



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

**For reporting year  
1 January 2024 to 31 December 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 Highpoint was originally opened as a prison in 1977 and has undergone a number of estate reconfigurations over the years. The prison is sited on a former Royal Air Force base, using many of the original buildings, and is split over two adjacent sites (north and south). It is situated some 10 miles southeast of Newmarket in rural Suffolk.

HMP Highpoint is a male category C men's training and resettlement prison (for those whose escape risk is considered to be low but who cannot be trusted in an open prison) for London and Essex. The 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) for the reporting period remains at an average 1,270<sup>1</sup>.

Accommodation at the prison varies considerably in terms of fabric and facilities. At the beginning of the reporting year, there were 10 residential units on the south site, which included:

- Unit 1: A & B wings
- Unit 2: C & D wings
- Unit 3: E & F spurs
- Unit 4: G & H spurs
- Unit 5: J & K spurs (unit 5, K spur, houses newly arrived prisoners until they can be located to an appropriate unit; this facilitates the delivery of the induction process)
- Unit 6
- Unit 7
- Unit 8: Q, R & S spurs
- Unit 9: T, V & W spurs
- Unit 10: X, Y & Z spurs

Ensuite cells are available on units 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10. On the north site, there are five residential units, which include units 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15. Most units have in-cell sanitation, except for units 11, 12 and 13 on the north site, which have 24-hour access to lavatory and shower recesses site. Most cells are single occupancy; however, there are 38 overcrowded cells across both sites.

In August 2022, planning permission was granted for extending HMP Highpoint by 741 additional spaces. These will be in three, four-storey T60 accommodation blocks (which comprise three accommodation wings connected to a central support wing, with six different types of ensuite cells). There will be a new workshop building that will house workshop provision, education, vocational training and a multi-faith room, in addition to a new healthcare unit, an extension to the current gate, prisoner property store and outside stores building. In addition, the gym facilities will be extended and improved, and there will be a refurbishment of both reception and the communications room. The infrastructure works were started but had to be stopped due to asbestos being found buried on the construction site. It is now anticipated that the works should be completed by 2027.

The dynamics of HMP Highpoint, with its split site and large population held some distance from home (60% still come from London or Essex) in a remote and rural location, continue

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

to create significant performance challenges for the prison and make Highpoint a complex establishment.

Agencies and contractors for the prison include:

- Drug rehabilitation services: Phoenix Futures
- Services for families and children: Ormiston Trust
- Healthcare: Practice Plus Group Health and Rehabilitation Services Ltd
- Improving access to psychological therapies (IAPT): Forward Trust
- Escort contractors: Serco, GeoAmey and Mitie (for immigration transport)
- Learning and skills, education and training: People Plus
- Maintenance: Gov Facility Services Limited (GFSL)
- Resettlement housing (London): St Mungo's
- Information, advice and guidance (IAG): Forward Trust

### **3. Key points**

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

This report covers the period from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024. Evidence is gathered from observations made on regular visits, monitoring meetings, scrutiny of prison data, informal contact with prisoners and staff, surveys and applications (written representations prisoners submit to the IMB). Please note that the prison has not much changed since our previous report, so this year's findings are very similar. We have updated any statistics and noted any changes, but the body of report remains much the same as last year.

During the reporting year, the population at Highpoint continued to be around 1,300. Highpoint is one of the largest category C training and resettlement prisons in the country, supporting prisoners who are at various stages in their sentences.

There was a decrease in self-harm incidents. However, the number of prisoners supported by the assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) procedure (used to support prisoners at risk of self-harm and suicide) rose quite considerably. The number of reported incidents of violence and disruption remained at a similar level to 2023.

PAVA (an incapacitant spray) was introduced to HMP Highpoint in 2023. During the reporting year, it was used three times.

The Board has a system of recording any incident where PAVA is used and recorded as an incident by the prison.

There continues to be thorough screening and support for prisoners arriving at Highpoint, and those considered vulnerable continued to be supported throughout their stay. A new strategy was issued in 2023 to help prisoners who are in debt to other prisoners.

#### **3.1 Main findings**

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

During its inspection in October 2023, HMP Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) reported that the care and separation unit (CSU), where prisoners are segregated, was one of the best in the UK. From the Board's observations, the CSU has continued to be well run and used effectively to support prisoners.

The key worker scheme (where a member of prison staff supports a prisoner throughout the custodial period) was still in place in the reporting year. Various prisoner forums continued to be held during the reporting year.

The Board continued to be concerned about the standards of maintenance and general repair in the prison, as there is still an issue with work often not being completed in a timely manner.

In comparison with last year's report, applications made to the Board about lost property increased slightly for property transferred from another establishment, although they decreased for lost property within the establishment during the reporting year.

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

As with last year, the GP and nurse-led services again achieved a green (positive) rating across the majority of metrics. Mental health needs were matched by resources 98% of the time. Support for those needing help with drug addiction and alcoholism was available

through Phoenix Futures and the drug strategy team.

### **Progression and resettlement**

A wide range of courses, both educational and vocational, continued to be available to prisoners. These included offending behaviour courses, such as Kaizen (for high or very high-risk adult men who have been convicted of a violent offence, including intimate partner violence), and the Thinking Skills Programme aimed at helping to reduce reoffending by developing thinking skills and applying them to managing risk factors and setting pro-social goals). There is often a wait to enrol on these courses.

Social visits and social video calls continued. Resettlement planning continued. Staffing levels seem good, and caseloads remain at 50 to 60 prisoners per month.

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

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

3.2.1 In spite of the revised Prisoners' Property Policy Framework, the Board continues to be concerned about the loss or delay of prisoners' property in transfer between establishments, and refers you to Section 5.9. The Board, once again, asks for an urgent review into the handling of prisoners' belongings.

3.2.2 There has been no improvement in the management of prisoners' property within the prison, and the Board would also like to see an improvement in the handling of prisoners' parcels within the Prison Security Framework.

3.2.3 Rail Track and construction: the Board would ask the Minister to acknowledge the excellent work carried out by the reducing reoffending team and the senior management team and would refer the Minister to the section 7.2.9.

3.2.4 During the reporting year, the Board has seen a considerable rise in the number of healthcare applications. There were 77 applications received compared with 38 in the previous year. The Board would ask that the Minister look into the reasons behind this.

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

3.2.5 The Board continues to be seriously concerned about the service provided by Gov Facility Services Ltd (GFSL). Again, we request an urgent review of the works maintenance contract to ensure it fully meets the ongoing needs of a challenging prison environment.

3.2.6 As noted in two previous annual reports, the netting around the prison blew down in a storm and was slowly being replaced (in most units). However, it has still not been completely replaced, all this time later. The prison is still vulnerable to 'throwovers' (where people from outside the prison throw parcels over the walls, which contain illicit items, to be picked up by prisoners) and the increased opportunity for contraband to get into the prison, which has a negative impact on the health and wellbeing of the prisoners.

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

3.2.7 The Board is aware that drug debt and fermenting liquids to brew prison alcohol are a major concern for the prison and we welcome the strategies, such as searches with specialist dogs and a designated search team (DST), which are being implemented to counteract this.

### **3.3 Progress since the last report**

There are a number of developments, highlighted in last year's report, that the Board would, again, like to emphasise as continuing to have positive outcomes for prisoners:

- The ongoing development of the key worker scheme.
- Unit 11 on the north site and units 6 and 7 on the south site are now incentivised substance free living (ISFL) areas, where prisoners can receive support and treatment.
- The provision of therapeutic courses in art and creative writing.
- The Board would like to acknowledge the high level of professionalism and care shown by the staff towards prisoners within the often-challenging environment of the care and separation unit.



## Evidence sections 4 – 7

### 4. Safety

#### 4.1 Reception and induction

4.1.1 Prisoners' property and persons are searched on arrival. A body scanner was installed in December 2020 and its use is intelligence-led. If a prisoner refuses to undergo a body scan, they can be subject to an adjudication (a disciplinary hearing that is held when a prisoner is alleged to have broken prison rules).

4.1.2 The prisoner's property is checked in front of them and, where appropriate, issued.

4.1.3 New arrivals are given an 'advance' of £25 so they can buy additional items as well as one phone credit. This system helps to reduce some potential debt issues.

4.1.4 On occasion, there are late arrivals. Highpoint does not have a lock-out time, but prisoners arriving after 5.30pm-6pm will, following security checks, be given an overnight bag before being located on the induction wing. In normal circumstances, they will have their property logged, then be brought back to reception the following morning to have it checked. Prisoners continue to be given the opportunity to make a swap if they wish for an alternative item of clothing to be issued.

4.1.5 As there are no healthcare staff on site at this time in the evening, it is still the case that late arrivals are located directly to the induction unit and placed on observation until they are seen by the healthcare team the following day.

4.1.6 Induction is situated on unit 5, on K wing. All new arrivals are monitored during the first night. The prison reports that the frequency of checks depends on whether:

- all checks have been completed (in which case a prisoner is observed every three hours);
- the screening has not been completed (in which case the prisoner is observed every hour); or
- the prisoner has not seen a healthcare professional (in which case the prisoner is observed every 30 minutes).

4.1.7 The Chaplaincy team continues to see all new arrivals in person, one-to-one, within 24 hours of arrival. They signpost the pastoral care available from the team, ensure that religious affiliations are noted and enquire about the prisoner's welfare.

4.1.8 The first morning on the wing process has remained unchanged since last year: new arrivals should meet with orderlies (trusted prisoners who take on work to provide services that contribute to the running of the prison) and be given core information about the prison, the various units and self-harm and drug abuse treatment. All new arrivals are given an information booklet, produced by prisoners, about all aspects of prison life in HMP Highpoint. This is a useful document, as prisoners can refer back to it. However, the IMB is concerned that there are some prisoners who are unable to read and who do not always declare this on arrival on the induction unit.

4.1.9 On the second morning on the induction unit, prisoners go for education screening, and they meet with Forward Trust, a charity offering information, advice and guidance (IAG), and are told about employment opportunities.

4.1.10 They also have a visit, through education, to the library and an introduction to the services offered by the library.

4.1.11 The Board continues to be assured that every effort is made to establish each new prisoner's learning needs and disabilities and to facilitate an individual learning plan. Those with low attainment are strongly advised to attend maths and English classes. Passes in these subjects are obligatory before enrolment in some other classes, such as carpentry, for example.

4.1.12 We have observed the education and library induction process. The staff tried hard to include all the prisoners and tell them what was available and when. However, it was obvious to the Board that, for a number of those attending, there was too much information to take in at a time when they were trying to adjust and understand their new environment.

4.1.13 It is still the case that, on the third morning, new arrivals are seen again by the healthcare team; as part of that consultation, they are offered blood tests and/or screening.

4.1.14 Once induction has been completed on the third day, prisoners can then be moved to other accommodation. This can be immediate if there is a space on an appropriate unit. Priority for moves is given to prisoners who have been on unit 5 the longest. The vast majority leave the induction Unit 7-14 days after their arrival. Some prisoners can take longer to place if, for example, they have special needs, due to a disability, and require a single cell or an ensuite shower.

4.1.15 As in previous years when the Board was monitoring the induction unit, we took the opportunity to speak to prisoners, who were appreciative of the arrangements and felt they had been treated with respect and fairness by reception staff.

4.1.16 In common with our previous report, property-related applications (prisoners' written representations) to the IMB also fluctuated throughout 2024. There continues to be an issue regarding prisoners being allowed a certain item of property at one establishment but being refused it at Highpoint. A more universal property regulation would help considerably. Some prisoners have a large amount of property in their cells and a volumetric control scheme was introduced at the very end of 2023., but issues continue.

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

4.2.1 Very sadly, during the reporting year there were three reported deaths in custody: one prisoner passed away in Addenbrookes Hospital, in Cambridge, while another prisoner passed away in the south prison and one in the north prison. All the death in custody documentation was recorded using the IMB guidance and protocol

4.2.2 There were 449 recorded incidents of self-harm incidents in 2024, a welcome drop compared with last year's figure of 593. Each month showed a similar percentage incident reduction compared with 2023, but the number of incidents is still considerably higher than the figures for the pre-pandemic and immediate post- pandemic years: 320 in 2018; and 357 in 2022.

4.2.3 Of the 449 self-harm cases recorded in 2024, 350 were categorised as low severity and two as severe.

4.2.4 The number of incidents of self-harm does not equate to the number of prisoners self-harming. There were six prisoners who self-harmed on multiple occasions during 2024.

4.2.5 The six prisoners, between them, accounted for 97 self-harm incidents, or 22% of the total. The most prominent method of self-harm across the prison is cutting. The reasons given to staff and the Board for self-harming are varied, but the most common concern anger, frustration and lack of coping mechanisms. Other reasons are the same as in our previous report, and include:

- Location issues (e.g. the prisoner wants a move off the unit, or they had been moved to a unit they do not want to be on, or they want a transfer out of the establishment).
- Incentives scheme issues (e.g. having their TV removed due to being placed on the basic (bottom) level of the scheme following a serious single incident board).
- Family issues (e.g. a bereavement, concern for an ill family member or relationship concerns).
- Debt.
- Healthcare: mental health triggers for self-harming episodes remained diverse in 2024.

Whilst the figures for self-harm are, respectively, higher in 2023 and 2024 than in previous years, the IMB has noted that the figures for HMP Highpoint are the lowest in their comparator group of prisons.

4.2.6 There are three constant watch cells at Highpoint. The IMB is concerned that one of these is in the CSU. We consider this to be inappropriate, although we have been reassured that its use is rare for constant watches of prisoners not already placed in the segregation unit. When it does occur, special measures are put in place for such prisoners, including walks outside of the CSU.

4.2.7 The Listener scheme (whereby prisoners trained by the Samaritans offer confidential emotional support to their peers) was restarted in 2023. Listeners are available to prisoners 24/7 and the names of the on-call Listeners are published in the daily briefing each day. The IMB continues to consider this provision to be imperative and we are very pleased that the scheme is reported to be working well.

The number of open assessment, care in custody and teamwork documents (ACCTs), which are used to manage prisoners at risk of self-harm and suicide, increased again in the reporting period. A total of 510 ACCTs were opened during the year. This is a significant increase on 2023, when 295 were opened. The reasons for this are unclear. In addition, 75 prisoners were transferred to HMP Highpoint on an ACCT.

It remains the case that the majority of ACCTs opened in 2024 followed incidents of self-harm. As noted in our previous report, statistics continue to show that prisoners of white ethnicity are more likely to self-harm and to have ACCTs opened (this follows local and national trends).

The Board continues to ask to see prisoners on open ACCTs when visiting the units. Details of all men on ACCTs are given in the daily alerts report and dates of ACCT reviews are given in the daily briefing (but not the time at which these reviews will occur). Copies of both the daily alerts report and daily briefing should be sent to the IMB each day, although this is not always the case. However, the system to support this was much more reliable in the latter part of 2024.

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

4.3.1 The safer prisons team (SPT) is a dedicated group of officers and office staff, run by a designated Governor. It deals with all matters involving the safety of prisoners, covering areas such as mental health and risk assessments, ACCT reviews and incidents involving

the use of force. In 2024, the number of reported violent incidents increased, yet again, to 367, compared with 302 in 2023 and 280 in 2022.

4.3.2 The number of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults increased to 210 in 2024 (there were 178 in 2023). However, there was also a very concerning increase in the number of assaults against staff, which rose to 151, of which 16 were serious. Last year, we were concerned to note 125 recorded assaults on staff, which was a 28% increase on the previous year, and the continuing upward trend is disturbing. The reasons for the continued increase are not fully known, but prison overcrowding - and the resultant difficulties in transferring prisoners to other establishments or wings - has, in part, resulted in reported changes in the prison population, about which IMB are asking for more details (but for which no information has been given). Debt continues to fuel unrest.

4.3.3 Violent incidents are analysed and those involved are interviewed by the safer prisons team (SPT). A challenge, support and intervention plan (CSIP) is used at Highpoint, as in all adult prisons, to manage those prisoners who are violent or pose a heightened risk of being violent. These prisoners are managed and supported on a plan that offers individualised targets and regular reviews.

A total of 608 prisoners were considered for CSIPs in 2024, 136 of whom progressed to an actual CSIP, whilst other options included no further action or additional support for the outside of a CSIP. The Board is aware of those prisoners on CSIPs through the daily briefings and daily alerts reports. The daily briefing documents when the CSIP reviews are taking place but does not give times, which are subject to change.

#### **4.4 Vulnerable prisoners**

4.4.1 Prisoners who have been bullied continue to be supported by staff, and known perpetrators are challenged. Prisoners are often reluctant to name the person they feel is bullying them for fear of retaliation. Men considered to be bullies are identified in the daily alerts report, with the reason for their inclusion stated on the list.

4.4.2 The daily briefing report contains the names of those who are registered as 'prisoners of concern'. The concerns are usually around personal hygiene, cleanliness, social care and mental health issues. Staff document their dealings with these prisoners each day. Details include whether the man has taken his meals, collected his medication and had a shower/taken some exercise, plus comments on his general demeanour and the condition of his cell. The men are encouraged and assisted to keep themselves and their cell clean and to discuss any issues they may have. The number of men on the register fluctuates but averages between 4 and 10. Prisoners who are self-isolating are named in the daily briefing report and IMB members try to see them when they undertake monitoring visits to the units. Some from the chaplaincy team visits all vulnerable prisoners each week. There is no dedicated residential unit for vulnerable prisoners at Highpoint.

#### **4.5 Use of force**

4.5.1 Board members continue to attend the prison when force has been used to control prisoners. This is so that we can ascertain what has occurred and satisfy ourselves that the prisoner is safe, has been seen by a healthcare professional and the correct protocols have been followed. Board members try to attend the monthly use of force meetings, for monitoring purposes, to which they are invited by the prison. However, these meetings are still frequently cancelled or postponed. As volunteers, it is often not possible for us to make diary changes at short notice.

4.5.2 Use of force was used to control prisoners on 878 occasions in 2024 (676 occasions during 2023). There was a significant increase in the use of force between July and October 2024. In January 2024, force was used on 52 occasions. In October, this had risen to 122 occasions. The reason for this increase was down to the presence of a dedicated search team (DST) in the establishment on multiple occasions in October, which saw an increase in force used to escort men to the body scanner in reception. There were also a large number of Gold Command capacity moves in October 2024, which saw numerous prisoners escorted to reception in rigid-bar handcuffs for transfers. The DST and Gold Command incidents spiked the number of incidents. If you subtracted these, October was around the average for the number of incidents we usually see.

Incidents of disorder during 2024 were at similar levels to 2023. However, the Board was pleased to note the significant decrease in 2024 in incidents of barricading.

Figures for 2024 are shown below (with figures for 2023, 2022 and 2021 in brackets):

	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2021</b>
There were 58 incidents at height in 2024	(52)	(53)	(25)
58 reports of barricading in 2024	(84)	(136)	(59)
1 incident of hostage taking in 2024	(1)	(1)	(1)
35 incidents concerning fire in 2024			

4.5.3 Due to the large population at HMP Highpoint, intelligence-led cell searches are completed almost daily. In addition, there are reactive cell searches if there is immediate evidence to support such a search. Grounds for completing such a search would be that, whilst completing an accommodation fabric and decency check (AFDC), an officer noticed a strong smell of fermenting liquid.

4.5.4 Highpoint maintains a positive relationship with the police. In 2024, weekly triage meetings with the police liaison officer (PLO) were introduced, where potential police referrals are discussed to ensure incidents are dealt with appropriately and in a timely manner.

4.5.5 Cell searches and unit and compound checks resulted in a significant number of finds during 2024 with, overall, a very large prison currency value, in common with last year. During 2024, 261 weapons were found compared with 209 in 2023. The number of drugs' finds also increased to 389, up from 337 in 2023. There were 291 findings of hooch, which was around the same number as in 2023. There was a very large increase in the number of mobile phones found in 2024: 1475 phones were found in the prison, up three-and-a-half times on the previous year's figure of 431. The increase is of particular concern to the IMB.

4.5.6 At the beginning of the reporting year, the Board was concerned that netting, installed to prevent throwovers and drops and which came down in storms some years ago, had still not been fully replaced and that Governors can only report that repairs were underway.

4.5.7 The daily briefing reports give details of proven drone drops and suspicious drone activity. One member of staff reported to the IMB that, given the size of the finds this year, drones the size of helicopters would need to have been used if all prohibited items were arriving by this means. It was believed that drones were not the only means by which prohibited items were coming into the prison.

4.5.8 The Board has continued to raise concerns with the Governing Governor, and at security meetings, that far more regular searching is not undertaken of staff and IMB members entering the prison. However, we were very pleased to be searched on a number of occasions in October.

#### **4.6 Substance misuse treatment**

4.6.1 Phoenix Futures report that drug abuse and cases of under the influence (UTI) incidents are at the highest they have known. Figures have been increasing year on year. Numbers were up in 2022 and last year (2023) Phoenix Futures reported that there was a further slight increase in drug use among prisoners. However, there has been a major spike in 2024. The number of prisoners receiving harm-reduction support is now running at around 150 per month; a few years ago, the figures were closer to 30 interventions per month. This increase can be clearly seen from the reports in the daily briefing, where hardly a day goes by without at least one – and often five or six – prisoners being reported as found UTI.

4.6.2 During the day, prisoners found UTI are dealt with by healthcare staff. However, out of hours, this often necessitates a call to 111 and requires an ambulance to attend the prison.

4.6.3 During an initial assessment, Phoenix Futures records the prisoner's drug of choice prior to custody. In common with the previous reporting period, this year the service saw heroin, closely followed by alcohol and cannabis, as the main drugs of choice on the outside. After custody, the drugs of choice depend on what is available. In recent months, this has been cannabis and spice for 50-65% of the service users at any one time. These figures differ from those given by the Prison Service, whose statistics are based on 'finds during 2024 and which give spice and hooch as the drugs of choice.

Phoenix Futures' caseload has remained fairly constant since Covid and at the end of 2024 they were actively working with around 270 prisoners, a slight increase on 2023. This represents just over 21% of the HMP Highpoint prison population.

However, they have paperwork caseload of 580 prisoners. This includes those who have previously worked with Phoenix Futures and will need assistance on release, as well as those on whom Phoenix Futures has received files from other prisons. There are approximately 100 prisoners for whom drugs are an issue who are refusing to work with the service. The figures show that approximately half of all Highpoint prisoners have some issue with drugs.

4.6.4 During 2024, unit 11 has continued to operate as a drug free unit, while units 6 and 7 came onstream at the end of 2023. They are known as incentivised substance free living units (ISFL). Phoenix Futures does not have any direct input into running them, but they do actively participate in their timetables by running SMART Recovery (an abstinence-focused programme) and drug awareness courses on a weekly basis.

Phoenix Futures' staff and officers working on the north site report that the ISFL unit 11 does run smoothly most of the time, but that it also faces challenges from time to time when the 'wrong type' of prisoner is located there. This appears to have been particularly acute when there was a national shortage of prison spaces. Another issue has been that whilst Phoenix Futures promotes a move to unit 11 as good progression, some prisoners who would benefit from living on the unit do not wish to relocate. They say this is because they do not want to have to share a cell and that there are fewer opportunities for work on the north site and they believe they would earn less money.

4.6.5 Unit 11 (ISFL) has a voluntary drug testing regime in place, which prisoners sign up to when entering the unit. Other prisoners can be subject to both random and suspicion-led tests. Again, this year, Phoenix Futures reports that across the prison, the lack of interview space suitable for conducting therapeutic interventions and confidential assessments with prisoners continues to restrict the work they are able to undertake. Additionally, there are sometimes issues around a prisoner isolating or being on an ACCT, which can impact the service's ability to work with them.

4.6.6 Phoenix Futures is made aware of any client due to be released and they report good coordination with other prison departments such as the offender management unit (OMU). For many prisoners, pre-release planning starts two to three months prior to release and this planning was able to continue effectively during the implementation of the early release programme. Some prisoners categorically refuse to engage at this point. However, the service continues to give all prisoners known to have a substance misuse history harm-reduction advice and community engagement details, regardless of whether they are active clients at the point of their release.

4.6.7 Prior to release, Phoenix Futures makes, and informs prisoners of, appointments in the community (which is particularly pertinent for those on scripts for Methadone and Subutex). Just over a third of Phoenix futures clients are known to have continued to engage with drug and alcohol services in the community after release, which helps to prevent the 'circle of harm' and reduces recidivism.

Drug debt remains an issue and the IMB is concerned about the correlation between the reported increase in violent incidents in 2023 and 2024 and the apparent increase in drug debt during the same period.

The IMB also remains concerned that large quantities of drugs (and other contraband) continue to get into the prison. This obviously has an impact on prisoner safety.

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

### **5.1 Accommodation, food**

5.1.1 From the Board's observations, Governors and prison officers continue to actively ensure that prisoners keep the units clean and tidy. Prisoners who do not keep their cells clean are encouraged to do so. Governors' visits result in a high level of activity and the prisoners are justifiably proud of the results.

5.1.2 As highlighted in our previous report, the majority of works being carried out by Gov Facility Services Ltd (GFSL) were still not done in a timely manner. This continues to have an impact on the two sites, north and south. Even when works were carried out in a timely manner, not all works, including fire safety, were regularly quality checked by a GFSL supervisor. The Board would, once again, for the third year running, point out that the workforce employed within the prison is trying their best to complete the works, but they are still not being adequately managed by the GFSL senior management team.

5.1.3 By the end of the reporting year, 515 repairs and 469 outstanding work orders were still not completed or carried out in a timely manner:

5.1.4 Whilst this is certainly an improvement on our last reporting year (2023), it would appear that GFSL's senior management team still does not understand the complexities of the issues and concerns in HMP Highpoint as a working prison. The Board understands that GFSL is still struggling to recruit tradesmen and retain them.

GFSL appears to be finding it especially difficult to recruit escorting staff, due to the expansion project taking precedent and procurement drawing resources from the same pool.

As in our 2022 and 2023 annual reports, the Board understands that the works listed below were still not carried out in a timely manner during the 2024 reporting year:

- general repairs to electrical equipment
- general repairs to plumbing
- general repairs/maintenance of fire-protection equipment
- general repairs/maintenance of CCTV systems
- general repairs/maintenance of heating systems, in particular, the boiler plant
- general repairs/maintenance/management of kitchen equipment is not always satisfactory and could be improved

5.1.5 To assist GFSL in maintenance, prisoners continue to be employed on the south and north sites. They carried out various maintenance works, including cell refurbishment, painting, mastic works and minor plumbing.

5.1.6 As with our two previous reports, the Board would, once again, ask that HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) carry out a review of the works' maintenance contract provided by GFSL to ensure it fully meets the needs of a challenging prison environment. The Board understands that a review is being undertaken to split Highpoint into two sites, with a site manager at each and an over-arching senior site manager when the new expansion is open.

5.1.7 The Board has observed that while the kitchen on the south site is not efficiently run, the kitchen on the north site is, with good teamwork between the prisoners employed and the staff running them. Even though there are times when there is still frustration, due to faulty equipment, meals appear to be served to the units on schedule. During the reporting



year, GFSL appointed a new kitchen equipment maintenance service provider, HCE. The Board understands that, as with the previous contractor, when HCE attends repair jobs in the prison, they do not carry spares. Consequently, an estimate has to be sent to GFSL for approval, which can take up to two weeks. The Board understands that, during the reporting year, temporary kitchen appliances were supplied, including a freezer and combination ovens.

5.1.8 The Board understands that the food supplier still substitutes items it cannot supply, which makes it very difficult for kitchen staff to adhere to the agreed menus and results in last-minute changes to the menus.

5.1.9 The Board highlights that, in these circumstances, if it were not for the very high professionalism and hard work of the staff (despite some issues with the kitchen on the south site), meals would not have been provided.

5.1.10 The Board notes that servery orderlies still do not always wear the appropriate protective clothing. When this was raised with staff and the orderlies, they cited problems with supply of protective clothing, which has been pointed out on a number of occasions in our monitoring reports, but no solutions offered.

5.1.11 Prisoners have the opportunity to raise issues about their meals on a daily basis via a food comment book kept in every unit servery. Prisoners still do not take up the opportunity to make comments in the books. However, when comments were made, managers appear to act on them.

## **5.2 Segregation**

5.2.1 The Board observed that the care and separation unit, or CSU, where prisoners are segregated, functioned with a high degree of professionalism and productivity during the reporting year. Staff effectively managed prisoners with complex behaviours, successfully defusing tense situations. The unit, with 18 operational cells, a search cell, and two multi-purpose cells (utilised as a library and storeroom), reported an average occupancy of nine.

5.2.2 The CSU experienced an increase in throughput during the reporting period, processing 516 prisoners, compared with 427 in 2023, representing a 21% increase. The average length of stay was six days. The Governor of the CSU sought to minimise occupancy levels. In order to facilitate the return of prisoners to residential units or, where appropriate, transfer to other establishments, progression plans were developed and implemented. Seven prisoners remained in the unit for a duration exceeding 42 days (the limit allowed without external authorisation); in each instance, established procedures were followed.

5.2.3 A Governor and a mental healthcare team member conduct segregation reviews twice a week. An IMB member is present to ensure procedural compliance. In addition, a Board member visits each segregated prisoner twice weekly, with consistent access granted.

5.2.4 Daily adjudications (disciplinary hearings held when a prisoner is alleged to have broken prison rules) concerning alleged breaches of prison rules took place in the CSU, conducted by a Governor and prison staff. The reporting year saw 3,665 adjudications, a fall of 120 compared to the figure of 3,785 in 2023. Board members monitored these hearings when possible, offering separate consultations to prisoners. The Board noted that the Governor and staff conducted these proceedings with respect and impartiality.

5.2.5 During the reporting year, there were 94 reported use of force incidents in the CSU, compared with 83 last year.

5.2.6 During the reporting year, there were 510 prisoners on open assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documents within the prison; 31 of these prisoners were on open ACCTs in the CSU, a fall of 30 when compared with 61 in 2023. This was a mixture of ACCTs being opened in the CSU and prisoners locating there who were already on an open ACCT.

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

5.3.1 There were 48 staff resignations (excluding promotions) during the reporting year, across bands 2, 3, 4 and 5, plus one resignation from band 5 (custodial manager grade). There were 55 new officer starters in the reporting year. In addition, there were leavers for other reasons, including transfers.

5.3.2 During the reporting year, the Governor continued to hold forums with each unit for both the south and north prison sites.

5.3.3 The reporting period saw the Governor continuing to send out frequent information bulletins to prisoners on a variety of subjects that impacted them, including any changes to the regime.

5.3.4 All prisoners were allocated a designated key worker to facilitate their support and engagement. Officers are obligated to perform key worker duties, including motivation and support, within the established daily timeframe. The anticipated contact time is 45 minutes per prisoner, per week, acknowledging the constraints of the prison's operational schedule and staffing resources.

### **5.4 Equality and diversity**

5.4.1 The role of the diversity and inclusion (D&I) team continued to show positive outcomes within the reporting period and provided exceptional support to these prisoners, in the Board's view. A diversity and inclusion officer now works within the safer prisons team and should be with D&I at least once or twice a week, although this still appears to be somewhat random. However, there is an emphasis on the officer taking care of the social care side of things, and this can often be tackled whilst in the SPT environment. The officer will also be the main officer detailed for any D&I events if possible.

5.4.2 The full-time business administrator, who joined in December 2023, has become an integral part of the smooth running of the team and there are positive dynamics within the working environment, in the Board's view. The team continues to be supported once a week by two members of the Ipswich and Suffolk Council for Racial Equality (ISCARE), based on the north and south sites, who are instrumental in helping to run the forums and providing staff training.

5.4.3 In 2024, 70 discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs) were submitted, nine of which were not proceeded with, due to the complainant wishing to withdraw. A total of 61 were fully investigated, with the reasons for the complaints and the outcomes, as follows:

Race	34
Religion and belief	18
Disability	07
Age	1
Sexual orientation	0

Gender/sex	1
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A1 Indian	1
A2 Pakistani	4
A3 Bangladeshi	3
A9 Any other Asian background	4
B1 Caribbean	13
B2 African	8
B9 Any other Black background	12
M1 White and Black Caribbean	1
M2 White and Black African	1
M3 White and Asian	1
M9 Mixed – any other background	1
O9 Any Other	2
W1 British	12
W3 Gypsy or Irish Traveller	7
W9 Any other White background	2

Upheld	5
Partially upheld	7
Inconclusive	11
Not Upheld	38
Withdrawn/resolved	

5.4.4 Throughout 2024, the number of foreign national prisoners dipped significantly, with many being moved to HMP Huntercombe, a designated establishment for foreign national prisoners. Last year, there were approximately 240 foreign national prisoners (not including 19 Irish nationals) in the prison. This year's figures stand at 172 (plus 14 Irish nationals). Although Albanians are still the group with the highest number of men in the prison, this has dropped dramatically to 28 (plus around four with confirmed British citizenship).

The charity, the Prisoners' Advice Service, specifically for foreign national prisoners, visited the north site of HMP Highpoint in January 2024 and the south site in July 2024.

The charity, Lives Not Knives, gave a presentation during the summer on how they are working with children and young adults in a preventative way against knife crime. Prisoners took part in a 24-hour sponsored physical challenge, raising over £1000 for the charity.

## **5.5 Faith and pastoral support**

5.5.1 During the reporting period, the chaplaincy team consisted of one Roman Catholic deacon, plus two Muslim chaplains and three Christian chaplains. Jewish, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Humanist, Pagan and Jehovah's Witness chaplains also made regular visits. In addition, there was a managing chaplain.

5.5.2 One-to-one sessions with a member of the chaplaincy team continued, and there was a confidential phone line to the Samaritans, as well as a private prayer line, all of which seemed to be well used by prisoners. Services and faith festivals were held regularly, although services occasionally had to be cancelled due to staff shortages. There were also Christmas services and Carol services.

5.5.3 Prisoners had access to a bereavement counselling service, provided in the main by the charity Cruse Bereavement Support. This was frequently oversubscribed, and not enough counsellors were available to meet the demand. The Board considers that the bereavement support provided by the chaplaincy in HMP Highpoint continued to be exceptional and should, once again, be noted.

5.5.4 This reporting year saw the continuation of a number of courses for prisoners, such as the Alpha course (an evangelical Christian course), which can help prisoners deal with loss, and the Sycamore Tree Victim Awareness course. The Sycamore Tree course has, again, been particularly popular and well attended and there is a waiting list. As noted in last year's report, some groups, such as the Bible study group, did not take place due to a lack of staff. The chaplaincy team continued to facilitate a weekly singing group, led by a talented prisoner.

5.5.5 Compassionate visits were in evidence throughout the year and were much appreciated by the prisoners and their visitors. It was felt by the chaplains, however, that the conditions of approval for these needed to be still tightly controlled.

5.5.6 Support for prisoners and staff continued to be available when there was a death in custody; the chaplaincy team was informed, as a matter of course, when this occurs.

5.5.7 Much of the work of the chaplaincy team continues to be in providing one-to-one support to prisoners daily, regardless of any expressed faith, in a variety of situations, and appears to be highly valued by the prisoners who seek it.

## **5.6 Incentives schemes**

5.6.1 Incentives schemes are available for prisoners as a way of encouraging them to 'do the right thing for the right reason' in order to earn enhancements. Last year, if a prisoner received a negative incentives scheme ruling, his television would be taken away. However, this year, it was up to the prison to decide if the negative ruling warranted the television being removed from the prisoner.

5.6.2 Positive behaviour, including assisting staff, aiding fellow prisoners and active rehabilitation participation, are recognised with increased incentive levels. Conversely, disruptive conduct and rule violations result in decreased levels.

5.6.3 The allocation of incentive levels to prisoners is predicated on feedback received from custodial staff with direct prisoner contact. In the event of a negative level adjustment,

prisoners are afforded the opportunity to lodge an appeal, which shall be subject to review by a custodial manager.

5.6.4 Prisoners on the enhanced (top) level of the incentives scheme enjoy specific benefits, such as living in designated areas, having access to cooking and experiencing greater freedom of movement.

## 5.7 Complaints

5.7.1 Prisoners may file a standard complaint (COMP1) regarding Prison Service matters within three months of the incident. Responses are typically provided within five working days. Dissatisfied prisoners can appeal, via a COMP1A, and further escalate it to the Independent Prisoner Complaint Investigations (IPCI).

5.7.2 Complaints concerning prison staff should be submitted as a COMP2 to the Governing Governor. Response timelines for all complaint stages are detailed in section 5.7.4.

5.7.3 From the Board's observations, complaint forms (COMP1s and COMP2s) were readily accessible on all prison wings throughout 2024. The prison received 3,277 complaints during the year, an increase from 3,169 in 2023. A significant portion of these complaints related to property access and transfers (see 5.8).

### 5.7.4 Forms and response times

Action	Time limit
Submission of complaint by prisoner	Within three months of the incident or the circumstances coming to the prisoner's attention
Stage 1 response	5 working days
Stage 1 response to complaint against member of staff	10 working days
Stage 1 response to complaint involving another establishment	10 working days
Stage 1 response with an equality aspect	5 working days
Resubmission by prisoner of complaint stage 2 (appeal)	Within one week of receipt of the stage 1 response
Stage 2 response	5 working days
Stage 2 response to complaint against member of staff	10 working days
Stage 2 response to complaint involving another establishment	10 working days
Confidential-access complaint to the Governor	5 working days
Confidential-access complaint to prison Group Director	6 weeks
Response to complaint about a reserved subject	6 weeks

## **5.8 Property**

5.8.1 During the reporting year, the Board received 59 applications (prisoners' written representations) concerning lost property, compared with 60 in 2023.

5.8.2 When property is missing, lost or not put on the transport, the Board advises prisoners to complete the Prison Service complaints procedure, Comp 1, or Comp 1A, followed by a COMP2. If the prisoner is not satisfied with the response, the Board advises him to divert his enquiry to the Independent Prisoners' Complaints Investigation (IPCI).

5.8.3 Should a prisoner's property be mislaid, a Board member can try to resolve the matter. If the Board member cannot help resolve the issue after talking to the reception staff, the prisoner is advised to complete the Prison Service complaints procedure. Should the prisoner still not have received a satisfactory response, he can then send a complaint about lost property to the IPCI.

5.8.4 The Board has been advised that a prisoner can no longer phone the IPCI and must communicate through the IPCI form, complete with copies of all COMP forms. This causes problems for those prisoners who have difficulty with writing.

5.8.5 Notwithstanding the revised Prisoners' Property Policy Framework, the Board continues to be concerned about the loss or delay of prisoners' property in transfer between establishments.

5.8.6 Lost or missing property leads to unnecessary time being spent trying to locate the item and, most significantly, frustration and disgruntlement among prisoners. Items are not necessarily of monetary value, but, more significantly, of personal and emotional value to the prisoner. Loss of such belongings can severely affect the wellbeing of all prisoners, particularly those serving longer sentences.

5.8.7 Prisoners who are serving life imprisonment and those given Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentences are allowed to have one parcel sent in on their birthday, which should comprise no more than six items. Other prisoners can request a parcel to be allowed in at any time, which should comprise no more than six items.

5.8.8 During the reporting year, the reception received a total of 1,537 parcels. They are processed and checked by the security department. On a number of occasions, contraband items were found in incoming parcels.

## **6. Health and wellbeing**

### **6.1 Physical healthcare**

6.1.1 Healthcare has been provided by Practice Plus Group and Rehabilitation Services on both the north and south sites since October 2020

6.1.2 One permanent GP retired in 2024, leaving the prison with a permanent GP and a bank GP, along with a full-time advanced nurse practitioner and an agency nurse practitioner. During the reporting year, another advanced nurse practitioner started their training.

6.1.3 It is the role of the 'emergency technician' (this is a health professional, usually temporarily employed through an agency) to assess the severity of a health issue in the first instance and decide whether a visit to A&E is required. There is also a physiotherapist assigned to the prison, who attends on a 'need only' basis.

6.1.4 Whilst most consultations with a healthcare professional were conducted face-to-face, phone calls were made directly to prisoners as a way to relay information such as blood test results, for example.

6.1.5 The level of care provided by Practice Plus Group continued to achieve a green rating across the majority of metrics during 2024.

6.1.6 On-site health screening continued throughout 2024. This ensures that certain life-threatening illnesses, such as bowel cancer and aortic aneurisms (plus inherited conditions such as glaucoma), can be detected early through mobile screening units brought into the establishment.

6.1.7 During the reporting year, the number of prisoners who did not go to their appointments (these are referred to as 'did not attend', or DNAs), have been an issue. Despite efforts to resolve this, the number remains above a 10% threshold.

6.1.8 A nurse-led, seven-days-a week service was provided during 2024, involving, on average, four nurses each day, assisted by support workers on the south site, with 2-3 nurses on the north site.

6.1.9 Out-of-hours assistance was provided via the NHS 111 service and paramedic/emergency ambulance call out. If a prisoner needed to attend the local hospital for treatment, officers were deployed to facilitate this.

## 6.1.10

### Q3 Activity Data:

Overall an operationally busy quarter, slight decline in the secondary screening data but this has been impacted by staff absence and annual leave. All patients have been screened but some not within the 7 days timescale. Clinical Lead has reviewed the process to ensure the wider nursing team are able to assist with the secondary screening.

GP DNA's are being monitored and all DNA's are followed up to ensure patients are aware of their appointment.

General Indicators	Target	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24
First Night Screenings	>=95%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Second Screenings	>=95%	74.0%	85.5%	71.5%
PERS seen at Reception	>=90%	99.4%	100.7%	97.9%
Medical Records Reviewed - Transfer In Sites	>=95%	99.4%	100.7%	100.0%
Medical Records Reviewed - Remand/Reception Sites	>=55%	99.4%	100.7%	100.0%
ESA Compliance	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A
GP DNA Rate	<10%	26.3%	20.8%	24.3%
MPCCC (Care Co-Ordinator Assigned Where Needed)	>=90%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Positive quarter for in-possession statuses and supply on transfer and discharged, Pharmacy team have changed processes to ensure all medication reconciliation are completed within the 72 hours.

Medication Indicators	Target	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24
Formulary Adherence	>=90%	-	-	-
Medicines Reconciliations	>=95%	98.2%	94.5%	95.8%
Omitted Doses	<20%	26.3%	N/A	N/A
In Possession Statuses (active arrivals)	100%	100.0%	97.9%	100.0%
Supply on Transfer Out (from your establishment)	100%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Supply on Discharge/Court (from your establishment)	100%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

## 6.2 Mental healthcare

6.2.1 The mental health team is employed by Practice Plus Group. It is commissioned to assess, treat and support prisoners with secondary mental health problems. The mental health team covers both sites and aims to have a member of the team on both sites every day.

6.2.2 There are two permanent members of the team, two bank nurses and one agency nurse who work full-time in the team. A new psychiatrist was appointed in 2023, who works with the team three days a week.

6.2.3 The mental health team has a caseload of 29 prisoners and is commissioned to see people within five working days. It achieved this 98% of the time. It continues to actively recruit staff.

6.2.4 During 2023, the mental health team continued to develop relationships with outside agencies, which includes teams across the country. It has been working closely with discipline staff to manage prisoners with more challenging behaviour.

6.2.5 The mental health team continues to attend meetings, including mandatory segregation reviews and safety intervention meetings (SIMs).

6.2.6 Prisoners on ACCT plans are seen regularly in accordance with their care plan.

6.2.7 Prisoners with anxiety disorders are referred to the improving access to psychological therapies (IAPT) service, provided by the Forward Trust and commissioned by the NHS.

## 6.3 Dental healthcare

6.3.1 Community dental services are commissioned directly from NHS England. Personnel include two dentists and a dental nurse, with time divided between the north and south sites. During the pandemic, a significant backlog was generated, but prisoners are now being seen within normal parameters.



6.3.2 During the reporting year, the dental team was left with only one dentist for the first few months of the year, due to maternity leave. The remaining dentist only works on a Monday and had to cover both the north and south sites. This had an impact on the dental team's waiting lists or the first few months of the reporting year. However, emergency patients were seen as a priority.

6.3.3 A new dentist was appointed in the last months of 2024 and the team is providing extra dental appointments to catch up on the backlog.

6.3.4 The number of prisoners who did not attend their appointments (these are referred to as 'DNAs') was higher than usual during 2024. Appointment forms are sent, so patients should be attending as requested.

6.3.5 The prison dental team won the National Dental Team of the Year award in December 2024, after their work was assessed by a national panel of judges and the care of the prisoners reviewed.

6.3.6 Positive feedback from all patients who filled out feedback forms and no formal complaints logged for Q3.

6.3.7 A new dental chair was installed on the south site in May 2024.

## **6.4 Social care**

6.4.1 The diversity and inclusion team leader is also responsible for social care, overseeing the requirements of prisoners with disabilities. However, a dedicated officer from the safer prisons team has been given the role of ensuring that referrals are completed and a database is maintained.

6.4.2 Suffolk Social Services made frequent visits to the healthcare centre. However, concerns over the detailing of a prison officer to support and stay with the visitor arose and a new agreement was put in place locally so, hopefully, this is the start of a smoother process.

6.4.3 There were still quite a few needs' assessments, and social care was provided by external sources wherever possible, such as Suffolk Adult and Community Services, for example. When a prisoner required special equipment, Suffolk Adult and Community Services visited the prisoner to assess his needs and provide appropriate support, equivalent to what he would receive in the community.

6.4.4 The prison also worked with NHS Wheelchair Services and obtained four wheelchairs specifically for prisoners who need to use them on a daily basis. These are 'on loan' and assigned and fitted solely for particular prisoners; they are listed on their property cards and will relocate with them if they are transferred or released from prison (as was the case with one prisoner in June).

6.4.5 Prisoners identified as men of concern were discussed at morning meetings and had 'write-ups' in the daily briefing report.

6.4.6 Peer support was provided, wherever required, with 'Buddies'. This could be physical support or help for those who are neurodiverse. Buddies were given a standard training run-through of 'dos' and 'don'ts' and were required to sign a compact to abide by these.

6.4.7 There are still no special units at HMP Highpoint, and end-of-life-care support is provided on the units until transfer to the local hospice is appropriate. The Board notes there is a good working relationship with the local hospice.

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

6.5.1 During 2024, the gym team lost a physical education instructor (PEI). Two members of staff seconded to the gym had both passed their pre-selection for the job so, by the end of 2024, the gym was operating with 10 PEIs from a target staffing figure of 12. However, two additional staff were seconded to the gym to undertake sports and games while recruitment took place. Over the past 12 months, the gym had extremely few staff redeployments, and session cancellations were virtually non-existent, apart from when there were any major incidents in the prison.

6.5.2 Attendance at the gym remained high in 2024, with figures most days totalling over 85% of total capacity.

6.5.3 During 2024, the gym ran four Level 2 Personal Trainer qualifications in the gym and three Level 2 Fitness Instructor qualifications. These were all 12-week courses which ran full time consistently over the reporting period.

All courses started with 12 prisoners taking part and the courses were run alongside the Northampton Saints Foundation, which provided two staff twice a week to help deliver and teach rugby, rugby values and core skills. These courses are always popular; prisoners attend an open day and are then picked according to who they performed on the day.

6.5.4 Gym staff also delivered several first aid at work and full first aid courses during 2024, as well as helping to organise and run several staff wellbeing days.

6.5.5 In the summer, 12 prisoners completed a fitness challenge for the charity, Lives Not Knives, in London. Throughout the day, any prisoner could attend the gym and contribute 'metres' towards the challenge; overnight, the 12 prisoners, along with three PEIs and a few officers, volunteered to do a 12-hour shift to complete the challenge. This raised over £1500 for charity, with lots of prisoners donating.

6.5.6 In August, the PE department and Northampton Saints Foundation (rugby club) completed the National Three Peaks Challenge to raise money for the Foundation. This involved climbing the three highest peaks in the UK in 24 hours. Two current PEIs, one former PEI, three staff from the Saints Foundation and three ex-prisoners (who had all completed the Level 2 course at Highpoint) took part. This was, again, a massive success, with everyone involved having a great time; over £2000 was raised for the Foundation.

## **6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation**

6.6.1 There have been some changes and, sadly, some struggles during 2024 with the incentivised substance free living (ISFL) unit, 11, due to the loss of some strong peer support on the unit (see 6.5.5). But, with a change of staff and working closely with the head of residence, the Board believes the ISFL will be in a strong place.

6.6.2 Units 6, 7 and 11 have been completing their compact based drug testing (CBDT). This is an administrative procedure designed to provide motivation for prisoners who want to be tested for non-controlled drugs in order to help promote and support a drug-free environment.

6.6.3 The prisoners were willing to carry out the drug tests during 2024 and appear to be happy with the Highpoint-designed CBDT logbook, which tracks their tests and shows their progression in desisting from illicit drug use. These books have been tailored to allow prisoners to list services they work with and to write a little about their story so far to minimise the number of times they need to repeat this, as it can bring up past traumas.

6.6.4 All ISFL units have had a new staff group, who have been trained in CBDT testing. Phoenix Futures delivers information on drugs and training about how to adjust the language used for those in recovery, due to a diverse need or mental struggle of addiction.

6.6.5 Unit 11 suffered an important loss in peer support with two long-standing ISFL orderlies moving on to other prisons in 2024. This has impacted the programmes. Part of the action plan with the new staff group is to implement group games and programmes again by June 2025. All ISFL units are getting commercial ovens, which will support cooking programmes.

Unit 11 gained an extra room in 2024, which had been refurbished. This created space for board games and arts and crafts, which freed up the relaxation meeting room for prisoners. This new room also has a chilled water filter to help with the cost of living, as in, prisoners can save money by not needing to buy bottled water from the canteen.

The Board recognises and commends the great efforts of the ISFL team, which helps prisoners who want to extricate themselves from drugs within the establishment.

## **6.7 Neurodiversity**

6.7.1 The role of the neurodiversity support manager (NSM) throughout 2024 has had a positive impact on prisoners with neurodivergent needs, in the Board's view. We have seen a greater awareness among both staff and prisoners of the challenges faced by those with neurodivergent needs.

6.7.2 During the reporting year, collating data for neurodiverse prisoners was updated. A total of 269 one-page profiles for prisoners were created and added to the Nomis (national offender management system) under the hidden disability alert tab. These were a mixture self-referral cases, along with referrals by members of staff in all areas of the prison, including officers and staff from Phoenix Futures and Forward Trust.

6.7.3 Drop-in sessions were conducted regularly by the neurodiversity orderlies. The orderlies visit a unit/wing morning/afternoon, making staff aware that they are there and why. Collecting referrals and alerting the men they are there for discussion/support. During the drop-in sessions, the orderlies discuss and make a note of any issues/ concerns/ suggestions they may have. These are then relayed back to the NSM for further discussion or action, depending on the nature of the information.

6.7.4 One-page profiles were completed during this time, as well as equipment given. Equipment comprises fidget items, activity packs, noise-cancelling ear defenders, ear plugs and painting-by-numbers booklets.

6.7.5 In 2024, two common issues arose. Some prisoners with neurodivergent needs struggled to understand the canteen sheets, which can be too 'wordy' and the writing too small. The comments regarding the canteen sheets will be considered when a new supplier is being sought. In the meantime, the officers can enlarge the sheets, or the neurodiversity orderlies can support those who are struggling. The second issue was that the unit staff sometimes had limited understanding of the challenges faced by neurodiverse prisoners. In 2024, training began weekly for new staff starters and full neurodivergent training has been delivered on training days.

6.7.6 The NSM, along with the reading specialist, started a creative writing course called Poetry in Motion in 2024. This was developed to support and encourage fathers to engage with their children/grandchildren.

## **7. Progression and resettlement**

### **7.1 Education, library**

7.1.1 Education in the prison is delivered by People Plus and offers City & Guilds and Gateway qualifications. There were 810 enrolments on accredited courses, with 585 achievements, and 150 enrolments on unaccredited courses, all of whom completed the courses. On digital prison service (DPS) computer, there were 485 enrolments, with, again, all the prisoners completing the courses.

Open University (OU) and distance-learning courses continued to be supported, with 13 prisoners following the former, and eight on other distance-learning courses. Vocational Training in North offers places for 50 prisoners, with City & Guilds qualifications in brickwork, plastering and carpentry, motor mechanics, multi-skills and barbering. There was a 79% achievement in vocational training, with outreach support in English and maths.

7.1.2 HMP Highpoint was working with the University of East Anglia as part of the unique CRITO Project, teaching accredited courses on philosophy and literature. Taster sessions were held from April to September, when prisoners could then enrol for the rest of the course. This project ceased in October.

7.1.3 Art classes changed to part-time (either morning or afternoon) and ran for 10 weeks for each prisoner on the south site, making them available to more prisoners. Entries were submitted for the Koestler Awards for arts in criminal justice, with 10 prisoners receiving awards. One prisoner had an exhibit at the South Bank.

7.1.4 A disadvantage for both staff and prisoners is that prisoners can be transferred (either between north and south sites, or to another prison) without reference to the education department. This can be a problem, as vocational training is not offered on the south site and art is not offered on north site.

7.1.5 Staffing was stable, with two supply cover tutors and three permanent tutors. Managers covered any absences due to staff sickness or holidays. Classes were only ever disrupted for planned closures. Both libraries were able to remain open, except in cases of staff sickness.

7.1.6 All new prisoners were seen two days after arrival by staff from education, the library and information, advice and guidance (IAG, provided by the Forward Trust). These sessions were held in the education department. Every effort was made beforehand to establish each new prisoner's learning needs and disabilities in order to facilitate an individual learning plan. Those with low attainment were strongly advised to attend maths and English classes. These were obligatory before enrolment in some other classes, such as carpentry. There was also screening and support for neurodiverse prisoners.

7.1.7 The full-time inclusion support co-ordinator works within industries (where prisoners produce goods to be commercially sold) to support prisoners with learning difficulties.

7.1.8 The Board is pleased to note that both libraries have open sessions on a rota basis, including evening sessions on the south site. Prisoners studying Open University courses often choose to use the library because it is a quieter environment. The delivery service to units continued to facilitate the borrowing of DVDs, which can only be loaned out for one week. A new library guide is available for use during induction and on the units.

7.1.9 Shannon Trust, a registered charity working in prisons in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, trains and inspires people in prison who can read and are numerate to

teach those who can't. In 2024, there were 106 new reading learners in HMP Highpoint, and 914 teaching sessions were held.

7.1.10 Storybook Dads, where prisoners can record a story on CD or DVD for their children, is running very successfully on both sites. Monthly prisoner reading groups and creative craft groups run on both sites.

7.1.11 A consultant came in four times during the year to deliver traffic management to 10 prisoners, as well as monthly to enable prisoners with less than four years to serve to obtain their CSCS card so they can work in construction. These are very well attended, with an excellent achievement rate.

## **7.2 Vocational training, work**

7.2.1 Waiting lists are live and change daily. They continue to be held for vocational courses, which reflects the number of prisoners who have the correct levels for course criteria. Waiting lists may have appeared long, but they were in keeping with prisoners who were able to sequence their digital personal learning plan (DPLP). Prisoners often made multiple applications for work placements, which also affected waiting lists.

7.2.2 Figures were published daily, showing details of prisoners classed as 'intentionally unemployed'. Efforts have been increasing to investigate reasons for this and to reduce the number.

7.2.3 Within the Prison Education Framework (PEF) provision, the newer courses in plastering, art, employability and peer mediation continued. Core functional skills and vocational courses, short courses for the construction skills certification scheme (CSCS), food safety and comedy scriptwriting all continued from the previous year. A multi-skills taster course was instigated on the north site, bringing all vocational workshops together in one location. There was no tutor for the catering course, which was suspended. Good use was made of dynamic purchasing scheme (DPS) funding for gym courses and the excellent Railtrack course, which offers guaranteed employment on release.

7.2.4 Chrome books were used to support OU and distance learning, CV preparation and gym courses.

7.2.5 Courses run during the reporting year included:

- Addictive behaviour
- Level 2 gym
- Parenting
- Thinking Change
- Violence Reduction
- Street Works
- Data Cabling
- Banksman
- EUSR/CSCS course
- Mediation
- Outreach employability
- Personal track safety
- Biohazard
- Counter-balance forklift
- Level 1 horticulture
- Level 1 wing cleaning

- Plant Construction

A weekly chess club is also run through DPS, and HMP Highpoint jointly represented England in an online international chess competition.

7.2.6 During the reporting year, a prison employment lead and a neurodiversity support manager (NSM) were appointed. An education, skills and work manager was in post for a short while, and a replacement was recruited for 2024.

7.2.7 There were two construction work fairs, one attended by 87 prisoners and representatives from 16 employers, and the other by 67 prisoners and 10 employers. There were two employability sessions, run by Wates Construction. Job Centre Plus held two job fairs, attended by 69 and 45 prisoners, respectively, and a housing adviser was also present. Other forums addressed gym and leisure, Railtrack, construction, and east of England employers. This area makes a crucial contribution to the rehabilitation aims of the prison. Some of the companies offered outside recruitment days, post-release. Prisoners were targeted for these events, based on their interests, courses and the length of their sentence. There was also a talk from Inside Connections, given by its founder, ex-offender John Burton.

7.2.8 Monthly targets for post-release employment (i.e. six months after leaving prison) consistently exceeded the planned target of 16%, averaging 25%.

7.2.9 Railtrack: during the reporting year, the prison delivered a Personal Track Safety (PTS) course in partnership with City & Guilds, which was fully funded by Department for Education. This vocational training qualification comes with a guaranteed job, working on the railways, on release. HMP Highpoint is unique in that it is now able to offer three types of qualification, with the infrastructure for Signalling and Overhead Lines now in place.

City & Guilds learning initiatives: the Governor provided the following update on the many achievements to date and next steps:

- Personal Track Safety (PTS): In June 2022, the team secured £65,000 of funding for 40 metres of track, which has been delivered. Since August 2022, Highpoint has delivered 15 PTS courses, with 148 prisoners graduating and 103 leaving prison. Of these 103 leavers, 53 are working in rail and a further 17 in other sectors. This was helped by wraparound support provided by City & Guilds. In 2024-2025, a further six cohorts will be delivered and another six in 2025-2026. The Governor asked if there was feedback on the quality of the training, which SP confirmed was of the highest standard, evidenced by the success rate and continuing partnerships.
- Telecommunications and Signalling (T&S): in the summer of 2024, £50,000 of funding was secured from the Clothworkers' Company, which fully funded the installation of a set of signalling.



T&S is more specialised than PTS, with courses commencing in the fourth quarter of 2024 and comprising three eight-week courses with eight learners per course. As per PTS, this will offer guaranteed employment on release for the learners.

OLEC: through a partnership with City & Guilds, a new relationship has been forged with Keltbray Infrastructure Services, which has significant connections in rail and has donated

equipment and staffing, resulting in the installation of overhead lines. Training on this new discipline will commence in 2025.

**HMP Highpoint: Rail Training Centre of Excellence** The vision for this is to create a rail training centre of excellence for HMPPS with 120 prisoners per year becoming qualified and offered guaranteed employment on release. This offering will be extended to other prisons with prisoners already being transferred in to complete the course and then return to their 'home' prison for discharge. All aspects, apart from the live track walk out can be provided in a custodial setting. Training is offered to learners during the last 6 months of their sentence.

Contractors that have supported the above include:

- City & Guilds
- Network Rail
- Keltbray Infrastructure Services
- Clothworkers' Company
- RSG Rail Safe Group
- Fullmen
- RT Infrastructure Solutions

### **Construction courses**

The Governor highlighted this new initiative, in partnership with Lynch, which was a significant undertaking. The offering will be provided on the prison's north site, with an old sports field identified as the ideal location for a construction site with heavy construction machinery. Security implications have been a major consideration. The courses will run for two weeks and will be delivered on the ratio of two trainers per four prisoners. It is hoped there will be 14 courses during 2025, so potentially 56 further learners, taking the overall total to 158, including the other programmes. The prison told the Board that the first course would start in December 2024.







## Electrical training

During the reporting year, the Board was advised that full facilities had been set up in workshop 7 for learners to gain Level 2 qualifications, such as being an electrician's mate, for example. However, this is not up and running, as it has been difficult to find employers willing to support the programme, without which funding can't be drawn down. The team is exploring different avenues with City & Guilds including, for example, working with Sizewell B.

## 7.3 Offender management, progression

7.3.1 As with our previous report, the backlog of work again showed a reduction compared with the previous reporting year. The use of laptops continued to be beneficial, particularly in facilitating meetings, such as with community offender managers (COMs, who are outside probation workers), for example. Prisoners were still arriving from other establishments without a sentence plan, adding to the workload of the offender management unit (OMU).

7.3.2 Staffing levels continued to improve during the reporting year, and caseloads were averaging at 56 cases, with the Probation Service averaging 65 cases. Operational staff, such as prison offender managers (POMs), however, were frequently redeployed to support the prison regime, which added to workload pressure on the department. Over the year, 1942 POM working hours were lost to redeployment among a staff. This was, however, a reduction of 579 hours compared with the previous year.

7.3.3 Prisoners' complaints were usually about not obtaining their hoped for move to category D status (this meant they could be eligible for transfer to an open prison), which some mistakenly considered to be their right. More prisoners were aware of who their POM was, and the key worker scheme often supported the work of the OMU.

7.3.4 Under normal circumstances, the handover process begins eight-and-a-half months before release. There were, however, occasions when prisoners were transferred to HMP Highpoint eight weeks prior to release, which hampered this process.

7.3.5 Another issue was that transfers to another establishment, when it was in the prisoner's best interests for reintegration into society, were not taking place.

7.3.6 The offending behaviour courses, Kaizen (which addresses issues of violence with high-risk prisoners) and the Thinking Skills Programme (TSP), were still much in demand, with a waiting list for both courses.

7.3.7 At least eight weeks prior to release, prisoners who are actively engaging, or who have previously engaged, with the substance misuse treatment service Phoenix Futures (or a service at a previous establishment) are seen and offered release planning.

7.3.8 Prisoners are encouraged to engage with community services on release, and referrals and signposting to other services are completed by Phoenix Futures staff as a regular part of their duties.

## **7.4 Family contact**

7.4.1 Social visits took place regularly on both sites. The busiest sessions were on Friday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons. Family days (both adults plus children, and adult-only sessions), which bring together men and their families outside of their statutory entitlement, usually in more informal settings, were held on a Wednesday and were much in demand. Family days for lifers and prisoners with indeterminate sentences (without a set release date) for public protection (IPP) were also held.

During the reporting year, the Board has taken two typical months to evaluate the number of social visitors for both the south and north sites:

- January 2024: adults, 1055; children, 338.
- June 2024: adults, 1300; children, 3491.

7.4.2 The charity, the Ormiston Trust, provided a welcome and check-in service for visitors, as well as childcare facilities, which were well equipped and well used. When Ormiston Trust note that a prisoner's partner is pregnant, they contact chaplaincy to suggest a compassionate visit following the birth (subject to security checks), to enable the father to bond with the baby.

7.4.3 Combat2Coffee (a support outlet for armed forces' veterans, including those in prison) provided hot drinks and food, and purchases could be made with contactless cards.

7.4.4 The chaplaincy team facilitated 74 compassionate and family visits on the prison site. Prisoners were also provided with in-cell phones, enabling them to contact approved numbers at their discretion.

7.4.5 The designation of HMP Highpoint as a London prison presented significant logistical barriers for families, including lengthy travel, financial burdens and inadequate public transport access.

## **7.5 Resettlement planning**

7.5.1 The probation pre-release team works directly with low- and medium-risk prisoners and acts in a supporting capacity for high-risk cases, which are the responsibility of the community probation service. All low- and medium-risk prisoners are seen by a member of the pre-release team approximately 12 weeks prior to release. A full assessment of needs is

completed, covering housing and a bank account, etc. From this point, the resettlement department can signpost prisoners to the relevant agencies, act as a link between them and liaise with the offender management unit and the community offender manager, as required.

7.5.2 During the reporting year, staffing in this department was reduced to two part-timers (from April), with one admin person added. On average, 50-60 prisoners were dealt with per month. During the reporting year, the prison released the following number of prisoners, within the Government's SD40 Earley Release Scheme. (To tackle overcrowding, some prisoners serving standard determinate sentences have a reduction in their sentence from 50% to 40%.)

- September: 187 prisoners were processed and released
- October: 138 prisoners were processed and released

Some support agencies were still not available: for example, there was still no qualified debt adviser in post.

7.5.3 Pre-release services were delivered by a team comprising one full-time and two part-time probation service officers, supported by an administrator and the wider probation management team. The pre-release team staffing level facilitated the processing of 50-60 prisoner cases per month. Nevertheless, a critical deficiency persisted in the lack of a qualified debt advisor.

7.5.4 Housing interventions were addressed through the deployment of a full-time St Mungo's worker, focusing on London-based accommodation and engaging with relevant stakeholders, and a part-time Interventions Alliance worker who provided general housing assistance.

## 8. The work of the IMB

At the start of the reporting year, there were seven Board members. During the reporting period, three members left, while three new members joined the Board in October and were in training.

### Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	17
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	7
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	10
Total number of visits to the establishment	478
Twice-weekly segregation reviews were regularly monitored throughout the year	104

### Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Reporting year 2023	Reporting year 2024
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	10	0
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	0	17
C	Equality	2	2
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	19	8
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	1	8
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	26	12
F	Food and kitchens	5	10
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	38	77
H1	Property within this establishment	27	17
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	33	42
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	1	2
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence), parole, release dates, re-categorisation	35	48
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	16	15
K	Transfers	29	10
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	59	39
	<b>Total number of applications</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>307</b>



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