



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Holme House

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

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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	8
5. Fair and humane treatment	12
6. Health and wellbeing	16
7. Progression and resettlement	19
 The work of the IMB	
Board statistics	22
Applications to the IMB	22
 Annex A	
Main service providers	23
 Annex B	
Graphs and tables	24

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Introductory sections 1 – 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

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

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

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

To enable the Board to carry out these duties effectively, its members have right of access to every prisoner and every part of the prison and also to the prison's records.

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

2. Description of the establishment

2.1 During 2024, HMP Holme House operated as a category C training and resettlement prison, holding convicted adult men (aged 18 and over). During the summer of 2024 it was announced that HMP Holme House was to be reclassified to a category B reception, training and resettlement prison, serving the courts of Teesside and parts of County Durham from January 2025 for men on remand and convicted prisoners (aged 18 and over). This change was prompted by growing capacity pressures across the estate, particularly within reception prisons.

2.2 The prison is part of the northeast prison group, together with HMP Durham, HMP Kirkclevington Grange and HMP Deerbolt. The majority of prisoners are from the local region, with a small number from further afield. 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 prison) of the prison during 2024 was 1,179¹, with a certified normal accommodation (CAN) of 1,036, which is the number of prisoners a prison can hold without being crowded. From January 2025, the operational capacity will reduce to 1152. Once the building works relating to a new houseblock are completed in 2025, the operational capacity will increase to 1173.

2.3 Since 2022, the prison has housed young people (18-25), as well as adults. During 2024, young people have typically made up to almost 15% (c.170 prisoners) of the prisoner population.

2.4 The prison consists of seven houseblocks, with one houseblock being used as a psychologically informed planned environment (PIPE) and one accommodating vulnerable prisoners. An incentivised substance free living unit (ISFL) is based in another block and veterans are accommodated together in part of a block. At the end of 2024, building works were progressing to erect an eighth houseblock, which will hold 20 prisoners.

2.5 There is an in-patient healthcare provision with 14 beds, and an end-of-life suite with two beds.

2.6 The segregation unit has a CNA of 28, which includes two special accommodation units (where items such as furniture, bedding and sanitation are removed in the interests of safety).

2.7 Education is delivered in three areas of classrooms and learning spaces (known as regimes). A suite of training kitchens and a bistro are available for catering training.

2.8 There are a number of workshops delivering services to the prison and other establishments, including a large laundry, plus DHL delivering the canteen service. Woodwork, upholstery and other workshops are available to train prisoners, where goods are manufactured for internal and a small number of external customers.

2.9 The garden and grounds maintenance service, along with yards and bins work, are based in external sheds and greenhouses.

2.10 The prison has a large, well-used gym and sports hall. A large kitchen, with an on-site bakery, provides work for prisoners, as well as delivering three meals (two meals and a packed breakfast) each day to over 1,100 people.

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

3. Key points

3.1 Main findings

Background

During the summer of 2024, it was announced that HMP Holme House would be reclassified as a category B reception, training and resettlement prison, serving the courts of Teesside and parts of County Durham from January 2025. This transition is a significant development, as the prison is now supporting both remand and convicted prisoners (aged 18 and over).

The impact of this change has led to a high number of activities needing to be completed in a very short timescale. These include physical building works, predominantly in reception and the court video suites, regime alterations, staff re-profiling and recruitment. The Board has observed the significant commitment to the re-role made by staff. Whilst such a major change has led to temporary disruptions - particularly for long-serving prisoners who have been transferred to accommodate the need to hold remand prisoners, the Board observed efforts being made to adapt and maintain stability. The daily prison regime has evolved to meet the needs of a category B establishment. The Board noted that some prisoners have experienced frustration and communication challenges during this period of transition.

The Board remains concerned about the recruitment and staffing level challenges the prison faces, particularly in maintaining staff morale and ensuring a continued focus on prisoner wellbeing.

Safety

- The prison has faced challenges to maintain a safe environment in 2024, with an increase in incidents of self-harm and violence among prisoners. The Board's view is that factors such as drug misuse and associated debt have contributed to these issues. Staff have actively managed these situations through the use of the assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) process, which is used to support prisoners who are at risk of self-harm and suicide, and necessary interventions. This is consistent with the data that evidences the increased use of force (UoF) levels.
- Efforts continue to enhance safety and security, including measures to reduce the presence of illicit items such as drugs and mobile phones.

Fair and humane treatment

- From the Board's observations, prisoners are generally treated well in the prison.
- Issues relating to loss of property have caused distress to some prisoners when they are at their most vulnerable.

Health and wellbeing

- Healthcare services provided to prisoners have been generally good, despite staffing shortages at times during the year.

Progression and resettlement

- The national processes, introduced in 2024 to help alleviate pressure on the Prison Service and involving the early release of a number of prisoners, did put pressure on the prison. Some prisoners did not finish their programmes and training plans prior to release.
- There has been a significant reduction in the levels of key worker support during the year, due to staff being deployed to other duties.

- The Board remains concerned about the lack, in both the number and the level, of educational qualifications achieved.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- Can the Minister reassure the Board that the major capital works to the roofs will be funded and executed during 2025? If no reassurance can be given, can the Minister explain why?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- Can the Prison Service advise the IMB why educational attainment has reduced over the last five years?

TO THE GOVERNOR

- Can the Governor provide assurance to the IMB that the re-role will not have a detrimental effect on the wellbeing and progression of all prisoners?
- Can the Governor advise what is happening in response to the increased level of prisoner self-harm?
- Can the Governor comment on the increase in Use of Force and whether it is at proportionate levels to similar prisons?
- Can the Governor confirm that there will be a review of prisoner wages in light of rising costs of items being stocked by the canteen?

3.3 Response to the last report

Issue raised	Response given	Progress
To the Minister Why is funding for essential repairs (both minor and capital works) being delayed or not made available?	<p>There will be two projects delivered this year... automatic fire detection in a number of cells and refurbishment of the showers on house block 1.</p> <p>Flooring for cells has been funded locally, commissioning for site roofing surveys and refurbishment, including workshops, laundry, gymnasium and visits' hall, will be carried out during 2024.</p>	<p>There has not been any shower refurbishment in house block 1 during 2024.</p> <p>At the end of the year, there was no indication when works would begin to remedy the significant defects to the roofs.</p>
To the Prison Service Can the vetting process be speeded up to ensure that new staff are in post without unnecessary delay?	<p>The current average processing time is 10 days. If the applicant gets the information needed...</p>	<p>We have been advised that the company that has the contract for the vetting</p>

	local feedback indicates that the process is now quicker since a new system was introduced in 2023.	is committed to completing the process (once all the necessary information has been received) in 25 working days. It appears that the recent average is 4-6 weeks.
Why is the Prison Service tied into a contract to purchase food from a company that has shortages, is inflexible and provides poor quality food on occasion? When will this contract be up for re-tender?	The impact of food inflation and supply chain challenges have impacted on the entire food sector... HMPPS can confirm that a review of the future food service is underway.	There is evidence that the review of future food services is underway, with a pilot project to nationalise recipes in progress.
To the Governor Despite many steps being taken, there are still significant numbers of illicit items, including phones, entering the prison each month. Does the Governor think that staff, contractors and prisoner security can be improved?	No response given.	
Although the ambience within the prison is generally good, disrepair is evident throughout the establishment, what is the Governor doing to improve this?	It is recognised that there has been issues with timeliness... and the Amey site team has been instructed to dedicate resources to recommissioning cells as soon as possible following any work.	There is evidence of progress on some repairs. However, there is evidence of some cells – such as those in the healthcare unit – being out of action for prolonged periods.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

During 2024, the reception team received convicted prisoners transferred from other prisons, principally from HMP Durham. From January 2025, the prison will start to receive remand prisoners, and the arrangements within reception are altering to accommodate this change.

During 2024 over 1,710 prisoners were transferred into the prison from other establishments.

The IMB observed the reception area to be well run, and prisoners being treated with care at what can be a very anxious and confusing time for them. One of the red band (trusted) prisoners in reception during 2024 was also Samaritan-trained as a Listener. Arriving prisoners are given food and a drink whilst they wait to be processed.

The transfer of prisoner property is an area that gave cause to a significant number of complaints. Observations in reception evidence that, on arrival, prisoner property is dealt with diligently. However, there continue to be times when not all of a prisoner's property arrives with them. In such cases, it may take weeks before property is found and relocated from the sending establishment.

Due to circumstances outside the control of HMP Holme House, prisoners sometimes arrived late in the afternoon (2-3pm) after being held in their previous prison ready for departure from early morning (this was prior to the re-role and additional resources being available). This late arrival time means that processes within reception must be actioned swiftly before the end of the usual working day.

Induction for mainstream prisoners starts on their first morning at Holme House daily (Monday to Saturday). We are pleased to report that all prisoners are required to undertake induction, even if they have been in Holme House previously. Sessions include meeting with a safer custody officer, Listener, a drug and alcohol recovery team (DART) staff member and the chaplaincy team.

New prisoners attend a session on their second morning, covering numeracy and literacy assessments, as well as employment opportunities. New prisoners do not move on from the first night wing until they are signed off as having undertaken induction.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

For the majority of 2024, the incidence of self-harm by prisoners was higher than in 2023 and 2022 (see Figure 4.2 in Annex B). A total of 928 self-harm incidents were recorded, involving 232 individuals. A total of 59 of these prisoners had self-harmed for the first time. The most common means of self-harm were cutting, strangulation, ligature and overdose.

A total of 632 assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) plans were opened or re-opened. There was an upward trend in the number of ACCTs, with a sharper increase from June, which also tracks the increase in self-harm incidents. The introduction of the new ACCT documentation (version 6.5) was delayed in the prison, because of printing issues.

The Board observed a significant number of ACCT reviews and has been pleased to see clear action and support plans being put in place to help self-harmers.

In March 2024, the safer prisons team introduced a self-harm trigger database, which was collated through ACCTs, the chaplaincy team, prison staff and partner agencies. The analysis is sent out to wing managers each month.

The main reasons prisoners gave for self-harming included wanting to move cell or house block, canteen and/or food issues, added days to sentence due to further penalties and medications and healthcare treatment. Feedback from prisoner representatives at safety meetings referred to some men challenging changes in the regime and adopting a culture in which they would self-harm to achieve a desired outcome.

At the end of 2024, the prison had 21 Samaritans-trained and supervised Listeners (prisoners who offer confidential emotional support to their peers). The Samaritans also launched a recruitment drive for new Listeners to take the places of the Listeners who were due to be released or transferred. The main issues prisoners raised with Listeners were transfers, mental health, family, staff issues and relationships. Prisoners can also phone Samaritans directly from their cells.

Some Listeners reported issues about not being unlocked when they were called on to support other prisoners. The IMB observed that, on occasion, the Listener suites on the main blocks required cleaning and were being used for other purposes.

Events were held during the year to assist in the prevention of self-harm. These included a 'time to talk day' for staff and prisoners; a national debt week, which involved a 'lived experience' speaker in the chapel; and a 'suicide prevention' day.

There were seven deaths in custody during 2024 (compared with five in 2023), five of which were, apparently, from natural causes and two were, apparently, self-inflicted. The Samaritans provide a support system entitled 'postvention' for staff and prisoners when a prisoner has died or taken his own life. In addition, a prisoner who was released from custody in 2024 died within 28 days of leaving the prison. The prison increased the number of trained family liaison officers from 10 to 14 during 2024.

The Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) investigates all deaths in custody and those within 28 days of release. The report into one of the prisoners whose death was self-inflicted noted that there were examples of how the mental health care the prisoner received was not of the required standard or quality. The investigation noted that the required observations in the prisoner's ACCT were not undertaken by the relevant officer. Subsequently, a staff member was dismissed in relation to this matter. The report into the other self-inflicted death made recommendations relating to mental health staff involvement in ACCT reviews and the assessment and referral process for secondary health provision. These were implemented in a healthcare action plan.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

The level of violence among prisoners was higher this year than in the previous year, with 324 incidents (39 recorded as serious) compared with 298 in 2023. The main reasons given for violence were retaliation, bullying and debt.

The number of incidents in which prisoners assaulted prison staff was considerably higher in 2024 (90 incidents) than in 2023 (40 incidents). Nine of these assaults were recorded as serious.

Challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIP) are used in managing prisoners who are a danger to others or vulnerable to harm through violent behaviour. Fortnightly CSIP meetings check that reviews of the plans are completed on time and document the facts and improvements.

There were 294 incidents of disorder, including 235 incidents at height (such as prisoners on the netting or climbing over bars or on the roof); 14 incidents in which prisoners barricaded themselves in cells; and 42 cell fires.

4.4 Use of force

Use of force has increased considerably since 2022, the first full year after the Covid lockdown.

- 2024: 856 (809 spontaneous and 47 planned interventions)
- 2023: 468 incidents
- 2022: 268 incidents

Figure 4.4 in Annex B shows the considerable increase in incidents from February, and the peak in August.

These data include occasions where a guiding hold was used which, in many cases, is sufficient for a prisoner to comply with an instruction. In 2024, a guiding hold was used 209 times. Officers have a duty of care for the safety of prisoners who are under the influence of illicit substances or have misused medications and they frequently have to escort/support them back to their cells.

The main reasons for force being used were:

- A refusal to relocate cell: 195 times (23%)
- Fights between prisoners: 116 times (13%)
- To prevent harm or an assault: 198 times (23%)
- Due to being under the influence: 88 times (10%)

Seven prisoners were subject to use of force on more than ten occasions, with force being used on one prisoner 21 times and another 15 times. There are distinct differences in the frequency of use of force between some house blocks.

PAVA incapacitant spray was drawn and used 24 times and drawn but not used 18 times. The drawing of PAVA is often sufficient to lead a prisoner to become compliant. A baton was drawn once in August but not used,

Special accommodation was used ten times in 2024. A body belt was not used during 2024.

A Board member regularly observed the use of force committee and scrutiny meetings. These view CCTV and body worn video camera (BWVC) footage, as well as officer statements of all incidents when the prisoner involved has complained. The 30-second pre-record facility on BWVCs has improved scrutiny of use of force incidents, as it can give evidence of the build up to, and context of, an incident. For much of 2024, there have been no prisoner representatives at the strategic meetings of the use of force committee, which we consider to be disappointing.

Analysis of the protected characteristics of prisoners subject to use of force shows no over representation of any race or ethnic group. During 2023, younger prisoners (18-25 years) were significantly over-represented in use of force incidents. However, in 2024, this pattern receded slightly, although this age group and the 25-29 year old age group remain over-represented in incidents where force is used.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

The prison faced an ongoing challenge to prevent illicit items entering the prison during the year. The common routes for illicit items into the prison were drones, visitors, letters and, possibly, staff and contractors. Whilst netting over some yards and the increased use of the prison drone scrutinising the perimeter have acted as deterrents for drone drops, it is clear that drones are able to access windows of house blocks with very good accuracy, which leads to illicit items entering the establishment swiftly.

Drugs are an ongoing threat to the stability of the prison and the wellbeing of prisoners and staff. Throughout 2024, prisoners were able to access drugs too readily, with an increase in the number of occasions when prisoners required medical assistance. The nature of the drugs taken means that side effects can be very unpredictable and can cause serious health risks. The Board notes that attending to prisoners who are 'under the influence' (UTI) has put strain on medical personnel and wing officers as they seek to respond promptly.

The passing of illicit items during social visits continued. The regional dogs' team is regularly in attendance during social visits. We welcome the sensitive nature in which the dog handlers operate when around visitors, particularly children and babies.

As in previous years, quantities of fermented liquid (hooch) were seized during 2024. The security team undertakes targeted searches using detector dogs. The Board notes that the search dogs are a regional resource and, therefore, have a number of priorities. However, the drug reduction programme funds two dogs and two officers, who are available during the week and at weekends.

During most months of the year, a number of mobile phones (and associated paraphernalia) were found in the prison (both small, basic models and larger models). As in previous years, the Board notes that the prevalence of phone finds is very concerning and indicates that there are channels available for phones to be entering the prison regularly.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

Accommodation

The appearance and cleanliness of the accommodation continues to be generally good and many of the accommodation-related issues noted in the 2023 report have either been addressed or are in the process of being addressed.

- The problem of plastic covers in the serveries has been resolved with the installation of new food heaters.
- More of the showers in the house blocks have been refurbished, although this is still not completed.
- The roof vents in house block 7 have undergone remedial work, which has rectified the original issues, although there are still periodic problems with heating.
- Funding has been secured to refurbish the servery areas.
- Issues centred on single cells being occupied by two people persist.
- The flooring upgrade on house block 1 on A wing is now complete.

Clothing

- The provision of clothing and bedding seems, generally, to be good although some shortages were reported during the year.

Food

- In 2023, the Board reported that the quality of the food had deteriorated. It is encouraging to observe that efforts have been made during 2024 to address this issue and there have been improvements in several areas, particularly with the pies and cooked food. Tentatively, there is evidence from the re-established food forum and kiosk messages that prisoners are recognising these developments. During the latter part of 2024, a significant number of the equipment issues have been resolved, including those concerning Bratt pans and boiling pans. Food-delivery trolleys have also been replaced and damaged serveries have been renewed with new warming trolleys, apart from those in house block 7, which are ongoing.
- Staff employed in the kitchens have already successfully gained nationally recognised qualifications and others are keen to continue doing this.
- The problems caused by food being supplied by one company remain. There are still shortfalls in deliveries, often reported to the catering manager at short notice, and replacements are not suitable. Understandably, this often raises complaints from the prisoners.
- Issues regarding staff shortages in the kitchen have, to a degree, been alleviated by introducing a new system where wing staff collect food from the kitchens and deliver food to house blocks 1 to 6.

5.2 Segregation

The segregation unit has 28 cells, including two special accommodation cells, two constant watch photochromatic cells, five 'trap' cells for prisoners believed to be secreting items within their system, and four anti-ligature cells. The remainder are regular cells but without TVs or fitted phones. In addition, the segregation has a large portable screen for use where a prisoner starts throwing items out of a cell.

During the year, special accommodation has been used 10 times. The Board notes that the duration of retention in special accommodation is typically short, usually a matter of hours.

Some prisoners refused to relocate from segregation back to house blocks because they reported being under threat on the house blocks.

Occupancy throughout the year remained high, typically being in double figures and, sometimes, approaching 20 prisoners. During the year, there have been periods of very challenging behaviour from prisoners held in segregation, causing disruption. IMB members observed this period and note that staff dealt with it professionally.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

Over 99% of prisoners were allocated a key worker. Unfortunately, the number of key worker sessions achieved has reduced significantly compared with 2023. This reduction has been primarily due to staffing problems in the prison, where staff have been diverted from key worker duties.

5.4 Equality and diversity

The prison holds a monthly diversity and inclusion forum. Membership includes departmental heads and prisoner representatives. It has operated throughout the year, monitoring and discharging the responsibilities of equality and diversity in all areas of prison life and, where necessary, identifying and taking remedial or improvement action. The data provided help to identify any potential disproportionality against protected characteristics across various facets of prison life, such as use of force, complaints, employment and the incentives scheme. Data indicate that over 40% of prisoners are considered to have some type of disability.

The meeting aims are to encourage prisoners and staff to report incidents of victimisation, harassment and discrimination within the prison by using the discrimination incident report form (DIRF) and to increase their confidence in the investigation processes and actions following the investigation findings. In 2024, 42 DIRFs were submitted (after those recategorised as complaints were excluded), seven of which were upheld.

During the year, the Board has noted a reduction in the bias towards many metrics indicating that the younger prisoners are disproportionately represented in areas such as the use of force, unemployment and the basic level of the incentives scheme. That stated, younger prisoners remained over-represented on many metrics.

A total of 12 work streams/focus groups operate to support protected characteristics. The Board is disappointed to note that some of these work streams have seen little activity during the year. The focus on the prison re-role in the latter months of 2024 appears to have impacted on the activity levels of some of the work streams.

The prison has recognised and celebrated special days in the diversity and inclusion calendar, such as Holocaust Memorial Day and Pride week.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The IMB does not have any concerns about the faith and pastoral care services in the prison.

From the Board's observations, the chaplaincy team works well and was consolidated during the year with the appointment of a number of new, permanent members of staff, including an Iman (after a period of struggling to appoint to this role). This consolidated team has developed a comprehensive service to all prisoners and not just those who attend services or register as having a faith on arrival in the prison.

All faiths appear to be accommodated, even those with only one or two members in the prison. The number of prisoners declaring a faith fluctuates. A broad breakdown shows at any one time:

- Prisoners with no faith registered: typically 400.
- Christian: typically around 500.
- Muslim: between 60 and 70.
- Pagan: between 10 and 15.
- Other faiths, including Sikh, Buddhism, Judaism and Hinduism: fewer than five each.

Key religious festivals were celebrated throughout the year, including arrangements being made to support Muslim prisoners during Ramadan and Eid, and Christian prisoners during Christmas and Easter. Many of the festivals involved prisoners in the planning. The team provides pastoral support to all prisoners with family problems, bereavement and other matters that require care and support.

5.6 Incentives schemes

The incentives scheme is designed to encourage positive behaviour and act as a deterrent against poor behaviour. During 2024, the Board welcomed the focus that has been placed on consistency in the use of the incentives scheme across each house block. Focus has been placed on promptly using the incentives scheme in relation to prisoners not attending training or work, as required. The percentage split between the three levels has become closer, with 43% on enhanced, 49% on standard and 9% on basic. Previously, three would be less than 5% on basic status.

5.7 Complaints

Prisoners submitted 2,541 complaints (Comp 1s) in 2024, similar to the total of 2,536 submitted in 2023. A total of 228 appeals (Comp 1As) were submitted. The category with the highest numbers of complaints related to property during transfers in and out or cell moves, with 432 complaints (17% of the total, excluding Comp 1As). Other complaints related to residential and cell matters, including repairs, heating, association, unlock, cell occupancy and noise, and amounted to 374 (15% of the total).

A relatively low number of responses to complaints (0.8%) were out of time, with the majority being attributed to delays by external establishments, mainly relating to property and transfer.

Prisoners often made negative oral comments to Board members about food quality and quantity, but only made 140 formal complaints (138 in 2023).

Quality assurance of the complaints process is undertaken for a sample of complaints received each month. These are checked against the standards set out in the Prisoners' Complaints Policy Framework. During 2024, an average of 12.3% of complaints received were checked each month.

The Board notes the attention given to the number and response times to complaints at the daily morning briefing.

Complaints related to healthcare and dentistry are handled through a separate complaints system that is administered by Spectrum.

5.8 Property

Delays in property travelling with prisoners being transferred to Holme House continued to cause distress, primarily because of the uncertainty associated with this. These situations can be complex as, often, the resolution involves other establishments.

Applications (prisoners' written representations) to the Board cover issues about property, including missing, lost or damaged property, as well as confiscated or withheld property, and property with uncertain ownership (where gifted from one to another but not recorded on

property card and authorised). Concerns with property whilst in prison remained the highest category of prisoner complaints during the year.

The number of applications to the Board relating to property has fallen (Annex B: Table 5.8). However, the Board is very mindful that any property going astray can be distressing for a prisoner.

The Board has been pleased to see the efforts being during the year (e.g. the focus at daily briefings) to ensure staffing is available to ensure property arriving is processed swiftly. However, the complaints data indicate that property remains an area of concern.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

Spectrum Community Health CIC is contracted to provide healthcare, including GPs, nurses, in-patient care and administrative support, and clinical and alcohol misuse treatment and pharmacy services, as well as overseeing dental care.

Healthcare services provided to prisoners have been generally good, despite staffing shortages at times during the year. Waiting times for the dental service have been supported by the addition of a weekend surgery.

Spectrum categorises complaints as 'formal' complaints and 'informal' (concerns). In 2024, there were 307 complaints and concerns raised (see Table 6.1 in Annex B) compared with 300 in 2023. Over half of the complaints and concerns were related to medication.

The staffing model was amended in 2024. Throughout the year, there have been vacancies. This, coupled with some instances of long-term sick, have meant that the staffing provision has been stretched. This has resulted in the use of more agency nursing to help to maintain the service.

The healthcare unit operates an out-patient department and has a 16-bed in-patient unit. The in-patient unit is a regional resource and caters for prisoners with physical, mental and social care needs. All patients have a care plan. During the year, a number of cells in the in-patient unit were unavailable for lengthy periods of time due to flooring repairs being required and repairs to beds (or new beds) needed.

The palliative care suite is also a regional resource, and the Board has observed patients (and their families) being treated with compassion and kindness.

6.2 Physical healthcare

Prisoners arriving at HMP Holme House have a healthcare screening.

The Board has monitored waiting times for routine GP and dentist appointments and has no current concerns. Specialist nurses see prisoners with long-term problems such as diabetes. An appointed nurse oversees health promotion, including patients' diets, spirometry, diabetes and tissue viability (this includes wounds and pressure sores).

A complex needs' register is kept, which has 42 prisoners on it, and is monitored by a specialist nurse. All prisoners who were eligible were offered Covid and flu vaccinations.

Some prisoners need to attend external appointments or receive medical care in local hospitals where their conditions warrant it. The IMB has observed such prisoners being treated with respect and care when leaving the prison on escort.

6.3 Mental health

The mental health team continued to provide services including speech and language therapy, dialectical behaviour therapy, eye-movement psychological intervention, cognitive-behaviour therapy, counselling and psychiatric consultations. Primary care assessment waiting times have been reported as being reasonable.

Mental health representatives attend initial ACCT reviews and follow-up reviews, where necessary. Two PPO reports on deaths in custody during the year made recommendations to the mental health services team. The Board noted that there is still pressure on available places within the secure mental health facilities in the region for prisoners whose conditions would benefit from this.

6.4 Social care

The management of social care assessment and provision is overseen by Spectrum. Equipment identified as required during occupational therapist assessment is provided through the Tees Community Equipment Service (TCES) for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC). An on-site sub-store of commonly provided equipment is kept, enabling timely issue of equipment. Commonly provided items include raised toilet seats, toilet frames and walking sticks.

During 2024, at least 60 referrals were made to social services, with some individuals having been referred more than once. The purpose of the referrals was to provide reasonable adaptations or to ensure personal social care could be delivered or to assess for ongoing care needs once released into the community. Six men have been supported with personal care, which is funded by social services.

SBC occupational therapists provided social care training for prisoners employed as carers. Several social carer training sessions have been held during the year. There has been a steady number of applications from prisoners to be social carers, and they are subject to suitability checks prior to being added to the waiting list for training. The Board notes that, in light of the ageing prison population, the need for prisoners to be employed as social carers will increase.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

During 2024, the prison has operated the full mandated regime. This means that all prisoners, except those in the segregation unit, have more than the minimum two hours each day out of their cell. Prisoners in the segregation unit have 30 minutes' exercise each day, plus a shower.

In September 2024, in preparation for the move to a category B reception prison, a revised residential core day regime was implemented. One of the main changes of this regime was that there is no in-cell association during association periods. The Board notes that, in the first few weeks of this revised regime, there were variances across house blocks in the operating of the regime, which led to prisoners being confused and frustrated. Although this has caused a few teething problems with regard to prisoners having access to toilets and their belongings during association, these matters have largely now been resolved.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

Substance misuse continues to be a significant problem in the prison, with illicit drugs being brought in via a variety of routes, including social visits, 'throwovers' and drones. The misuse of prescribed drugs and the fermenting of hooch also resulted in prisoners being under the influence, with many at risk of serious harm. Each day, a number of prisoners were found to be under the influence of illicit substances, which can lead to potentially life-threatening health risks, as well as put additional pressure on prison resources. The prison has in place a comprehensive recovery strategy that provides tailored solutions for all prisoners wanting help.

At any one time, almost half of the prison population is being helped by a non-clinical drug recovery programme (DRP), whilst the clinical drug and alcohol recovery team (DART) prescribed methadone to about one-sixth of prisoners during the year, with a smaller number relying on Buprenorphine. Two-thirds of prisoners taking methadone are on a maintenance dose, while the other third are on a reducing dose.

House block 6 is an ISFL (incentivised substance free living) unit, which has successfully delivered activities and programmes to help prisoners remain drug- and alcohol-free. The

Humankind (Waythrough) charity continued to deliver a recovery programme within the house block.

The programme leader continued to be creative and, together with the custody manager of the wing, expanded the animal-assisted input. This was an activity to improve the wellbeing of prisoners and offer meaningful activity by providing care for both the animals and the surrounding area.

Fifty-four prisoners graduated from the programme. Following graduation, many applied for, and were given, category D status (which means they were eligible for an open prison), or moved to house block 6 B wing to continue their maintenance by assisting other prisoners with a drug habit.

The status of B wing changed throughout the year, so it was housing other prisoners rather than only prisoners attempting to be drug free, because of overcrowding in the prison estate.

Other prisoners with drug and alcohol problems were supported by DART.

6.7 Soft skills, including the gym

The prison has continued to deliver several soft skills activities, including art-based therapies. HMP Holme House has a large, well equipped, gym, which is available to prisoners and staff. In addition, gym staff have organised a number of specialist events to encourage prisoners to participate. These include three personal activity development schemes (PADS), which are based on army basic training, three with Hartlepool United Football Club staff, two rugby league coaching courses with the Doncaster team and two in-house tennis training sessions. Unfortunately, despite the quality of gym equipment and its availability, plus the work done by staff, attendance at the gym has fallen from 34% of the population in 2023 to 28% in 2024.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, Library

Education

Novus is contracted to deliver education services in the prison. Formal education for English and maths with City & Guilds courses is available to prisoners. These are aimed at practical knowledge, rather than formal academic qualifications.

Novus' contractual targets for course completion are 65% for English and 50% for maths, and these modest targets are achieved. However, the prison target of 80% for both is rarely, if ever, achieved, being more in the 70% range. The reasons for the difference include tutor absence, prisoner refusal to participate, preferring other work, and prisoners leaving the courses before completion or to attend other appointments. The prisoner release schemes during the year adversely affected performance, as many prisoners left without completing training and education plans.

The Board remains concerned about the lack, in both the number and the level, of educational qualifications achieved.

Library and the Shannon Trust

The library has functioned throughout the year with the service provided by Stockton Borough Council. The Shannon Trust is staffed by its employees and volunteers. The library is available to all prisoners. In-patients and those in the segregation unit are supplied by delivery when required. All areas do participate, with more than 10,000 books being issued over the year. However, the Board continues to note that the library services report that they are underused.

The Shannon Trust has operated throughout the year, helping prisoners who do not feel able to attend formal education courses, to learn to read and develop basic maths skills. Shannon Trust engagement over the year has been 12-15 English learners at any one time and 3-4 learning maths. It is noteworthy that the maths learners usually follow on from completing the English course.

7.2 Vocational training, work

Vocational training

The prison continues to offer vocational training opportunities; these are centred on various workshops, including woodworking and furniture refurbishment. During the second half of the year, bathroom installation was added, with kitchen installation hoped to follow later. There were problems during the year when services were not delivered, in part due to staff shortages but also because the roof window lights in the wood mill were unsafe.

Work

Work opportunities included the laundry, DHL and bins and stores, in addition to employment activities on the house blocks (such as server workers and cleaners). The laundry ceased external commercial contracts because the condition of the roof meant that continuity of work could not be guaranteed. This resulted in a significant reduction in work for prisoners employed there, which lasted throughout 2024. The laundry is a very large workshop, which would provide considerable employment and commercial opportunities were it able to work to capacity.

As in previous years, prisoners on house block 7 (which holds vulnerable men) have a restricted range of work activities available to them, including gardening, waste management

and the manufacture of 'boxer shorts' for the Prison Service. Prisoners on his house block also work for DHL, pick-packing the canteen for Holme House and other prisons.

The need to physically separate prisoners convicted of sexual offences (PCoSOs) from other prisoners makes it difficult to broaden the range of available activities and educational opportunities for this cohort.

The IMB notes that monies paid to prisoners in prison employment and training have not increased and are not keeping up with the rising costs of items available for prisoners to purchase through the canteen system.

7.3 Offender management, progression

The introduction of the standard determinate sentence (SDS40) increased the workload of the offender management unit (OMU), which had an impact on prisoners in terms of reduced contact time. However, against this, the initiatives developed in the recent past, such as key worker meetings and in-cell phone technology, continued to be of real benefit, although key worker sessions were significantly reduced.

Although prison offender managers still do not see prisoners as often as they would have liked, the drop-in sessions continued. They were useful, as they gave them the chance to complete offender assessment system (OASys) reports and the opportunity to communicate with the individuals they managed. In 2024, there were:

- 534 OASys reports completed;
- 129 category D transfers.
- 202 home detention curfew (HDC) releases; and
- 94 temporary presumptive recategorisation scheme (TPRS) assessments, with 12 prisoners transferred to open conditions.

The TPRS scheme was expanded to include those with 12 months left to serve (TPRS12) in November 2024, which is when these occurred.

During the year, the Board noted the efforts made to support prisoners with an imprisoned for public protection (IPP) sentence. There were 50 IPP prisoners (including those recalled) in the prison as of December 2024.

The prison delivered a number of programmes designed to help prisoners address the problems associated with the offences that had resulted in their conviction. Kaizen (an accredited programme to address offender behaviour), the Thinking skills programme (TSP) and the intimate partner violence (IPV) programme were delivered across the prison, although house block 7 prisoners reported that they were not given access. A new regime of programmes is being developed during 2025 and old scheme phased out.

7.4 Family contact

Prisoners can keep in contact with their family and friends by mail, phone, the email-a-prisoner system, social visits and social video calls. During the year, over 12,500 social visits took place, compared with more than 8,700 in 2023. Just over 6,000 social video calls were made in 2024, which was at similar levels to 2023.

Visitors have occasionally reported inconsistencies with security staff on the entry portal with regard to proof of identity and appropriateness of clothing.

NEPACS (North East Prison After Care Society) charity ran a number of family days for 'mains' prisoners and for vulnerable prisoners during the year.

Security protocols mean that any visitor caught trying to smuggle illicit items or substances into the prison are apprehended and banned, and, if appropriate, the police are informed.

7.5 Resettlement planning

During 2024, a total of 1,350 prisoners were released, of whom:

- 131 were released under home detention curfew (HDC).
- Almost 300 were released to insecure/temporary/transient accommodation.
- 350 were released to approved premises.
- 328 were released to a settled family environment.
- 112 were released with no accommodation on the night of their release.

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	15
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	9
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	9
Total number of visits to the establishment	339

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	20	24
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	0	4
C	Equality	2	0
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	15	10
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	19	5
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	10	6
F	Food and kitchens	12	10
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	38	19
H1	Property within the establishment	19	15
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	29	14
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	9	6
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence), parole, release dates, recategorisation	23	38
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	18	12
K	Transfers	16	8
L	Miscellaneous	2	6
	Total number of applications	232	177

Annex A

Main service providers

- Spectrum Community Health CIC: healthcare
- Novus: education, learning and skills
- Bidfood: food and catering suppliers
- DHL: prisoner canteen
- GeoAmey: prisoner transport
- Amey: works and stores
- Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV): mental health services
- Stockton Borough Council: library services; social care support
- Samaritans: Listeners
- NEPACS: family support
- Humankind (Waythrough): rehabilitation; non-clinical DART services

Annex B

Graphs and tables

Figure 4.2: Self-harm

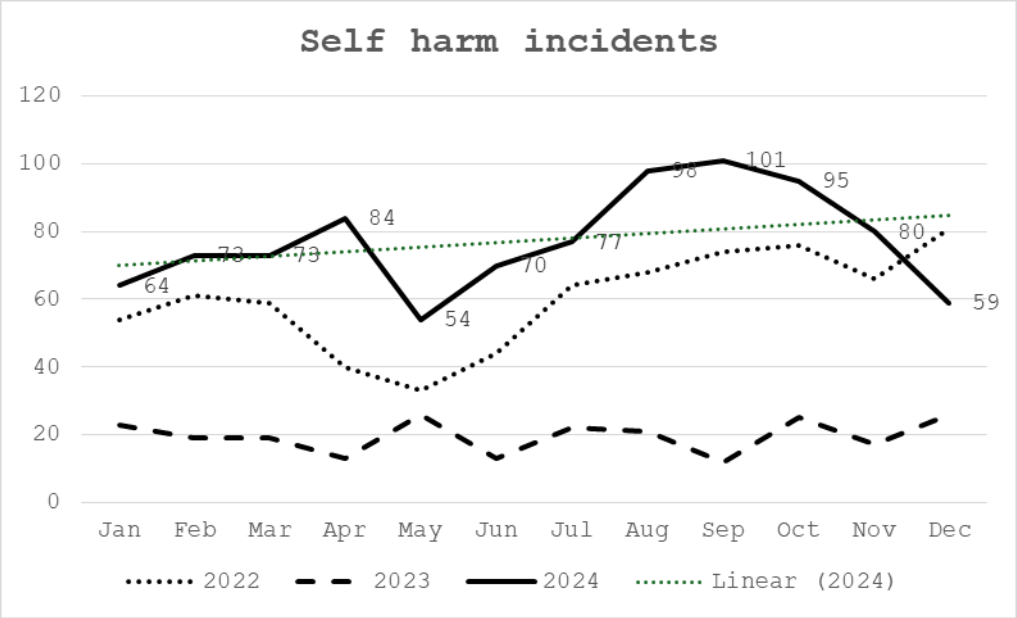


Figure 4.4: Use of force

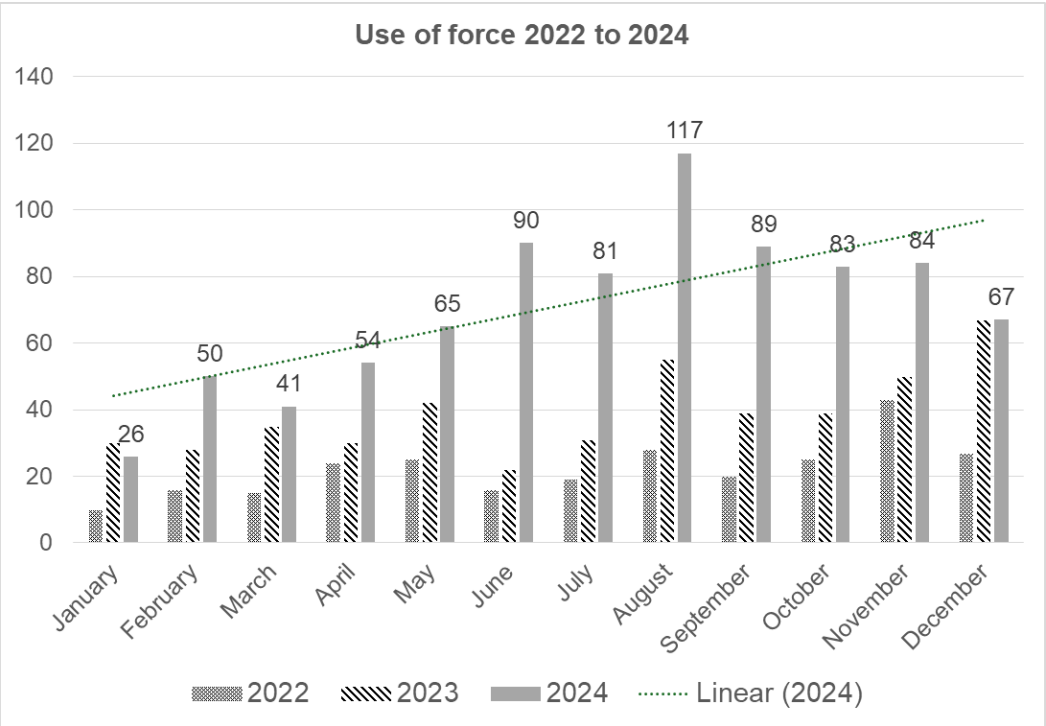


Table 5.8: Applications to IMB concerning property

	Applications received by IMB	2022	2023	2024
H1	Property within this establishment	33	19	15
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	29	29	14
	All property applications	62	48	29
	Total of all applications	241	232	177
	% of property applications	26%	21%	16%

Table 6.1: Healthcare complaints and concerns

CATEGORY	NUMBER
Access to medication	131
Access to treatment	99
Appointments	13
Equipment	12
Privacy, dignity and wellbeing	10
Communications	9
Waiting times	8
Patient care	6
Administration	6
Access to medical records	4
Diagnosis problems	3
Values and behaviours	3
Facilities	2
Medication errors	1



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