



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Grendon

**For reporting year
1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024**

Published May 2025



Contents

Introductory sections 1 – 3	Page
1. Statutory role of the IMB	3
2. Description of the establishment	4
3. Key points	5
 Evidence sections 4 – 7	
4. Safety	13
5. Fair and humane treatment	14
6. Health and wellbeing	17
7. Progression and resettlement	19
 The work of the IMB	
Board statistics	22
Applications to the IMB	22
 Annex A	
Service providers	23

All IMB annual reports are published on www.imb.org.uk

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 to the prison's records.

The Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT) and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment is an international human rights treaty designed to strengthen protection for people deprived of their liberty. The protocol recognises that such people are particularly vulnerable and aims to prevent their ill-treatment through establishing a system of visits or inspections to all places of detention. OPCAT requires that states designate a National Preventive Mechanism to carry out visits to places of detention, to monitor the treatment of and conditions for detainees and to make recommendations for the prevention of ill-treatment. The IMB is part of the United Kingdom's National Preventive Mechanism.

2. Description of the establishment

- 2.1 HMP Grendon was opened in 1962 as a category B prison (for those considered a risk to public safety but not categorised a maximum-security threat) and is designed to provide therapy for prisoners with personality disorders. It has developed both a national and international reputation for its work, and Grendon remains the UK's only therapeutic community (TC) prison whose sole purpose is therapy.
- 2.2 There are several prisoners serving indeterminate sentences (which do not have a set release date but a minimum time to be served set by the court). Most men are serving long determinate sentences (which have fixed end dates). Serving prisoners apply for a place at Grendon to address their offending behaviour and psychological deficits. Many have personality disorders and addiction histories. The therapeutic regime is supported by a multidisciplinary group of stakeholders and the therapy process requires considerable commitment, with many men taking several years to complete it.
- 2.3 Grendon is termed a democratic TC, as the men take an active part in their therapy by, for example, chairing wing community meetings, which are held twice weekly. Small therapy groups are held on the other weekday mornings, where all men are encouraged actively to participate. Overall, both staff and residents are responsible to their respective communities for their actions. There is no segregation unit.
- 2.4 The prison's operational capacity is 185¹ (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), although the roll for most of the year was around 160.
- 2.5 F wing (a TC Plus facility, for those with learning disabilities) has a capacity for 20 men, while the assessment wing (G wing) can accommodate 40 men.
- 2.6 Arriving residents remain on the assessment wing for between three and six months, where there is a similar regime to the TC wings.
- 2.7 Grendon is incorporated into the national offender personality disorder (OPD) pathway programme, which is a collaboration between the NHS and HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). The programme provides psychological services to people with personality disorders who are at risk of reoffending.
- 2.8 The prison is jointly managed with HMP Springhill (located on an adjacent site) and a single IMB monitors both prisons. Although the two prisons share many services and staff, Springhill and Grendon operate as separate units and exist for quite different purposes. During the period of this report, a new Governor, responsible for both prisons, was appointed.

¹ Figures included in this report are largely local management information data. 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

For most of the reporting period, only 50% of the Board members have been active and a high proportion of members have been in training. The experienced Board Chair retired from his post during the reporting period and has yet to be replaced. The paucity of members has reduced the Board's capacity to carry out its full role, with priority (although not exclusively) given to dealing with applications (prisoners' written representations to the IMB) within an appropriate timeframe.

3.1 Main findings

Safety

- Grendon is seen by the Board as a relatively safe environment for prisoners and staff, with staff having a very good knowledge of prisoners. In particular, the Board considers Grendon to be a prison in which the management and staff make a great effort to try and ensure the safety of prisoners, including those who have complex needs.
- The prison continues to have a low number of safety-related issues in all wings, including incidents of violent behaviour (measured through challenge, support and intervention plans/CSIPs). That said, there was one death in custody during this reporting period, which was the first in five years.
- Throughout the year, there were various instances of cell-bell alarms not working correctly on different wings at different times.
- The number of assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) plans (used to support prisoners who are at risk of self-harm and suicide) remained relatively low, at 39.

Fair and humane treatment

- The Board noted a focus on wing cleanliness. A programme of refurbishment was slowly improving the fabric of the prison, but many repairs have either taken a long time or been deferred due to other impending upgrade work.
- With no in-cell toilets on any wings, the night sanitation processes that have been implemented remain incompatible with standards of decency.
- As reported in previous years, the presence of rats across the estate continues to be a problem, which has impacted on the morale of the prisoners and continues to be a source of frustration within the communities.
- An external therapeutic community (TC) audit², carried out during the reporting year, highlighted several shortcomings and an erosion in wing-based community relationships. The audit findings are outside the Board's monitoring remit, but there is now an extensive recovery plan in place to address the numerous issues raised.
- Prisoners reported to the Board that they were often frustrated about lost property, relating to their transfer into Grendon, where there were process issues that resulted in items being lost. Most of the men who complained to

² The audit was conducted under the Community of Communities (C of C) quality improvement and accreditation programme, using a process of self- and peer-review; enabled by the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

the IMB had used the prison's complaints process or did so when prompted by an IMB member.

- All faiths are supported, and the men's observation of faith is also well supported by others within the prison, including the provision of appropriate food and the celebration of religious festivals.

Health and wellbeing

- The Board's access to appropriate healthcare-related data remains an issue, with members often unable to get sight of information that should reasonably be expected to be available. This has resulted in limiting the Board's role in monitoring the healthcare provision for prisoners. Improvements have been noted following a Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection during the year, but we believe that there is still more to be done by the healthcare providers to improve the quality of the prisoner experience.
- Several positive health education and screening events were held, with good support from healthcare champion roles.
- Staff rosters are continually under review to reduce early lock-ups and the corresponding reduced time out of cell.
- Family days (which bring together men and their families outside of their statutory entitlement to social visits, usually in more informal settings) and the use of social video calls were greatly welcomed, anticipated and valued by the men. The contribution of prison staff towards the success of these family events was evident and appreciated by prisoners.

Progression and resettlement

- The external TC audit resulted in an extensive recovery action plan to help address the reported decline in the TC culture at the prison. The audit findings are outside the remit of the Board, but members observed good communication and evidence of prisoners and staff constructively challenging each other's behaviour throughout the year.
- It remains difficult to move prisoners on from Grendon once they have completed their therapy, as transfer opportunities to other suitable prisons remains limited. This has meant that there is an increased number of men who are 'out of therapy' (OOT) with little opportunity or incentive to engage in other purposeful activity, education or resettlement work.
- Prisoners stated that they were often bored when out of therapy and there is an unserved appetite to do vocational training, even from men who have considerable time left on their sentences.
- Various education provider posts were unfilled during the year, which resulted in a reduction in the number of training courses on offer, with most activities tending to gear towards improving the literacy skills for prisoners who need it.
- Prisoners were allocated wing jobs as part of their community responsibilities, but many complained to the Board that the wages were not adequate. The wider increase in prices gave them even less to spend, leading to a drop in motivation and morale.
- The appointment of a full-time neurodiversity support manager (NSM) is welcome, and it has led to an encouraging improvement in the awareness of neurodiversity issues and associated support needs for prisoners and staff.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- The Board continues to be concerned about how men who are out of therapy cannot move on to another prison due to overcrowding, which can have a major impact on the effective running of a therapeutic community. How are specialist prisons, such as Grendon, factored into considerations on prison sentencing policies?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- There continues to be an ongoing issue regarding men who remain too long at Grendon following the completion of their therapy, due to the lack of space at other prisons. There are very few opportunities at Grendon for these men to build on their experiences once they are OOT. What is being considered to address this matter?

TO THE GOVERNOR

- There are still issues with the building infrastructure and associated poor sanitation arrangements in the non-refurbished wings, along with continued rat infestation and the over-heating that is experienced by staff and prisoners during the year. What longer-term plans does the Governor have to address these issues?

3.3 Response to the last report

To the Minister:

Issue raised	Response given	Progress
<p>1. The Board followed the cases of three men whose Ministerial responses to the Parole Board failed to meet the required 28-day deadline; one man had to wait for eight months (7.4.2). Could the Minister assure the Board that measures have been put in place to address these delays and that they will not occur in future?</p>	<p>I understand the Board's continued concerns about the timescales some prisoners are having to wait for a decision from the Secretary of State (SoS) on whether a move to open conditions will be accepted or rejected following the Parole Board's recommendation. It is the responsibility of the SoS to respond within 28 calendar days and the backlog of cases has been reduced by adding further resource focused on Parole Board recommendations for open conditions. Officials with delegated responsibility can also make decisions on behalf of the SoS to expediate the process, and HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is considering future initiatives to ensure that where indeterminate sentenced prisoners are considered suitable for open conditions, these decisions are made swiftly and effectively.</p>	<p>The Board did not monitor any cases in this reporting period.</p>
<p>2. The lack of funds for much-needed capital expenditures, including the upgrading of old and dilapidated buildings and fittings, including the windows on the wings, is causing growing frustration for both men and staff. For example, as noted in this year's HMIP report, men are not able to play football outside because no money is available to repair the</p>	<p>HMPPS is investing approximately £26.3 million into HMP Grendon between 2020 and 2025 to improve fire safety and night sanitation. A bid for a project to replace windows has also been submitted and will be considered. It is recognised that upgrades are needed due to the age of the wings; however, the prioritisation of the available funding does prevent some projects of this size and cost being able to progress. It</p>	<p>The fire safety refurbishment programme, conducted wing by wing, made progress in 2024 and continues into 2025.</p>

Issue raised	Response given	Progress
asphalt surface (6.5.1). Can the Minister provide assurance that he is aware of these capital funding shortfalls, and give some indication of a timetable for when funds are likely to be forthcoming to start to address these concerns?	remains the case that demands for maintenance are greater than the available funding. HMPPS is prioritising bids that focus on risk to life and risk to capacity and decency. HMPPS is also developing a Long-term Prison Estate Strategy beyond the current spending review period investment. This will be informed by condition surveys that are already underway to assess the fabric, cells and critical assets at each prison, which, in turn, will inform long-term forward maintenance registers.	

To the Prison Service:

Issue raised	Response given	Progress
1. How does the Prison Service plan to address the growing problem of men who are out of therapy (OOT) and unable to move out of Grendon, which was also noted in last year's report? It continues to have a detrimental effect on the prison's ability to deliver its goals as a democratic therapeutic community by disrupting life on the wings and perpetuating the queue of men accepted to come to Grendon (7.1.7).	Acknowledged that HMPPS has had to manage significant population pressures. HMPPS Population Management Unit engages with Grendon to prioritise transfers for prisoners who have spent the most time out of therapy. This must be balanced with the available spaces across the estate and the need to use available prison transport as efficiently as possible. To help reduce the pressure on prisons places, on 12 July 2024, the Lord Chancellor announced temporary changes to standard determinate sentences. HMP Grendon also continues to coordinate with other prisons to enable transfers, and a weekly meeting is	Continues to be a problem exacerbated by the accommodation pressures within the wider prison estate.

Issue raised	Response given	Progress
	held, chaired by the Deputy Governor, to proactively manage the population.	
<p>2. The delivery schedule of the ongoing fire and safety project continues to suffer from delays (5.1.1). Can the Prison Service indicate when this problem will be permanently resolved?</p>	<p>Acknowledged that the Fire Safety Improvement project at HMP Grendon is nearly two years over the initial projected end date. Referenced the inherent risks of delay in complex projects of this nature, with unexpected requirements occurring. HMPPS and the Ministry of Justice continue to work with the contractors to avoid further slippage; however, there have been challenges in recruiting the large number of operational support grade escorts required for all the projects currently active at HMP Grendon. The project is now projected to conclude in August 2025. Lessons have been learnt during the project and the remaining wings due for completion do have a reduced project completion time compared with previous wings.</p>	<p>Fire and Safety Project continues.</p>
<p>3. The Board continues to believe that the night sanitation system does not meet minimum decency and hygiene outcomes for prisoners, and this year it has suffered further operational problems (5.1.4 and 6.2.3). What plans does the Prison Service have to replace Grendon's night sanitation system?</p>	<p>It is acknowledged that the only solution to provide all cells with running water and sanitation would be a refurbishment, including structural changes or new replacement wings, which would require significant capital funding. The maintenance allocations are primarily invested to make sure prison places remain in use, making other improvements where possible. As the Board will be aware from last year's</p>	<p>No change.</p>

Issue raised	Response given	Progress
	response, as part of the Fire Safety Improvement Project, all existing cell door locking switchgear and the associated IT are being replaced to mitigate issues occurring in future with the performance of the overall night sanitation system.	
4. The budget the prison has to fund a fairer wage, to help offset the ever-growing gap between the increased costs the men face in canteen and other purchases and the 50p weekly rise awarded, remains woefully inadequate (7.3.1). What steps will the Prison Service take to address this injustice?	Governors continue to have the discretion to pay above the nationally set minimum rates of pay in Prison Service Order (PSO) 4460 Prisoners' Pay and are required to review their local pay policy annually. However, budgetary pressures for prisons mean that there is little scope to significantly improve the prisoner pay budget. In 2022, there was a national 10% uplift in private cash allowances. This is money that can be sent in by family and friends of prisoners, and several new value brand product lines were made available through the Prison Retail service.	In October 2024, the prison had an uplift to the prisoner pay budget, equivalent to an additional £1 per prisoner, per week, plus a one-off payment of £15 per prisoner. Pay uplifts have now been applied across the various roles.

To the Governor... the Board looks forward to:

Issue raised	Progress
1. Working closely with the new Governor to fulfil its statutory role.	The IMB is working closely with the Governor and has regular meetings with them or their deputy and has good updates on issues we raise.
2. A resolution to the problems of men being pulled from education to attend therapy specials, and lessons being cancelled because of staff training (7.1.4 and 7.2.5).	Guidance provided to wing staff on processes to follow for wing specials, which seek to minimise knock-on disruptions.

Issue raised	Progress
3. Continued progress in the efforts to rebuild Grendon's unique culture and ethos (7.1.2).	The IMB sees a very positive culture within the prison and believes things have got back to 'normal' post-Covid. An audit report identified some very positive areas, but also some areas for improvement.
4. Staff training on responses to complaints continuing to be a priority area (5.7.1 and 5.7.3).	Fewer comments received complaining about the timeliness or outcomes of complaints raised to the prison.
5. Monitoring any new initiatives rolled out to enable the prison to better scrutinise the impact of health delivery and the health complaints' system (6.1.3, 6.1.4 and 6.1.10).	N/A.
6. Improvements to the effectiveness of the prison's diversity and inclusion mandate in delivering necessary change being sustained and the re-establishment of the external scrutiny of all discrimination incident report forms/DIRFs (5.4.2 and 5.4.4).	A neurodiversity support manager was appointed in-year and a head of diversity (covers Grendon, too) was appointed in the last quarter. No external scrutiny of DIRFs, but prison adjusted its process to ensure the allocated reviewer has no conflicts of interest.
7. A monthly set of routinely collected/agreed healthcare data through which we can monitor the quality of healthcare (6.1.3)	No progress - none received.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

There was one death in custody; the last death in custody in Grendon was in 2019. The Prisons & Probation Ombudsman (PPO) has completed its report, which will be published after the inquest (pending January 2025). There were 39 assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) plans, which was slightly up on the figure of 34 in the previous report. Around two-thirds of these men had self-harmed and approximately a third were identified as being at heightened risk of suicide.

A Board member spoke to two men on ACCTs who were 'out of therapy' (OOT) and had differing views about the support they received: one positive and the other negative. The latter said he was not receiving the support he would have received if he was in the wider prison estate.

Following the installation of in-cell phones (Jan 2024), men were able to access the Samaritans helpline more easily and more confidentially. Previously, men had to request access to the wing's portable Samaritan phone, which had a limited range, and meant it was not always possible to have an in-cell conversation.

There have been various instances across the year of cell-bell alarms not working correctly on different wings at different times. Fixing these issues as they arise is a priority for the prison.

4.2 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

Levels of violence amongst men and staff remained low, with a low number of challenge, support and intervention plans (20 between April and September) opened over the year. Some of these were managed for the men's safety rather than because they were perpetrators.

4.3 Use of force

There were seven use of force (UoF) incidents. Attention has been given to encouraging staff to turn on their body worn video cameras (BWVCs) early, as it can provide extra context around circumstances of an incident. In one replay, watched by the Board, no excessive force appeared to have been used.

4.4 Preventing illicit items

The number of intelligence reports (IRs) for suspected drug use this year fell to around a third (120) of the unusually high levels recorded in 2023 (377). The risk has largely been assessed as 'tolerable' across the year, with a couple of months where the risk was raised to 'manageable'. Intelligence has remained steady around the illicit use of mobile phones, with the risk remaining 'tolerable' to 'manageable'³.

³ Local tactical briefing risk categories: black is 'critical'; red is 'serious'; amber is 'significant'; yellow is 'manageable'; and green is 'tolerable'.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

The fire safety improvement project continued during 2024. This required two wings to move consecutively in entirety during the reporting year. Whilst these moves were planned for, there were some issues with wings not being as expected when handed over by the contractors for occupation (e.g. cells not painted adequately; kitchen needing deep cleaning; flooding).

Men complained to the Board about lack of maintenance on the wings (e.g. broken tiles in toilets, damaged walls due to leaking pipes, analogue TV channels playing up, unreliable showers, lack of hot water, etc). This general sense of lack of care by contractors contributed towards a lowering of community morale. The wings were often so hot (with no ability to regulate the heating) that windows were opened - wasting energy and money. One man noted a temp of 26°C in his cell.

There was flooding in one of the wings, which had leaked into some of the cells and caused damage to some residents' property. The toilets on one of the floors were out of action and 24 portable toilets had been sourced at short notice. Men were offered the option of changing wings, but they said they wanted to stay and fix 'their' wing, and this specific issue was resolved with officers and men working together.

Rats have been a problem on wings at various points across the year and, on occasion, in the kitchen area. Consequently, rat control experts' visits were increased and building modifications were made to block rat access points. At times, when the wings were unbearably hot due to uncontrollable heating, men were reticent to open windows, due to the possibility of rats getting in.

With no in-cell toilets, night sanitation processes remain incompatible with standards of decency. On one occasion, when the out-of-cell notification system failed on one floor (i.e. the system was not registering a man's time out of cell accurately), men were required to remain in their cells and use cell pots. There have also been a few instances when staff were slow to respond to alarms raised when men have taken longer than the allotted time to return to cells.

The food spend is averaging £3.07 a day compared with £2.77 last year, a rise of 11%, mainly contributed by food inflation. Any 'surplus' is invariably used to fund special menus for festivals and family days, for example.

Several men raised concerns with the Board about the amount of food (and time of service), with some men saying that they had nothing available to eat between 5pm and midday the following day. This is particularly relevant for those men who had no funds to purchase canteen.

A new meal ordering system (Athena) is, after considerable delay, finally being rolled out in certain wings, which should help simplify meal ordering when fully operational.

In-cell telephony has reportedly enabled more flexible communication with family and friends. Some men had used the emailprisoner.com service and said that it mostly worked well.

5.2 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

The relationships between staff and men are an important component in forming a healthy culture within a democratic TC. So, notwithstanding positive individual reports regarding these relationships, it was disappointing that the therapeutic community audit of 2023-2024 highlighted several shortcomings within the wing-based community. For example, decisions not being made collaboratively across staff and men and the need to improve shared informal time such as mealtimes.

5.3 Equality and diversity

In April, the new neurodiversity support manager organised a self-reported survey, which indicated that just over half of the men had neurodiverse needs. A new head of diversity and inclusion took up their post (shared with HMP Springhill) at the end of October 2024 and is a welcome addition to the Grendon community. Staff have been encouraged to complete an informative online neurodiversity awareness course, which the Board believes should be made mandatory for all staff working at the prison. Use of a communications passport, a tool that allows a man to explain his communication requirements, was also piloted, with good feedback. A total of 17 discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs) were raised, and there were examples of slow responses, despite the best efforts of the safer custody team. These issues included finding prison staff independent of the incident to respond.

5.4 Faith and pastoral support

The chaplaincy continued with weekly drop-in sessions and men reported finding these helpful in giving context outside of their wing and the opportunity to connect and talk with other men. The chaplains supported festivals across the main faiths (Christianity and Islam) in observance at Grendon and took commendable care to support other minority faiths (e.g. Buddhism). The special preparation of foods for these celebrations often received positive comments from the men. D-day was commemorated with a memorial in the chapel and some wings made the effort to have a D-Day tribute on display.

5.5 Complaints

The table below summarises the annual data on complaints received by the prison. It excludes health complaints, which go directly to the healthcare service provider. The number of complaints increased by about half compared with the previous year. Complaints relating to property continue to dominate, but there were a notable number of complaints regarding residential, the offender management unit (OMU)/OASys and canteen issues.

Subject	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020
Property	69	54	90	87	110
Recategorisation	7	2	14	32	49
Confidential access	18	9	9	57	31
Data breach	0	3	1	26	0
Canteen	33	23	10	14	20
Catalogue	0	0	0	20	10

Transfers	3	1	16	30	8
Mail	6	0	4	9	25
Residential	28	*	*	*	*
OMU/OASys	23	*	*	*	*
Other	148	128	169	320	345
Property	335	220	313	595	598

**Data not separated.*

5.6 Property

As can be seen from the complaints table, the recording and transfer of property between establishments remains a frustrating and recurring issue for men. A problem which, if addressed, would substantially reduce the time staff spend trying to resolve these matters.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Health education

There were active health notice boards in the wings (particularly G and F wings). Several health events had been promoted, including a cancer awareness event; there was a drug and alcohol recovery (DART) recovering together event, International Overdose Awareness Day and with three weight-management clinics.

The IMB noted men operating outdoors when the weather was extremely hot without the necessary protection. Staff were reminded to ensure men used the appropriate sunscreen and other forms of protection, although the Board recognises that this may be financially prohibitive and not always enforceable.

6.2 Healthcare champions

The introduction of healthcare champions has proved invaluable, with the citing of several examples of positive changes. For instance, a high-blood pressure reading had prompted a change in lifestyle in a man who had not been diagnosed previously. There were also examples of good practice working with the healthcare orderly (a trusted prisoner who takes on work to provide services that contribute to the running of the prison), such as the issuing of appointment slips that led to a significant reduction in missed appointments, while a phone credit incentives scheme increased attendance at the lung health check van.

6.3 Health and social care services

No data was received on healthcare provision (please see the 'health and wellbeing' section, above), so no assessment can be made.

6.4 Healthcare complaints

The IMB does not have sight of healthcare complaints unless an application is raised with the Board for us to follow up on. We continued to get a good response from the healthcare department to any issues we raised with them, with commitments to follow up the concern directly with the complainant, as often they relate to a misunderstanding of a situation. For example, several applications raised with the Board related to medications that were not prescribed by healthcare, when the men thought it should be.

6.5 Care Quality Commission inspection

The Care Quality commission (CQC) carried out a focused announced inspection of healthcare services at Grendon, following up its last inspection, which found the quality of healthcare required improvement. A Requirement Notice, in relation to Regulation 17, Good Governance, was issued to the provider.

The purpose of this inspection was to determine if the provider was meeting the legal requirements and regulations under Section 60 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 and that prisoners were receiving safe care and treatment. The CQC does not rate services provided in prisons; it highlights good practice and issues that service providers need to improve on and take recommended action as necessary. At this inspection, the CQC found that some improvements had been made, but others were still required.

This inspection found:

- Care planning had improved, and the plans sampled were person-centred.
- A system was in place to ensure care plans were audited and improvements made as required.
- Applications for healthcare appointments were collected daily and there was reasonable access to GP appointments.
- Improvements had been made in some areas of medicines' management, such as access to prescribing support distantly from outside the prison.

Improvements were still needed to ensure that robust procedures are embedded regarding the supply of minor ailment and emergency medicines and stock checks and that records are maintained for patients who have received treatment.

(Here is the link to the CQC inspection: <https://www.cqc.org.uk/location/1-4053555946/inspection-summary>)

6.6 Time out of cell, regime

On occasion, wings were locked up at 4.45pm (rather than 7.15pm), due to staff shortages. The men were not always informed in advance of these early lock-ups, which led to the cancellation of planned activities. Prison staff reported that these early lock-ups were occasionally down to staffing issues, a problem that was acknowledged by the prison management. Changes to staff work rotas were being made to reflect the new regime.

7. Progression and resettlement

The process of transferring Grendon men to other prisons after their therapy (particularly progressive moves) can be laborious. Once a suitable onward prison has been identified for a Grendon prisoner, the associated one-for-one swap process can be lengthy and complicated, because men need to be fully assessed as suitable for Grendon prior to a transfer, and arranging transport for a one-to-one exchange can be challenging.

7.1 Therapy

Grendon continues to have a positive reputation, due to its unique therapeutic programme. Men apply to join the prison so they can benefit from the intensive regime. There is a steady waiting list to be transferred to the prison and new entrants to the prison spend 4-6 months in the assessment wing to determine whether therapy is appropriate to support their rehabilitation. Once on the programme, most men stay in Grendon for between three and five years.

Notwithstanding the need for the prison to address the wing-based community relationship issues, highlighted in the therapeutic community audit, Board members, in conversations with the men, regularly heard very positive responses to their therapy. For example, one man reported that, in three weeks at Grendon, he had resolved issues that he had not been able to resolve in five years at his previous prisons. While Grendon is not necessarily the most appropriate environment for all men, others remarked on the quality of their relationships with prison officers and of the generally peaceful environment. Men made comparisons with their previous prisons, and they recognised the positive impact that the Grendon regime can have in supporting their progress towards dealing with the issues that had led to them being in prison.

Regular wing meetings help to resolve issues facing the group and individuals. These include open discussions to which men are expected to contribute. The core values of democracy, tolerance reality and sense of community are evident to IMB members who occasionally observe these meetings. The Governors continue to explore ways to reduce the number of occasions when these therapy sessions have had to be cancelled due to staff scheduling changes or prisoner wing special meetings.

7.2 Out of therapy (OOT)

Grendon is designed to support men undergoing a rigorous and demanding therapeutic programme. However, the Board remains concerned at the number of men who are out of therapy (OOT) and still at Grendon, either because they have completed their programme or they are considered unsuitable for therapy. Too often for these men there is no obvious immediate pathway that builds on their Grendon experience or enables them to return to a more suitable prison. National prison overcrowding issues have also made it difficult to transfer these men out and to provide spaces for men in other prisons who would benefit from the intensive therapy. Local arrangements are made for men OOT, such as attending Friday wing community meetings, and efforts have been made more recently to make it easier for men to take-up other activities, such as work placements. It does, however, remain a difficult period for these men to navigate.

At any one time, about a fifth of the prison population were OOT. In any given month, over half had typically been OOT for over three months, with at least one man waiting over a year for a transfer. The reasons given for these delays were a combination of transport problems and the receiving prisons not having enough suitable spaces.

7.3 Education and library provision

The library is popular and well used by the men. The librarian runs literacy classes, with prisoners acting as mentors to men seeking to enhance their literacy skills. The Shannon Trust⁴ supports this peer-to-peer reading initiative and have trained several new mentors. There is a good range of books aimed at reading levels 1 and 2. The initial academic screening process identifies men who need support with their literacy and numeracy. All who need it are entered into a supportive programme to improve their skills.

The librarian is well connected and has organised reading groups, with help from the University of Bath and the Bodleian Library in Oxford. Creative writing workshops are led by published authors from outside the prison. Contributions by workshop participants are edited and occasionally published.

Other examples of activities to improve literacy skills included:

- New books at reading levels 1 and 2, designed for people with dyslexia, are to arrive soon; funded by BACO⁵.
- The Shannon Trust has now trained 11 new mentors.
- Monthly prison reading groups facilitated on a Saturday, with a virtual reading group organised for G wing.
- Book offering for 'first nighters'.
- Poet in residence selects poems for group discussion.
- The National Literacy Trust arranged for a variety of authors to give talks in the prison.
- The National Literacy Trust has provided a 'scribe' to support a man who is unable to read or write so he can create his own book. Buckinghamshire Archives has provided copies of historic materials for the area around Grendon/Springhill, including photos of old prisons, prisoners and poems, as a prompt for creative projects.

The artist in residence and poet in residence programmes have continued to run successfully. On average, 16 men participate each week. Participants report that the scheme has improved their wellbeing and self-esteem. One man was successful at the annual Koestler Awards, an arts scheme designed for those in the prison system.

However, men require backing from their community to be involved in these activities and this is not always offered. Also, activities can take place when education classes

⁴ Shannon Trust is a charity that empowers people to improve their reading and numeracy skills through peer-led learning programme: <https://www.shannontrust.org.uk/>

⁵ BACO (Bucks Association of the Care of Offenders) is a registered charity that aims to help offenders break their cycle of criminal behaviour and reintegrate back into society: <https://www.baco.org.uk/>

are on, which require an absence to be granted. Consequently, the creative offers are not always being taken advantage of by as broad a range of men as possible.

Education is provided by Milton Keynes College. This programme has been disrupted by other priorities of the men (e.g. when a special wing meeting is called). Lessons have been cancelled due to staff shortages. The attendance figure for education in September was 68%.

A total of 12 men were studying for degrees with the Open University.

7.4 Activities

A wide range of activities is offered within each wing during therapy breaks, including a half-marathon, scrabble, darts, table tennis, pool and football.

7.5 Vocational training, work

Opportunities for work placements are restricted because of the nature of the regime and because almost all the men are usually many years away from being released. Jobs available are invariably site-based, such as, for example, cleaners, kitchen orderlies, library orderlies and some in the gym.

The therapy and the opportunities for emotional development are helping with preparation for the world of work. For instance, one man who had served as a DART representative spoke of how he had learned new skills by organising events, speaking publicly and supporting other men with addictions.

7.6 Family contact

Grendon draws men from across the UK. Consequently, family members who wish to visit relatives in prison are often required to travel a long way. Wing family days are well organised, and men without families visiting seem happy to participate in some way, such as, for example helping to serve refreshments. There were lots of activities for children, which had been preceded by activities in the gym. Social visit days on C and D wings had been cancelled (or possibly postponed) in the previous weeks, due to too many wing incidents occurring.

7.7 Resettlement planning

Most men who leave Grendon are returned to another prison to continue their sentence. In 2024, 12 men were sent directly to open prisons, a further eight were sent to other prisons, and four men were released.

A man who had been granted parole and was due to be released directly from Grendon (which is a rare occurrence) spoke very positively about his experience. It was also good to note that he had a very clear idea of his domestic arrangements post-release.

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	14
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	8 (which included 2 on sabbatical and 2 in training)
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	5 (which included 2 in training)
Total number of visits to the establishment	25* visits to Grendon (35 visits to Springhill)

**As the Board monitors two prisons and had well-below the expected complement of trained members, it operated an 'alternate week' monitoring schedule for each prison. Board meetings are held at Springhill.*

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Current reporting year	Previous reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	4	5
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	1	1
C	Equality	0	4
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	1	0
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	3	3
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	4	0
F	Food and kitchens	0	0
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	5	6
H1	Property within the establishment	0	0
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	2	3
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	1	2
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence), parole, release dates, re-categorisation	1	0
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	1	0
K	Transfers	1	0
L	Miscellaneous	1	1
	Total number of applications	25	25

Annex A

Service providers

- Healthcare:
 - Primary healthcare: Practice Plus Group (PPG)
 - Pharmacy: Practice Plus Group (PPG)
 - Social Care: Buckinghamshire Council
 - Drug and alcohol recovery team (DART): Midlands Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust
 - Podiatry and physiotherapy: Practice Plus Group MSK, Buckinghamshire
 - Mental health services: Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust
 - Dental: Time for Teeth
 - Audiology: Specsavers
 - Optician: The Prison Optician Trust
- Education: Milton Keynes College
- Library: Buckinghamshire Council
- Maintenance: Gov Facility Services Limited (GFSL)
- Food: HMPPS
- Escort contractor: Serco



This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3

Where we have identified any third-party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications>

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at imb@justice.gov.uk