



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Bullingdon

**For reporting year
1 July 2023 to 30 June 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 Bullingdon is a local, resettlement category B prison for men, situated near Bicester in Oxfordshire. At the end of June 2024, about 65%¹ of the prisoners were on remand, or were convicted but not yet sentenced. Most prisoners transfer to other prisons when they are convicted and sentenced. This means that a large number of prisoners have short stays in the prison. At the end of June 2024, 92% of prisoners had been in the prison for less than a year and more than half for under three months. During the year ending June 2024, the number of new arrivals each month ranged from 238 to 326. This high level of turnover ('churn') leads to various problems.

On 30 June 2024, the end of the Board's reporting year, the prison's operational capacity (i.e. its permitted maximum number of prisoners) was 921. This figure is lower than its normal operational capacity of 1,112, because a rolling refurbishment programme meant that one wing was out of use for much of the reporting year. This reduction in the number of prisoners, due to maintenance work, went some way to mitigate difficulties arising from staff shortages. As of the end of June, prison Governors were aware that they might need to curtail renovation work, even if it was not properly finished, in order to bring empty cells back into use more quickly than had been planned when work began. Many prisoners share cells that were intended for single occupancy.

As in previous years, the prison has had staff shortages and a high proportion of inexperienced staff. These factors have an impact on a number of the key concerns raised below.

The prison should have 216 officers. As of June 2024, there were 217 in employment, but 60 of these officers were not available for duty (because, for example, they were at training college, on structured learning weeks, or on restricted duty).

A total of 130 of these 217 officers were in their probationary year; on one wing, 22 of 28 members of its regular staff group were probationers. The ratio of experienced officers to probationers makes it very difficult for more senior colleagues to mentor junior staff, and it affects the daily running of the regime and the level of support for and supervision of prisoners.

In May 2024, the prison ran a staff development day focused on training in basic operational duties, despite many officers having only recently completed the national training course for new operational staff; a second such day was scheduled for July 2024.

In addition to prison officers, a large number of non-operational staff also work in the prison (e.g. in administrative and other support roles). The Board acknowledges that many members of staff (both operational and non-operational) are working under significant pressure.

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

3. Key points

3.1 Main findings

Safety

- The high turnover of prisoners affects the stability and safety of the prison.
- Levels of self-harm remain high.
- Levels of violence remain high and, for several days during one week in May, the prison changed its stability level from amber to red (the highest level of concern).
- There has been an increase in the number of prisoner-on-staff assaults.
- The number of Illicit items (including drugs and mobile phones) entering the prison remains high.
- Of the 24% of prisoners who responded to IMB surveys (see Annex B)², more than 40% reported that they felt 'quite unsafe' or 'very unsafe'.

Fair and humane treatment

- Much of the prison shows signs of dilapidation, including the main accommodation blocks; some refurbishment work was underway during the reporting year.
- Many cells designed for single occupancy are occupied by two prisoners.
- There have been issues with the quality and quantity of food during the year.
- The Here to Help (H2H) peer support pilot scheme has grown into a very useful service, respected by both prisoners and staff.
- A great deal of property belonging to prisoners continues to go missing, both during transfers between establishments and within the prison.

Health and wellbeing

- Healthcare provision is generally good, but is sometimes negatively affected by a shortage of staff.

Progression and resettlement

- A large number of prisoners are released homeless and are recalled to prison within a short period of time.
- In March 2024, at the end of the prison's performance year, about 17% of prisoners were in employment six weeks post-release; Bullingdon was third in its comparator group of nine prisons.

² More information about how the Board conducted these surveys and the responses that it received is included in Annex B at the end of this report. When the Board draws attention to evidence from these surveys in the main body of the report, it notes explicitly that it is doing so and it notes the number of responses on which it draws at that point. Other judgments are those of the Board, drawing on the full range of evidence (including prison data, the views of prisoners and staff and our own observations) that we obtained in the course of our monitoring work during the year in review.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- Chronic overcrowding and a high turnover of prisoners make it difficult for staff to work towards the rehabilitation and progression of offenders, rather than simply detaining them. How will the Minister address this fundamental challenge?
- How will the Minister work with others to find accommodation for men at risk of being homeless on their release from Bullingdon?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- The Board is seriously concerned about the continuing shortage and high turnover of staff, which has a negative impact on almost every aspect of the prison. How does the Prison Service plan to improve the retention of experienced staff and support and mentoring for new and recent recruits?
- The prison continues to be a violent and unsafe environment for both prisoners and staff. What more can the Prison Service do to address this issue?
- The high proportion of inexperienced staff and the complex challenges that they face make it difficult for them to work towards the rehabilitation and progression of offenders, rather than simply detaining them. How will the Prison Service help its staff to address this fundamental challenge?

TO THE GOVERNOR

- When will defective equipment in the prison kitchen and on serveries be replaced or repaired?
- What steps will the Governor take to address the significant decrease in key working?

3.3 Response to the last report

Issues raised with the Minister	Response given	Progress
The prison is chronically overcrowded. Can the Minister review the implications of this?	<p>In the short term, we are responding to overcrowding by seeking to make use of all available space across the prison estate.</p> <p>In the long term, we are building more prison spaces.</p>	<p>The prison remains chronically overcrowded.</p> <p>A new wing is being built, with the intention that it is used to increase the number of prisoners rather than to address overcrowding. It is not clear how easy it will be to find the necessary additional staff for a larger prisoner population, given current issues in recruitment and retention.</p>

Issues raised with the Prison Service	Response given	Progress
The proportion of inexperienced staff is high. How can the Prison Service better prepare and support them?	A national training toolkit is available for use at local level.	<p>The proportion of inexperienced staff remains high.</p> <p>Training and staff development is being provided locally.</p>

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

The large number of prisoners entering the prison puts significant pressure on its reception and induction functions, and the high churn and overcrowding causes difficulties throughout the prison.

There have been some occasions, caused by the late arrival of transport vehicles from courts or from other prisons, when prisoners have not gone from reception to the induction wing until very late in the evening. This has meant that some first night procedures (e.g. part of the medical screening for new prisoners, or the transfer of their property) were delayed until the following day, potentially contributing to risk for some new arrivals in the prison.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

Recorded levels of self-harm are high, although slightly lower than last year. A large proportion of recorded incidents of self-harm may be attributable to a small number of individuals, so figures may fluctuate significantly as particular individuals enter and leave the prison.

Not all self-harm is observed and recorded, as incidents may take place unobserved when men are locked in their cells. In the Board's view, it is likely that the recorded level would be higher were it not for attempts to reduce self-harm through collaboration between operational and healthcare staff and the use of assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) plans (used to support prisoners at risk of self-harm or suicide) and other interventions overseen by the weekly safety intervention meeting (SIM).

During the reporting year, there were two deaths in custody. Each occurred within 14 days of a prisoner leaving the prison and so is recorded as a death in custody. One was the result of a road traffic accident. The other was apparently drug-related.

In the year covered by this report, the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) published five reports on deaths in Bullingdon, and three reports on post-release deaths that occurred within 14 days of a prisoner leaving the prison. These were all reports on deaths that occurred before the reporting year. Of the five deaths in the prison, four were recorded as natural causes, and one as suicide. Of the three deaths post-release, one was recorded as due to natural causes and two due to other causes.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

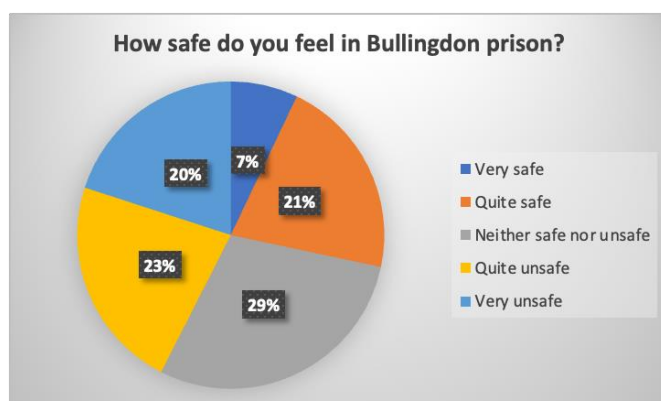
Levels of violence remain high, as in previous years, despite attempts to reduce them (e.g. the use of challenge, support and intervention plans/CSIPs, which are used to manage prisoners who pose a high risk of violence) and other interventions overseen by the weekly SIM.

The level of assaults on members of staff has increased, and both experienced members of staff and experienced members of the Board judge the prison to have been more volatile during the reporting year than they remember in the past. For

several days during one week in May, the prison changed its stability level from amber to red (the highest level of concern) in recognition of high levels of violence and other concerns about safety. Dog handlers and patrol dogs were deployed on walkways to help operational staff assert and maintain control.

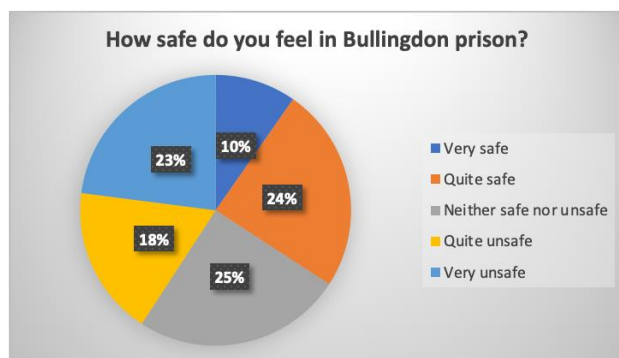
In September 2023, of the 26% of prisoners who responded to our survey, 43% said they felt 'quite unsafe' or 'very unsafe' in HMP Bullingdon, while 28% of those who responded said they felt 'very safe' or 'quite safe'.

The breakdown of responses to this question, in September 2023, was as follows:



In May 2024, of the 22% of prisoners who responded to our survey, 41% reported feeling quite unsafe or very unsafe, while 34% reported feeling quite safe or very safe.

The full breakdown of responses to this question, in May 2024, was as follows:



In June 2024, due to a shortage of space across the prison estate, there were 23 category B prisoners in Bullingdon, whose presence, in the Board's view, likely had an impact on increased violence and decreased safety in the prison.

4.4 Use of force

There were 1,010 recorded uses of force by prison staff. This is an increase of 114 compared with last year. However, the actual increase in officers using force is probably higher, because some actions that were included in our previous report as force are longer recorded as such. For example, occasions when three members of staff are present each time a prisoner in the care and separation unit, or CSU, is unlocked from his cell are no longer recorded as instances of force, although they were recorded in that way in the last reporting year.

There was one occasion when PAVA spray (an incapacitant spray similar to pepper spray) was drawn and used. There were five occasions when PAVA spray was drawn but not used. There were two occasions when batons were drawn and used. There were four occasions when batons were drawn but not used. Any incident when PAVA spray or a baton is drawn is counted as a use of force, even if the spray or baton is not used on a prisoner.

Special accommodation (a bare cell in the CSU, where there are no furnishings that can be damaged, or a cell elsewhere to which water is switched off temporarily as part of a process intended to make a resident comply with instructions) was used 38 times.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

The number of illicit items (including drugs and mobile phones) entering the prison remains high. The prison has made frequent and often successful use of phone detectors on the wings during the night.

No mandatory drugs tests (MDTs) took place in the last two months of the reporting year (May and June 2024). The number of MDTs during the first 10 months of the reporting year was 211.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

Much of the prison shows signs of dilapidation, including the main accommodation blocks. There has been some work to address this. The refurbishment of one wing was completed during the reporting year and the refurbishment of another wing was in progress at the end of the reporting year.

Some shower blocks on the four un-refurbished wings are in poor repair. At the end of the reporting year, funds had been allocated to refurbish showers on two of these wings, but the work had not yet begun.

There is little consistency in checking facilities in cells prior to their occupation by new prisoners and some cells lack basic facilities, such as privacy screens around toilets. The Board is particularly concerned about this, as many cells designed for single occupancy are occupied by two prisoners.

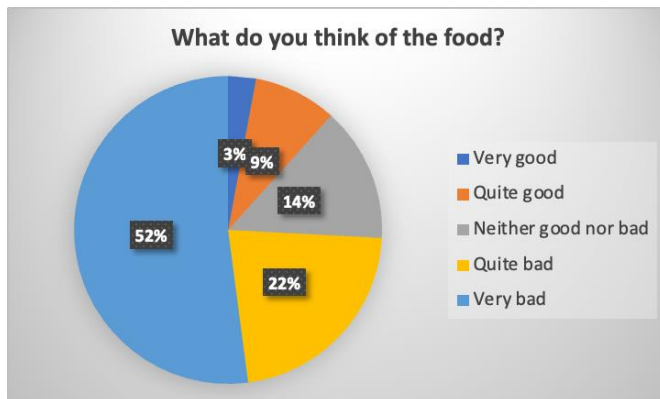
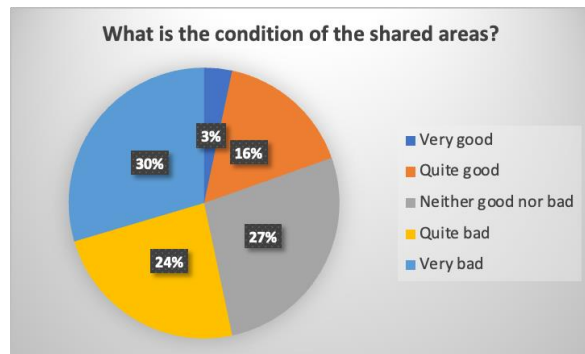
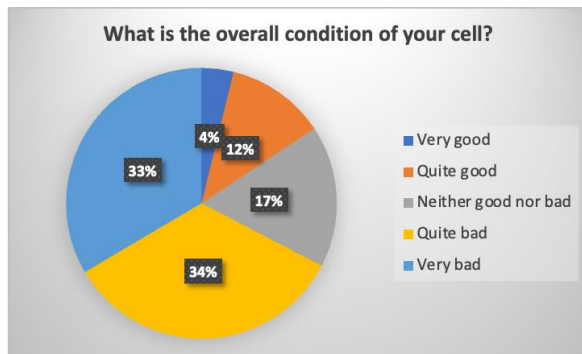
The creation of two 'decency teams' (one officer and four prisoners per team) to repair minor problems in cells is a very positive move. Prisoners may now note faults and request a repair on a general application form, which goes straight to the decency team. This simplifies and streamlines the application process.

There have been issues with the quality and quantity of food during the year and prison managers were addressing this. Prisoners are reluctant to log complaints about food to the prison and rarely use the food comment books available at each servery. When encouraged to do so, prisoners often respond that their comments make no difference and that there is no point making them in these books. The number of food-related applications (prisoners' written representations to the Board) have doubled since last year.

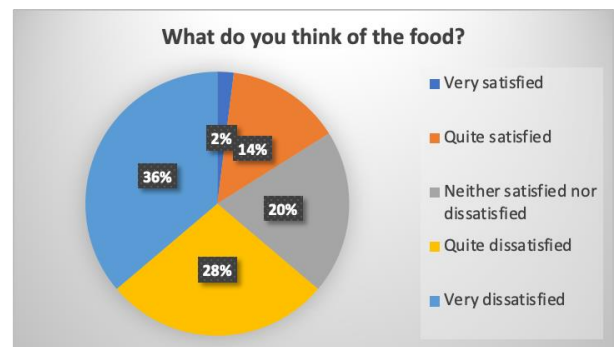
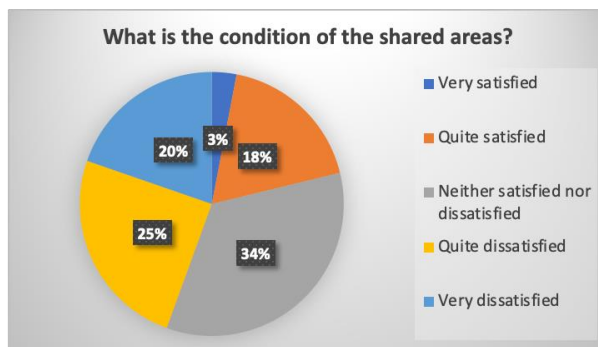
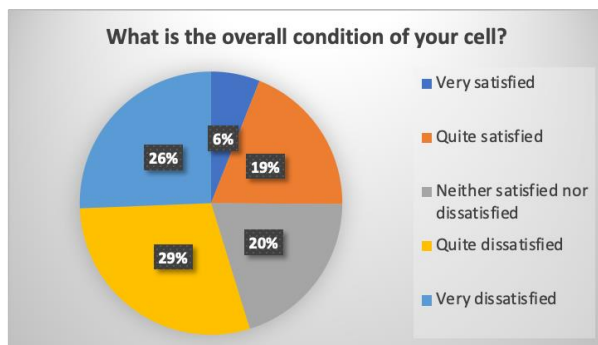
Some items of cooking equipment in the kitchen have been out of use for some time, which has an impact on the food that can be prepared. There is also a need for the repair or replacement of some items of food servery equipment (e.g. hotplates) on the wings.

In our surveys, we asked prisoners to rate their cells, shared areas and the food. While in each case (see below) there were significant numbers who were positive or neutral about each, there were many more who were negative. This was mostly the case with food (74% 'quite bad' or 'very bad'), and least the case with regard to shared areas (54% 'quite bad' or 'very bad').

In September 2023, when 26% of prisoners responded, the full range of their responses were as follows:



In May 2024, when 22% of prisoners responded, their answers were as follows:



5.2 Segregation

The care and separation unit, or CSU, where prisoners may be sent for the good order and/or discipline of the prison, for their own protection or for punishment, often accommodates prisoners with very challenging behaviour. On 30 June 2024, its occupants included two men who had been there, in solitary confinement, for more than 42 days (the limit allowed without external authorisation). Occupancy has been high for much of the year.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

The Here to Help (H2H) peer support pilot scheme has become a very useful service, respected by the prisoners and staff alike. The purpose of the H2H reps is for prisoners trained as peer supporters to offer other prisoners advice, support, information and guidance for a wide range of concerns and issues. They are also able to help other prisoners write applications or other paperwork they may need to complete. In addition, they also act as a spokesperson between prisoners and staff, as the need arises, and they represent prisoners at the monthly prisoner consultative meeting.

As of 24 June 2024, there were 14 men employed as reps and trained to carry out the role, providing transferable skills that could be used in the community. Accredited courses being run include mental health first aid, developing critical thinking to enhance decision making, and learning to advise.

The IMB has observed the reps delivering Induction to prisoners, supporting those who have special needs and representing the views of the other prisoner, with clarity and understanding, at the prisoner consultative meeting. When asked by IMB members, the H2H reps are very positive about the role and how it can help reduce stress and anger with their peers and they value the transferrable skills.

A total of 4,187 key working sessions (when a member of prison staff, designated as a key worker for a prisoner, meets that person on a one-to-one basis) took place during the reporting year. July 2023 saw the highest number, at 747, and April 2024 the lowest, at 153. All prisoners should be allocated a key worker within four days of arriving. Key working levels have been seriously impacted by staffing shortages; the sessions that are available are allocated to prisoners on a priority list.

In our two surveys, we asked prisoners about the levels of contact with officers and the ease with which they could access healthcare; education, training or work; mental health and wellbeing support; and support to help with release.

In response to our first survey, in September 2023, only 17% of respondents felt they had enough or more than enough opportunity to speak to officers about how they were doing. However, three-quarters felt they had 'not enough' or 'not nearly enough' (51% for that alone) opportunity.

The full breakdown of responses to this question in September was as follows:



In comments, a few respondents recognised that staffing shortages contributed to this. They, and many, many more, identified staff attitude (*'be available to listen to us, help us'*) as one of the most important things that could contribute to making life in prison better.

In response to our survey in May 2024, 15% of respondents said they had enough or more than enough opportunity to speak to members of staff about how they were doing. More than three-quarters felt they had 'not enough' or 'not nearly enough' (53% for that alone) opportunity, which is similar to the responses given in September.

The full figures in response to this question, in May 2024, were as follows:



5.4 Equality and diversity

The work of the former diversity manager has had a major impact on improving the quality of data collection and raising awareness of issues over the last two years. The position was discontinued at the end of March 2024, due to budgetary constraints, and administrative support for work in this area was also reduced. Alternative arrangements are being set in place: from June, equality and diversity issues became part of the work of a new Governor-level position, which includes responsibility for equality and diversity, alongside management of the CSU.

Over 40% of prisoners have a declared disability and many have more than one disability. Steps to raise disability awareness among prisoners and staff continue. The work of the neurodiversity support manager had a significant impact in this respect.

Elderly prisoners who require social care are often kept in the inpatient healthcare unit for the duration of their sentence. This is because there are not enough accessible facilities in the main residential wings. The prison building is not designed for an elderly population and it presents challenges for anyone with limited physical mobility. This lack of accessible accommodation is an equality issue.

The IMB receives very few equality-related applications (see the table at the end of the report). However, a significant proportion of prisoners who responded to our survey (see Annex B) used the opportunity to make complaints of bullying and racism (the latter by prisoners who did not identify as white).

Foreign national prisoners make up about a fifth of the population, comprising some 50 nationalities, compared with about 40 in previous years. About 30 different languages are spoken. Provision of translated induction packs will need to be reviewed as the linguistic diversity of the population shifts. Information about prisoners' language needs and preferences is now recorded more accurately and consistently. It is surprising that the improved recording has not so far been reflected in the increased use of interpreting and translation services.

5.5 Incentives schemes

Under the incentives policy, prisoners may be placed on a basic, standard or enhanced level, which affects the privileges for which they are eligible. In June 2024, 21% of prisoners were on enhanced (top) status, a similar proportion to June 2023.

Prisoners on the enhanced level who have been at Bullingdon for 12 weeks can be considered for 'red band status, whereby they may be given responsibility for carrying out specified tasks across several areas of the prison. The high proportion of short-stay prisoners (55% are at Bullingdon for less than three months) presents a challenge for recruitment and retention, because red bands are often moved out a few weeks or, in some cases, days after taking up their role. The churn means that staff to spend disproportionate amounts of time on risk-assessment and prisoners have reduced opportunities for sustained development in roles of responsibility. For example, it is not unusual for about a third of the red band positions to be vacant, awaiting risk assessment; in one week, only one of the positions was filled. The high turnover and difficulties in filling these positions looks set to continue, as Bullingdon is only allowed to put a very limited number of prisoners on hold rather than transfer.

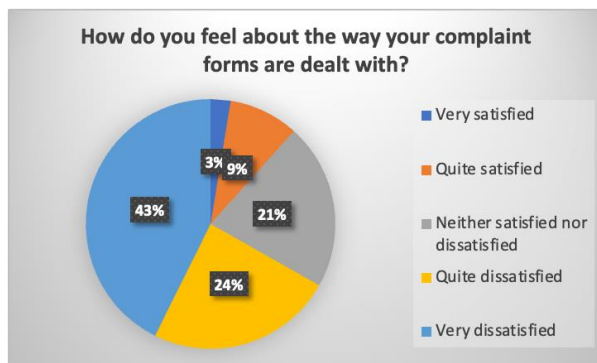
5.6 Complaints

The quality of the response that prisoners receive in answer to their written complaints (Comp1, an ordinary complaint; and Comp1A, an appeal) is variable. Responses from the prison often take longer than the required time and prisoners who do not lodge an appeal within the required seven days are given no latitude and their appeals are not considered.

In our surveys, we asked prisoners how they felt that their complaint forms were dealt with.

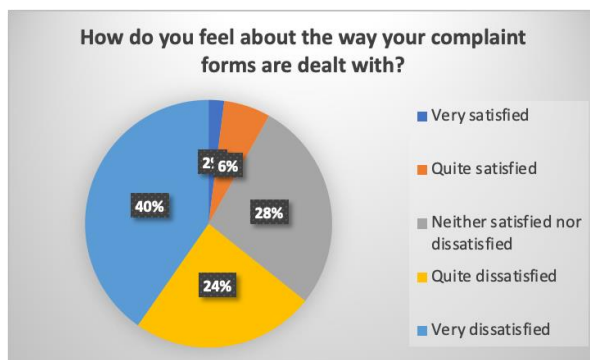
In September 2023, when 26% of prisoners responded, 67% of respondents reported being 'quite dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied' about the way in which their complaint forms were handled. A total of 12% of respondents said that they were 'quite satisfied' or 'very satisfied'.

The full breakdown of their responses was as follows:



In May 2024, when 22% of prisoners responded, 64% of respondents reported being 'quite dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied' with the way their complaint forms were handled. A total of 8% of respondents said they were 'quite satisfied' or 'very satisfied' (September 2023 12%).

The full breakdown of their responses was as follows:



5.7 Property

A great deal of property belonging to prisoners continues to go missing, both during transfers between establishments and within the prison. The prison paid out £1,371 to prisoners in compensation for lost property.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

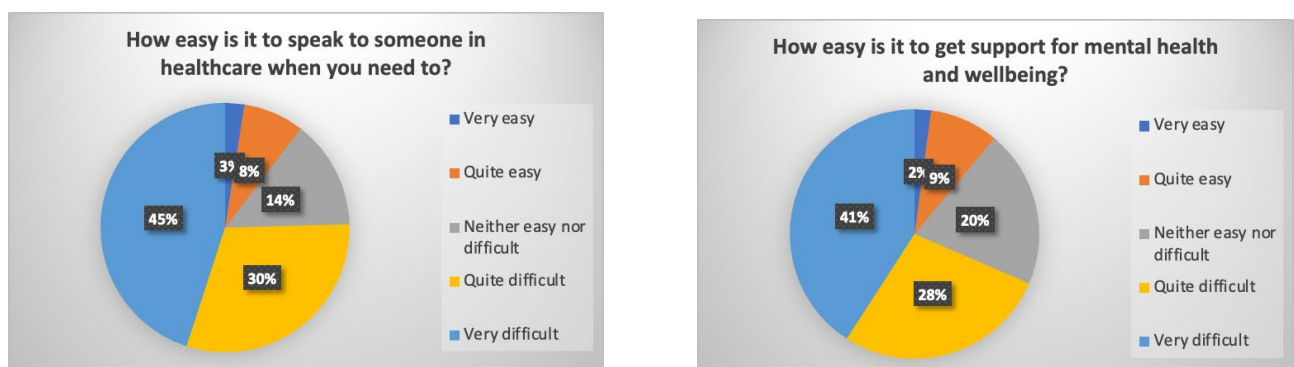
The Board has observed that healthcare services are generally good. However, they are placed under strain by staff shortages in the healthcare team, as well as by shortages of operational staff. This can impede prisoners being escorted to the healthcare inpatient unit for treatment and can prevent external appointments in hospitals being kept.

The patient liaison team was introduced during the reporting year. Its members should visit each wing once a week to see prisoners with healthcare concerns and signpost them to appropriate sources of help.

In our two surveys, we asked prisoners about the ease with which they thought they can access healthcare and support for their mental health and wellbeing support.

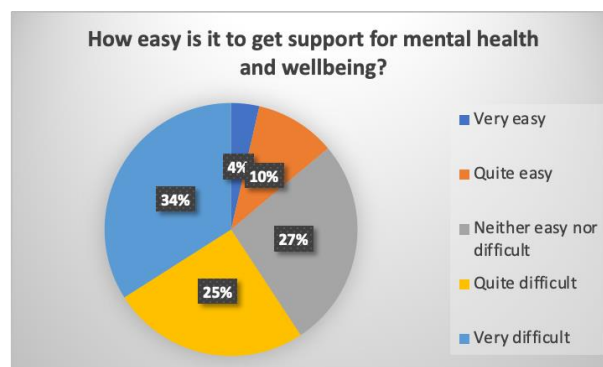
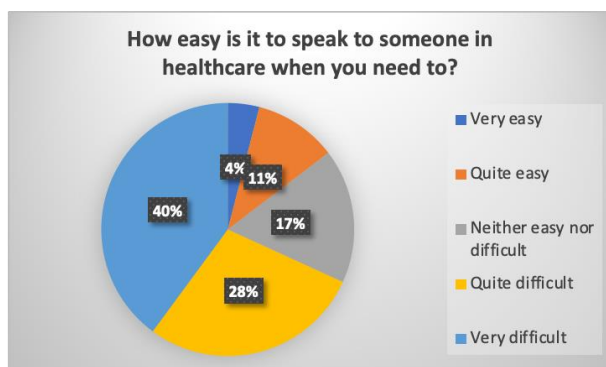
In September 2023, of the 26% of prisoners who responded to our survey, 11% said that it was very easy or quite easy to speak to someone in healthcare when they needed to, and 11% said that it was very easy or quite easy to get support for mental health and wellbeing. 75% said that it was very difficult or quite difficult to speak to someone in healthcare, and 77% said that it was very difficult or quite to get support for mental health and wellbeing.

The full breakdown of responses to this question in September 2023 was as follows:



In May 2024, of the 22% of prisoners who responded to our survey, 15% said that it was very easy or quite easy to speak to someone in healthcare when they needed to, and 14% said that it was very easy or quite easy to get support for mental health and wellbeing. 68% said that it was very difficult or quite difficult to speak to someone in healthcare, and 59% said that it was very difficult or quite to get support for mental health and wellbeing

The full breakdown of responses to this question in May 2024 was as follows:



6.2 Social care

Elderly prisoners who require social care are often kept in the inpatient healthcare unit for the duration of their sentence. This is because there are not enough accessible facilities in the main residential wings. The prison building is not designed for an elderly population and it presents challenges for anyone with limited physical mobility.

6.3 Time out of cell, regime

There is often a limited regime in the healthcare inpatients unit, usually due to a lack of staff. This means that many prisoners here spend a long time in their cells.

6.4 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

At the end of June 2024, there were 206 prisoners undergoing treatment for drug and alcohol use. A total of 119 of these men had been referred to Inclusion (a service that addresses addiction and substance abuse) in June. Of these referrals, 78 were made by healthcare, 10 by prison staff, and 31 by the men themselves.

In June, 31 prisoners went into alcohol detox on their arrival in the prison (down from 40 in May) and 59 went into opioid substitution therapy (OST) on their arrival in the prison (down from 67 in May).

In the same month, there were 50 recorded incidents of prisoners being observed as under the influence of drugs or alcohol, a decrease of 12 reported incidents from the previous month. This figure does not account for prisoners being under the influence when in their cells and not under observation by prison staff.

Also in June, 37 prisoners were released with a referral to a community drug service (down from 48 in May).

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education

Staffing vacancies restricted the range of courses on offer during the year, but by May 2024 over 90% of teaching vacancies were filled.

There is little time for short-stay prisoners to complete education or training qualifications before they move on.

7.2 Vocational training, work

Owing to the churn, there are significant delays in filling work spaces. Waiting lists result while risk assessments (see also 5.6 above) for employment are carried out. Short-stay prisoners are often unable to progress from low-risk to medium- or high-risk jobs before transfer or release.

7.3 Resettlement planning

The proportion of prisoners who were recalled to prison after release was higher for those who were released early, or under revised guidelines aimed to reduce overcrowding (the end of custody supervised licence scheme/ECSL) than for those who were released in the usual way, when the prison had more time to make plans for their resettlement.

In March 2024, at the end of the prison's performance year, about 17% of prisoners were in employment six weeks post-release; Bullingdon was third in its comparator group of prisons.

In May 2024, 54% of prisoners who were released were homeless and about a third of those men were recalled within three weeks of their release.

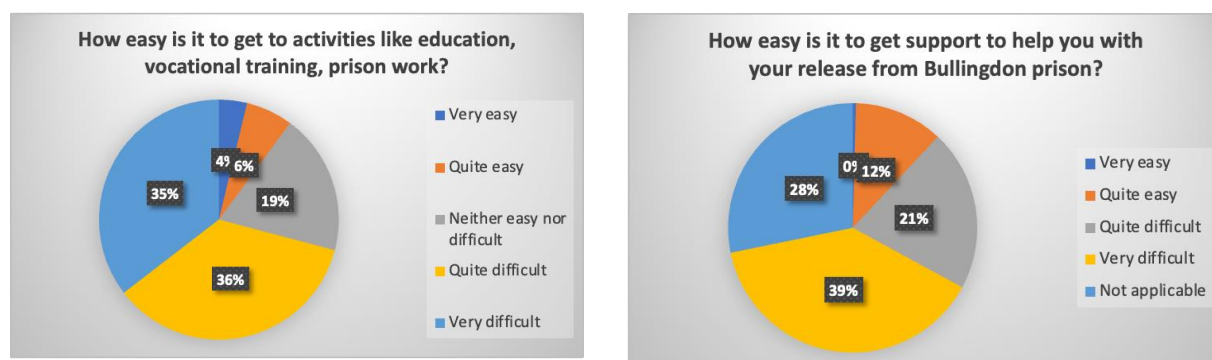
A shortage of suitable accommodation outside the prison means that it is not always possible to find accommodation for men at risk of being homeless on their release, including when the prison's resettlement team has made appropriate referrals to accommodation providers. This is an issue that lies beyond the remit of HMP Bullingdon and local probation services and needs to be addressed at a national level.

A prisoner who has been released and is now in employment expressed his thanks for the support he had received while in Bullingdon, including from named officers on the wings where he was held and from members of staff in the laundry, the inclusion unit and the employment hub.

In our two surveys, we asked prisoners about how easy it was for them to access education, training or work, and support to help them with release.

In September 2023, when 26% of prisoners responded, more than 70% of respondents said that it was 'quite difficult' or 'very difficult' to get access to purposeful activities, and 60% (but 83% of those who felt it was applicable) said it was 'quite difficult' or 'very difficult' to get access to support to help with release. Addressing the challenges of access to purposeful activity was very frequently cited as one of the three most important things that would make life better in Bullingdon. A significant number of remand prisoners highlighted this issue, so this is a concern for them as well as for sentenced prisoners.

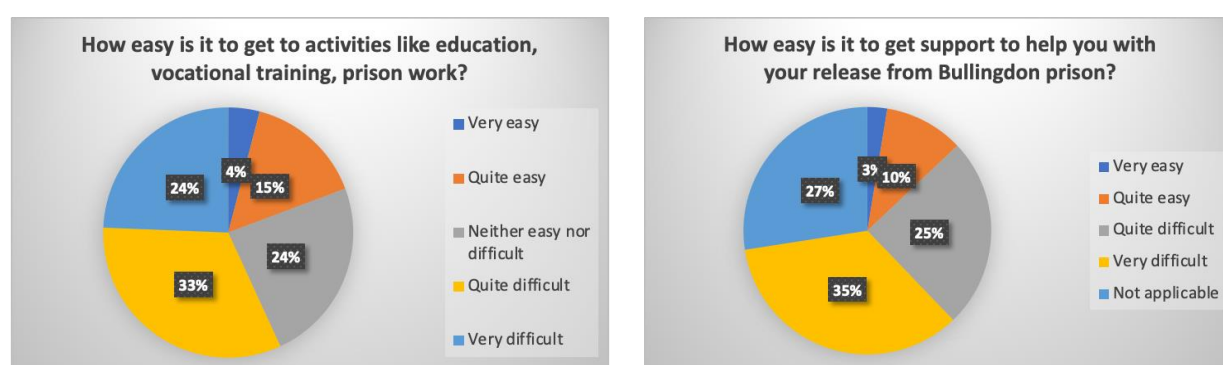
The full breakdown of answers to these questions, in September 2023, was as follows:



In May 2024, when 22% of prisoners responded, 57% of respondents said it was 'quite difficult' or 'very difficult' to get to activities (fewer than the 71% who said this in September 2023). A total of 19% said it was 'quite easy' or 'very easy' (more than the 10% who said this in September 2023). This represents some improvement, but it is a continuing challenge. Free text comments (prisoners' general survey feedback) suggested challenges around (a) getting jobs and (b) cancelling of sessions (of the gym and library, especially). Many respondents attributed this to a lack of staff.

60% of respondents said it was quite or very difficult to get support relating to release (the same figure as in September 2023) and 13% say it was easy or quite easy (very close to the 12% who said this in September 2023). There is little or no change, therefore, in prisoners' perception of support relating to their release. In the context of most areas showing some improvement in prisoner perception these figures are concerning.

The full breakdown of answers to these questions, in May 2024, was as follows:



8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	16
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	17 (including 2 on sabbatical)
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	10 (including 2 on sabbatical)*
Total number of visits to the establishment	322 (430 last year)
Total number of segregation reviews observed	37 (105 last year)

*During the reporting year, the Board operated with fewer members than usual, which affected our ability to collect evidence for some areas of this report.

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year 2022-23	Current reporting year 2023-24
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing and ablutions	29	42
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	5	18
C	Equality	14	8
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	8	28
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	80	52
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	22	13
F	Food and kitchens	24	51
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	129	103
H1	Property within the establishment	52	49
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	29	37
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	20	22
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence), parole, release dates, recategorisation	69	33
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	105	80
K	Transfers	19	18
L	Miscellaneous	49	79
	Total	654	633

Annex A

Service providers

- Aramark provides catering services.
- DHL provides canteen services.
- Gov Facilities Services Limited (GFSL) is responsible for maintenance.
- Inclusion provides support for drug and alcohol rehabilitation.
- Milton Keynes College provides education and training
- Oxfordshire County Council provides library services.
- The contracted provider for physical healthcare services is the Practice Plus Group, which sub-contracts some services to other healthcare providers.
- The contracted provider for mental health services is Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust.
- Oxfordshire County Council works with the Practice Plus Group to provide social care.

Annex B

Prisoner surveys conducted by the Board

During the reporting year, the Board conducted two prisoner surveys. The first took place in September 2023 and the second in May 2024. We have drawn on some of the results of these surveys in the evidence section of this report (above). A fuller summary of the results of these surveys follows below.

IMB Survey of Prisoners in HMP Bullingdon, September 2023

Background

The IMB undertook a prisoner survey by delivering survey forms to prisoner cells on the evening of 26 September and asking for them to be returned using IMB boxes. We received 240 responses from a roll of 916 (a 26% response rate). Responses were anonymous and, on this occasion, we did not ask prisoners to tell us which wing they were on. This was our first survey and we used questions that were based on questions recommended by the IMB Secretariat.

The inclusion of these survey results in our report allows prisoner voices to be heard and provides data that the prison can compare with the data that it collects from surveys it also runs.

Respondent profile

Of 240 respondents:

Age

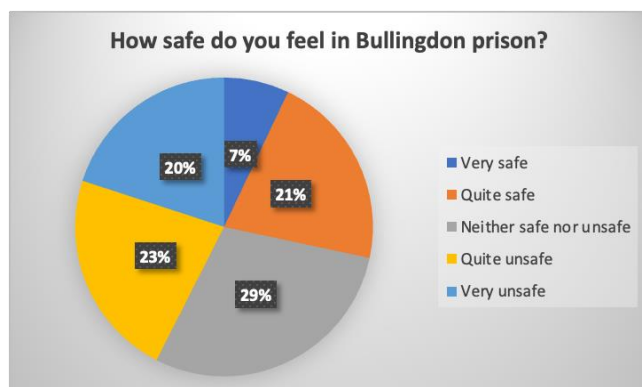
- 39 said they were 25 or under
- 151 said they were 26-49
- 37 said they were 50 or over
- 12 didn't want to say
- 2 did not answer this question

Ethnicity

- 134 identified as white (63% of those choosing to identify)
 - 23 identified as black (11% of those choosing to identify)
 - 20 identified as Asian (9% of those choosing to identify)
 - 23 identified as mixed (11% of those choosing to identify)
 - 14 identified as other (7% of those choosing to identify)
 - 24 didn't want to say
 - 1 did not answer this question
-
- 58% said they were on remand; 42% not.
 - 50% said they considered themselves to have a health condition; 50% not.
 - 54% said they had previously heard of the IMB; 46% said they hadn't.

Key findings

Safety

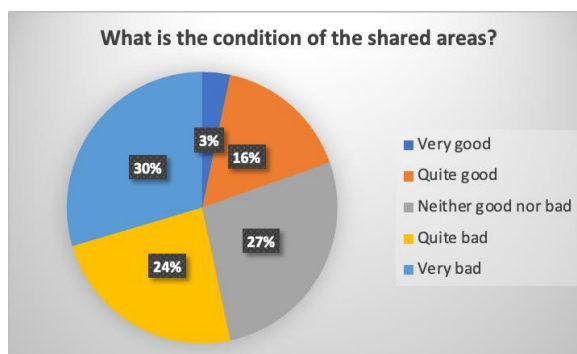
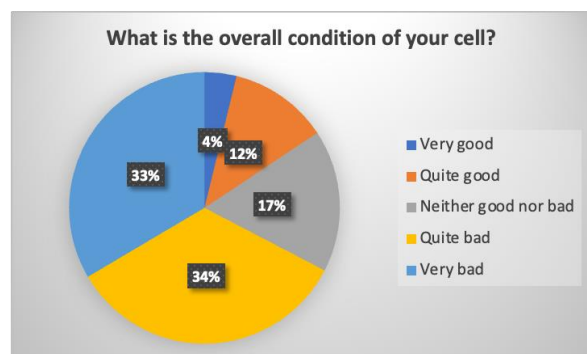


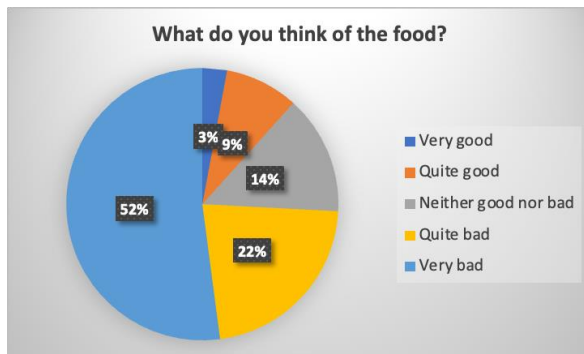
A total of 43% of prisoners responding say they feel quite or very unsafe in HMP Bullingdon vs 28% reporting that they feel very or quite safe. This is a matter of concern.

Conditions and food

We asked respondents to rate their cells, shared areas and the food. While in each case (see below) there were significant numbers who were positive or neutral about each, there were many more who were negative. This was most the case regarding food (74% quite or very bad), and least the case with regard to shared areas (54% quite or very bad).

In free text comments (see below) relatively few mentioned cell conditions among the three most important things that could make their life in prison better. Many did comment on food asking for better quality; larger portions; to receive what they ordered; and for fairness in food distribution.





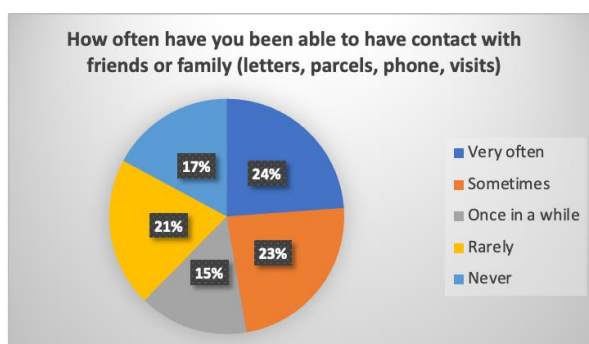
Access to support

We asked respondents about the levels of contact with officers and family/friends and about the ease with which they can access healthcare; education, training or work; mental health and wellbeing support; and support to help with release.

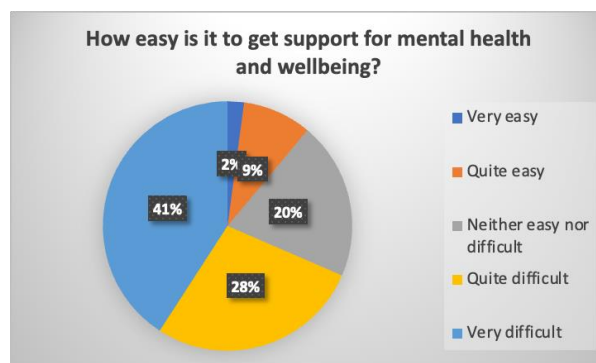
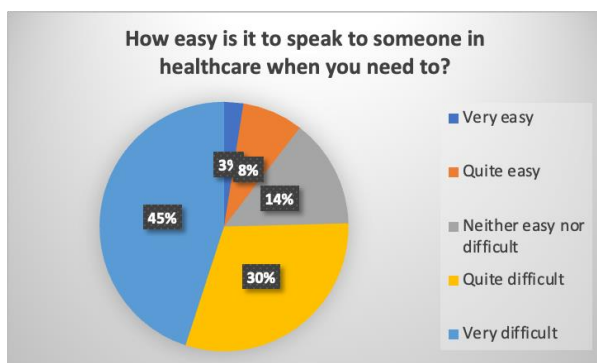


Only 17% of respondents felt they had enough or more than enough chances to speak to officers about how they're doing: three quarters felt they had not enough, or not nearly enough (51% for that alone) opportunity.

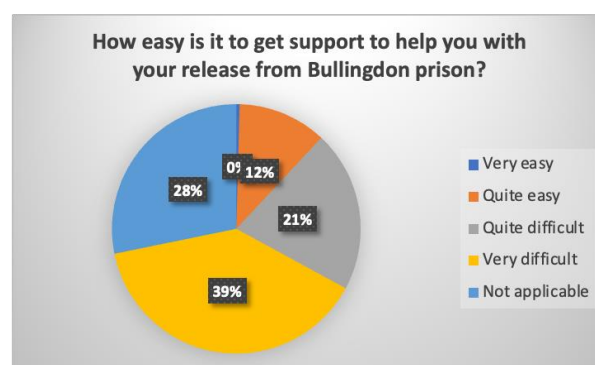
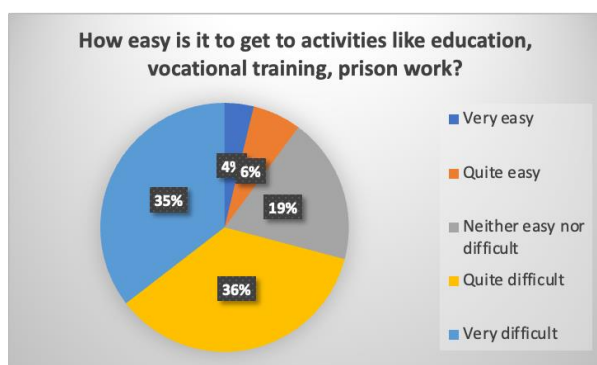
In comments, a few respondents recognised that staffing shortages contributed to this. They, and many, many more, identified staff attitude (be available to listen to us, help us!) as one of the most important things that could contribute to making life in prison better.



Levels of contact with family and friends showed considerable and (across the question options offered) fairly evenly distributed variation. The correlation between family / friend contact and general dissatisfaction / unhappiness appeared to be low.



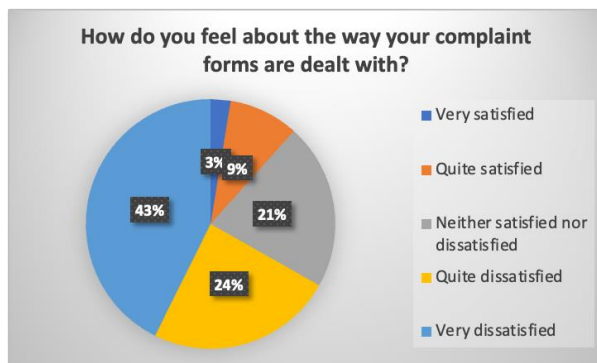
Respondents report that getting access to healthcare in general and to mental health/wellbeing support are both difficult. Three quarters (75%) say it is quite difficult or very difficult to speak to someone in healthcare when they need to (noting that need is self-determined here, as it is also for people who are not in prison). Access to support for mental health and wellbeing appears to be a little less difficult (69% reporting it as quite or very difficult). The numbers reporting it as quite or very easy to access mental health support are the same as for talking to healthcare generally (11%). That only 11% think talking to healthcare when needed, or to get support for mental health / wellbeing, is easy or quite easy is of concern.



Over 70% of respondents said it's quite or very difficult to get access to purposeful activities and 60% (but 83% of those who felt it was applicable) said it's quite or very difficult to get access to support to help with release. Addressing the challenges of access to purposeful activity was very frequently cited as one of the three most important things that would make life better in Bullingdon. A significant number of remand prisoners highlighted this issue.

While 58% of respondents said they were on remand, only 28% of respondents felt that support to help with release was not applicable to them. In other words, this is an issue for prisoners on remand as well as for sentenced prisoners.

Complaint form handling



It's perhaps not surprising that two thirds of prisoners are quite or very dissatisfied about how their complaint forms are dealt with – they are complaining after all and will often not receive the answer they seek. Comments, however, point to issues here (and with general apps) around how long it takes to get a response, with forms being lost, and such like – issues beyond the nature of the answer received.

The most important things that would make life better in prison

We asked respondents to tell us the three most important things that could make life better in prison and to provide any additional information they wanted. We received many responses, with the vast majority of prisoners identifying three (or four or more) things that would make a difference.

The main four issues identified were:

- Food: better quality, more of it; getting what's ordered; fairly served.
- Access to purposeful activity/support: work (and the amount paid for it) was frequently mentioned here, as were gym and library sessions (too often cancelled), and infrequent key worker sessions.
- Time out of cell: those raising this spoke of 23, 21 or 16 hours in their cell as being just too much.
- Prison officer attitudes and helpfulness: while some officers were praised and some respondents recognised the impact of under-resourcing, many complained of staff who didn't listen or didn't care. A significant proportion reported bullying and/or racism (the latter being reported by prisoners identifying as white).

IMB Survey of Prisoners in HMP Bullingdon, May 2024

Background

The IMB undertook a prisoner survey by delivering survey forms to prisoner cells on the evening of 16 May and asking for them to be returned using IMB boxes. We received 200 responses from a roll of 902 (a 22% response rate). This was our second survey, and we used the same questions that we asked in September 2023, except for two changes. One change was a request for prisoners to identify their wing, and the other was a change in age categories (in order to align with other statistics that we receive from the prison). In the analysis below, we note how answers received in May 2024 compared to those in September 2023.

The inclusion of these survey results in our report allows prisoner voices to be heard and provides data that the prison can compare with the data that it collects from surveys that it also runs.

Respondent profile: of 199 respondents...

Age

- 4.5% 20 and under
- 28% 21-29
- 58% 30-59
- 6.5% 60 and over
- 2.5% didn't want to say

Ethnicity

- 63% identified as white (September 2023 60%)
 - 8.5% identified as black (September 2023 10%)
 - 9.5% identified as Asian (September 2023 8%)
 - 9% identified as mixed (September 2023 10%)
 - 2% identified as other (September 2023 6%)
 - 7.5% didn't want to say (September 2023 ~10%)
- 55% said they were on remand (September 2023, 58%)
 - 62% said they considered themselves to have a health condition (September 2023, 50%).
 - 58% said they had previously heard of the IMB (September 2023, 54%).

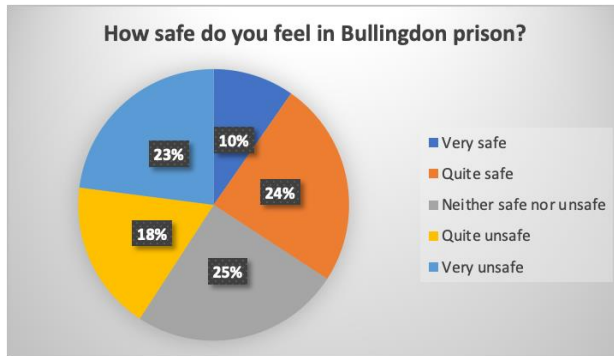
The respondents' profiles were, therefore, similar to that in September 2023. Respondent' broken down by wing, as below. A wing was not in use at the time of the survey.

- B: 15.5%
- C: 14%
- D: 14.5%
- E: 37.5%
- F: 8.5%

- HC: 2.5%
- CSU: 1.5%
- Don't want to say: 6.5%

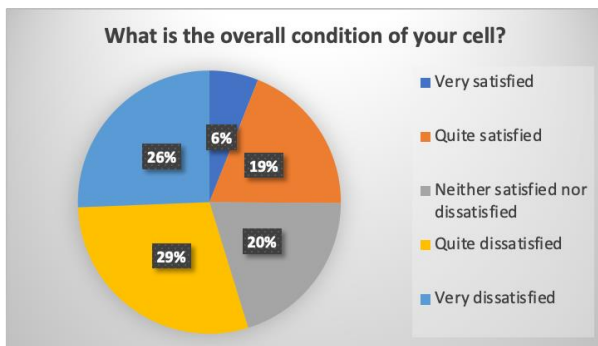
Key findings

Safety

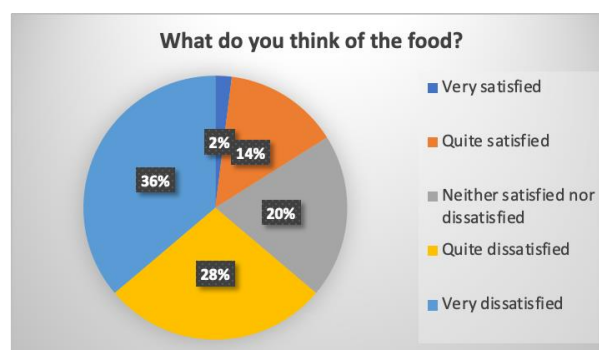
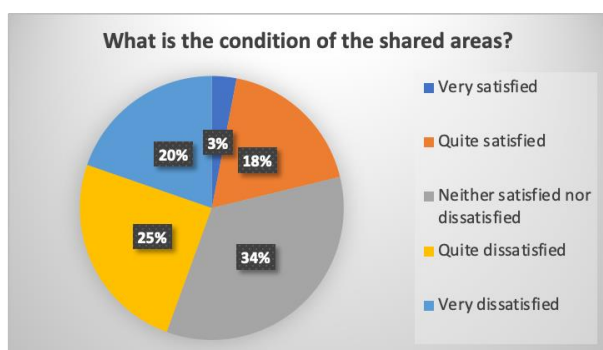


41% of respondents reported feeling quite or very unsafe (September 2023 43%) and 34% reported feeling quite or very safe (September 2023 28%). So, there is a very small (and statistically insignificant) increase in those feeling safe since September last year, but remains concerning

Conditions and food



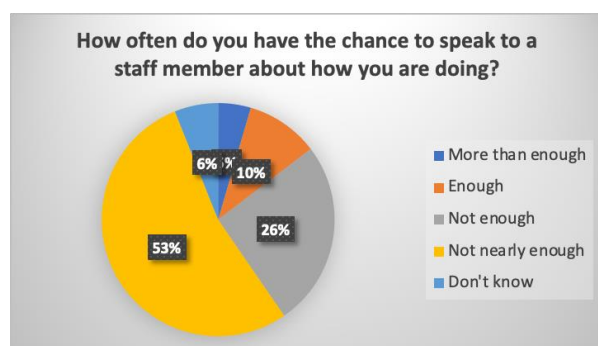
55% of respondents reported feeling quite or very dissatisfied with the condition of their cell (September 2023 67%), and 25% reported feeling quite or very satisfied (September 2023 16%). This represents some improvement since September.



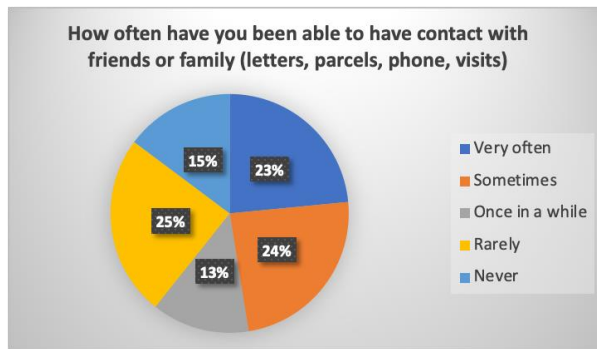
45% of respondents reported feeling quite or very dissatisfied with shared area conditions (September 2023 54%) and 21% reported feeling quite or very satisfied (September 2023 19%). So again, there is a small improvement, though with sustained levels of dissatisfaction, and less of an improvement than with individual cell conditions.

64% of respondents reported feeling quite or very dissatisfied with the food provided (September 2023 74%) and 16% reported feeling quite or very satisfied (September 2023 12%). Again, there is some improvement, though levels of dissatisfaction remain higher here than on any other aspect of conditions.

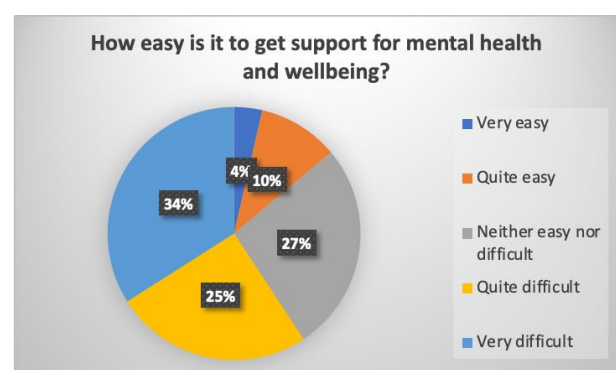
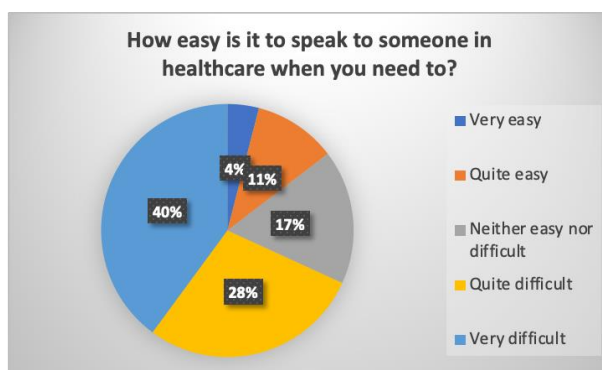
Access to support



79% of respondents said they had not enough or not nearly enough opportunity to speak to staff members about how they were doing (September 2023 75%). 15% said they had more than enough or enough opportunity (September 2023 17%). In the context of a general slight improvement, this stands out. It is also reflected in the free text comments which refer to the impact of inexperienced staff.

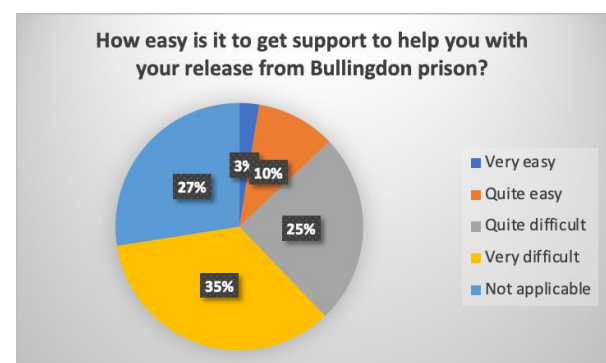
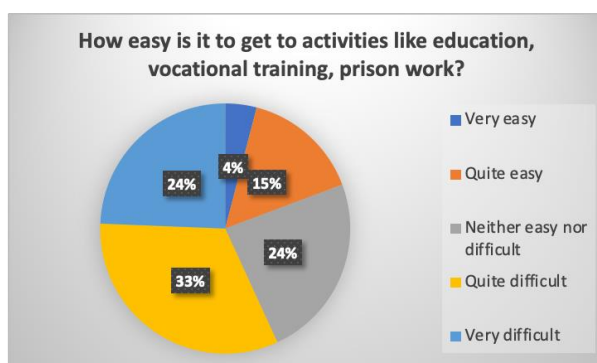


Respondents reported levels of contact with family or friends very similar to those reported in September 2023. 40% reported rarely or never having contact (September 2023 38%), and 47% reported having contact very often or sometimes (September 2023 47%).



68% of respondents said it was quite or very difficult to speak to Healthcare (September 2023 75%). 15% said it was quite or very easy (September 2023 11%). There is therefore a small improvement since September, but the level of those reporting that access is difficult remains very high. Free text comments about healthcare are very strongly negative.

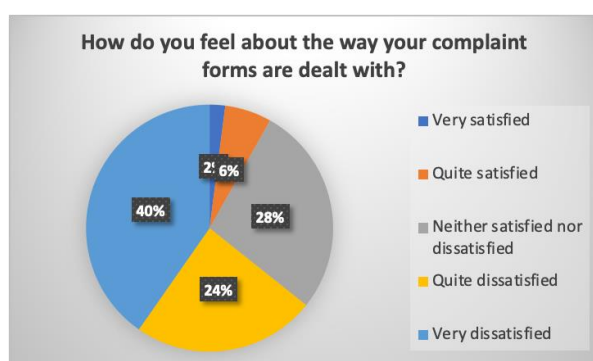
59% of respondents said it's quite or very difficult to get mental health support (September 2023 69%). 14% said it's quite or very easy (September 2023 11%). Again, this represents a slight improvement, but satisfaction levels are still low. Free text comments also point to access to mental health support as a significant and continuing real problem.



57% of respondents said it's quite or very difficult to get to activities (September 2023 71%). 19% said it's quite or very easy (September 2023 10%). This represents some improvement, but a continuing challenge. Free text comments suggest challenges around (a) getting jobs and (b) cancelling of sessions (gym, library especially). Many respondents attribute this to a lack of staff.

60% of respondents said it's quite or very difficult to get support relating to release (September 2023: 60%) and 13% say it's easy or quite easy (September 2023: 12%). There is little or no change, therefore, in this area. In the context of most areas showing some improvement in prisoner perception this is concerning.

Complaints



64% of respondents reported being quite or very dissatisfied about the way in which their complaint forms are dealt with (September 2023 67%). 8% are quite or very satisfied (September 2023 12%).

So, there's an increase (7% points) in the number neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, rather than an overall improvement or deterioration.

The most important things that would make life better in prison

We asked respondents to tell us the three most important things that could make life better in prison, and to provide any additional information they wanted. We received many responses, with a majority of prisoners identifying three (or four or more) things that would make a difference.

The areas most frequently mentioned are the same as those that were given most often in September 2023:

- Staff attitudes and behaviours: many respondents refer to a lack of staff engagement with prisoners; lack of care and lack of commitment to resolving prisoner issues; and the challenges arising from the proportion of inexperienced (and often young) officers now working in the prison.
- Complaints about lack of time out of cell, including requests for more on-wing association (including pool tables and table tennis).
- Linked to the above, the prisoners expressed a desire for more purposeful activity on and off-wing: jobs (with a desire for better pay), education, gym, and library. Cancellation of, or not being allowed out for, gym and library were frequently mentioned.
- Food: a desire for better quality, bigger portions, a healthier diet, receiving the choices they had ordered, and fairer distribution of food on wing.

Other themes that were more pronounced this year, compared to last September included:

- A view that everything takes far too long to be resolved (or is not resolved at all): applications, phone PINs, complaints, requests for help.
- Enhanced status brings little benefit to prisoners, and takes too long to achieve in a prison with such short stays.
- Prisoners are more likely to get things done for them (e.g. securing jobs) if they have drug dependency issues or create problems than if they 'keep your head down' and 'behave' (this being a view from those who believe they have 'kept their head down' and 'behaved').
- A wish for better or 'not-broken' furniture and bedding, especially beds and mattresses.



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