



# **Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Forest Bank**

**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**

HMP/YOI Forest Bank is a privately run category B prison (for those considered a risk to public safety but not categorised as a maximum security threat) and young offender institution for men and young adult men in Manchester, which has been operated by Sodexo for over 20 years.

Currently designated as a reception and resettlement prison, it can hold up to 1470 men and young adults<sup>1</sup>. The prison has three primary purposes: to receive those recently remanded in custody and hold them until their court appearances are concluded; to hold those who are serving short prison sentences; and to hold those requiring resettlement support as their release date approaches. Convicted men with time to serve would be expected to be allocated to training establishments elsewhere.

The establishment was originally opened in 2000, so the buildings are relatively modern in design and construction. There are eight residential house blocks, with a total of 16 wings. There is a care and separation unit (CSU) that can house up to 27 residents. Until April 2023, the healthcare centre offered inpatient services, but it has now been classed as an outpatient centre, with the wing repurposed as a residential block. Other areas of the prison include an education centre with classrooms, a library and a computer suite. Facilities also include a chapel, a sports hall and an all-weather sports pitch. There is an industries wing, comprising separate workshops, a reception centre, a visits' hall, an administration block and kitchens.

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<sup>1</sup> Figures included in this report are local management information. They reflect the prison's/YOI'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**

The prison has experienced a much-increased churn rate in its population, which has been driven by national population pressures over the reporting year. In this context:

##### **Safety**

- Rates of violence have increased by 13% compared with the previous reporting period.
- Use of force has increased by 17% compared with the previous reporting period.
- Self-harm has decreased 1% compared with the previous reporting period.

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

- From the Board's observations, the management of prisoners with complex needs continues to be a challenge for the establishment.
- The establishment, over the last reporting year, has faced challenges around illicit items, cleanliness and maintenance issues on the accommodation blocks.
- The prison has been actively recruiting new prison officers, but faces the challenge of training the new officers.

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

- Spectrum and Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust (GMMH) provide a package of healthcare services.
- From the Board's observations, there continues to be strain on the mental health services. This appears to be due to an increase in the number of individuals with complex issues entering custody through Forest Bank.
- Wait times for external healthcare appointments remain long.

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

- Overall, the Board has found that the standard of education and training in industries is good.
- Purposeful activity has increased during the reporting period and stands at 21.2 hours per prisoner, per week, on average.

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

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

- Forest Bank continues to operate at capacity. Are there any plans to increase prisoner capacity with capital investment in new wings or an expanded prison complex? If so, what additional support will the operator be provided with to manage additional increases of prison capacity?

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

- Reception prisons in general are under real pressure. What plans exist to review and evaluate the model?

## TO THE DIRECTOR

- In the Board's view, staff and prisoner relationships require attention. What steps will the Director take to improve key worker sessions and ensure they are carried out?
- The Board has received complaints about medication treatment dispensing times being missed frequently, which has an impact on prisoners' health. What action will the prison take to improve this outcome?
- Illicit items continue to be an operational and safety challenge. What investment and support will the operator be provided with to prevent illicit items entering the prison?

### 3.3 Response to the last report

Main Area for Development	Response	Progress Made
<b><i>To the Minister</i></b>  What progress has been made to ensure prisoners in need of secure mental health facilities are transferred in a reasonable timeframe?	National action to be taken on this thematic finding. NHS good practice guidance sets out that cases should be resolved in 28 days. Referenced the National Partnership Agreement on Health and Social Care in England, which was published in February 2023.	Poor progress. The establishment continues to advise that prisoners are kept in care and separation unit (CSU) wing for longer than expected, due to a lack of mental health faculties for prisoners with complex needs.
<b><i>To the Prison Service</i></b>  What further support can be given to assist the prison in managing the onward movement of prisoners who are distressed about moving and disrupt transfers. This can result in the prisoner not being accepted on the usual transport of the receiving establishment?	HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) commented that the prisoner escort and custody service (PECS) supplies support for disruptive prisoners on a case-by-case basis.	The Board continues to be concerned that this situation.

<p><b><i>To the Governor</i></b></p> <p>Meaningful out-of-cell time remains a concern. What actions is the senior leadership team undertaking to address this?</p>	<p>During the reporting period, the Director sent a directive to wings that, during an incident, a dynamic risk assessment should be performed vs, the entire wing subjected to losing association, isolating the offending prisoners.</p>	<p>Average progress. The Board would like to see better progress in this area, including additional evening association, a challenge the establishment faces with staffing restrictions. The senior leadership team (SLT) has also allowed some trusted prisoners to escort themselves (to healthcare, social visits, education, industries, adjudications), with officers placed statically, monitoring activity and opening gates when needed.</p>
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## Evidence sections 4 – 7

### 4. Safety

Over the reporting period, the Board has established the following findings from its observations:

- Managing transfers to other prisons appears to be a great challenge, with many prisoners becoming distressed by the decision, which can often result in refusal to leave and self-harm. This can have a huge impact on the regime.
- Incidents of self-harm following the transfer of complex prisoners fell by just 1% over the reporting period compared with last year.
- Rates of violence and use of force have increased by 13% and 17%, respectively, compared with last year. This is in the context of a higher churn rate and an increase in 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 100, compared with the previous reporting period.
- Prison staff are attempting to manage increasing levels of violence and prisoners with additional needs, including those with mental health issues and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).
- Prisoners have reported to the Board that there have been delays in seeing medical staff. In addition, they have told IMB members that they are concerned about being unable to access medication that has to be taken at specific times and that the prison has not been providing the same medication as prescribed by doctors in the community. The Board acknowledges that some types of medication are not prescribed in a prison setting, with alternatives usually being offered.

#### 4.1 Reception and induction

The prison accepts up to 30 new prisoners (both remanded and sentenced) daily from across the northwest courts system. All incoming prisoners pass through the reception area. New prisoners follow a thorough reception process before being situated on E wing, also known as the early days centre.

Induction handbooks are issued to all prisoners, including versions for non-English speaking foreign national prisoners, which are kept up to date in the 10 most requested languages. The handbooks can be printed by staff in reception as prisoners arrive. In addition, all prisoners and staff have access to the phone language interpreting service, The Big Word.

The prison is allowed to retain several sentenced prisoners to act as Listeners (prisoners trained by the Samaritans to provide peer support), Insiders (a trusted prisoner who acts a peer mentor) and other roles essential to the running of the prison. However, they are not exempt from being transferred.

The reception area is clean, well maintained, bright and as welcoming as realistically possible. There is also a contraband amnesty bin, allowing all incoming prisoners to dispose of illicit items without further action being taken. Staff appear friendly and



experienced in reception and seem to have an excellent level of knowledge and skills to manage the wide range of prisoners entering and leaving the establishment.

Overall, the Board has found the reception area to be operated well, with dedicated staff. However, it is impacted negatively when prisoners refuse to transfer willingly and require the agreement of the transport provider and receiving establishment to accept them under these circumstances. Reception is also affected by late evening and weekend arrivals.

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

Over the reporting period, self-harm decreased by 1% (see Table 1, below). A total of 160 reports of self-harm incidents were linked to prisoners refusing a prison transfer. The prison has seen a significant increase in prisoners with complex needs who are struggling with moderate-to-severe mental health issues, as well as a rise in neurodiverse prisoners.

There were, regrettably, four deaths in custody during the reporting period. One death is being reviewed by the coroner, while two were, apparently, due to natural causes and the fourth was, apparently, self-inflicted, with inquests pending for all four.

The safer custody team consists of a suicide and self-harm (SASH) training team leader, use of force co-ordinator, violence reduction lead and an analyst. The team reports to the head of safety and wellbeing. The head of safer custody, or the Director, chairs a weekly safety intervention meeting (SIM), where managers proactively review the needs of the more complex cases and try to reduce the causes of both self-harm and violence. Assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documents, which are used to support prisoners who are at risk of self-harm and suicide, continue to be operated throughout the establishment and daily figures are published on operational reports by wing. Both operational and non-operational staff are fully trained on how to open, comment and complete an ACCT plan during their Sodexo induction.

ACCT reviews are undertaken on a weekly basis, where a determination will be made if the prisoners should remain on an ACCT plan, and is attended by a representative from the mental health team, chaplaincy, family team and recovery and programmes teams. Case coordinators receive training from HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) to carry out these duties.

At the beginning of 2024, the prison had 17 Listeners, while another 14 were trained in June 2024. However, this number had fallen to just 7 Listeners by the end of the reporting year. The reason given for this is unpreventable transfers out of the establishment or loss of employment due to bad behaviour. During the reporting period there were a further seven on a training course, with hopes they can commence their duties speedily. Prisoners say they feel Listeners are valuable and support them on the wings, emotionally and practically.

*Table 1: Levels of self-harm (monthly variations can be driven by one or more prolific self-harming individuals)*

		November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	Total
Levels of Self Harm	2022/2023	43	91	89	74	67	87	101	128	114	110	117	69	1090
	2023/2024	110	92	127	99	80	72	64	77	99	96	83	78	1077
		156%	1%	43%	34%	19%	-17%	-37%	-40%	-13%	-13%	-29%	13%	-1%
	2021/2022		965											
	2022/2023		1090	13%										
	2023/2024		1077	-1%										

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

Rates of violence remain high at Forest Bank, having increased by 13% since the previous reporting year.

Weekly safety intervention meetings (SIMs) continue to oversee violence management interventions and address violent behaviour within custody. The safer custody team also oversees the process of challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs), used to help manage prisoners who pose an increased risk of violence. These men and young adults are allocated a responsible manager who operates to a review a timetable and agrees to any further actions.

The prison has a violence reduction policy through several different programmes and a new safeguarding policy for adult prisoners, including a referral process if required. The prison's CSIP self-assessment has now been signed off for successful CSIP implementation by HMPPS. There is also a weapons amnesty, where a secure depository is circulated around the facility to remove dangerous and illicit weapons.

During the previous reporting period, the safer custody team recruited two violence reduction representatives from the population, with an additional rep recruited during this reporting period. At the end of the reporting year, however, the safer custody team returned to having two representatives. The area of focus is on the reduction of gangs and providing intelligence on gang activity. These representatives received informal training by the safer custody team and work with fellow prisoners to address violence reduction. Prisoners in these roles say they feel they have a purpose and can use their own life experiences to support others, especially young adults.

*Table 2: Levels of violence (note that the operational capacity was around 100 lower in 2022-2023)*

		November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	Total
Levels of Violence	2022/2023	47	53	71	64	63	46	60	50	42	54	47	50	647
	2023/2024	52	54	78	55	71	57	46	72	62	66	47	74	734
		11%	2%	10%	-14%	13%	24%	-23%	44%	48%	22%	0%	48%	13%
	2021/2022	680												
	2022/2023	647	-5%											
	2023/2024	734	13%											

### 4.4 Use of force

The trends for the use of force (UoF) are monitored by the safer custody team. Use of force has increased by 17% over the reporting period, compared with the previous year. In the boards opinion through observations this rise appears to come from resistance to transfer.

A weekly UoF review meeting with other departments checks that the force used is lawful and compliant with policies. It also provides recognition for staff and identifies key learning points.

There is an appointed UoF coordinator who monitors all relevant activity and provides support to staff, from initiation to completion of the paperwork. All UoF activity is recorded on the daily operational log. During the end of the reporting period, and during the upcoming reporting period the staff roll of batons has occurred, followed by incapacitant spray.

*Table 3: Levels of the use of force (note that the operational capacity was around 100 lower in 2022-2023)*

		November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	Total
Use of Force	2022/2023	76	58	98	66	78	95	120	91	45	83	70	70	950
	2023/2024	96	85	110	75	93	85	71	98	104	93	86	111	1107
		26%	47%	12%	14%	19%	-11%	-41%	8%	131%	12%	23%	59%	17%
		2021/2022	1104											
		2022/2023	950	-14%										
		2023/2024	1107	17%										

## 4.5 Preventing illicit items

The prison continues to take a proactive stance against contraband, focusing on the supply of drugs and illicit items, organised crime and staff corruption. The prison has appeared to make good progress in this area.

An intelligence-based approach is taken to address the rise in contraband and illicit items found to be smuggled into the prison by visitors and members of staff. All staff members are supported and trained in anti-corruption, as well as in professional standards. During their Sodexo induction, external operators given access to the prison, and operational and non-operational staff, are trained and encouraged to confidentially report any concerns about illicit items or staff corruption using intelligence reports.

During the previous reporting period, investment in netting and security reduced throwovers (where packages containing illicit items are thrown over the prison walls and picked up by prisoners), and this approach has eliminated the threat in conjunction with Greater Manchester Police, who patrol to proactively deter gangs from attempting throwovers. The prison also appears to have made a meaningful effort to reduce the brewing of hooch (alcohol made illegally in the prison), with surveillance and cell searches targeting the key ingredients.

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

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

The main residential section of the prison comprises of wings A to F, in addition to wings G and H, also known as the Eden unit. The wings are well maintained by the facilities team, external contractors and prisoners who work in the capacity as wing painters. Prisoners are housed either in single or double cells, with no cell being used to hold more than two prisoners.

During the reporting period, new prisoners were located on an 'early day' wing (E1 during the first half of the reporting period, then E2). The time spent here depended on whether or not they had been in prison before. Prisoners with mobility issues were housed on G1 or H1, both of which have cells that enable and promote 'independent' living.

During the previous and current reporting period, the inpatient healthcare accommodation was reclassified as an accommodation block (I wing) with 10 single cells. During this time, the healthcare provision was outsourced to a third party, which meant that the requirement for medical accommodation was no longer required. The prison operates the repurposed unit for high-risk prisoners and those with additional needs, most - if not all - of whom are on ACCT plans.

These prisoners appear to spend a large amount of time in their cells due to safety issues, as their needs or behaviour can be extremely challenging. The Board acknowledges the IMB National Thematic Report, which highlights the need for additional mental health beds in secure hospitals, and understands the pressure faced by the Forest Bank in managing a difficult situation.

Prisoners who enter Forest Bank without property are given prison-issue clothes and can request underwear and socks at any time. In addition, they can buy clothing through the digital kiosk (self-service computer terminals that allow prisoners to manage their daily affairs). Also, their visitors can arrange to bring their belongings to the establishment (see 5.7). Any property items not allowed on the wings are stored securely in the property locker in reception, while valuables are kept in safes. This stored property will be available to the prisoner when they leave the establishment.

Prisoners can choose to eat communally or in their cells. Kitchens are monitored regularly by the Board; additionally, servery areas on the wings, which are used to maintain food warm for serving, make up our observations when on the wings. Staff are required to supervise the serving of food as well as completing the temperature checks on the wings.

The prison displays all nutritional information about food for all individuals, including staff. This information can be accessed on the wing digital kiosks and is available on the printed menus in the dining area. Menus are changed seasonally, aiming to provide balance and diversity in meal choices. Menus are influenced by the results of prisoner surveys. The allowance for food for each prisoner has increased slightly to allow for the rise in the cost of supplies. The kitchens support a diverse range of religious and cultural festivals, as well as providing several daily choices for vegetarians, vegans and religious and special dietary requirements.

The kitchens are regularly monitored by the Board and found to be of a good standard, with excellent levels of hygiene and cleanliness. When the Board can observe, prisoners who work in the kitchens and kitchen staff wear the correct personal protective equipment (PPE), and we have found morale to be uplifting and positive.

Prisoners can choose to eat communally or in their cells. The IMB received six applications (prisoners' written representations) about concerns relating to the kitchens and food in the reporting period. This was an increase from three applications in the previous year. The theme from kitchen/food complaints appears to be regarding health requirements which, when investigated, concerned healthcare.

During the reporting period, the IMB has a duty to report on what they see during wing observations.

- Several wings have fallen below the standard of cleanliness expected to be maintained. One of the reasons for this was restricted wing activity, which meant cleaners were not given enough time to properly clean the areas.
- The showers are heavily used and, on occasion, there has been a build-up of matter. But it seems that drains are cleaned out once a month as a matter of routine and any blockages cleared, where necessary, in between times.
- Water coolers located on wings and hot water machines have been out of use for extended periods. The aforementioned requires an external engineer, so several need to be broken before a service is called. They seem to be repaired for short periods and broken again soon after.
- Wings don't have air conditioning, so were incredibly uncomfortable in the hot weather, with cooled water not always available to prisoners (although tap water was available in cells). There have been occasions when warm temperatures have been a concern, although we observed fans being placed on wings and bottled water handed out to prisoners.
- Multipurpose rooms were often used for storing items and not for prisoners.
- Some wings have no seating during association other than the lunch tables.

The Board would like to recognise the effort and energy made by some prison staff and cleaners to ensure the wings not mentioned above are clean and tidy and provide prisoners with a decent living environment.

#### *Types of accommodation*

Wing	Description
A	Young offenders (under 24 years of age)
B	Standard wing (24 years-plus)
C	Standard wing (24 years-plus)
D	Vulnerable prisoners
E	Vulnerable prisoners/EDiC*
F	Fresh start/prisoners on the enhanced level of the incentives scheme
G	Drug rehabilitation
H	EDiC*/drug rehabilitation
I	Prisoners with additional needs (ACCT plans**)
CSU	Segregation

\*EDiC: early days in custody

\*\*Assessment, care in custody and teamwork

## **5.2 Segregation**

The care and separation unit (CSU), where prisoners are segregated, comprises 27 cells, with an additional constant observation cell, a meeting room and two special cells (where items such as furniture, bedding and sanitation are removed in the interests of safety). There are two showers, a wing servery and two designated exercise yards. When the IMB has been able to observe, the CSU has usually been clean, tidy and well managed. Rounds are carried out daily by managers, the chaplaincy team and the healthcare department, which includes doctors, nurses and mental health support workers. The Board observes adjudications (disciplinary hearings when a prisoner is alleged to have broken prison rules) and GOoD reviews (which determine whether or not a prisoner should remain segregated) and can report that procedures are usually carried out correctly. The focus on prisoner decency is rightly continued to the CSU. Each day, prisoners have time to clean their cells, use the phone and shower and to exercise, although the exercise yard is very small and bare, with no equipment.

The staff on the CSU wing often win inter-prison awards for their work and are held in high standing as an effective team running a challenging unit. Many prisoners have reported to the Board that they feel the care and support they receive whilst being on CSU is of a good standard. These staff are often faced with extremely challenging behaviour: indeed, the Board has witnessed prisoners abusing staff with racist, homophobic and sexist slurs. These unacceptable situations have been observed to have been dealt with in a very professional manner.

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

Staff and prisoner relationships are generally mixed, in the Board's view: prisoners appear to have good overall relationships with gym staff, as well as with the chaplaincy team, kitchen staff, the CSU and workshop staff. The prison has a key worker scheme, where a prisoner is allocated a key worker and has sessions with them regularly. Each session should take place weekly for 45 minutes. The timeframe includes supporting the prisoner in several areas, including self-harm, relationships, mental health and education and includes a write-up. As in our previous report, a high number of prisoners are unable to identify who their key worker is.

The prison was not able to provide the allotted number of key worker sessions in the reporting period. In our previous report, the IMB was concerned about how few key worker sessions had been carried out and the trend appears to have continued for this reviewing year.

However, it must be noted that there are several experienced prison officers who carry out their duties exceptionally. They have been observed treating their role and prisoners with respect and compassion. Prisoners speak highly of these individuals and trust them to support them in difficult times and they report they have good relationships.

## **5.4 Equality and diversity**

The diversity and inclusion action team (DIAT), with its dedicated lead, has continued to make all staff and prisoners aware of Sodexo's policy on diversity and inclusion. It also works hard, in the Board's view, to try to ensure that an individual's special needs are met. These include getting reading glasses, sorting out transgender case reviews, ordering make-up, offering support to transgender prisoners, organising personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEP) for prisoners with mobility issues, disability aides,

disability payments, welfare checks and accessible transport. In addition to responsibilities for diversity, equity and inclusion, the team manages the foreign national prisoner coordinator, who runs a weekly surgery, alongside immigration officers from the Home Office. The DIAT lead makes referrals for prisoners with neurodivergent needs to receive support from the education team and healthcare unit.

The DIAT lead holds a one-to-one surgery, often daily, with prisoners who have requested support via the digital kiosk. More than 78 prisoners have been placed on PEEPs, which help a person with impaired mobility to evacuate a building or reach a place of safety in the event of an emergency. From January to October 2024, over 1,952 prisoners declared that they had a disability, either during their induction or through an application on the digital kiosk, and asked for support.

A total of 80 discrimination incident report forms (DIRFs) were submitted by prisoners between January and October 2024. Once investigations were completed and a decision made, these were spot-audited by Board members and appeared to be managed fairly. During the reporting period, DIAT organised monthly awareness themes, including for the LGBTQ+ and transgender communities. It also arranged awareness of the Poppy Appeal and International Women's Day, as well as for stress, over 50s activities, neurodiversity and black history. All new staff received training in diversity, equity and inclusion during their induction. The Board would like to commend the DIAT team for their hard work and dedication, which was much in evidence throughout the reporting period.

## **5.5 Faith and pastoral support**

The chaplaincy team at Forest Bank continues to deliver its services to prisoners and staff, as stated in the prison service instructions (PSIs) and prison service orders (PSOs), to a remarkably high standard, in the Board's view.

All statutory duties have been carried out (seeing new inductions, completing CSU and healthcare rounds daily). In addition, a member of the chaplaincy team visits all prisoners on ACCT plans at least once a week and all prisoners who are approaching their release date two to three weeks prior to their release. They ensure they are prepared for release and, in some cases, refer them to outside agencies and partners for support with various services.

The chaplaincy team also responds daily to an average of 40 applications from prisoners requesting to see a chaplain for a variety of reasons. This is one of the main duties of chaplains and takes a sizeable proportion of their time. It is considered vital to the wellbeing of the residents, as it resolves many problems and even helps reduce violence and frustration amongst residents.

Corporate worship and religious classes are all well attended and well-liked by prisoners. The chaplaincy continues to collaborate with the Samaritans and facilitates the training of new Listeners. It continues to collaborate with community organisations delivering various forms of support for prisoners. These organisations include:

- The Message Trust
- Prison Fellowship
- The Prison Phoenix Trust (yoga)
- Alcoholics Anonymous
- Lighthouse Church
- Mothers' Union

In addition to the above, the chaplaincy has a Cruse Bereavement counsellor, who comes into Forest Bank weekly and has one-to-one sessions with prisoners. This service was much needed and is growing in popularity, with up to 30 prisoners on a waiting list for the service.

The chaplaincy continues to receive weekly resources from chaplaincy HQ faith advisors, which are distributed to residents, according to their faith, and specific faith broadcasts on national prison radio and Way-out TV.

Covid restrictions have been lifted and prisoners are now able to attend funerals and visit dying relatives, providing they are risk assessed and security cleared.

The chaplaincy team continue to be positively involved with staff and residents' morale and are an integral part of the work conducted at Forest Bank.

The Board would like to recognise the hard work of the chaplaincy team, who frequently informally and within established roles are able to support and provide an excellent service to the prison population and staff.

## **5.6 Incentives schemes**

Forest bank has an incentives scheme where prisoners are placed on 'basic' (the bottom level), 'standard' or 'enhanced' status (the top level). This scheme is used to encourage prisoners to better their experience in the prison by achieving a higher status and, therefore, gaining more privileges. In the reporting period, the IMB received a total of 18 applications regarding the incentives scheme.

## **5.7 Complaints**

During the reporting period, the performance delivery unit (PDU) received the following complaints.

1 November 2023 to 31 October 2024	Total
Comp 1 (ordinary complaints)	2704
Comp 1a (appeals)	281
Comp 2 (confidential complaints)	92

### **5.7.1 IMB applications**

During the reporting period, the Board received 222 applications. We receive applications in writing and, in some rare circumstance, verbally. However, best practice states prisoners must write to us. Appropriate support is provided by Listeners, Insiders and the chaplaincy to enable all prisoners to write an IMB application.

## **5.8 Property**

The Board received 30 applications regarding property in the reporting period, which accounted for 13% of all applications received. The prison complaints team received 777 complaints, which accounted for 25% of the total complaints received during the reporting period regarding property.

Forest Bank is not immune to the nationally recognised thematic reported issue of prisoners' property, which can be misplaced, damaged or stolen during prison location or transfers. Due to the nature of the prison as a remand and resettlement function, it is



expected that the proportion of complaints made to the prison and the applications submitted to the Board reflect the transient community.

Property parcels are delivered in person at the prison and prisoners have a 28-day window to receive property when they first arrive at the establishment. After this, the window closes and prisoners can 'refresh' their property by exchanging like-for-like items. Prisoners are also entitled to apply for seasonal property every 12 months. They can request property or ask for any property-related support via the kiosks on the wings. During the reporting period, staff have been detailed to get the property from the gatehouse to reception. However, due to staff pressure from the high level of court traffic (often late), this can hold up the process of issuing the property from reception to the wings.

The Board continues to work with other IMBs to resolve property issues created by transfers. Missing property in the prison is also an ongoing issue, with regular complaints from prisoners that items go missing when they are moved from the wing to the CSU.

## **6. Health and wellbeing**

### **6.1 Healthcare general**

The unit treats both physical and mental health needs. On arrival at the establishment, a prisoner receives an initial health screening, which is completed by a registered general nurse from the primary care team. This is followed by a secondary health screening, completed by a nurse, within seven days of the individual's arrival.

Healthcare is provided by Spectrum, a not-for-profit organisation. It offers the following services:

- Reception and secondary screening
- Emergency care
- Primary care service
- Substance misuse service
- Triage

Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust provides:

- Primary mental health
- Secondary mental health
- Psychological therapies

Access to healthcare services has improved with the use of the digital kiosks, where prisoners can now self-refer for triaging, mental health, optometry, podiatry and other healthcare services. There is also a healthcare enquiries' application on the kiosk, so prisoners can enquire about any appointments/complaints or information regarding their healthcare.

### **6.2 Physical healthcare**

Physical healthcare is provided by Spectrum. The primary healthcare team continues to offer treatment and advice through appointments booked by residents using the digital kiosk system. There is an NHS dentist service, which runs clinics in the establishment twice a week, a visiting optician service, which runs a clinic once a fortnight, and a visiting podiatry service, which runs a clinic once a week. There is a doctor on site from Monday to Saturday (9am-9pm, Monday to Friday; 1pm-5pm, Saturday) who operates a triage system of appointment allocations. There are long waiting times for external healthcare appointments, whilst dental appointment waiting times are four weeks. There is an out-of-hours doctors' team to support 24/7.

### **6.3 Mental health**

The primary mental health team in the prison is Greater Manchester Mental Health (GMMH). It continues to offer assessment and support to residents with common mental health disorders and regularly liaises with the secondary mental health team, In-Reach continues to offer services to address severe and long-term mental health needs.

GMMH is involved in many operational processes to ensure compliance in relation to ACCT reviews and CSU safety assessments, along with providing urgent assessments of high-risk mental health needs for those residents in crisis who may self-harm. One nurse oversees visiting every prisoner who has had an incident of self-harm, or who has had an ACCT plan opened for them the previous day. In addition to the daily provision of a mental health review for those with escalating need, the primary mental

health team offers a routine triage service. This operates every Monday, Wednesday and Friday for prisoners who have submitted an application via the digital kiosk or for those who have been identified as presenting with a concern or outstanding need. Alongside this, GMMH runs a clinic once a week for prisoners in need of antipsychotic medication. In the Board's view, the service Appointments is very effectively, with appointments being added to prisoners' timetables. Movement slips are sent to the wings in advance, and the wings are contacted every morning to make staff aware of who has an appointment and at what time, which ensures missed appointments are kept to a minimum. Prisoners who miss appointments are contacted via their in-cell phone and asked for an explanation and offered another appointment. Vulnerable prisoners (VPs) are contacted separately by a member of staff who visits the wing on a regular basis.

In-reach, the secondary mental health team, is responsible for the case management of residents with severe and long-term enduring mental health needs, including prisoners with schizophrenia, bipolar and psychosis, and those who are already under the mental health team in the community. Working within the care programme approach (CPA) framework, secondary mental healthcare also provides case management for prisoners with learning disabilities and other neurodivergent conditions (i.e. autism spectrum disorder and ADHD), as well as acquired brain injury. The team also has responsibility for co-ordinating hospital transfers under the Mental Health Act and remissions from care settings back into the prison estate. A high level of multi-agency working is required within the secondary mental health team, and this includes involvement in multi-agency public protection arrangements' (MAPPA) meetings, pathfinders and the prison's inter departmental risk management meetings.

Part of the primary mental health provision includes a psychological wellbeing service, which consists of a psychological wellbeing practitioner provided by GMMH. This service provides low-intensity, psychologically informed interventions to help residents self-manage symptoms of anxiety and stress, sleep problems and common mental health issues that may be caused by being in custody. GMMH also works alongside subcontracted services, The Big Life Group and Intuitive Thinking Skills. These subcontracted services deliver support with health and wellbeing in general. This includes sleep well, mindfulness, healthy minds, fresh start, addressing addictive behaviour, mental health resilience and anger management. Interventions are delivered face-to-face via both one-to-one and group sessions and by using self-help packs and workbooks. Group sessions facilitate 2-3 prisoners and run 3-4 times a week (Monday-Friday), while one-to-one sessions operate daily.

There is also a visiting psychiatry service, which attends the prison on a sessional basis; input is provided to both primary and secondary mental health cases to inform treatment and risk management. These appointments take place on the residential wings.

#### **6.4 Social care**

The prison works closely with the local authority, and the new resettlement partner, Ingeus, has taken over the running of the original Shelter contract since we published our previous report. The prison has faced new challenges this year, such as the early release scheme, in which it became overwhelmingly difficult to offer the same standard of support back into the local community as usual. Many prisoners who were recalled following early release reported that they were released with no fixed abode. The Board

acknowledges that this is not an issue specific to Forest Bank but is a huge concern for prisons and prisoners nationally.

Many specialist agencies work with the staff to deliver services and it is encouraging to note that local industries are taking a much more active role in working with the prison. The prison delivers a wide range of services that are aimed at giving the best possible outcomes for prisoners.

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

The prison regards out-of-cell time, attending education, work, wing association, social visits and exercise. During the reporting period, the regime of the establishment has, from time to time, been impacted by staff shortages and responses to violent incidents. Where violent incidents occur, a dynamic risk assessment is made, which can result in a prisoner losing his association privileges (when prisoners are allowed to mix with each other outside).

	Nov 23	Dec 23	Jan 24	Feb 24	Mar 24	Apr 24	May 24	Jun 24	Jul 24	Aug 24	Sep 24	Oct 24
Average time out of cell per day (in hours and minutes)	6: 39	06: 26	06: 30	06: 36	06: 41	06: 40	06: 45	06: 50	06: 46	06: 49	06: 44	06: 52

### **6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation**

The substance misuse service at HMP Forest Bank is delivered by external providers, Spectrum, and Change, Grow, Live (CGL). Spectrum and CGL provide a confidential service and ensure that prisoners receive a package of both clinical and psychosocial support from reception into the establishment until their release.

All care plans are individualised, based on the needs of the service user, and the team works with anyone who requires support.

The CGL group room is on the middle floor of the G&H housing block. It is used for interventions for G&H and main location prisoners. Some interventions are also delivered on location for prisoners on G&H units in the wing-based group rooms. The prison offers monthly group interventions to vulnerable prisoner wings.

The service sees anyone reported to be under the influence within the following 24 hours to offer harm-reduction advice and support. During the reporting period, 54 prisoners in this time frame engaged with CGL, following an under-the-influence episode.

Due to the majority of the CGL caseload being clinical clients, they are located on G and H units; CGL completes joint working with Spectrum for five-day reviews and 13-week reviews.

- All new receptions are seen by a Spectrum healthcare GP or non-medical prescriber (NMP) as part of the first-night prescribing model.
- All new substance misuse prisoners are observed twice-daily by a Spectrum nurse during a stabilisation period to ensure safety.

- Prescribed substance misuse clients are located on the substance misuse wings for continuation of care, and work on a one-to-one basis with the CGL psychosocial team to address their needs and progress their individualised care plan objectives.
- They are reviewed on the fifth day of their sentence by a Spectrum substance misuse nurse and a psychosocial CGL recovery coordinator. At 13 weeks, they are also reviewed jointly by CGL and the Spectrum NMP.
- Prisoners who have a positive mandatory drug test, or are reported as under the influence on the daily occurrence log, are seen by the CGL duty worker or sent a referral letter for the service. This is to offer support and provide harm-reduction advice.
- Prisoners can self-refer to CGL at any point throughout their sentence via the digital kiosk.
- CGL provides a range of psychosocial interventions and reacts to drug trends in terms of harm reduction and relapse prevention.
- All prisoners engaging with CGL commence the release planning process from up to eight weeks prior to release. Harm-reduction advice is provided and CGL liaise with community substance misuse providers to arrange release appointments for continuity of care. This also includes non-prescribed for clients, as they may wish to engage with recovery support services on release.
- On the day of release, prisoners engaging with CGL are seen by the CGL reception worker to prompt them on their appointments and to offer and provide naloxone, a medicine that rapidly reverses an opioid overdose.
- CGL also has two connecting communities workers, who can work with prisoners 12 weeks prior to release and then support them 12 weeks post release into the community. This service is to support prisoners who need extra help attending appointments and reintegrating into the community.

Between April 2023 and March 2024, the following new referrals were made to CGL: 1512 for substance misuse service/clinical; 472 were self-referrals; 54 were for under the influence; and 13 were to the OMU.

Clinical new receptions entering the prison accounted for the majority of CGL referrals (74%). These included anyone who is prescribed opioid substitution treatment (OST), such as methadone or espranor, alcohol detoxes or those being monitored for substance misuse withdrawals. In total, 539 referrals were non-clinical (26%). All these referrals were seen for a CGL triage assessment, of whom 49 declined to engage with the service (9%).

The CGL states that heroin, crack cocaine and alcohol are the drugs of choice for the community clients, whereas cannabis and synthetic cannabinoids are the lead issues for prison self-referrals.

## **7. Progression and resettlement**

There has been a concerted effort in purposeful activity. The last reporting period saw average purposeful activity hours per week at 15.89 hours per prisoner, while for this reporting period the average hours per week were 19.26 hours, demonstrating a significant increase of 21.2%.

### **7.1 Education, library**

Forest Bank operates a full suite of education and library services. However, it has a high turnover of prisoners, with 80% staying less than eight weeks and 80% being transferred to other prisons.

A requirement for prison employment means prisoners must pass a literacy and numeracy Entry Level 3 test. The basis for this is to ensure that prisoners accessing vocational work or courses have a good standard of English and maths. An initial assessment is conducted by the education team to ensure prisoners are in the correct class for the reading and numeracy standard. The education department also offers ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) for foreign national prisoners. Education for vulnerable prisoners takes place on D wing, utilising purpose-built classrooms.

The education team encountered several challenges, not dissimilar to other reception and resettlement prisoners in the prison estate. These included an increasing number of organised gang members in the prison population, a high churn of prisoners, changes in regime and prisoner discipline. The Board commends the education team for acknowledging and resolving issues, where possible, to offer a good standard of education.

A member of the Board attended an Entry Level 3 literacy class. It was observed that this class was organised, well-run and achieved the lesson objectives.

The prison provides Open University classes for sentenced prisoners, and there is access to evening library for vulnerable prisoners. It is not unusual for the education team to provide adequate in-cell materials and support for prisoners unable to attend education sessions.

Reading is promoted by all staff and selected prisoners. Suitable and diverse books, newspapers and publication stocks are kept up to date. Books can be obtained through the digital kiosk on each wing by those who cannot attend the library.

In the reporting year, the Board gathered the following further information regarding the education department:

- Most prisoners' reading ages are assessed at Entry Level 2 or Entry Level 3 during their initial assessment. The percentage of these fluctuates with the high churn, but the highest percentage of learners are assessed at these levels. English and maths teaching is available up to Level 2 so there is plenty of opportunity for progression for these learners.
- Purposeful activity continues to increase, with around 70% of activity spaces now being occupied with either full-time or part-time employment. Work attendance levels remain high, at between 85 and 95%.

- Staff retention remains good, with only one teacher vacancy. There was a successful annual assurance review visit, carried out by regional colleagues.
- Challenges remain with the high churn and meeting the demand for education inductions, screening and assessments in reception.
- The reading strategy continues to be successful in its implementation. The impact of the strategy is reflected in prisoners' and staffs' attitude towards reading and the improved reading abilities of the prisoners.

## **7.2 Vocational training, work**

Over the reporting period, attendance for prisoners working in industries was, on average, 140-150 prisoners per day. A pre-requirement of work within industries is a qualification of maths and English Level 3.

Two workshops are run daily for vulnerable prisoners. Staff are undertaking instructor level training to improve the quality of courses.

The prison offers the following courses:

- Food hygiene
- Warehousing
- Recycling (co-ordinated with HMP Risley)
- Carbon literacy, with an intention to include cycle repair and refurbishment

In conjunction with the library team, 'Brew, Break and Books' is a reading initiative co-run with the library.

The prison provides several prison-accredited courses for prisoners:

- Level 2 award in recycling
- Level 1 award in practical cleaning (bodily fluids, food areas, buffing)
- Level 1 award certificate in warehousing and storage
- Level 1 cleaning principles
- Level 1 serverly operative
- Level 2 health and safety

Within the Industries area is the employment hub, where prisoners have access to the job centre, in addition to the housing and employment teams. The aims of this area are to improve outcomes for released prisons to capitalise on education and training achievements.

The prison is not immune to the pressures that most reception and resettlement establishments experience. These include length of prisoner stay, lack of prisoner engagement and limited opportunities to partner with external businesses. For prisoners who do engage in the prison education and industry opportunities offered, benefits can be seen.

In the view of the Board, the education and vocational departments are well organised, and staff should be commended on their work. Remand prisoners may work if they choose to and have access to the same level of purposeful activity as those who have been sentenced.

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

The role of the offender management unit (OMU) has evolved greatly, mainly since Covid restrictions have eased. Prison staff deliver the initial part of a prisoner's recall pack face to face. (Recall packs are given when a prisoner released on licence or parole is returned to prison because they have broken the conditions of their community licence.) The legal and bail service also liaises closely with the courts in relation to bail applications. To prepare prisoners for transition on release, the OMU facilitates regular surgeries, including Approved Premises (probation hostels), so they can ensure they meet prisoners' criteria. The OMU also facilitates monthly cohort spotlight/integrated offender management (IOM) pre-release surgeries for prisoners due for release back to their local areas in Greater Manchester. Prison offender managers (POMs) are responsible for the completion of offender assessments for those evaluated as posing a low or medium risk of harm to the public who have 10 months or more to serve in custody. If it is less than 10 months, it is the responsibility of the community offender manager (COM) to complete the offender assessment and set sentence planning targets. The Thinking Skills Programme (TSP) is delivered on G and H wings once the offender assessment system (OASys) has been completed. Prisoners need to be eligible for the TSP.

The OMU staff focus on the support and risk management of all sentenced and multi-agency public protection arrangements' (MAPPA) level 2/3 prisoners. They work closely with probation services and/or the police and other stakeholders to ensure effective risk management and robust pre-release planning.

### **7.4 Family contact**

The prison offers a robust social visits' programme, including extended social visits and initiatives aimed at promoting and maintaining relationships. New prisoners can book social visits within seven days of their arrival at Forest Bank.

The families team is responsible for booking 'compassionate' visits, in conjunction with the chaplaincy team, and are present in the visits' centre, offering advice and information for people visiting the establishment. The families team offers a range of interventions, including:

- Family days, which take place four times a year, bring together prisoners and their families outside of their statutory entitlement to social visits, usually in more informal settings. Prisoners at these events are free to leave their table and engage with their families in fun sports and craft activities. A buffet and drinks are provided, free of charge. The tea bar is also available to purchase additional snacks/drinks.
- Storybook Dads is a session where prisoners are invited to record a bedtime story for their child, niece, nephew, grandchild, etc. The recording is sent externally to have music and sound effects added, which transform the recording into something magical, in the Board's view. Completed CDs are then posted to the child's parent/guardian.
- Baby bonding sessions are aimed at dads, granddads, uncles, etc, to help them connect with their child/grandchild/Niece/nephew. Sessions provide an opportunity for prisoners to explore the likes and dislikes of their child in a safe, comfortable environment. The prison encourages the use of family keepsakes, such as, for example, taking a baby's handprints, family photos, etc.



- Family TV and Tots TV: families are invited to watch a movie in the family's team room, a simple activity that helps bring relatives together. And for Tots TV, prisoners are encouraged to play together as a family with age-appropriate toys (building blocks, dolls, prams, cars, etc).
- Gaming sessions: for older children, the families team provides a range of games consoles and board games for families to use (including Guess Who, jumbo Jenga, jumbo Connect 4, Operation, Velcro darts, etc), encouraging families to interact with one another in a fun, safe environment.
- Family sports provides an opportunity for families to interact while playing fun sports activities in the visits' hall. Families are free to move around the hall, playing activities such as football, basketball, badminton and table tennis, etc.
- SWAPS: this involves prisoners and their children completing and then 'swapping' a set of fun activity sheets so they can learn fun, interesting things about each another.

The process for gaining the relevant consent for accessing Storybook Dads can be time consuming, as written consent is required from the child's parent/guardian/care-giver.

The families team also runs 'bite-size' courses aimed at maintaining family contact, including three unaccredited group sessions. One of these, called Pre-Release, explores the issues prisoners may face when leaving prison and returning to live in the family home, including the effect of imprisonment on partners, family members and children. Another, Positive Parenting, is for dads who want to learn more about a child's development. It allows prisoners to explore barriers to communication, as well as difficulties that may occur when parenting, and offers positive ways overcome these issues. The third session, Positive Thinking, is a goal-setting course with a focus on family-oriented targets. Two in-cell booklets are also provided by the families team. The first, entitled Forward Thinking, explores positive future goals in relation to family and positive relationships. A certificate is issued on completion, and this in-cell workbook is suitable for all prisoners regardless of restrictions. The second, Building Positive Relationships, is for prisoners who want to develop better communication skills in their relationships, although prisoner restrictions may limit suitability for this activity. A certificate is issued on completion.

## **7.5 Resettlement planning**

Forest Bank assists resettlement planning of prisoners by providing education, employment and assistance with accommodation wherever possible. Those leaving prison are identified via the screening process used by the OMU.

Prisoners can request appointments with the employment hub, which are offered daily and are often fully booked, for help with finding jobs after their release.

- Ingeus is the contractor in charge of housing the prisoners.
- Approximately 90% of prisoners leave the prison with accommodation on their day of release.
- 4.5% of employment hub appointments are missed by prisoners.

## 8. The work of the IMB

### Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board member	17
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	13
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	6
Total number of visits to the establishment	193

### Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	1	17
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives schemes, sanctions	5	18
C	Equality	0	8
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	5	21
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	13	17
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	2	9
F	Food and kitchens	3	6
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	21	38
H1	Property within the establishment	18	21
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	8	9
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	2	1
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence), parole, release dates, recategorisation	6	5
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	10	15
K	Transfers	6	5
L	Miscellaneous	29	25
N/A	Non-category	0	7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>222</b>



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