



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

**For reporting year  
1 November 2023 to 31 October 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**

2.1 HMP Ford is a category D open prison. The main aim of the prison is rehabilitation and resettlement. Subject to the requirements of their sentence plan, men are encouraged to take up courses in education and vocational training, as well as full-time work in the community. Prisoners at Ford are considered trustworthy in open conditions and include both men coming to the end of long sentences and those serving shorter sentences.

2.2 As at 31 October 2024, Ford had an operational capacity (the maximum number of prisoners that can be held without serious risk to safety, security, good order and the proper running of the planned regime) of 349<sup>1</sup> adult men, which was reduced from 389 in early 2024, when 40 pods (small, separate, self-contained housing units) were closed in anticipation of them being removed from the prison. The further delayed expansion project at Ford, which would have taken the capacity up to 709 men, has yet to receive planning permission and is now not anticipated to be completed until 2029. As a result, the 40 pods closed earlier in the year will be reopened in phases, between December 2024 and March 2025.

2.3 Ford was converted to an open prison in 1960 from a former Fleet Air Arm station and is situated in West Sussex, two miles from the coast and three miles south of Arundel. It covers an area of 110 acres, bisected by a busy class B public road. Ford railway station is a mile away.

2.4 The accommodation, all of which is now single occupancy, is comprised of a brick-built block with 214 single rooms (A wing), two other brick-built accommodation units, with 55 rooms, and 80 outdoor accommodation pods. All the brick-built accommodation has shared washing and toilet facilities, while each pod has its own facilities. There is accommodation for 15 prisoners with some degree of physical disability.

2.5 Prisoners have access to a well-equipped gymnasium and outdoor exercise equipment, which are adequate for the operational capacity of 349.

2.6 On-site academic education is provided by Milton Keynes College and vocational training by Chichester College. Both are supplemented by prison staff.

2.7 Ford offers a variety of practical qualifications and training to prepare prisoners for work both before and after release. The Chichester College Ford Campus School of Construction offers painting and decorating, dry lining, carpentry and bricklaying. Other on-site opportunities for training include the engineering workshop, waste management, bicycle refurbishment and horticulture. On-site opportunities for paid work include the prison café, Serving Thyme, and the DHL warehouse, which distributes food packs for four prisons, including Ford.

2.8 Voluntary organisations providing support to prisoners include the Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT), Samaritans, Changing Tunes, Stone Pillow, Shannon Trust, Change For Good, New Foundation, Prison Fellowship, the

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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.

Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association (SSAFA), and several other veterans' support organisations. The support received is across a range of different areas, specifically education, music and post-release community resettlement.

2.9 The prison infrastructure is maintained by Gov Facility Services Limited (GFSL).

2.10 The principal health services are provided by Practice Plus Group

2.11 Ford's stated objectives for 2023-2024 are:

- to reduce reoffending; and
- to protect the public and improve the safety and security of HMP Ford.

### **3. Key points**

#### **Background to the report**

This report covers the 12-month period ending 31 October 2024 and tracks improvement and deterioration from year to year. It is not a one-off snapshot assessment of the prison.

#### **3.1 Main findings**

##### **Safety**

- From its observations, the IMB believes that the prison is, generally, a safe environment. (See section 4)
- The improved induction process is a positive development in assisting men in their all-important transition from closed to open conditions. Also, the introduction of neurodiversity assessments, undertaken at the time of prisoners' induction, is encouraging to see, given the potentially positive impact on their prison journey. (4.1.2 and 7.2.3)
- We continue to note the proportion of the prison population who are regularly returned to closed conditions, although the number reduced from 132 in 2023 to 100 in 2024. (4.4.3)
- We note the significant downward trend during year in the number of illicit items found, including drugs, and the reduction in the failure rate of mandatory drug testing. These are encouraging and would appear, in the Board's view, to be the result of both the increased security and searching regime implemented in October 2023 and the significant increase in activities, which support better outcomes for the men and a safer environment for prisoners and staff. (4.5)

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

- The inadequate phone provision continues to be an issue. Several options to address this exist, but no solution has yet been implemented. The Governor has plans to address this, but needs the support of HMPPS. (5.1.4)
- To the extent possible, Ford seems to provide a fair and humane environment for the prisoners. But with budgets below what is, in the Board's view, acceptable and necessary, it is an ongoing battle against the failing state of the buildings and infrastructure. The constant cycle of electrical issues, unacceptable internal drain conditions and broken hot water systems (which has worsened over the past year) continues to highlight the unsatisfactory state of the buildings at Ford. (5.1.7)
- In particular, the boilers at HMP Ford are old and are not fit for purpose. They were put on the Risk Register by Gov Facility Services Limited (GSFL) nine years ago and are a clear health and safety risk. Not having access to hot water is also impacting the rehabilitation of prisoners who are release on temporary licence (ROTL) which, with HMP Ford being a resettlement prison, consists of over 100 men going out to work each day. These men represent their prison, and prisoners in general, and whilst alternative arrangements are put in place, it is totally unsatisfactory that they cannot have a hot shower on their wings to support their working life. This issue was escalated to the Area

Executive Director in November 2024; however, the response was there is no money available to replace these broken hot water systems. (5.1.8)

- The Governor commissioned a report into diversity and inclusion, which concluded in September 2024. This showed a small, but persistent, incidence of racial bias in the number of searches and of men being placed on report and receiving adjudications (disciplinary hearings when a prisoner is suspected of breaking prison rules). He is to be commended on his determination to address this through further staff training. (5.4.3)
- The chaplaincy offers excellent support to the men across all faiths and in many different ways. (5.5.1)

## **Health and wellbeing**

- From the Board's observations, the healthcare department, together with the mental health and substance misuse teams provide an excellent integrated service at Ford. Men with more complex needs have arrived this year and have been very well cared for. (See section 6)
- Dental care was taken over by a new provider in April 2024, when almost all the equipment was found to be unserviceable, which meant that they could not start work until October. By the end of the reporting year, the dentist was making good inroads into the backlog of 80 men on the waiting list and a second dentist has been appointed. (6.1.4)
- Gym and sports provision has increased during the year. The number of sports staff has increased from two to four during the reporting year. Football, volleyball and tennis are now enjoyed by the men, whilst the number of gym sessions increased from 681 in August 2023 to 3000 in August 2024. (6.5)

## **Progression and resettlement**

- During the reporting year, the prison has appeared to positively focus its educational activities towards the future employment needs of the men. This is very important in giving the men every opportunity to develop towards their release. Examples of the changes have been the better allocation of men to prison work on arrival and the work done by the neurodiversity support manager (NSM) in enabling personalised interventions to be put in place. (7.2.1 and 7.2.3)
- Chichester College School of Construction continues to be a real asset for Ford, in the Board's view, providing the men with an opportunity to learn new skills. It is therefore, very concerning to note, that the budget for these critical rehabilitation activities has been cut by 50% for the 2025 financial year. (7.3.6)
- The quantity and quality of the workshops on site has improved, notably engineering and land based activities (LBA). (7.3.7)
- The provision of the support from different police services has improved since last year, as police forces (including "The Met") are now beginning to respond within agreed timescales. Nevertheless, delays in responses from community offender managers (COMs) within the Probation Service are a major source of frustration for prisoners and staff. (7.4.2)
- The offender management unit (OMU) has performed well throughout the year, including planning and executing the release of 71 men on one day in October 2024 under the SDS-40 programme early release scheme, 100% of

whom were released into accommodation. A much smaller release under the SDS-40 programme was completed in September 2024. (7.6.1)

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

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

- Given the largely positive HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) report of 2023 and recent IMB reports highlighting the improving work of Ford, when – and how – will the Minister expedite the new build plans for HMP Ford to expand its capacity in support of the prison’s ‘reducing reoffending’ objective?
- At present, there is no way for a resettlement prison to evaluate the success of all that they do, including know what percentage of prisoners re-offend. When will the Minister set up an effective system to monitor prisoners after release?
- As we have reported for some years now, the building infrastructure across Ford is failing and the accommodation provided is unacceptable. Simply ‘limping along’ is not a viable option. When will the Minister undertake an in-depth appraisal of the existing buildings and commit to undertaking a comprehensive refurbishment of that accommodation?
- Given that GFSL has registered 219 faults with the boilers in the accommodation blocks in the five years to 30 November 2024, when will the Minister commit to replacing Ford’s boilers and hot water systems, which were deemed ‘at risk’ nine years ago?

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

- Given that GFSL has registered 219 faults with the boilers in the accommodation blocks in the five years to 30 November 2024, when will HMPPS commit to replacing Ford’s boilers and hot water systems, which were deemed ‘at risk’ nine years ago?
- Most men arrive from prisons that have in-cell phones. When will HMPPS address the lack of phone access at Ford to enable the maintenance of family ties?

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

The Board commends the Governor on the:

- Much increased access to gym and outdoor sports: a 128% increase in number of gym sessions from 1314 to 3000 per month in the reporting year.
- Significant improvement in cleanliness and the state of the grounds.
- Refurbishment of several accommodation corridors and rooms in A wing.
- Commitment that GFSL show in responding to the many serious building and infrastructure failures.
- Successful release in October 2024 of 71 men under SDS-40, with 100% released into accommodation.
- Positive impact of the new security and searching regime introduced in October 2023, making Ford a safer and more secure environment for prisoners and staff with ‘finds, mandatory drug tests (MDTs) and returned to closed (RTCs) all showing downward trends.



- Continuing excellence of healthcare and the integrated substance misuse service (ISMS).
- Advances made in the delivery of education and work opportunities.

The Board looks forward to the following matters being addressed:

- The prison operating at full capacity again, which will allow the available resources to be properly utilised and prisoners to benefit from their time at Ford.
- A consistent, reliable heating and water supply to the accommodation blocks, as the situation is unacceptable.
- A more proactive approach to the monitoring and management of the provision of effective cooking, washing and laundry facilities in the prisoners' accommodation.
- Solutions implemented to address the lack of phone access for the men.

### 3.3 Response to last year's report

The key points raised in the 2022-2023 annual report, together with the responses received and subsequent progress, are:

Issue raised in the 2022-2023 annual report	Response from MoJ/HMPPS in March 2024	Progress update through October 2024
<p><b>TO THE MINISTER</b></p> <p>Last year, the Board reported on issues with outside probation that are affecting some men's access to release on temporary licence (ROTL). The situation has not improved, although the problems/delays in communication are now mostly affecting the large proportion of prisoners who will return to their London home area.</p> <p>Together with IMBs throughout the country, we continue to stress that sentences of Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPPs) are inhumane and should be removed from existing prisoners. There were three prisoners serving IPP sentences in Ford at the end of the reporting year (and seven in the previous year).</p>	<p>Significant new funding is going into recruiting new probation staff.</p> <p>A full-time Probation Services officer has been recruited at Ford.</p> <p>Changes announced on 23 November 2023 to reform the licence termination for prisoners serving IPP sentences will provide a clear pathway to a definitive end to the licence.</p>	<p>There has been some improvement in response times by police forces. This is not the case with outside probation, where Community Offender Managers continue to take too long to deal with important issues.</p> <p>There were four prisoners serving IPP sentences in Ford at the end of the reporting year.</p> <p>One prisoner completed his three-year tariff in 2008 but was not released until 2016 – he was recalled in 2017 and</p>

	None of the changes announced affect men in prison, only those released.	is still in Ford having served a total of 15 additional years over his original tariff and with no sign of release.
<p><b>TO THE PRISON SERVICE</b></p> <p>The Governor and his team are rightly to be congratulated on the positive HMIP report in April 2023. There is much to build on and a combination of the resource and support of the MoJ and HMPPS, as well as the leadership of the Governor and his team, will help Ford to meet its principal objective of improving prisoner outcomes as they leave the prison system.</p> <p>The length of time that it is taking to break ground on the new build project is an ongoing disappointment. In addition, it is concerning that there seems to be little, if any, planning for the impact of the significant increase in prisoner numbers (beyond the previous 544 capacity to 779) on other parts of the prison, such as the gym/sports facilities and reception, for example. (5.1.3)</p> <p>There has been some welcome refurbishment of the shower/toilet facilities on several corridors. However, the continuing failure to adequately maintain the prison estate to an acceptable level leads us to question what actually needs to happen before a full refurbishment plan is drawn up and executed for A, R and Q wings, in particular. The Board is concerned that the health and safety of prisoners and staff is at</p>	<p>The resettlement objective is the no one priority. Lots of positive work and commitment by Ford teams but no evidence available beyond the rudimentary six weeks post release employment measure.</p> <p>The process includes multiple reviews which take time to complete.</p> <p>Several upgrades were approved, but these did not include a new gym in spite of the planned 100% increase in prisoner numbers.</p> <p>Funding is not available for a full refurbishment. A gradual and targeted approach is the way forward. However, major maintenance bids will be submitted in 2024.</p>	<p>There is still no meaningful measurement undertaken of the value of the Open prison service. Even the rudimentary 6 week/month in employment measures were suspended due to a lack of probation resource.</p> <p>In spite of the many reviews, in September 2024, the appointed main contractor on this project has gone into administration for the second time. The result appears to be that Ford's Expansion Project will not now conclude until 2029 at the earliest.</p> <p>In spite of the good words in March 2024, recent boiler failures, electric issues and unacceptable internal drain conditions continue to highlight the poor state of the building infrastructure at Ford.</p>

risk of being compromised without such action.		
There continues to be a high number of complaints, resulting from the failure to safely transfer the personal property of prisoners between prisons. The 2022 Prisoners Property Policy Framework does not appear to have made any noticeable improvement and we are concerned that certain prisons (not HMP Ford) are particularly poor in this very important area.	The Framework includes a focus on ensuring compliance with volumetric controls, including legal documentation. Governors are to carry out checks to ensure that prisoners' property is being handled correctly. HMPPS is committed to looking for further improvements.	Whilst property related complaints and Applications to the IMB have reduced this year, the continued impact of the unacceptable loss of prisoner's personal possessions, including passports, driving licences etc. by prisons other than Ford is unacceptable. Much more needs to be done.
<p><b>TO THE GOVERNOR</b></p> <p>Staff resourcing issues and inflexibility have meant that the excellent outdoor facilities at Ford are significantly underused, particularly during the all- important weekends. The Board is pleased to note the steps being taken at the end of the year to address this.</p>	This is a priority for the Governor and steps are being taken to deliver change.	Through proper resourcing and a more pragmatic, solution-oriented approach, there has been significant and positive change.

## **Evidence sections 4 – 7**

### **4. Safety**

The prison has an established Safer Custody function and holds a multidisciplinary Safer Custody meeting once a month, involving Healthcare, Integrated Substance Misuse Services, Security, Chaplaincy and Safer Custody. There are 4 Safer Custody Orderlies.

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

4.1.1 The reception area is a cramped space, taking new prisoners on arrival and dealing with all prisoners leaving on Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL), for outside work/education or other reasons, such as home visits. There can be over 120 movements out and then in again on any given day, most of which will be early morning and late afternoon, as men leave to go to work and then return. At busy times, the reception area can be crowded. For home visits at Christmas and for the release of prisoners as part of the SDS-40 early release programme (including those leaving under the Home Detention Curfew licence conditions – tag) the visits hall was used to accommodate the number of prisoner movements. Despite the constraints on the reception area, at all times the area was found to be clean, tidy and well managed.

4.1.2 Induction is well organised, and prisoners generally arrive with a positive attitude to their forthcoming time at Ford and appreciate the support they receive on arrival. All prisoners who are new to Ford are housed in a single block and are supported by induction orderlies who reside on their block. The men receive a two-week induction which includes introduction to the working day, key functions and facilities. They also meet key staff, the Neurodiversity lead, functional heads and the IMB.

The Education, Skills and Work induction has been expanded into 10 separate sessions with a strong emphasis on working with prisoners to support them on their journey and equipping prisoners with digital skills for a digital world. Induction now also includes a neurodiversity assessment and staff report an increase in the number of men arriving with neurodiversity needs so it is encouraging to see that these are being identified during the induction period with the potential to have a positive impact on their prison journey.

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

4.2.1 There were no deaths in custody and no reported instances of self-harm during the reporting year.

4.2.2 There were five Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) documents opened during the reporting year – these are designed to support a vulnerable prisoner. They were all dealt with appropriately and closed promptly.

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

4.3.1 There was one case of prisoner-on-prisoner violence, the victim required hospital treatment and the attacker was returned to a closed prison.

#### **4.4 Use of force, failure to return/absconds/returned to closed conditions**

4.4.1 There were six instances of use of force. Only two required restraint and the others involved the application of handcuffs or hand-held control.

4.4.2 There were four Failure to Returns (out on ROTL and did not come back), three of whom were recaptured. In addition, there were two Absconds (walked out of the prison) both of whom were recaptured. All those recaptured are returned to the closed estate.

4.4.3 There was a total of 100 men Returned to Closed (RTC) conditions in the IMB reporting year, which compares to 132 in the previous year. Men were returned for a number of reasons, ranging from issues arising from intelligence reports, perceived risk of abscond, failure of Mandatory Drug Testing (MDT) or other matters associated with adjudication (disciplinary hearing), use of illicit substances and overseas prisoners due for removal. As reported in previous years it is an on-going concern that such a large number of men are returned to closed conditions, which questions the assessment of their suitability for open conditions. It is also disruptive to the prison regime and takes up valuable resources that could be deployed more productively.

4.4.4 Under the Temporary Prisoner Release Scheme (TPRS), 27 prisoners were transferred to Ford, of which five were subsequently Returned to Closed (RTC). Whilst this compares favourably with the results from 2023 when five of the seven TPRS arrivals were RTC, the relaxing of the eligibility conditions for TPRS in Autumn 2024 will increase the risk of unsuitable men being transferred to Ford.

#### **4.5 Preventing illicit items**

4.5.1 As Ford is an open prison with facilities on either side of a public road and approximately a third of the prison population leaving and returning to the prison every day to attend outside work, education and home visits a number of challenges arise in relation to keeping men safe. Illicit items can be brought into the prison, which places men at risk of the impact of illicit drugs, bullying and debt. There is no electronic security scanner equipment at Ford to search men returning to the prison, although CCTV and close monitoring mean that illicit items are now rarely thrown over the fence.

4.5.2 Since the end of the last reporting year there has been an increased focus on searching men returning, including the requirement for all men to enter through the reception hall, along with an increase in random searches. There has also been more frequent use of the Dedicated Search Team (DST) that works across the prison estate, along with the training of Ford staff by the DST in searching techniques. As can be seen from the table below there has been a small increase over the year in the number of finds, however the quarterly figures show a progressive downward trend which is hoped is the result of the more rigorous searching regime.

	<b>TOTAL 2023</b>	Q1 Nov-Jan	Q2 Feb-Apr	Q3 May-July	Q4 Aug-Oct	<b>TOTAL 2024</b>
<b>Finds</b>						
Phone/related	<b>394</b>	206	104	114	60	<b>484</b>
Drugs/related	<b>178</b>	84	52	30	26	<b>192</b>
Alcohol	<b>21</b>	12	3	5	3	<b>23</b>
Weapons	<b>4</b>	5	2	0	1	<b>8</b>
Tools	<b>5</b>	7	1	6	1	<b>15</b>
Cash	<b>34</b>	11	5	3	2	<b>21</b>
Other/Misc.	<b>392</b>	111	87	90	26	<b>314</b>
<b>Total Finds</b>	<b>1028</b>	436	254	248	119	<b>1057</b>

4.5.3 In the reporting year, there have been 548 Mandatory Drugs Tests (MDT's) carried out, of which 44 (8.0%) were positive, compared with the same period last year, when 619 were carried out, of which 107 (17.3%) were positive. It is encouraging to see the reduction in the proportion testing positive which ought to improve the outcomes for the men at Ford as well as provide for a safer environment for prisoners and staff.

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

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

5.1.1 As at 31 October 2024 (the end of the reporting year) Ford Prison had capacity for 349 prisoners, of which 214 are housed in the brick-built A-wing, 55 in two separate brick accommodation units and 80 in pods.

5.1.2 The 40 additional pods that were due to be removed in March 2024 remain in place and are used as short-term accommodation whilst maintenance and repair works are carried out to prisoners' permanent housing. It is anticipated that these pods will be reopened as permanent accommodation in the first quarter of 2025.

5.1.3 The prison still has no purpose-designed rooms for prisoners with disabilities, although one landing in A-wing (C1) and eight pods have some modifications to assist prisoners with physical needs. The disability alarm system in the eight pods is still not properly connected.

5.1.4 The telephone provision is inadequate, with no 'in-cell' 'phones and insufficient and badly-located telephones in the corridors. As a consequence, communication between prisoners and their families is difficult, especially for those with young children. There are a number of possible solutions, beyond increasing the number of corridor telephones. These include the previously discounted PIN locked mobile phones which are now being reconsidered and would at least partially address the issue.

5.1.5 Regarding the proposed prison expansion: a planning application has been submitted, seeking consent to develop the south-eastern quadrant of the main site with seven new accommodation blocks and ancillary buildings, which would increase the establishment's current maximum capacity of 389 to 709.

5.1.6 However, irrespective of the outcome of this planning application, commencement of any building works will now be delayed indefinitely, due to the appointed building contractor, ISG, filing for administration on 20 September 2024. 2029 has now been suggested as a revised completion date, but the Board has little confidence in this, given the many delays that have already occurred – both previously appointed main contractors have gone into administration after signing contracts.

5.1.7 For several years, the IMB annual reports have commented on the poor condition of the former Fleet Air Arm buildings. The frequency of plumbing, drainage, heating and electrical problems is increasing and is due to the old infrastructure and a total lack of planned, regular maintenance.

5.1.8 GFSL have had 219 faults registered from Jan 2020 to 30 November 2024 for boilers, just in the residential blocks. In that same period, an external company has had to be called in 58 times to repair faults that GFSL could not deal with. Many of these faults result in boilers not working for several days, often in the coldest weather and on the wings reserved for the most vulnerable and unwell prisoners.

Not having access to hot water is also impacting upon the rehabilitation of prisoners, over 100 of whom go out to work each day. These men represent their prison and prisoners in general and it is totally unsatisfactory that they cannot have a hot shower on their wings to support their working life.

The boilers at HMP Ford are old and appear not to be fit for purpose. They were put on the Risk Register by GFSL nine years ago and are a clear health and safety risk.

5.1.9 Until such a time as the prison expansion takes place, the workshops and other buildings on the industrial side of the site will continue to be under-used, due to the need to balance the number of prisoners required to run the prison against the number available for outside work and training.

5.1.10 The care and maintenance of the open areas is impressive and, in addition to providing playing areas for outdoor sports, this work sets a high standard for the character and appearance of the prison as a whole.

5.1.11 The clothing and bedding provided to prisoners is adequate, although certain items could be better quality. What is missing however, having regard to the large and outdoor nature of the prison, are proper raincoats.

5.1.12 The quantity and quality of the food served at lunch and in the evenings is of a more than reasonable standard. The kitchen manages to operate on a budget of approximately £2.75 per day for each prisoner present and religious preferences are catered for. The 'cook your own' substitute for a prepared meal (principally chicken breasts) now offers the alternative of three hens' eggs.

5.1.13 The accommodation wings have kitchenettes equipped with microwaves, grills and air-fryers, in addition to which there are washing machines and clothes-dryers. However much, if not all, of this equipment is 'domestic' in quality and is frequently broken, due to over-use and mis-use. The IMB is often required to alert the prison to such situations and recommend a more proactive approach by the Residential team to monitoring and management of the provision of cooking, washing and laundry facilities for the prisoners.

5.1.14 The DHL canteen service is over-priced and much criticised by the men. It is positive that this will be replaced on site by a more conventional 'shop', but disappointing that this will continue to be operated by DHL, given the service and pricing concerns.

## **5.2 Segregation**

5.2.1 Being an open prison, HMP Ford has no segregation block. Instead it has 4 accommodation cells in which prisoners await adjudication or the possibility of a return to closed conditions. The IMB is normally notified, as a matter of course whenever prisoners are admitted to the cells.

## **5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships**

5.3.1 In the Board's view, the overall culture in the prison is one of support, respect, fairness and humanity.

5.3.2 The new Personal Officer scheme that was established twelve months ago appears to be working well through reinforcing constructive relationships between prisoners and staff. It is being continuously reviewed by the prison.

5.3.3 Apart from several relatively inactive months when the lead prisoner left, the Offenders Consultative Committee (OCC) has had a positive year and has now has been revitalised under another new team. There is publicity about its activities



outside the OCC office and in the dining hall and towards the end of the year it established a constructive relationship with the 'Residential' team.

#### **5.4 Equality and diversity**

5.4.1 During the year, nine discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFS) were submitted which appears to confirm that there is little, if any, conscious or unconscious discrimination in the prison.

5.4.2 Importantly, prison data shows that, when compared to the overall ethnic makeup of Ford, there is a fair representation across the ethnic groups of prisoners in paid work outside.

5.4.3 It is notable, however, that during the reporting year the Governor commissioned a detailed report on Diversity and Inclusion at Ford. The report acknowledges that certain apparent disparities exist between white prisoners and prisoners from ethnic minorities with regard to the number of searches, being placed on report and having proven adjudications. The Governor is to be commended for this report, and whilst there is no evidence of direct racism from staff at Ford, certain measures have been proposed to ensure that all prisoners continue to be treated equally, including Cultural Awareness training.

#### **5.5 Faith and pastoral support**

5.5.1 The Chaplaincy continues to be a valuable resource, with four employed chaplains (including the Imam, who is now working full-time), seven sessional chaplains of various faiths and five additional volunteer chaplains.

5.5.2 The Chaplaincy works with prisoners of all faiths, with prisoners' families and with members of the prison staff.

5.5.3 There are currently four prisoners participating in The Alpha Course and a successful Faith Festival was organised at the end of the summer.

5.5.4 As well as performing its spiritual role, the Chaplaincy organises choral and musical activities.

5.5.5 In addition to providing comfort, the chaplains offer practical support in conjunction with the charity CRUSE to prisoners who have to deal with bereavement and its practical consequences.

#### **5.6 Incentives schemes**

5.6.1 At the end of September 2024 there were no prisoners on Basic Incentives and Earned Privileges (IEP), 23 on Standard and 324 on Enhanced, which is consistent with what would be expected at an open prison.

5.6.2 Any changes in incentive levels include discussion with the prisoner concerned and are regularly reviewed by a senior officer.

#### **5.7 Complaints**

5.7.1 Internal complaints are being dealt with in good time and external complaints are pursued systematically by the Business Hub. As in previous years the majority of complaints relate to property and are exacerbated by differences in the application of property rules by different prisons.

## **6. Health and wellbeing**

The interim head of healthcare was confirmed in the post in April 2024. In the Board's view, Practice Plus Group continues to offer a very good service and feedback from all prisoners is positive. Ford does not have a hospital wing but more men with complex health needs have arrived at Ford in the last reporting year including a man on dialysis, and another on end of life care, who was cared for in conjunction with the local hospice, who visit as necessary. These men have nothing but praise for the support they have received.

### **6.1 General healthcare**

6.1.1 All new prisoners are seen by healthcare/wellbeing within the 24 hours of arrival for a full assessment of their needs and introduction to the process for obtaining prescribed medication. A further screening is done within seven days.

6.1.2 There is a multi-disciplinary approach co-ordinating Healthcare, Substance Misuse and Mental Health, with a weekly meeting to discuss complex cases.

6.1.3 The early release scheme had an unsettling effect on Ford, with many more men arriving at Ford with a very short time to serve. Interventions by Healthcare, Mental Health and Substance Misuse teams were increased in September/October 2024 to ensure that these men were ready and back-up in the community was put in place.

6.1.4 In the Board's view, the only service that has not functioned well is dental. The dentist retired in April and when the service was taken over by Time for Teeth almost all of the equipment was found to be unserviceable. It took until October for everything to be repaired or replaced and the dentist to start seeing patients with a backlog of about 80 patients. By the end of October this backlog had been reduced to 10 but rising again with new arrivals. A second dentist started at the end of October so cover is two days a week. In the interim, prisoners requiring emergency treatment had to be sent out to the hospital.

### **6.2 Physical healthcare**

6.2.1 Healthcare is now staffed seven days a week, up from five days previously. Appointments are made and men are seen within 24 hours. Where necessary, the out of hours NHS 111 is used and prisoners are sent to A & E.

6.2.2 A big push had been made to reduce those failing to attend appointments (FTA). The table below shows the improvement in the FTA figures for quarter ending September 2024 when compared with those for the month of September 2023:

<b>Appointment area</b>	<b>Number of appointments missed</b>  <b>Quarter ending 30 September 2024</b>	<b>FTA %</b>  <b>Quarter ending 30 September 2024</b>	<b>FTA %</b>  <b>Month of September 2023</b>
GP Appointments	31 out of 262	11.75	16.6
Nurse Appointments	38 out of 304	12.75	14.1
Mental Health Appointment	163 out of 1,162	14.03	17.4

6.2.3 Healthcare continues to push to update all vaccinations for prisoners, including those missed in childhood. The Hep C Trust together with Practice Plus ran a full day in July (4.30 am to 9.30 pm) testing for Hep C. Take up was 95%.

### **6.3 Mental health**

6.3.1 Although prisoners will normally have completed offender behaviour programmes prior to transfer to Ford, the psychology and substance misuse teams at Ford run a variety of courses and interventions to address substance misuse and many psychological issues (e.g., stress, anxiety, emotional regulation, mood, sleeplessness and anger management), all of which can lead to offending behaviour.

The mental health team runs numerous interventions. There is an informal daily half hour drop-in at lunchtime for men with Mental Health and Substance Misuse issues. This used to be weekly.

6.3.2 The psychology team is also a trauma-informed service (this acknowledges the need to understand a patient's life experiences to deliver effective care), which is beneficial.

### **6.4 Social care**

6.4.1 The part-time occupational therapist (OT) moved, full time, to a closed prison, but can visit as required or the community OT can cover. Recruitment is underway to employ another full-time OT.

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

6.5.1 Ford has had a full regime for the whole of the reporting period. There has been a huge push by the Governor on sport and the gym. The number of Physical Education staff has gone from 2.5 to 4.5 in the reporting year. Of real note, the number of prisoner participation hours increased to 3000 appointments in the month of August 2024 (August 2023 – 681) with all men now offered four sport and gym sessions a week.

6.5.2 There is now tennis, volleyball, and combined staff/prisoner football matches. The trial of unsupervised football in the evenings and weekends has proved successful and is continuing. There is a snooker table in the dining hall and the number of men socialising and eating in the dining hall has increased.

## **6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation**

6.6.1 All men are screened on arrival at Ford (6.1.1), which includes their history of drug or alcohol use. They can also attend the daily drop in sessions. The Smart Inside Out group therapy programme runs for four and a half weeks, together with one to one appointment as necessary. The number of men on chemical interventions at the end of the year was three.

6.6.2 Staff throughout the prison co-operate to identify prisoners with particular needs and ensure that the appropriate facilities and courses are offered. In the case of substance misuse, there is a monitoring system to ensure that prisoners do attend the necessary courses.

6.6.3 On release, the Substance Misuse team liaise with outside chemists to ensure continuity of care. Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous only offer online sessions. A new Transfer and Discharge Coordinator arrived in May to liaise with community healthcare and smooth the path of prisoners with physical, mental or substances misuse support when they are released. They continue to carry out this role alongside his new role as Head of Substance Misuse.

## **7. Progression and resettlement**

### **7.1 General**

7.1.1 The ambition of the Education, Skills and Work (ESW) teams at Ford is for “every man to have the opportunity to develop and progress”. Consistent with the ethos of an open prison, each prisoner is strongly encouraged to own their individual future.

The Board is particularly encouraged by the leadership being shown in this key area of prison life and it is hoped that evidence will be available in 2025 to prove the positive impact after release.

### **7.2 Education and Library**

7.2.1 The journey for each prisoner arriving at Ford begins with Induction, which has a strong focus on ESW. The emphasis is clearly on the men taking control of their own time at Ford, quite different to the closed estate. A Quick View Prospectus is provided to the men which gives details of the many and varied opportunities available. It includes the following quote from the Governor, that neatly describes what Ford offers - “HMP Ford is all about hope, opportunity and progression. We hope that you will be inspired and motivated to plan your resettlement journey.”

The Board has observed that there is little commitment by the usual sending prisons to provide any form of preparation for this all-important transition into an open prison. The only example the Board learned of was a peer-led session at HMP Coldingley, which was well received.

7.2.2 Personal Learning Plans (PLP's) are used to agree a schedule of education related activities for each prisoner, to support their journey through Ford and on to eventual release. At the start of the reporting year, there was a significant backlog in producing PLP's, but this was dealt with and all PLP's are now completed within four weeks of arrival. During the year, there was an improvement in the planning for each man upon arrival, based on the PLP discussions – this is made harder when the number of men is reduced and more arrive for a short stay only.

7.2.3 Whilst there remains a concern regarding the number of prisoners who arrive at Ford with a low level of maths and English literacy, work has been done to better support these men, including:

- more appropriate allocation of men to prison work on arrival;
- improved collaboration across the teams at Ford; and
- the work done by the Neuro Diversity manager, who picks up learning difficulties early on, so enabling appropriate personalised interventions to be put in place.

7.2.4 Developing the digital skills of prisoners is a high priority and progress has been made with providing better access to computers and more training opportunities. The Virtual Campus provides different courses and other information to the prisoners, but overall, these efforts are hampered by old hardware and lack of staff coverage, particularly outside of the normal working day.

7.2.5 Several new courses were introduced during the year which were well received by the men. These include Setting Up Your Own Business and Modern British Values.

7.2.6 The IMB had previously reported about the negative impact on the education progress of regular interruptions to the men's days. This has been addressed through better scheduling of healthcare and gym appointments, together with reinforcing the right behaviours of prisoners seeking employment outside of the prison.

7.2.7 The library is a well-resourced and popular facility at Ford. Whilst usage dropped during the months when prison capacity was reduced, the library remains a place for reading, company and support. In the reporting year, the average number of visits per calendar month in the reporting year was circa 1,480 and number of items borrowed was some 820. This prisoner quote sums up the importance of the library at Ford:

*"I use the library as a safe space to reflect and take time out. HMP Ford has by far the best library compared to the other seven prisons I have been in".*

### **7.3 Vocational training, work**

7.3.1 One of the most important contributors to reducing reoffending is enabling prisoners to get paid work outside the prison. The experience and skills developed are invaluable for their successful reintroduction to life outside of prison and prisoners finish their sentence with a renewed sense of purpose and achievement, as well as cash in the bank. For the reporting year, the average number of prisoners working outside of the prison each day was 120, which is approximately 35% of the prison roll and is close to the ideal level set by Ford of 38%.

7.3.2 The Prison Employment Lead (PEL) and the Business & Community Engagement Manager (BACE) work together to deliver regular Employment Fairs and on-site employment drop-in events bringing in local and national employers to engage directly with the prisoners. These events have been well attended and, in collaboration with New Futures Network, Ford currently has links with around 40-50 active local and regional employers offering a range of job opportunities to the prisoners. There is good evidence that the reputation of Ford with potential employers has grown in the year, whilst prisoners appear more motivated to secure employment that will sustain beyond release.

7.3.3 This level of success is dependent upon Ford being able to provide sufficient workers who have a fair length of time left to serve on their sentence and who are suitable and motivated for outside work. It was noticeable that the number of prisoners on ROTL work reduced to 71 towards the year end, a result of the reduction in prisoner numbers and some employers not wanting to take prisoners for shortened periods, both due to the early release scheme. It is anticipated that it will return to former levels as the prison "refills". In the Board's view, the prison is to be congratulated on its continued success in this respect.

7.3.4 The Board commends the staff at HMP Ford for their efforts in engaging with the prisoners to assess and target the employment needs of the prison population, developing the prisoner's transferable skills and engaging with employers to offer a range of jobs opportunities, with the focus on skill gaps within Ford's predominant

resettlement areas of London (46%) and the South East (28%). Of note this year is the on-site Traffic Management Course offering Level 1 Health & Safety in the construction industry, which is very popular with the prisoners.

7.3.5 Some men who want employment not offered by Ford do source jobs themselves, but to counter the risk of this being abused, the approval process is complicated and many applications fail. Whilst it is encouraging that the numbers of applications have gone up this year from 19 to 26, the success rate remains low at 27%. The self-sourced route has value, being a good contributor to Ford meeting the employment progression needs of all the prisoners, and should be supported.

7.3.6 Chichester College School of Construction continues to be a real asset for Ford, offering the following qualifications - L2 Diploma in Site Carpentry, L2 Diploma/Certificate Painting and Decorating, L2 drylining and L2 Diploma Bricklaying. Those in attendance are well motivated and interested in their activities however, there has recently been a decline in numbers which has been attributed to the much less engaged attitude of the recent arrivals at Ford with shorter term sentences to serve. It is very concerning to note that the budget for these critical rehabilitation activities has been cut by 50% for the 2025 financial year.

7.3.7 The on-site workshops are well managed and are moving from strength to strength in improving links in their industry area for active employment opportunities outside the prison:

- Engineering offers City & Guilds L2 and are busy with prison orders that are recognised for their quality.
- Waste Management offers Waste Management Training & Advisory Board (WAMITAB) L1 in Waste and Recycling and all prison cleaners are required to complete a WAMITAB qualification.
- The Bicycle Workshop is well managed and offer City and Guilds L2 qualification.
- Land Based Activities (LBA) maintains the grounds, grows plants for Ford, other prisons and government organisations and offers training in the use of tractors, diggers and ride on mowers. It is one of the larger on-site employers at Ford. After a period of severe neglect, LBA is under new management which has transformed the appearance of the site at Ford and the quality of the products that they offer their customers.
- The on-site café, Serving Thyme, is open to the public and it is encouraging to witness the positive interaction between the prisoners and the local community. This café along with the internal Café 60 and the Training Kitchen (which was reopened in the summer of 2024) provide qualifications in Barista, Food Production, Food Safety and Hospitality. It is thus disappointing to note that the Training Kitchen was then permanently closed after the end of the reporting year due to funding constraints.
- DHL operates a warehouse on site servicing several prisons. It is the largest on-site employer at Ford and, while it offers one of the highest rates of pay, it

provides no formal qualification in warehousing and logistics and has never offered employment to prisoners on release. At the end of the reporting year, the role of DHL at Ford was uncertain

7.3.8 The low rates of pay in Engineering and LBA, both commercial areas that require a motivated and productive workforce, is a source of discontent for the prisoners. While there is merit in rewarding prisoner's progression in trust and education with access to higher paid jobs within the prison, the pay scales at Ford fail to recognise workers with trade skills required by the prison to function and to honour their external contractual obligations. There is disparity in pay in some areas and the methodology used to determine the rates of pay is unclear.

#### **7.4 Offender management, progression**

7.4.1 The Offender Assessment System (OASys) is used at Ford as the basis for sentence planning and is updated as prisoner needs are identified or change.

7.4.2 Unfortunately, as reported in previous years, problems continue in obtaining timely responses from COM's and from some police forces regarding background and other necessary checks prior to being granted ROTL, whether for overnight, day or education/training/employment reasons. These delays result in additional work for the OMU team in issuing reminders and chasing replies. It is a particular problem in London where many Ford prisoners live on release. The situation has improved since last year as police forces (including the London Metropolitan Police, "The Met") are now beginning to respond within agreed timescales. Nevertheless, delays in COM's responding in good time remain a major source of frustration for prisoners and staff.

The difficulties faced by the probation service are well known and substantial and they clearly impact and frustrate prisoner outcomes. On one occasion Ford were seeking a ROTL update for a prisoner who had a job offer. After several weeks and several chasing emails, the COM replied that she was no longer dealing with the prisoner. Further time elapsed before the new COM was discovered and progress chased and the situation was eventually resolved and ROTL paperwork updated. Sadly, by this time the employer had withdrawn the job offer.

7.4.3 The OMU holds weekly drop-in sessions where men can see their prison offender managers (POMs) without an appointment. This facility is popular with prisoners and has meant that there have been very few complaints during the year from prisoners that they do not receive the support they need from OMU. Some of these complaints are related to POMs having to explain delays to prisoners resulting from system/process issues; prisoners are not interested in procedural matters and just want to get to work to further their rehabilitation.

During the year, the Stone Pillow charity attended the drop-in sessions to assist prisoners who anticipate accommodation problems on release.

7.4.5 Sentence plans are usually created by a previous prison prior to transfer to Ford. However, sentence plans are updated at Ford to address changing prisoner needs, usually with the addition of ROTL. Prisoners have a copy of their sentence plans and further copies are available when the original is misplaced.

7.4.6 The prison has had both IPP (Indeterminate for Public Protection) and men serving life sentences throughout the year. In October 2024, there were four IPP



prisoners and 26 prisoners completing life sentences. Both categories receive enhanced-behaviour monitoring and additional psychological support. One of the IPP prisoners will come to the end of his tariff shortly and the other three are all over their original tariff. One prisoner completed his three-year tariff in 2008 but was not released until 2016 – he was recalled in 2017 and is still in Ford having served a total of 15 additional years over his original tariff and with no sign of release.

Together with IMBs throughout the country, we continue to stress that IPP sentences are inhumane and should be removed from existing prisoners.

7.4.7 Preparation for parole takes place at Ford to ensure that prisoners have a full understanding of the process and that they are offered practical and emotional support throughout, particularly during the 21-day reconsideration period. During the reporting year, 20 parole hearings were scheduled, of which 15 led to the release of the prisoner on licence. This is comparable with the previous year when the figures were 16 and 14 respectively.

7.4.8 As a category D prison, the safe use of ROTL for employment purposes is key to Ford being successful. The Reducing Reoffending team deals regularly with prisoners who have a poor work ethic that leads some to fail in their work placement as well as causing employers to withdraw from the prison's employment scheme. The Reducing Reoffending team work carefully with prisoners to address their shortcomings in life skills and work ethic that cause these problems.

7.4.9 Some prisoners find that the Prisoner Earning Act deduction of 40% of earnings (levy), plus the increased cost of food and transport out of prison, mean that there can be little or, in some cases, no incentive to work. Prisoners are able to apply for the levy to be reduced by the Governor where appropriate, which is approved in some cases.

## **7.5 Family contact**

7.5.1 The prison holds family days at key dates in the year, which are well received, and the normal social visits' system runs smoothly when they have been observed by the Board. On a number of occasions, the visitor toilets used by families were found to be unclean and very unappealing which created a poor impression of the prison which maintains better standards of cleanliness elsewhere in its buildings.

7.5.2 See 5.1.4 for observations regarding the provision of telephones which are not adequate for an open prison.

## **7.6 Resettlement planning**

7.6.1 Prison staff continue to work hard to ensure that prisoners have accommodation on release. The lack of previous "through the gate" services makes this a difficult task. Nevertheless, it is positive to report that all prisoners released in the year had accommodation on leaving Ford. This includes the 71 men released on one day in October 2024 under the SDS-40 programme.

This was a considerable achievement by the prison, with the Ford pre-release team working diligently throughout the year, sometimes carrying out additional work because of difficulties in the external probation service. There have been some delays in releasing prisoners on Home Detention Curfew, because of the more detailed pre-release checks that external probation staff are required to undertake.

The Community Accommodation Service tier 3 (CAS3) funding was a help in securing reliable post release accommodation for up to 84 nights and was used on approximately 24 occasions in the year.

7.6.2 Where possible, particular care is taken to source accommodation close to planned place of employment. However, as in the past, men have been unable to take up planned employment because they are accommodated too far away.

7.6.3 The number of men who leave the prison with a job to go to and remain in employment six weeks post release is estimated to be 63%. The IMB notes that staff at Ford go above and beyond what is expected to continue supporting prisoners secure employment in the immediate post-release period.

## 8. The work of the IMB

### Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	12
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	11
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	9
Total number of visits to the establishment	255

### Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	1	2
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	3	0
C	Equality	1	1
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	1	0
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	0	1
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	1	0
F	Food and kitchens	0	0
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	1	2
H1	Property within the establishment	0	0
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	17	6
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	1	0
I	Sentence management, including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	11	1
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	1	1
K	Transfers	0	1
L	Miscellaneous	1	1
	<b>Total number of applications</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>16</b>



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