the reporting year, with additional places in headphones, packing, waste management, engineering, woodwork, farming and gardens, ground maintenance and bikes. This is dependent on instructors, but is open most weekdays.

7.2.2 Education has also expanded placements in English and maths and includes brick laying, forklift training, carpentry, horticulture, creative music, creative art and rugby. Again, these are dependent on instructors being available, but they run most weekdays. All of these educational courses were enthusiastically received by the prisoners.

7.2.3 Opportunities were available in the kitchen and waste disposal workshops for access to vocational qualifications.

7.3 Offender management, progression

7.3.1 The OMU was stretched prior to the early release scheme coming into practice. This is now the case even more, as it tries to work with external offender management team on the re-calculation of sentences where prisoners are eligible. This is anticipated to continue to be a challenge as the Government extends the early release scheme to 70 days.

7.4 Family contact

7.4.1 Social visits were available for the whole of the reporting year and increased by 165%. The Board would like to see the number of social video calls increase substantially during the next reporting period, as there are only a handful of slots available over four days per week and this makes it difficult for families to book a slot. Given the remoteness of the prison location, this is essential for the prisoners whose families are outside the south west region.

Family contact	2023-2024
Social visits	2,873
Social video calls	1,551

7.5 Resettlement planning

7.5.1 During the course of the year, finding accommodation for prisoners prior to release was not always successful. The responsibility for this is with the external community offender manager (COM) team, employed by HMPPS. Significant staff shortages in this service have put pressure and dependency on OMU staff in the

prison to support the accommodation process prior to a prisoner being released. This has been exacerbated by the early release scheme. The OMU has not been provided with additional funding by HMPPS to increase staffing to accommodate the additional work.

7.5.2 The presence of a Jobcentre Plus employee, based full-time in the prison, was unfortunately not available for part of the year. The aim was to interview all prisoners before discharge and arrange appointments with potential employers and with the Jobcentre Plus office local to where the prisoner would be living to expedite the welfare benefits' process. Hopefully, this will change in the next reporting year.

7.5.3 On release, at-risk residents were provided with a taxi to Weymouth train station or, if appropriate, transfers were arranged to Bristol before release to make onward journeys easier. These transfers were agreed on at the SIM by the Portland management team.

7.5.4 Senior members of prison staff told the Board that there was 'no meaningful resettlement' in the prison. They felt that the new system of passing resettlement responsibilities back to the Probation Service was only making their work with residents prior to their release more difficult. As a result, there was little housing officer capacity and no ability to take a holistic view of resettlement.

7.5.5 It was clear to the Board that the management of this transition of responsibilities initiated by HMPPS had been neither effective nor successful. At the end of the reporting year, there were many residual staffing issues, which urgently needed resolution in order to ensure the retention of staff and the provision of a workable and humane system of resettlement.

7.5.6 In HMP Portland, it appeared to the Board that whether residents had a positive experience around discharge and resettlement was entirely dependent on the goodwill of staff already working under great pressure.

7.5.7 There has been a challenge with transport provided by HMPSS where it has been agreed to move a prisoner from one prison to another. It is often cancelled or moved at the last minute and, in many cases, the prison has to use its own staff to move the prisoner, to ensure the place remains available.

8. The work of the IMB

- The Board continued to monitor the prison throughout the reporting year. Monitoring was primarily face to face.
- The Board held a monthly meeting, which the Governor, or their deputy, attended, in order to brief members on prison matters and to discuss issues from monitoring reports. During the reporting year, six meetings took place via Teams and six were in person.
- During the reporting period, the Board consisted of six members, two of whom had less than two years' experience. In the reporting period, the Board made 130 visits, compared with 102 in the previous period, and received 224 applications, compared with 354 in the previous year. A recruitment campaign was held in January 2023 and by the end of the reporting period two additional members had been appointed, while one established member had resigned.

Board statistics

	2022-2023	2023-2024
Recommended complement of Board members	12	12
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	4	6
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	4	7
Total number of visits to the establishment	102	130
Total number of segregation reviews and adjudications monitored	44	54

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year 2022-2023	Current reporting year 2023-2024
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	8	13
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	4	1
C	Equality	6	1
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	14	9
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	16	6
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	16	7
F	Food and kitchens	4	6
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	52	29
H1	Property within this establishment	70	43
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	34	25
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	28	6
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence), parole, release dates, recategorisation	50	43
J	Staff/resident concerns, including bullying	24	14
K	Transfers	14	8
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	14	13
	Total number of applications	354	224

NB: The IMB applications' box on each wing was checked at least once during every staffed monitoring week.



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