



# **Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Whatton**

**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 Whatton is a category C training prison for people convicted of sexual offences against adults and children. It is one of the largest specialist prisons in Europe to offer offending behaviour programmes to prisoners with convictions for sexual offences. The establishment offers a wide range of learning and skills programmes, as well as employment opportunities, such as in manufacturing and gardening.

The prison's 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) is 856<sup>1</sup> and the average population in the reporting year was 849.

The prison's residential accommodation consists of 14 residential wings:

- A wings 1 to 8 (constructed in 2006), with a care and separation unit (CSU), which has eight cells attached to the A3 residential unit;
- B wings 1 to 3 (constructed during the 1960s, when the prison was a detention centre housing young offenders);
- C1 (constructed in 2005);
- C2 was replaced by modular, prefabricated, two-tier, purpose-built cells unit and was opened in September 2023. This provides additional accommodation for 39 prisoners;
- C3 (constructed in 2008) is a two-storey unit with a central area.

HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) has been investigating the possibility of extending the capacity of the prison by installing additional cell blocks. Decisions have not yet been announced.

The accommodation cells comprise a mixture of single and double accommodation, with ensuite toilet, washbasin and shower, and older facilities (with an in-cell toilet) and shared shower accommodation. The accommodation in B wing is the oldest and has previously been criticised by the IMB and HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP). A programme of gradual refurbishment has continued throughout the reporting year, but the cells are the smallest in the prison estate. The Board has been advised that there are no plans to replace the B wings in the short-to-medium term. A planned replacement of water pipework, scheduled for early 2023, has been delayed until at least January 2025.

A programme to install in-cell phones was completed in February 2024.

Accommodation for purposeful activity includes a sports field, sports hall (including three badminton courts and a cardiovascular exercise suite), two gyms with weight training facilities, manufacturing workshops, a large education unit, and a large kitchen facility specifically for the use of prisoners undertaking the national

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

vocational qualification (NVQ) in catering. The establishment has a well-resourced library, which caters for all levels of literacy and those undertaking higher educational qualifications. The prison also has an external contract with People Plus for the supply of library resources; this is subcontracted to Suffolk Library Services.

The healthcare unit's end-of-life suite has been decommissioned and the room repurposed.

Outside the prison's secure compound, there is a purpose-built visitor reception Centre, managed under contract.

There are three externally commissioned services: for the provision of healthcare services, with Practice Plus Group; facilities management, provided by Amey; and learning and skills, managed by People Plus.

The HMIP inspection report, in January 2024, highlighted the inadequacy of B wing accommodation, particularly underlining what the IMB had noted in previous annual reports of minimal size, ventilation and heating, to which we add the slow commencement of agreed improvements. The conditions have been drawn to our attention, particularly by prisoners newly transferred into Whatton, because of the contrast with the prisons from which they have been transferred. We deal with this further in our report.

### **3. Key points**

The Board acknowledges the support of the Governor, Deputy Governor, senior management team and prison officers, which helps the Board meet its obligations.

#### **3.1 Main findings**

##### **Safety**

- Generally, the Board's perception is that prisoners feel safe.
- There have been no attempts to escape.
- The number of prisoners in segregation continues to fall, and prisoners report that staff are particularly supportive and fair in the CSU.
- Whilst self-harm statistics appear high at times, these are attributed to a small minority of prisoners; the actual number of individual prisoners self-harming is low.
- Generally, the Board's perception is that prisoners move about the estate safely.
- Vulnerable prisoners are reviewed regularly
- From the Board's observations, prisoners are treated with minimal force only when necessary.

##### **Fair and humane treatment**

- This is a focus of activity.
- Most of the accommodation is of a good standard, with the exception of B wing.
- The prison is generally clean and well-decorated.
- The security of the prison was improved by changes in the census count
- Movement of prisoners across the prison was regulated with movement order slips
- Time out of cells seems adequate and a system of rotational lockdowns is in operation when the prison is short-staffed.
- Staff and prisoner relationships are generally positive and the Board has observed helpful assistance between staff and prisoners, and between prisoners.
- In the Board's view, the provision and quality of food is good, with very few applications to IMB.

##### **Health and wellbeing**

- There have been improvements in staffing numbers and skills.
- Changes in prescription collection have had a positive impact on queuing, enabling prisoners to get to work and activities on time.
- The prison has aimed to provide a level of healthcare that matches the provision in society outside prison that in the community.
- The new GP appointment system appears to allow fairer and timely consultations.
- The Board is more confident about the safeguarding process.
- The prison chaplaincy team appears to be well respected by the prisoners and a range of celebration and religious observances have been noted.
- A new psychologist was employed in the summer of 2024.

##### **Progression and resettlement**

- Prisoners are prepared for release with various courses. However, there is little

- contact after release and we know that only a minority secure any kind of work.
- Prisoners transferred into Whatton for courses sometimes have a long wait and some are concerned that this will impact their release date.
- A number of workshops are available, with good attendance.

### **3.2 Main areas for development**

#### ***TO THE MINISTER***

- We have a disproportionate amount of IPP prisoners at Whatton and the IPP prisoner numbers have not fallen since the last review. How will the Minister address this issue?
- When will the Minister review the IPP policy in order to support the wellbeing and morale of IPP prisoners?
- How - and when - will the Minister ensure greater finance for building and staffing?

#### ***TO THE PRISON SERVICE***

- Prisoners are transferred to WHMP Whatton to do courses that will support their release date. When will the Prison Service give improved access through funding for courses?
- How will the Prison Service support HMP Whatton in finding suitable work placements on release for prisoners so that the numbers of prisoners in work improves significantly?

#### ***TO THE GOVERNOR***

- Visiting time is important for families and prisoners. Is the Governor satisfied that the practice of gathering visitors outside the security area and allowing entry as a group offers the full amount of time for the actual visit with the prisoner? Visitors are given tally numbers on arrival and extra staff help when they are moved into search room. The aim is to get maximum time with prisoner. There is monitoring to establish effectiveness of process.

### **3.3 Response to the last report**

<b>Issue raised</b>	<b>Response given</b>	<b>Progress</b>
<b>To the Minister</b>		
IPP prisoners.	We raised this with the secretary of State, who indicated a forthcoming report to Parliament.	The report failed to make any substantial changes to the IPP status. IPP prisoners are more vulnerable to self-harm.
Accommodation in B wing.	Description of improvements to be carried out.	No start to the improvements.

Medical provision and accommodation.	Changes to be carried out and increases to staffing.	Changes put in place and additional staff brought in, particularly for those prisoners with mental health issues.
Managing changes in the regime.	Bringing in further use of IT and prisoners adapting better after time.	The HMIP inspection report generally supported our belief that the prison was working effectively and that prisoners benefitted from the organisation of the prison and the staff.
Solar panels.	Nothing further.	
Eureka key	Completed.	
<b>To the Prison Service</b>		
Prisoners transferred to Whatton for courses that will lead to supported release into the community. Courses had not taken place or transferred too late to recognise the time allocated for course ends after potential release date.	No comment	There are prisoners in this position. Courses have taken longer to come into full operation after Covid. It is still a point of aggravation and distress for some, who feel their release point may be affected. There are waiting lists within Whatton with clear criteria for dates of release. Prisoners transferring into Whatton may have release dates that give them a priority over existing place holders. Programmes are being phased out for new programmes next year. The national policy is that release dates are a priority.



## **Evidence sections 4 – 7**

### **4. Safety**

Generally, the Board's perception is that prisoners feel safe and have accepted the limitations of the new movement strategy. The Staff are assured that each census is a correct exercise.

Our members express no concerns about their personal security in the estate.

#### **4.1 Reception and induction**

4.1.1 The induction process for new prisoners is regularly monitored by IMB members. The Board notes that staff seem especially caring, considerate and helpful with new arrivals.

4.1.2 The first stage of induction of prisoners takes place in reception as soon as they are removed from the prison van. Their warrant, categorisation and identification details are checked, and details of their property are logged. Any items not allowed at HMP Whatton are removed from their property box and this is explained carefully to prisoners.

4.1.3 Each prisoner is then checked on the body scanner, fingerprinted and photographed for identification. Their risk-assessment record is also checked to verify whether or not they can safely share a cell.

4.1.4 The prisoners are seen by a member of staff from the healthcare unit within half an hour of arriving. They are offered a drink and given time and money to phone home. In addition, they are offered a small amount of credit on their phone and a small amount of canteen (a facility where prisoners can buy snacks, toiletries, stationery and other essentials) credit to tide them over until they receive their money.

4.1.5 Prisoners are also seen also by a member of staff from the education department to assess their needs and their OASys (a tool used to assess the risks and needs of prisoners) record is checked.

4.1.6 The new prisoners are initially housed in unit A4 until all assessments have been carried out. Here they are given a tour of the building, introduced to all staff members, as well as the IMB, if possible. Prisoners are usually moved after they have had a few days to settle into their new surroundings and there is a suitable wing and cell available. Prisoners are informed of support available to them by means of the Samaritans, Listeners (prisoners trained by the Samaritans to provide peer support), mentors and key workers. They are clearly told the rules of the prison, which may differ from the prisons from which they have transferred.

#### **4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody**

4.2.1 There were no self-inflicted deaths during the reporting year; two deaths in custody were, apparently, due to natural causes.

4.2.2 A death in prison is unsettling and distressing for staff and prisoners. In the Board's view, the staff go out of their way to ensure that those likely to be affected have access to counselling, while the chaplaincy unit hold a service to mark the death, which prisoners can attend.

### **4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation**

4.3.1 There are transfers that enable prisoners to take the specialist courses available. These prisoners may not always receive the priority that was expected, due to the lack of available places. The courses are designed to help prisoners convicted of sexual offences (PCoSO) address their offending behaviour. HMP Whatton continues to receive prisoners who fit the criteria of having committed a sexual offence, either current or as part of a conviction. This has led to a less settled population, with some more challenging and younger prisoners, who had previously not been in this prison's normal demographic.

In the Board's view, this has, in part at least, led to an increase in violence and self-harm (although, overall, the number of incidents is still low compared with other prisons), including some serious incidents, as well as an increase in the misuse of prescription medication in the prison. However, action by staff in understanding and dealing with prisoners who self-harm specifically will, hopefully, see a reduction in the number of self-harm cases over time.

4.3.2 Adjudications (disciplinary hearings, when a prisoner is suspected of having broken prison rules) continue to be managed effectively and regularly monitored by the IMB. The number of outstanding adjudications has decreased during the reporting period and is now well-managed, with a new recording system in place to ensure adjudications are dealt with in a timely fashion. Arrangements are available for the independent adjudicator (IA) to hold their adjudications, remotely, via laptop, or in person. All such referrals to the IA are in line with the locally agreed tariff document/LOP and are infrequent.

At the last adjudications standardisation meeting in April, the senior management team (SMT) fully reviewed all punishments in the local tariff document, in line with suggestions from HMIP and, through this review, raised the threshold for CC (cellular confinement) for a lot of the charges. Hopefully, this should see a decrease in the number of times CC is used as a punishment over the next reporting period.

### **4.4 Use of force**

Officers responsible for prisoners have become better equipped through the developing use of body-worn video cameras (BWVCs) and other equipment, where the need arises.

Statistically, the 30-39 age group was overrepresented, a trend resulting from the expansion of the prisoner intake, and these implications have been raised in the adjudications standardisation meetings. There is nothing to suggest this age group is being specifically targeted. The IMB regularly monitors the use of force (UoF) meetings and, of those observed, all incidents have been reviewed and assessed as proportionate. Members have observed discussions around the use of force and each meeting reviews footage from BWVCs and CCTV. A total of 78% of UoF incidents are captured on BWVC or CCTV.

The use of proportional statistics has demonstrated to all staff and prisoners that, proportionally, the number of prisoners offending is the same for the minority groups as for majority groups. In reporting to committees, such as that concerned with the use of force, for example, there is a rationalisation of claims that one group or another is picked on by the staff, and it can clearly be seen that it is not the case.

## **4.5 Preventing illicit items**

4.5.1 From October 2023 to the end of March 2024, there were no illicit items found, and this good news was shared with both staff and prisoners. Attempts to import Spice (a chemical compound that mimics the effects of the active ingredient in cannabis) into the prison have been blocked. The work of the post room in surveying the incoming mail, identifying potential drug-impregnated paper or drug-carrying packages, is central to the constant attention to potential routes into the prison. There have also been block searches of cells across wings, which have found and removed illicit items and substances from circulation. There must be constant vigilance because of the ability of manufacturers to vary the constituents of manufactured chemical drugs.

4.5.2 The proportion of prisoners on prescription drugs (all but five prisoners) is a source of concern but also reflects the demographic of the prison. Many prisoners come to Whatton with profound mental health needs. Concerns often surround the use of drugs that are prescribed for one prisoner being passed on to another prisoner for recreational use and gain. There appears to be zero tolerance in Whatton for handling, passing on, or acquiring drugs from whatever source and this is strictly adhered to. The new systems for collecting prescription medicines should improve this and also cut down on the mass waiting around B wing.

## **5. Fair and humane treatment**

### **5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food**

5.1.1 HMP Whatton has had considerable issues with the accommodation on B wing, highlighted in the HMIP report during this reporting period, as well as previous IMB annual reports. Dampness to a limited degree, lack of appropriate toilet facilities and in-cell toilets adjacent to sleeping facilities have given rise to prisoner complaints. Cell ventilation is also below standard, as is the heating provision. In general, the size of the cells is at a minimum. Prisoners who are transferred from other prisons and are then housed in B wing in HMP Whatton comment particularly on the differences with the accommodation they had in their previous prison.

5.1.2 The IMB concurs with the HMIP report that B wing is not fit for purpose. In the Board's view, all other accommodation units are of a satisfactory standard, with the implementation of a new wing accommodation unit C2, which houses 39 prisoners who are working towards gaining category D (open prison) status. This is an unlocked wing so that prisoners can gain confidence in being in a more outside environment. Each cell has an ensuite facility and air conditioning, with a communal laundry facility for the unit. Prisoners report to the Board that they are very satisfied with the facilities offered in this wing. This differs considerably with C3 wing, where the ventilation is poor: too hot in summer and too cold in winter.

5.1.3 Cleanliness has remained a priority and, when the Board has been able to observe, all wings are very clean, with most cells in a tidy condition.

5.1.4 Wing A8 mainly houses prisoners who use wheelchairs, those who need mobility assistance and the frail and elderly. The number of prisoners in these categories is increasing and exceeds A8 capacity. Any extra capacity is being housed in the ground floor of A7. Wing A7 does not adequately support the needs of prisoners with mobility issues.

### **5.2 Segregation**

5.2.1 The care and separation unit (CSU), where prisoners are segregated, has eight cells. Whilst the prisoners confined there often present with very challenging behaviour, there are fewer reports of inappropriate behaviour than in previous years. Board members visit at least weekly and find the staff are helpful and knowledgeable. We have noted positive relationships between officers and prisoners in the CSU, with prisoners reporting to us that they are mostly happy with the care and support they receive.

Assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) plans, which are used to support prisoners at risk of self-harm and suicide, are viewed and signed each time a member visits the CSU. These documents are kept up to date, with observations of the prisoner noted with comments and the time of the observation.

5.2.2 As previously noted, prisoners with profound mental health concerns have been detained in the CSU for an excessive number of days. Whilst this is an unacceptable situation for the prisoner, they continue to receive all the necessary services. Staff have expressed concerns about the impact on their own mental health and recovery period from this unsatisfactory situation.

5.2.3 The IMB considers it a matter of concern that some prisoners with severe mental health problems are kept in the CSU cells, for their own safety and close observation,

whilst waiting for transfer to specialists' mental health facilities. In a recent case, it was 80 days before one particular prisoner could be transferred. The IMB visited him regularly and commend the staff on their interactions with him, as his behaviour could be challenging.

### **5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers**

5.3.1 Shortages of staff, staff illness, bed-watches, hospital transfers, detached duties and regime lockdowns have all stretched the relationships between staff and prisoners, especially when wings had to be shut down at short notice, often due to a medical emergency hospital transfer. However, the staff and management of the prison have worked hard at minimising disruption and prisoners report and the IMB has observed generally positive exchanges between prisoners and staff. Prisoners in the gyms have been particularly keen to tell us about the support they receive from gym staff.

5.3.2 A newly appointed health centre manager has improved the appointment systems and the IMB has noted key relationships being established. The Board has received very few applications (prisoners' written submissions) relating to healthcare provision, with prisoners telling us that they like and respect the healthcare staff.

5.3.3 Key working has remained a priority, and there are now checks by band 5 staff to ensure that these issues are being fed back to staff. During the reporting year, the IMB has observed some excellent staff interactions with prisoners who have particularly challenging behaviour.

### **5.4 Equality and diversity**

5.4.1 The Governor and staff focus on equality and diversity across their responsibilities. It is recognisable in their provision for identifying the points in the population that give rise to the need for care and specific recording of the data referring to treatment and reaction. This is particularly so in prison life and routine, where interactions between prisoner and regime may become frayed. The Governor meets with the protected characteristics (including race, religion, age, disability, sex and sexual orientation, which it is unlawful to discriminate against) and minority ethnic groups on a regular basis. In the WEAT (Whatton equalities action training) committee, there are representatives from the protected characteristics groups, who have a specific place on the agenda to report and comment on issues affecting their group. In statistical analysis, the groups are shown proportionally to their number. These data are compared so groups may have evidence that the numbers of prisoners who are part of the issue is no different to the proportion of other groups. For a prisoner, this is crucial information to see that there is equality of treatment across the prison.

5.4.2 Where prisoners have conflicted with the regime, adjudication observations by the IMB have seen that prisoners are given a clear description of their rights and are allowed to make statements and conduct themselves in the presentation of their case. It is clear from the statistics that the number of prisoners held in the CSU has fallen during the reporting year, from 25 in January to eight in May.

Prisoners in the CSU in the last three months of the reporting period:

- Prisoners in for own protection: 0
- On Rule 45 (for the maintenance of good order or discipline (GOoD): 6
- Individual prisoners: 32

When the Board observed Rule 45 reviews, prisoners were taken through the process clearly and given the opportunity to put their case. The outcomes were explained, and it was ensured that the prisoner was aware of outcomes and the implications.

## **5.5 Faith and pastoral support**

5.5.1 The chaplaincy is very important to prisoners. The members will give support to any prisoner, whether or not he holds a faith. It offers good support for internal and external links. In the Board's view, the arrangements for space for worship are sufficient and flexible enough to provide areas for worship. There are permanent members of staff representing their faith and visiting clergy come in, such as, for example, a Rabbi for the small group of Jewish prisoners.

5.5.2 The environment is arranged for differing forms of worship and shared. It is not visually stimulating for prayer and worship, but the chaplaincy works hard to provide the appropriate environment and atmosphere.

Whilst space is made available and always open, it replicates other prison architecture rather than being a purpose-built wing.

5.5.3 HMP Whatton has an ageing population. Religious services are held on the first floor and the stair lift is very slow. There is probably a reluctance to use it. A lift has been out of action for some time. The chaplaincy is concerned that congregations may be affected by the access issues. However, the Board is pleased to note that the plans to improve the stair lift will help make prison accommodation, especially to the chaplaincy, boardroom and the offices, more easily accessible to all prisoners.

5.5.4 There is a wide range of faiths among the prison population, including:

- Christian (who are not CofE or RC): 102
- Protestant/Church of England (CofE): 181
- Roman Catholic (RC): 92
- Muslim: 79
- No faith: 204
- Pagan 49
- Sikh: 6
- Jewish: 3

These all have special times for festivals. The Chaplaincy focuses on each at its appropriate time and will include special meals and diets. It has been possible for prisoners of a faith to join together for that special meal. The Christmas celebrations are particularly sensitive for many prisoners, who are separated from families at that time.

Members of the chaplaincy offer individual counselling. Pastoral care is both re-active and pro-active, strongly correlating with prisoners' mental health needs.

## **5.6 Incentives schemes**

5.6.1 Every prisoner has a plan for their life at Whatton. For many, this is an incentive that they lacked outside prison and includes education and the option to be involved in courses that will improve their life in prison and their life chances on release. The need for most prisoners to learn to read effectively is recognised and the incentives provide entry to other activities and work requiring the higher levels of literacy. The status they achieve through good behaviour in the prison's incentives scheme allows them to

access better opportunities and earn money. The loss of these privileges, through negative behaviour, is depressing and restrictive for them.

5.6.2 The gardens provide work that many enjoy, and one prisoner was enthusiastic enough to be planning his garden work at home on release.

Activity is an incentive and crucial for wellbeing and mental health. Opportunities are provided so that a sentence plan can be constructive in rehabilitation.

IPP prisoners have little incentive to follow any productive activity, which is why we would ask that there is some scheme of review from outside prison so that there is an incentive to work to, not for release but for wellbeing and a forward view.

## **5.7 Complaints**

5.7.1 Prisoners can make complaints through applications to the IMB or via the prison's complaints system, using Comp 1 (an ordinary complaint) and Comp 2 (a confidential complaint) forms. Each process has time limits for response. The Board organises rotas and tries to respond to an application within a week of it being received. However, this is not always possible when finding responses to complex complaints.

The IMB is important in that it remains separate from the prison staff and complaints to us are handled by our Board members. The prisoner completes a specific IMB form, which is then placed inside a locked box, marked IMB, on each wing. These are collected once a week and are dealt with by IMB members. The prisoner receives an answer sealed and secure from other prisoners or staff.

5.7.2 Comp 1 is the prison official form and has a routine handling time for each part of the system. It is entirely dealt with by prison staff. However, a prisoner may elect for the Chair of IMB to deal with the complaint.

5.7.3 IMB applications cover a range of complaints from simple to complex. Prisoner property is a high-end topic and, perhaps, the most difficult to deal with. In answering these complaints, the IMB member is reliant on help from prison staff who have access to information sources that we do not have. Often, losses have taken place during prisoner transfer in transport that has not enough specific space for luggage. Long-term prisoners have collected a range of property of varying values, and which cannot be contained in the allocated amount of property in transfer. There are other categories under which we receive applications – please see the applications table at the end of the report.

## **5.8 Property**

5.8.1 A large percentage of applications from prisoners relates to property that has been lost or not arrived with them when they are transferred to HMP Whatton.

5.8.2 Applications are processed by IMB members, who initially contact the complaints clerk to check progress, who then contacts the prison from which the prisoner was sent. There is often a very long wait or no response at all from other prisons, which is unsatisfactory.

5.8.3 However, at HMP Whatton, prisoners are allowed three bags of property each, plus one bag or box of legal documents. Different prisons have different policies. Many prisoners have, due to long sentences resulting in the acquisition of extra property.

5.8.4 The contractors for transporting prisoners have strict health and safety rules.

These require them to ensure that all passageways on the vans remain clear of any obstacles that could impede exiting the vehicle in an emergency.

5.8.5 As transporting prisoners is a business, the vans are usually full, or almost full, for efficiency of time and money, leaving little or no space for extra capacity of property. This often results in bags being left at the original prison.

5.8.6 Prisoners are responsible for paying for transportation of any extra property they want to take with them and the originating prison should arrange for this to take place. It is, therefore, important that prisoners understand this situation and are urged to reduce the amount of property they have or be willing to pay for it to be transferred.

Similarly, prisons need to be prepared to charge prisoners for the transportation of extra property, over and above their limit.



## **6. Health and wellbeing**

### **6.1 Healthcare general**

The provision of electronic key cabinets should improve the collection of prescribed medication and prevent the major grouping of prisoners waiting. The prison acknowledges that this may relax the prisoner movement to some extent.

There are waiting times for some facilities and some issues with prisoners receiving appointments for a point in time that makes it difficult to get a movement slip. The staff are working on solutions that meet both the access to appointments and the need for the regular census process, newly in place.

The large percentage of prisoners on prescribed medication is an issue and the prison is both reviewing the reasons for this and randomly checking prisoners and their medication.

There has been an increase in prisoners attending hospital for emergency appointments. This means that officers are locked into escort duty, sometimes for long periods. There is strain on wing staffing.

### **6.2 Physical healthcare**

The provision of gymnasium time for physical activities is well used, with regular times available. Prisoners who require wheelchairs and 'pushers' can access across the estate to work or facilities. This provides a good physical background to cell confinement. The field does not figure largely in this activity.

### **6.3 Mental health, drug and alcohol rehabilitation**

6.3.1 Due to the nature of the cohort at HMP Whatton, mental health and drug and alcohol rehabilitation are significant issues. Following the change in leadership in the previous reporting period, the healthcare team at Whatton has increased in numbers and capability. Some significant challenges have been overcome and the team has undertaken training so that all nurses are capable of providing immediate life support (ILS); plus, two mental health nurses are undertaking suturing training.

6.3.2 During the reporting period, there was still an identified requirement for more support in the substance misuse function. However, due to the efficient use of spare resources elsewhere, a limited amount of external resource is available temporarily. Alcoholics Anonymous also attends the prison to offer additional support. The current needs assessment shows that more resource is required in this area, in addition to the current two staff.

6.3.3 One of the significant issues is in the delivery of medicines to patients. HMP Whatton's healthcare facilities are old and, as previously reported by the IMB the fabric is becoming a serious concern.

6.3.4 The facilities are in the original part of the estate, dating to the 1960s, designed to cater for a much smaller population. Daily, the queue for medicines is substantial in narrow corridors, which is particularly challenging for wheelchair users. The gathering also gives rise to opportunities for pressures by individuals to obtain drugs from others. There should be a solution to this when the extra facility, with preloaded medicines only obtainable by the code held by each prisoner, opens individual lockers. The machine will be located away from the main healthcare facility and should help reduce pressures

focused on a single corridor. It has not, at the time of writing the report, been installed.

6.3.5 During the reporting period, the Board received applications relating to healthcare, which constituted 10% of the total number. Two related to issues in the medicine queue and six related to issues with mental health or rehabilitation.

6.3.6 The prison provides many support platforms for neurodiverse prisoners, supporting reading, maths, communication, concentration, motor skills, emotional regulation and organisation, as well as individual support for any other requirements.

## **6.4 Social care**

HMP Whatton has a relatively elderly age profile of prisoners. The most elderly and frail prisoners and those with disabilities are all housed in one wing, where Nottinghamshire Social Services provide care assistants to support them. Social care plans are prepared in consultation with the prisoners. Staff on the wing report that they can request mobility and support equipment for prisoners relatively easily and it arrives quickly. The IMB has received very few applications in relation to social care and care needs during the reporting period.

## **6.5 Time out of cell regime**

6.5.1 Changes to the roll call towards the end of last year had a significant impact on time out of cells for all prisoners and the IMB received applications to that effect. Since the introduction of a new register system, bar teething problems, the prison has seen a return to acceptable levels of time out of cells.

6.5.2 Throughout the reporting period, the gymnasiums have remained open and prisoners are accessing four periods each week, with some being able to access additional sessions on a needs' basis. The staff in both gyms recognise the value of their input, going beyond the physical training needs of the prisoners.

6.5.3 Staff shortages impact time out of cells, but prison management monitors this to ensure that no individual wings are unduly impacted. The IMB reported on the impact of Bank Holidays on lock-ups in one particular wing, where they seemed to be affected more than other wings. This appears to have been resolved since being reported on, with wing closures being shared out on a more equal and rotational basis.

## **6.7 Soft skills**

6.7.1 The prison is very much aware of the need to practise and encourage soft skills in prisoners and staff as exemplars of these skills. All employment provides the opportunity to practise the skill development, approaches and methods, which emphasises the nature of patience, diplomacy and resilience and give prisoners the opportunity to experience and practise such skill, which then can be transferred to other situations.

6.7.2 Prisoners should also experience interactions that encourage the staff to work in this way and this will be especially so in areas of disciplinary interaction, adjudication and complaint resolution, where soft skills give better results and improve outcomes as a reward.

6.7.3 The IMB has observed staff handling prisoners in this way and is in discussions of duty and practice. Certainly, the prisoner representation on WEAT is underpinned by soft skills in order to effectively make their points and humour is added to help discussions by both sides.

6.7.4 It is this experience of social interaction that will support prisoners in release and in settling into life outside. Many will find that their way will be eased by using soft skills, as opposed to confrontation, in a world that will not be generally supportive or accepting. Whilst HMP Whatton is not a resettlement prison, a proportion of its prisoners are released each year and need support to back their courses and general preparation for release.

## **7. Progression and resettlement**

### **7.1 Education, library**

#### **Education**

7.1.1 Education services at HMP Whatton are provided by People Plus.

Attending Education in prison reduces the risk of reoffending by 9%. From this year, on induction, all prisoners receive the 'People Plus College HMP Whatton Course Guide'. This is also provided on wings and is available to those at the monthly awarding of certificates. It is intended to help a key concern identified in an HMIP report earlier this year that identified that places in education courses should be used to capacity. New arrivals must complete a maths and English assessment, unless there is evidence of prior achievement at Level 1 or above. This is to allow allocation to the correct course or job. Fewer of these assessments are required since the introduction of an online computer system to share information on assessments already performed at other prisons. The need for assessments has fallen from eight per week to two, freeing up time for other educational needs.

7.1.2 Neurodiversity assessments have fallen from ten to 4-5 per week, again due to online sharing of information. Neurodiverse learners seem are reluctant to attend education. Two tutors are devoted to outreach sessions with this category of prisoner, which has led to a slightly higher achievement rate.

7.1.3 A Level 2 functional skills English course is a basic requirement for most employers and is offered as four sessions per week for seven weeks. Other vocational courses include health and safety in the construction environment, painting and decorating, and horticulture. For the more advanced student, certificates in bookkeeping and accounting are offered up to Level 3.

7.1.4 Entrepreneurial skills are promoted by a course on how to plan a new business. Self-employment is encouraged, with a digital skills course using Microsoft Office Suite. Open University qualifications are available to those with 18 months or more remaining on their sentence.

7.1.5 In-cell learning is supported with creative writing, mental wellbeing, maths, food hygiene and understanding yourself and others. Importantly, up to 30 hours of guided in-cell-learning in the CSU is offered in areas such as personal development and helping to build better relationships. Laptops offered to certain prisoners aid their in-cell study.

7.1.6 Over the preceding year, the education department offered 33 different courses, with 1,184 starters and 1,039 qualifiers. More courses now offer both Level 1 and Level 2 national vocational qualifications (NVQs), in, for example, the cycle maintenance course, which started last year. A diploma in painting and decorating is a Level 2 and 3 course.

#### **7.1.7 Library**

People Plus subcontract the library facilities to Suffolk Libraries. The latter is an independent and charitable society that runs Suffolk's public library service and prison libraries in several counties, including Nottinghamshire. Their vision is to 'transform lives through access to knowledge and resources, promote lifelong learning and strengthen communities by meeting their evolving needs'.

7.1.8 Around 2,000 books are borrowed each month. The HMP Whatton stock is around 12,400 books, and games such as jigsaw puzzles. A total of 87% of the prison population are active library members. Suffolk Libraries plan to give 10% of the budget allocated to Whatton for library staff to purchase appropriate books through Askews and Holts Library Services, library suppliers. A reading support tutor, along with a colleague, offer support four days a week. The computers in the library are actively used for Open University courses, with 195 visits per month, on average. The Shannon Trust continues to provide peer-led literacy and numeracy programmes.

## **7.2 Vocational training, work**

7.2.1 The activities hub, industries, and education (provided by People Plus) continue to work together as a team to ensure that prisoners engage in activity that is likely to benefit them by supporting their wellbeing and promoting effective rehabilitation.

The team has taken on board comments made by the HMIP inspection team and Ofsted, which carried out an unannounced inspection in January 2024.

There are 758 workspaces: 654 full time and 104 part time. These include:

- Multimedia, which runs the prison radio from its own studio and also offers printing services.
- Waste management: there is a workshop dedicated to Bakers Waste, which plans to expand the number of places to 12. It provides valuable resettlement work, and the first prisoner has just obtained a job with them on release.
- Horticulture: this maintains the prison grounds, which are always impressive, as well as a large produce garden, which supplies the canteen and other prisons. In the last year funds were put back into the industries budget.
- Paints: this workshop is well run and provides basic up to Level 3 qualifications.
- DHL: a very popular workspace, this supplies canteen to a number of prisons.
- Kitchen and staff mess: these provide the opportunity to obtain level 1 & 2 qualifications in catering and food hygiene.
- Textiles workshops: these continue to make workwear and two different types of sandbags for the Ministry of Defence.
- Laundry: this department is regarded as a centre of excellence nationwide and offers launderers qualifications.
- Cycle maintenance: this also provides qualifications, and the repaired bikes are then given to charity.
- The CRED team (clean, rehabilitative, enabling, decent) works with the managements team, Amey, across the prison, learning valuable skills for future release.

7.2.2 At the end of the reporting period, the employment status data were as follows:

- Employed: 584
- Unemployed: 92
- Retired: 86
- Medically retired: 44
- Unfit: 4
- Attending programmes: 32

7.2.3 The following relevant comments were made by the inspection team and Ofsted:.

- Data monitoring was good and staff were able to show how they had adapted delivery to motivate non-attenders.
- There were sufficient activities for the prison population and the allocation process is efficient. Unemployment rates were low.
- In workshops, prisoners developed valuable skills.
- Too few prisoners working in catering had qualifications. with the same for wing cleaners.
- Too few prisoners with learning difficulties or disabilities had their support needs met.
- Prisoners felt safe in the workshops.
- Too many prisoners had little awareness of how their allocated activity matched up to their long-term goals.
- Prisoners who were past retirement age could engage in an appropriate range of activities which supported their mental wellbeing.

7.2.4 Further to the previous Ofsted inspection, a plan was already in place to address the issues raised, but it hadn't been sufficiently embedded. The activities policy is being amended and a new activities guide has been produced, which is available to all prisoners, with vacancies highlighted. The local pay rate has been raised in a number of areas. There is increased focus on the career pathway. Further to comments about the prison adopting a punitive approach to behaviour management, prisoners now do not automatically lose their job following an adjudication.

7.2.5 The activities teams holds the waiting list for the education department as well, which is a smarter process. The activities staff are now involved in key worker checks. There are now tier 2 activities, such as Opal, a programme for older prisoners with a variety of activities and Fine Cell, a specific craft of cross stitching and embroidery available to those in work. All those awaiting a place on programmes are still considered for work.

7.2.6 A neurodiversity support manager has been in place since June 2023, and they work with relevant prisoners to ensure that reasonable adjustments are made.

7.2.7 The IMB will monitor these changes carefully, but we are confident that the activities team is working hard to provide the best possible outcomes for prisoners.

### **7.3 Offender management, progression**

7.3.1 Category D reclassified prisoners are moved on rapidly to category D prisons within one week. It takes 12-18 months to train a case worker and one year for a prison offender manager (POM). There are now three case workers, with another due to start, handling around 200 cases. Typically, eight case workers would deal with that workload. The previously steady case administration staff numbers are changing due to younger recruits who are more likely to move on for promotion or to other roles, e.g. within multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA). The Kaizen and Horizon programmes, which are for men who have been convicted of a sexual offence, are aimed at prisoners' release dates. These programmes will come to an end in the next reporting year to be replaced by a new suite of programmes.

7.3.2 Parole board hearings have significantly increased in number, from a median of

ten per month during the first half of the previous year, to 12, although parole awarded remains around two per month. As of April 2024, HMP Whatton still had 121 prisoners with an Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentence. This represents just under one in ten of all remaining IPP prisoners. The outcome of the Victims and Prisoners Bill is awaited. HMP Whatton has 104 mandatory, discretionary or automatic lifers. The number of both IPP prisoners and lifers increased significantly over the reporting year.

## **7.4 Family contact**

7.4.1 Following feedback from prisoners that some were not able to receive any social visits, the visits have been split into two categories: family days, where one visitor must be under the age of 18 and the prisoner must have Level 4 child contact arrangements in place; and adult social visit days, where all visitors must be over the age of 18, with a maximum of four visitors per visit being allowed in.

7.4.2 Family day visiting sessions have been observed by members over the reporting year, where prisoners are expected to participate in activities with the children.

7.4.3 Due to the nature of the prisoner's offence at HMP Whatton and the fact that HMP Whatton is not a local prison, not many families participate in social visits. Over a period of two weeks in December 2023, only 70 prisoners had social visits.

## **7.5 Resettlement planning**

7.5.1 In last year's annual report, the Board pointed out that HMP Whatton is not a resettlement prison yet, on average, about a quarter of the prisoners are released over the year. There are prisoners who are transferred to Whatton to access courses so that they may prepare for release.

7.5.2 There are important factors that sit behind resettlement. A sex offender will find it difficult to impossible to go into employment. The prison has tried to forge links with various industries, but the nature of a conviction for a sex offence, which may have been against children, is a huge barrier for the prison to overcome and for industry/employers to accept. This indicates that prisoners are vulnerable on release and have very little to be positive about. This is especially true where the offence was either against a family member or had alienated their family from retaining contact. There are reasons of distance and accessibility for the low percentage of prisoners who receive visitors, but their conviction adds to this and brings about a dislocation with a background that is difficult, or impossible, to overcome.

The corollary to this is that the preparation for release has to be effective at the end of sentence in preparation for life outside and a realistic appraisal of where the prisoner will go on release. This must be underpinned by relationships with the Probation Service and the provision of supportive residence for a time after release. Whatton seem to work hard at this, but loses contact very quickly after release. This may not be the case in resettlement prisons. The staff in Whatton appear to take great care in supporting prisoners through courses and providing experience, without any extra funding. The arrangements are strong but the contact for prisoners, particularly vulnerable at this time, is quickly lost once away from Whatton.

## 8. The work of the IMB

IMB evidence comes from observations made on visits, scrutiny of records and informal contact with staff and prisoners, as well as through applications from prisoners to the IMB.

The Board's priorities have been collating, investigating and answering prisoner applications, segregation reviews, and monitoring visits to the establishment.

### Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	15
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	9
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	8
Total number of visits to the establishment	156

### Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	9	9
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	13	6
C	Equality	0	3
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	13	8
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	18	5
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	10	1
F	Food and kitchens	7	5
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	16	13
H1	Property within the establishment	11	8
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	15	14
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	7	1
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence), parole, release dates, re-categorisation	10	16
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	13	14
K	Transfers	8	6
L	Miscellaneous	57	29
	<b>Total number of applications</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>138</b>



## **Annex A**

### **Service providers**

- Physical health: Practice Plus Group
- Mental health: Practice Plus Group
- Substance misuse: Practice Plus Group
- Dental health: Time for Teeth
- Prison education framework: People Plus
- Escort contractor: GeoAmey



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