



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Risley

**For reporting period
1 April 2022 to 31 March 2024**

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Introductory sections 1 – 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

The Prison Act 1952 requires every prison to be monitored by an independent board appointed by the Secretary of State from members of the community in which the prison is situated.

Under the National Monitoring Framework agreed with ministers, the Board is required to:

- satisfy itself as to the humane and just treatment of those held in custody within its prison and the range and adequacy of the programmes preparing them for release
- inform promptly the Secretary of State, or any official to whom authority has been delegated as it judges appropriate, any concern it has
- report annually to the Secretary of State on how well the prison has met the standards and requirements placed on it and what impact these have on those in its custody.

To enable the Board to carry out these duties effectively, its members have right of access to every 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 Risley is one of the largest category C training and resettlement prisons in the UK, with an operational capacity of 1,042¹ male prisoners.

The prison continues to be a hub for foreign national prisoners in the north west and Home Office Immigration Enforcement (formerly UK Border Agency) staff are permanently based in the prison.

During this reporting period the population consisted of up to 200 foreign nationals, approximately 400 people convicted of sexual offences (PCoSOs), with the other 400 spaces being for mainstream cat C prisoners. This made the prison a complex establishment to manage as there was a need to run two parallel regimes.

The Risley site consists of seven residential wings, two of which house vulnerable prisoners/PCoSOs. There is also a care and separation unit with its own outside exercise area.

The Activity facilities within the establishment provide 12 workshops and 14 education classrooms, together with a library.

There is also a health centre with full-time doctors and nursing staff. In addition, dental, podiatry and physiotherapy services are provided.

Other facilities include a sports hall and two gyms.

There is a multi-faith centre / chapel which is supported by the chaplaincy team consisting of several ministers from various faiths.

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

3. Key points

Background information

During this reporting period, the Board has faced significant challenges in conducting comprehensive monitoring due to limited capacity. The Board has undergone considerable change, with membership evolving and processes developing throughout this time. As a result, the monitoring framework at the outset of this period was markedly different from its current state.

These challenges have had an impact on the depth of this report, which presents a high-level overview rather than fully detailed analysis. The Board acknowledges that monitoring was underdeveloped at times, but significant efforts have been made over the past 12 months since the end of this reporting period to strengthen practices, increase capacity, and establish a more robust approach. Moving forward, the Board aims to produce a more substantial and evidence-driven report.

3.1 Main findings

Safety

- Self-harm rates across the prison were extremely high and higher than most category C prisons. There were 630 recorded incidents of self-harm during the 2022-2023 reporting period, and 1,136 during the 2023-2024 reporting period, an increase of 64%. This included a number of serious incidents and repeated behaviour. There have also been six deaths in custody during the two years of this reporting period but only one apparently self-inflicted. The Board agreed with the HMIP (His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons) report of April 2023 which stated that 'all too often underlying causes [for self-harm] have not been addressed'.
- The Board has also continued to monitor the running of two regimes that were implemented to protect PCoSO prisoners. At the start of this reporting period HMP Risley had three different types of prison populations, namely PCoSOs, foreign nationals and mainstream prisoners. Historically it has been a complex and difficult environment to manage, and the Board has ongoing concerns over this dual regime and its impact on prisoners.
- The Board notes that induction and reception processes seemed to work well, despite occasional delays.

Fair and humane treatment

- The Board has observed that the fabric and maintenance of wings A and B in particular and, to a lesser extent, wings C and D, is poor. This is partly due to the age of the buildings, but the Board also believes this is largely due to poor contract maintenance. Throughout this reporting period the Board has observed delays to repairs on wings showers, washing machines and drains. The Board has seen slow responses to maintenance concerns from the contract provider, although priority is given to repairing out of use cells.
- The Board notes again the ongoing issues regarding property across the prison estate. This is a major concern at HMP Risley, and this was reflected in the number of applications to the IMB (written representations from prisoners to the IMB) in respect to property: 45 in 22/23 rising to 61 in 23/24.

Health and wellbeing

- A major concern for the Board throughout this reporting period was the lack of dental services for men, particularly during the period January 2023 through to November 2023. Men were being transported to other sites to receive treatment, and waiting times throughout this period could be a number of weeks.
- From the Board's observations, the mental health provision appears to have been largely well managed. The current provider, Greater Manchester Mental Health (GMMH), has been in place throughout the reporting period and the Board has seen them to engage well with the men, particularly those complex cases.
- Regular monitoring throughout this period highlighted some concerns over staffing levels within healthcare: of particular note were the ongoing vacancies of nurses in both primary and mental health teams. However, this was well managed with the use of agency staff.

Progression and resettlement

- The Board has been concerned throughout this period over prisoner access to vocational training, particularly to workshops. The Board has continued to raise concerns over the number of spaces available in education and purposeful activity and believes the number of spaces is not sufficient to support the population size. Lack of access to spaces continued to impact other areas of the prison and prisoner progression.
- Through ongoing monitoring, the Board has also noted both concerns and improvements to resettlement throughout this period. Improvements noted were in the increased provision of probation staff which improved workflow and outcomes, particularly for PCoSO prisoners who had more specialised support. The Board also praises the useful provision of the 'one stop shop' discharge planning board. Concerns, however, were raised regarding recorded delays in resettlement planning for both high-risk men and foreign national prisoners.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- What actions are being taken to improve the management and efficiency of AMEY contracts?
- We recognise that the government has invested in building new prisons however the provision for maintaining and repairing the current estate feels insufficient. Are there any plans to invest in the current infrastructure?
- The Board recognises there have been a number of investigations into property over the years, however as evidenced this continues to be an ongoing issue. Is the minister planning to evaluate or add additional resource to investigating the flow of property?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- Does HMPPS plan to re-evaluate the availability of work and activity spaces at HMP Risley? The Board strongly believes that the current provision is not suitable for the prison population size.

- Staff absences over summer months continue to hinder the regime, particularly in access to workshops. Does the organisation plan to evaluate its staffing provision at peak times of leave throughout the year?
- The delays in resettlement for high-risk men and foreign nationals continues to disrupt their progression, does HMPPS believe the current processes are suitable for more complex cases?
- The pay structure for prisoners at HMP Risley has caused concern for the Board in regard to men's wellbeing, as pay has not matched the rising cost of living. Are there any long-term plans to reassess this?

TO THE GOVERNOR

- The Board recognises that this report is now 12-36 months out of date, covering a two-year period from 2022-24, as the Board has been in a state of transition. The Board, however, is in regular contact with the Governor and feels all questions raised at this point would be out of date compared to where the prison is now in 2025.

3.3 Response to the last report

A copy of the ministerial response to the last report written in 2022 can be found on the IMB website (imb.org.uk). The Board thanks the minister for his reply and recognises the response from HMPPS to the concerns raised over prisoners' property.

Due to the length of time between the response to the last report and this 2022-24 report's publication date, the Board feels that the situation has evolved beyond the need for a detailed progress update, given the period that has elapsed. The Board believes it is more appropriate to move forward without revisiting that previous response, focusing instead on the current state and future actions.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

The prison continued to have a transient population with an average of 140 prisoners arriving each month. This presented challenges in dealing with prisoners' property transfers and settling the men into their new environment.

This was reflected in the number of applications to the IMB in respect to property which was 45 in 22/23 but rose to 61 in 23/24.

In general, the Board observed well-run reception and induction processes for all types of prisoner.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

There were six deaths in custody in the two years from 1 May 2022 to 30 April 2024. No breakdown between the two years was available. One of the deaths in 2022 was apparently self-inflicted, two deaths were within 3 months of release and three were from apparent natural causes.

The incidence of self-harm increased significantly in the 2023-24 reporting period, with 1,068 incidents, a 59.1% increase from the 631 incidents during 2022-23. In 2022-23, the top three drivers of self-harm were protest and frustration, impending release and past trauma. In 2023-24, the top three drivers were impending release, incentives scheme changes and medication issues.

There were a number of men identified as prolific self-harmers. In total, these incidents involved 246 men in 23/24 compared to 189 in 22/23.

The Safety Intervention Meeting (SIM) regularly reviewed individuals who presented a risk of self-harm, were self-isolating or presented a risk of harm to themselves or others through arson.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

The number of violent incidents recorded in 2023/24 (337) was more than double that of 22/23 (164). There were 93 assaults on staff in 2023/24, a slightly higher proportion than in 22/23. In total, 31 of the incidents were classed as serious in 2023/23, compared to 18 in 22/23.

Violent incidents were reviewed at the use of force scrutiny meeting.

The recorded increase in both violent incidents and self-harm was consistent with anecdotal discussions with the prison chaplaincy team.

4.4 Use of force (UoF)

There has been an increase in the number of incidents where force was used in the 23/24 reporting year. Incidents were mainly associated with fighting and escorting (usually from a wing to the CSU). Whilst the number of incidents has approximately doubled since July 2023, the majority of incidents were at the lower end of the use of force severity scale. A number of reasons were given, but the most prevalent one was individuals refusing to relocate to another wing.

There was no evidence found that the number of times force was used in incidents involving ethnic groups or men with a particular race or faith were significantly different to the prison population as a whole.

The use of force review team met weekly and monthly throughout the period, reviewing a random sample of incidents within the range of 40-60% of the total incidents that had occurred. Body worn camera footage, fixed camera footage and officers' statements were used to aid the review. The incidents were broadly spread across the prison estate. All prisoners who have been subjected to the use of force were debriefed after the event against a five point debrief plan.

The body worn cameras were activated in most instances. There was approximately 85% coverage of incidents by fixed cameras which means that in some cases reviews were totally reliant on the body worn camera having been activated.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

The prison has experienced an increase in drug related problems. The increased potency of drugs and the increase in the availability of 'Spice' were major contributory factors.

During the reporting period, there were 16 drone sightings at HMP Risley, which is a low figure compared with other establishments. Drones do continue to present a route for illicit items, but other ingress routes are more common. At the time of the report, intelligence suggests that throw-overs were the most common route.

The frequency and timeliness of cell searches was hampered by lack of resource. This was the case for intelligence-led searches as well as random searches. Regional search teams were deployed but in-house staff searches were not consistent across the prison.

The use of the NW dog search teams was very effective but as they were shared throughout the region, their deterrent effect cannot be as strong as a full time presence.

Whilst the entrance to the prison had x-ray scanners, these were not always functioning due to resource issues.

The production of illicit alcohol ('hooch') in the prison environment continued to result in behavioural problems and medical risks.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

Most of the accommodation blocks were in a state of poor repair. There was an ongoing refurbishment programme which took many months. Showers are being updated and in some areas much improved. By the end of this reporting period in March 2024, residents of A wing had to take showers in a mobile shower area outside the main residential block. This was not satisfactory but there was no alternative while the wing was being refurbished. There was a regular painting programme on the wings which kept the internal areas of the prison looking satisfactory but could not fully cover up years of lack of investment.

The IMB has observed food bowls with cockroaches in them and cells with only a piece of wood covering the window which led to cells being very cold. At one time water was flowing through light fittings on the ceiling on the induction wing, which is entirely unacceptable for prisoners, especially those who are new. Electrical problems were not dealt with in a timely fashion.

Repairs seemed to take a long time and verbal complaints from prisoners about heating and showers were very common. The Board also found that AMEY contracts appeared difficult to manage, and included multiple delays. The staff resource to escort AMEY contractors was also very draining on other activities in the establishment.

There were two independent living units within the prison and these show what can be done. The men on these units were grateful to be there and work as a community, taking pride in their unit and were very keen to show visitors round. The communal facilities were immaculate, and all cooking equipment was kept clean. It is therefore ironic that one group of these enhanced prisoners lived in the worst area of the prison: R wing, an independent living unit part of B wing, the fabric of which was appalling.

There were only five cells which had been adapted for use by disabled prisoners. The induction wing was unsuitable for those in wheelchairs. Wheelchair users had to go elsewhere for a shower while on this wing. Only one wing had a lift. As the number of older and more disabled prisoner rises, the Board is concerned that the needs of this group of prisoners cannot be met without some major adaptations to cells.

Food within the prison is adequate bearing in mind the budget constraints which the kitchen staff work under. An ongoing problem for the kitchen was repairs to ageing equipment. AMEY seemed to be outsourcing electrical repairs to other contractors and it took a long time for essential equipment such as heated food trollies to be fixed. However, it is even more concerning that these repairs often were of very poor quality, as the IMB has witnessed. This is not satisfactory.

Overcrowding was recorded at 11.54% for the period April 2022 to March 2024, based on two prisoners sharing a cell designed for one. All shared cells had a decency screen, although some of these were not used for the correct purpose.

The Board is of the opinion that some areas of the prison are no longer fit for purpose and the conditions are unsuitable for both prisoners and staff. Areas are simply beyond repair. This applies particularly to the heating and water system which

works from a coalfired boiler. There have been continuing underground breaks in the pipes. In winter the prison could not cope with a boiler breakdown or pipe problems and men would have to be housed elsewhere. As the prison ages, this scenario only becomes more likely.

5.2 Segregation

The Care and Separation Unit was well staffed and well managed in the opinion of the IMB. The environment has been improved with a new floor and it has been painted throughout. The outside exercise area has also been modernised. Cells were made ready for new occupants and had in cell telephony.

Standard prisoners had access to the library, gym sessions on the yard and acts of collective worship. This has improved the regime available to men in the CSU.

The IMB attended the CSU regularly and aimed to attend almost all segregation reviews. The IMB found these reviews to be well run and completed in the appropriate timescale. The Segregation Monitoring and Review Group completed a detailed analysis of all CSU statistics every quarter.

The average length of stay in the CSU remained steady over the reporting period at 12 days. Only rarely did prisoners spend longer than 42 days in the CSU. Two men stayed over 60 days. Both these men had long term mental health needs. In both instances the men returned to the main body of the prison as no alternative provision could be found. There were no uses of special accommodation during the reporting period.

During the period of the report, 12.5% of prisoners in the CSU were there because they had failed a body scan when they arrived at the prison on transfer. This is quite concerning. Mental health issues were also extremely common on the CSU. It was very difficult to move those with severe problems to a more appropriate establishment which could better meet their needs.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

Interactions between men and staff observed by the IMB were generally good. Men often commented to us that some of the less experienced officers were sometimes unwilling to deal with simple questions and told the men to put in a complaint. It is unclear if this was because they did not know the answer or lacked the initiative to find out. As a result, men asked workshop staff for help when the problem should have been dealt with on the wing.

The prison has adapted the key work model which met the needs of the most vulnerable prisoners more effectively. All men had a key worker who they may have seen only rarely, but the prison had a dedicated team of four full time key workers. This team supported about 200 of the most vulnerable men in the prison, such as prolific self-harmers, very violent prisoners who damage property and PCoSOs before release. This policy resulted in this group being seen more regularly. A more focused system is preferred to the previous model when a vulnerable prisoner hardly ever saw a key worker. There were good quality assurance systems in place to monitor key work.

5.4 Equality and diversity

The prison had good systems in place for dealing with those with protected characteristics, with regular forums for all groups. There was an Equality Representative on all wings apart from the induction wing where it proved difficult to recruit. Men appeared to speak freely at these forums. Older prisoners and disabled prisoners had a joint forum until November 2023. From November 2023, these forums were separated to better serve the needs of the groups. A common theme from the forum serving black, Asian and minority ethnic prisoners was that these men felt that they were not getting jobs on the wing when they arose, suggesting they often went to newcomers to the wing instead. This is contrary to the policy as it should work within the prison.

During the reporting period there were 100 DIRFs (discrimination incident reporting forms), although 12 of these were deemed to be complaints rather than DIRFs. About 60% of DIRFS were relating to race. This is not surprising in a prison with a large foreign national population. DIRFs were investigated in a timely fashion.

A concern from some physically disabled prisoners was that they were prevented from benefitting from the independent living regime on F wing for PCoSO prisoners due to lack of access. All the cells are upstairs and there is no other access. This is an issue for the prison moving forward as there are likely to be more older and disabled prisoners in the future who cannot access some living areas.

The Equalities Manager was keen to develop some of the issues brought up in forums and DIRFS as staff training points whenever possible and appropriate.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The chaplaincy team was well regarded by prisoners. They attended all segregation reviews and aimed to attend all ACCT (assessment, care in custody and teamwork – the process used to manage those at risk of suicide or self-harm) reviews, of which there could be over 30 per week. There were at least two services or groups meeting every day and the chaplaincy facilitated the Sycamore Tree course five times a year. They provided pastoral support to men who requested it as well as taking calls from family members and prison staff who might voice concerns about men in the prison.

The chaplaincy embraced technology during this reporting period and as a result they facilitated video calls between prisoners and sick family members. One man and his partner were able to see his mother's funeral which was held abroad. This brought them great comfort.

5.6 Incentives schemes

At the end of the reporting year 6% of the prisoners were on the basic level, 55% were on standard and 39% were on enhanced. These figures reflect the situation throughout the year.

The scheme appeared to be very well run and good records were kept. All new prisoners started at standard level. How the scheme operates was explained during the induction process. Prisoners were involved in the incentives forums to increase confidence in the fairness of the process.

Good behaviour earned the opportunity to have more spending money and evening association amongst other privileges. Prisoners could apply for enhanced status

after three months on standard. Enhanced prisoners could apply after a year to live on the independent living wings which is a highly valued incentive. The scheme did seem to work well, and men were keen to move up through the levels.

Weekly reviews of those on basic were held and men were encouraged to modify their behaviour to move on to standard level.

5.7 Complaints

Between January and April 2024, there were 600 complaints from prisoners, which was a decrease on the 710 complaints recorded during the same period in 2023. Property and PIN (personal identification numbers needed for prisoners to be able to call friends and family) numbers were the main areas of complaint. However, there was also an increase in prisoners complaining about their living conditions.

Complaints often arose due to staff shortages in key areas. PIN number complaints reflect the fact that there was a shortage of staff able to deal with these. Men found long waits for numbers to be activated or property to arrive frustrating.

Some complaints were not really complaints, rather they were requests or applications and could have been dealt with before the prisoner felt the need to put in a complaint form. There appeared to be a problem in the training of new staff. If they are not fully aware of prison procedure, or are unwilling to find the solution to a problem, they told the prisoner to put in a complaint. Long term prisoners regularly informed the IMB of this and it is something that the prison needs to address.

There was little resilience in the prison with regard to staffing of areas which affect the wellbeing of men. Important roles such as Complaints Clerk need someone who can take over the role in times of long-term sickness. This is particularly important when matters have to be dealt with according to a prescribed timeframe.

5.8 Property

Although concerns about property issues at the end of the reporting period remained high, the prison did introduce a new system in early 2024 which led to this area of the prison being more organised than before, with a better recording system in place. On arrival in reception property was checked and property cards were completed with the prisoner present.

There was a problem when men bought from canteen sheets. It could take a long time for them to receive items; sometimes as long as six weeks. Prisoners became anxious when their goods did not arrive, and this has led to an increase in applications to the Board as we were asked to find missing items. They were often within the prison but had not been delivered to prisoners.

There appeared to be a big variation across the prison estate about what men were allowed to have in their possession. This was a particular problem when men were transferred back to closed conditions from an open prison. Some men had lots of property which the receiving prison did not have room to store. This caused frustration for all concerned.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

From regular monitoring the Board has evidence to believe that throughout this reporting period healthcare in general was well managed and functioned smoothly. Relationships between the prison and the supplier (Health Care General) appeared to be amicable and concerns were communicated smoothly.

The Board received the usual levels of complaints regarding healthcare throughout this period. The number of complaints to the IMB dropped from 32 in the previous reporting period down to 24 in the year 22-23 and then rose back to previous levels to a total of 32 in the year 23-24.

The Board saw some staffing challenges throughout this period as numbers would fluctuate, however there was a good use of agency staff to fill vacancies throughout this time.

6.2 Physical healthcare

As laid out in the key findings, the lack of access to dental services was observed to be a challenge at points during this reporting period, in particular from January 2023 through to Nov 2023. For almost a whole year men had no access to onsite dental treatment which meant transporting them to other sites. This had knock-on effects on staff availability and waiting lists. The Board recorded evidence to suggest that waiting times were a number of weeks at least during the summer of 2023.

Monitoring of medication has not uncovered any particular problems throughout this reporting period and processes around this appeared to work well.

Overall men had good access to physical exercise, including regular gym access with a good array of equipment to use, and access to two sports halls.

6.3 Mental health

As previously mentioned, the Board has concerns over the high rates of self-harm; however, outside of this mental health needs seemed to be generally well managed and the quality of care observed being given by staff was good. New prisoners with mental health needs were brought to the attention of the mental health team and the team appeared to be well led overall. Psychological support was available despite vacancies in the mental health team, as these were managed via agency staff.

6.4 Social care

Regular monitoring has indicated that social care has generally operated well with occasional challenges throughout this reporting period. The Equalities Manager, despite limited resource, appeared to manage a fair and humane service for the men, including support such the buddy system for older men. The prison also provided two wheelchair adapted cells which were regularly in use. From the Board's observations, there appeared to be a good relationship between the Equalities Manager and adult social services.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

The Board received applications during this period from men reporting being locked up for 23 hours a day. However, due to the Board's limited monitoring capacity at

times throughout this reporting period, its capacity to investigate what percentage of these reports were accurate was limited. Overall the Board observed a functioning regime on most days and men were generally able to access the gym, education, purposeful activity and other appointments.

The HMIP (His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons) independent review report conducted in January 2024 as a progress review after the full inspection in April 2023 stated that men now had more time out of the cell and noted that the evening regime now accommodated more social time. However, it still raised concerns over non-working men having more time in cell and the availability of regime on weekends. This is an area the Board continues to monitor with interest.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

Change Grow Live were the provider for this reporting period; throughout this time the Board felt this provider was doing well. They provided group therapy sessions with an apparently equitable service available to all men, and sessions were observed in 2023. There was up to date drug strategy in place and positive relationships were observed between men undergoing rehabilitation and staff providing care.

There was a focus on C wing as a dedicated recovery wing which appeared to function well throughout this period.

6.7 Soft skills

This is an area that the Board feels is lacking at HMP Risley. For example, in previous years the prison ran sessions with Age Concern for older men which many older prisoners remember, but these were not provided during this reporting period. The Board feels that more could be done to support the men with social skills, particularly the older PCoSO prisoners.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

The library at HMP Risley was observed to be well used. This was a good resource for men and had a good selection of material. However, the Board feels there were not enough available education spaces for a prison with this population size. While education, induction and assessment have all been observed to function well, it is the next steps that seemed to cause some challenges in progressing men forward, especially when courses were just not available or already full.

The Board observed regular sessions with Shannon Trust mentors tutoring and improving prisoners' reading skills.

7.2 Vocational training, work

The Board had serious concerns over access to workshops and purposeful activity throughout this period. In the Board's opinion, the prison has for some time now been roughly 300 spaces short on the purposeful activity and education needed for an establishment of this size. This had a knock-on effect on the men who were unable to be allocated work and spent more time in their cells as a result.

At times workshop closures reduced the opportunities for men to access meaningful activity further.

Throughout this time the Board has continued to highlight concerns over the assessment of men's suitability for work and training, particularly in workshops where tools are accessible. The Board has concerns over potentially dangerous men having access to some of these tools and has continued to raise this with staff, with regards to tutors' safety and men's risk assessment procedures. While this is likely to be a small minority of prisoners, the Board believes it affects risk levels in the establishment as a whole.

7.3 Offender management, progression

The Board observed improvement around programmes, particularly the provision of programmes for those who have committed sexual offences which had been identified as a cause for concern during the 2023 HMIP inspection. The progress review in 2024 recorded improvements which the Board echoes. This also fell in line with improvement of probation officer staffing in the OMU (offender management unit) who had the capacity and skills to better support men of this offending type.

Increased staffing levels in the OMU at the end of 2023 improved stability within the OMU and benefited prisoners through better access to preparations for resettlement.

7.4 Family contact

The Board has observed the organisation POPS (partners of prisoners) having good contact with men. They were in contact with prisoners during induction, right at the start of their time at HMP Risley. The Board has seen this to be a supportive and helpful service. They facilitated family days which encourages contact with families. However, the Board has raised concerns during this period around men's late arrival to family visits. Visit times were causing confusion between visitors, POPS and prisoners. Families would often feel that their time was unfairly cut short so the

Board addressed this with prison managers in May 2023 after which time improvements were seen.

The other issue that remained a concern for the Board during this time was the ability to get PIN numbers onto prisoners' phones. There were ongoing issues regarding allocation of PIN numbers as well as lengthy delays in providing numbers to prisoners which had a negative impact on family contact throughout this period.

7.5 Resettlement planning

The Board saw improvements to resettlement planning around the same time that staffing levels in the OMU improved in January 2024. Although there had previously been some concerns around public protection arrangements, these were strengthened with the addition of new staff.

The prison held weekly discharge planning boards, which act as a one stop shop for release planning and include help from DWP (Department for Work and Pensions), CGL (Change Grow Live) and information on accessing community drug rehabilitation and mental health services. Prisoners were generally well equipped to attend these, and rates of attendance were observed to be good.

Throughout the reporting period the prison saw an average monthly release of around 15 men a month which compares well to other cat Cs of a similar size.

One in five prisoners were still in employment within 6 weeks of release, as reported by HMIP in their progress review undertaken in January 2024, which was higher than rates observed in similar prisons. The Board's monitoring activity supports HMIP's reporting and the overall impression that resettlement planning worked well throughout this period.

High-risk prisoners, however, were more dependent on access to their community offender manager for support, and these prisoners saw some delays in their ability to progress through the resettlement process. The Board would argue that outcomes for high-risk prisoners were likely to be poorer than for others.

Prisoners assessed as high risk of serious harm either had a community offender manager (COM) allocated from the outset of their sentence, if they were 'short-term prisoners', or from 8.5 months prior to their conditional release date. COMs were responsible for release planning activities and could request support from pre-release teams within the prison. High-risk prisoners had enhanced handover arrangements, including a prison offender manager-community offender manager handover and a full offender assessment detailing the risks, needs and a risk management plan. These prisoners still saw some delays in their ability to progress through the resettlement process and the Board was concerned that outcomes for these prisoners were likely to be poorer than for others.

Most foreign national prisoners are deported to their country of origin, but more detailed release planning is done with those who had the right to work in the UK. Some were held beyond their release date and struggled to find Home Office approved housing, for which there was often a long wait. However, this was not highlighted as a priority in the improvement measures suggested by HMIP. The foreign national prisoner situation continues to be complex and requires ongoing monitoring by the Board.

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	15
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	8 (including 4 dual boarders)
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	12 (including 4 dual boarders)
Total number of visits to the establishment	742 (over 2 years) 343 in 22/23 399 in 23/24

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Reporting year 2022-2023	Reporting year 2023-2024
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	1	3	6
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	1	1	17
C	Equality	6	10	4
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	10	11	12
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	20	6	15
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	0		15
F	Food and kitchens	7	15	2
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	32	24	32
H1	Property within the establishment	54	45	33
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility			28
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues			3
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	27	32	15
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	21	21	20
K	Transfers	12	7	4
L	Miscellaneous	29	33	15
	Total number of applications	220	208	221



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