



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Springhill

**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 to the prison's records.

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

2. Description of the establishment

HMP Springhill is an open establishment (category D) that focuses on the rehabilitation and resettlement of prisoners. It receives both prisoners coming to the end of long sentences and those serving shorter sentences who are considered trustworthy in open conditions. Springhill has no segregation unit. Men are encouraged to take up courses in education, vocational training and full-time work in the community.

The establishment was opened in 1953 and is the oldest of the open prisons. The camp is characterised by freestanding, prefabricated huts, built in the 1960s. It has an operational capacity of 335¹ adult men, the same as for last year. The roll was typically over 300 for the reporting period, with a couple of dips in July (243) and in October (238), following the standard determinate sentences 40% (SDS40) release scheme (which allows certain prisoners to be released early, at the 40% point of their sentence, instead of the standard 50% point).

The prison is jointly managed with HMP Grendon (located next door) and a single IMB monitors both prisons. Although the two prisons share many services and staff, Springhill and Grendon operate as separate units and exist for quite different purposes.

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

3. Key points

3.1 Main findings

Safety

- Levels of self-harm and violence remained low, with the risk assessed as green, or 'tolerable'², for much of the period.
- Access to illicit drugs presented a constant problem, particularly cannabis, cocaine and steroids, but stayed within yellow, or 'manageable risk' parameters.

Fair and humane treatment

- The failing infrastructure across the estate continued to hamper staff efforts to provide a safe and enabling environment. Of specific concern to the Board were: frequent power outages; unreliable fire alarm system; leaking buildings; failing kitchen equipment; failing sanitation; and the presence of rats.
- The delivery of 41 new single cells (X-huts) was a much needed highlight in the reporting year. Categorised as temporary accommodation, the huts have a best-use period of 15 years.
- The varying needs of neurodivergent individuals, estimated to account for around a third of the Springhill population, seem to be better recognised, with adjustments being made to create a more inclusive environment.

Health and wellbeing

- Men's engagement with health awareness (e.g. prostate cancer, bowel cancer, blood-borne viruses, diabetes, drug/alcohol recovery, etc) and screening (e.g. respiratory conditions) events was generally good. However, continued effort is needed to ensure men who work offsite can also benefit from these events.
- The mental health team was under pressure at the end of the year, due to an unprecedented increase in referrals, which was driven by the intake of men following October's SDS40 bulk release. This could put a strain across all staff and have a negative impact on the men's care.

Progression and resettlement

- Continued problems with attracting and retaining staff who teach core subjects hindered efforts to improve the men's ability to navigate day-to-day life and their employability.
- Activities designed to support men's progression remained disjointed. i.e. there is limited flow, from personal learning plans to vocational skills training to jobs available and future employment, despite the welcome introduction of defined career pathways.
- From the Board's observations, the offender management unit (OMU) team, although vital to Springhill's mandate as a resettlement prison, has been under constant workload pressure and affected by poor support from outside

² Local tactical briefing risk categories: black is 'critical'; red is 'serious'; amber is 'significant'; yellow is 'manageable'; and green is 'tolerable'.

agencies. This has considerably restricted its ability to deliver an effective service.

- Springhill's efficient management of SDS40 in October 2024 resulted in the smooth release of some 80 men. The ensuing rapid intake of men, however, had a detrimental impact on the prison's ability to process men for release on temporary licence (ROTL), with just 13% of men, compared with the usual third, able to access outside work in mid-November 2024.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- The UK government continues to under-invest in the provision of the rehabilitation services needed to reduce recidivism. How will the Minister make the case for long-term investment in its open prisons, specifically in offender management and educational/vocational services?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- The Board continues to report issues with securing the necessary information and engagement from outside probation and other agencies, which significantly delay men's access to release on temporary licence (ROTL). An issue which is exacerbated by the introduction of new early release schemes. What more does the Prison Service intend to do to improve the capacity of outside probation and the effectiveness of interfaces with all relevant agencies?
- Implementing new early release schemes, such as SDS40, results in spikes in new admissions, as the Prison Service manages capacity across the prison estate. These spikes resulted in a period of higher demand for mental health services. How will the Prison Service ensure that mental health and all other on-site services have the capacity to meet this type of fluctuation in demand?
- The poor state of Springhill's infrastructure seriously impacts its ability to deliver a safe and enabling environment. What is the Prison Service's plan, over the immediate and longer term, to improve the failing estate?

TO THE GOVERNOR

- The Board looks forward to seeing how continued efforts to join up elements of the Springhill regime result in more men achieving work-related ROTL; developing skills for the long term; and staying in employment post-release.

3.3 Response to the last report

To the Minister:

Issue raised	Response given	Progress
The ability of the prison to prepare men for life outside is repeatedly hampered by the generally decaying infrastructure, the breakdown of old equipment and low wages. As in our last report, the Board asks again when the Minister plans to make the appropriate investment in Springhill, as opposed to short-term funding?	Acknowledged issue and planned provision of 41 new single cells to replace demolished hut. Noted ongoing business case discussions around future capacity. Acknowledged that maintenance demands are greater than budget, with a long-term estate strategy due in the next spending review.	41 single cells (X-huts) were delivered on time and inhabited by men from June 24. Governor continues to have conversations with MoJ officials on future investment in and redesign of Springhill. No decisions made in 2024.

To the Prison Service:

Issue raised	Response given	Progress
1. For the last two years, the Board has reported on issues with outside probation that are delaying some men's access to ROTL. These problems have worsened. When will they be addressed?	Work continues to streamline vetting processes and improve communications between the prison and community offender managers (COMs).	Continues to be a major problem, made more intense with influx of men following SDS40 release in October.
2. For men not in full-time work, levels of pay have fallen well behind price increases and the Governor's ability to award meaningful local pay rises is restricted. What plans does the Prison Service have to address this issue?	Budgets remain constricted. Efforts made to introduce more value brands and benchmark canteen prices with the wider economy to ensure consistency.	In October, the prison had an uplift to the prisoner pay budget, equivalent to an additional £1 per prisoner per week, plus a one-off payment of £15 per prisoner. Pay uplifts have now been applied across the various roles.
3. Men continue to contact the Board about the failure to respond to complaints in the requisite time, especially those involving transfers from other prisons. What plans are there to improve (digitise?) the current system?	No plans to digitise prisoner complaints. Noted that the process and timelines are clearly set out and that Springhill scans and tracks complaints and responses.	Fewer comments received on lateness of responses. Local process ensures overdue responses are chased, but there is no overarching system that tracks how many and how long complaints are over the deadline.

To the Governor:

Issue raised	Progress
1. Keeping abreast of the new education, skills and work initiative to ensure the harmonisation/close integration of education, on-camp and off-site work to enable the prison to deliver on its resettlement goals.	More attention has been given to defining 'career pathways' for men and ensuring correct 'sequencing' of activities, e.g. skills development before job application, etc. Difficult to assess impact with existing data.
2. Less underemployment of men working on camp and an increase in external jobs connected to post-release job opportunities.	Underemployment of men working on camp remained a problem, particularly when roll suddenly increased. External roles on offer continued to be dominated by construction and warehouse roles.
3. A rise in the numbers of men able to access education and the range of courses offered continuing to meet short-term demand and enhance post-release job opportunities.	No obvious improvements in 2024. Men's needs are expected to be better met through changes planned for next contract year (April 2025) and through the new MoJ seven-year education service contract (autumn 2025).
4. Monitoring the re-formed employment advisory board (EAB) to connect men on ROTL with jobs that are sustainable on release and the capacity of the activities team to provide sufficient opportunities for men seeking full-time work.	The EAB was re-formed under the new Governor, but it took until October 2024 for a first meeting to be held. Consequently, it has had no impact in 2024. Bi-monthly meetings scheduled for 2025.
5. OMU staffing problems being addressed to enable it to again achieve its 8-12 week targets for sentence plan and offender assessment system (OASys) processes to be completed.	Efforts made to address staffing issues, included appointing a dedicated head of OMU in-year. However, men still faced delays, as some arrived without an up-to-date OASys, and external services were slow to provide requested information.
6. Monitoring any new initiatives rolled out to enable the prison to better scrutinise the impact and quality of healthcare delivery and the healthcare complaints system.	No change. Continued lack of timely data continued to hamper monitoring of healthcare services and outcomes.
7. The improvements to the effectiveness of the prison's diversity and inclusion (D&I) mandate in delivering necessary change being sustained and the re-establishment of the external scrutiny of all discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs).	Neurodiversity support manager appointed in-year and a diversity lead (also covers HMP Grendon) was appointed in the last quarter. No external scrutiny of DIRFs, but prison adjusted its process to ensure the allocated reviewer has no conflicts of interest.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

Background

In response to the low number of signed-off members, the Board prioritised monitoring of access to education and employment, alongside issues that arose on monitoring visits. The evidence presented in these sections reflects those priorities.

4. Safety

4.1 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

There was one case of self-harm reported and three assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) plans (which are used to support prisoners who are at risk of self-harm and suicide) were opened in the year, two of which were in December. Men had access to around six Samaritan-trained Listeners. These are other prisoners who can offer confidential emotional support. There were no deaths in custody during the reporting period.

4.2 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

The proportion of men connected to organised crime groups (OCGs) hovered at around a quarter of the prison's population throughout the year, with a slight dip in October, following the release of about 80 men on SDS40.

Overall, assaults amongst men and against staff remained in single figures for the reporting period, with no challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs) opened, which are used to manage prisoners who pose an increased risk of violence, progressed.

The number of men returned to closed conditions over the year was 113, which is similar to last year's figure of 105. However, it is worth noting that 23 of these were in December, the highest monthly total for the year.

There was an increase in the number of absconds (seven) over last year (two), with the number of those who failed to return (four) also higher than last year (two).

4.3 Use of force

Use of force (UoF) incidents remained low, with just four over the year. Attention has been given to encouraging staff to turn on their body worn video cameras (BWVC) early, as this can provide extra context around circumstances of an incident. In the replays watched by the Board, no excessive force appeared to have been used.

4.4 Preventing illicit items

There were 308 drug-related incident reports (IRs) for the reporting period, which is about 25% higher than last year, with the risk assessed as 'yellow' – 'manageable' for most of the year. There was a substantial increase in IRs in October (48) over September (26), which was attributed to men having a more laid-back attitude in the run-up to the bulk release of men through SDS40 on 22 October 2024. December had the highest monthly number of IRs (59) of the year, with just over half related to cannabis.

There were 55 positive mandatory drug tests (MDTs) recorded, which is double last year's 27 positive tests. Cannabis was the most prevalent drug, with some men

testing positive for cocaine or both. Steroids regularly appeared in drugs' finds. Although men were regularly tested for alcohol throughout the year, there were no positive tests, which is consistent with last year.

Mobile phone finds were constant throughout the year, with the risk shifting between 'green – tolerable' and 'yellow – manageable'.

Intelligence indicates that some contraband comes on site at night from the sports field, which borders land open to the public. Additionally, an instance was uncovered of a man exploiting his role as a prison driver (a job undertaken by prisoners) to bring contraband on to the site for distribution (October 2024). In response, the prison regularly reviews and adjusts its (night) security processes.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

Most of the estate, e.g. accommodation huts, training rooms, the dining hall and healthcare buildings, remains in a poor state of repair and is highly susceptible to bad weather, particularly heavy rains, which frequently result in leaking roofs. The age and temporary-build nature of most of the estate often means that the cost of repairs is prohibitive. For example, a quote for the leaking roof of the dining hall, which is also used for family social visits, was estimated to be about £1 million to replace or about £80,000 for temporary fixes (December 2024).

There were ongoing issues with the fire alarm and smoke systems, with obvious faults in N and P huts, which resulted in men being decanted from P hut whilst the issue was rectified. The safety risk this presented was escalated to the area executive director at the beginning of the year and an agreement to fund replacement of the whole Springhill system was secured by end of reporting year.

There have been frequent power outages throughout the year, with the first occurring in January and the most recent in December. Back-up generators and switchgear are so old that operating them is often not safe. A temporary solution was implemented in December, but the business case for a more sustainable solution remains with the Ministry of Justice.

There was a problem with sewage in the early part of the year, which was seen pooling at the back of, and underneath, the temporary Z-huts accommodation, due in part to the pumps failing. Whilst there were fewer complaints about rats than for last year, they remain a problem and vigilance with respect to kitchen hygiene is a constant, with regular visits maintained from a pest control company.

Most of the men shared a cell, which makes them cramped and ill-suited for studying. On a positive note, the new X-huts provide single accommodation, which have a self-cook facility for 41 men, were available for occupation on time in June.

Kitchen equipment regularly broke down, e.g. fridges, fryers and ovens, which required the use of rental equipment. In general, the menu is well received and when negative feedback is received, such as not enough hot desserts, action is taken to improve the offering. Efforts are made to refresh the menu, such as offering a themed menu once a month, for example, and to make it easier to understand, by adding symbols, for those for whom English is not their first language

5.2 Adjudications

The number of adjudications (disciplinary hearings when a prisoner is alleged to have broken prison rules) charged over the period April to December 2024³ was 246. A total of 46% (113) of these charges were proven, which compares with a proven rate of 60% last year (January to December 2023). The small number of adjudications the IMB observed adhered to the defined process. We received two applications (prisoners' written representations to the IMB) concerning adjudications during the reporting period, too few to identify any patterns of unfairness.

³ Data for the first quarter of 2024 was not readily available, as the prison runs a financial year reporting period.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

Casual observations by IMB members suggest that staff and prisoner relationships remained good. A few men, newly arrived at Springhill, told the Board that they felt they were 'treated as adults'.

5.4 Equality and diversity

The new neurodiversity support manager organised a self-reported survey (in June 2024) amongst the men, which indicated that just over a third had neurodiverse needs. Staff have been encouraged to complete an online neurodiversity awareness course. Adjustments to create a more inclusive environment have started to be made, which included quiet gym sessions being added to the schedule. Drop-in sessions were initiated to provide a safe space for men to talk about their challenges as they adjust from prison to open conditions. A new head of diversity and inclusion took up post (shared with HMP Grendon) at the end of October 2024. Just four discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs) were raised during the reporting period.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The team of chaplains supported the celebration of religious feasts and special days of the main faiths (Christianity and Islam) in observance at Springhill, and took care to support minority faiths. The kitchen has a wall chart that marks all the festivals of major faith groups, along with an indication of which types of food/preparations are serious obligations.

5.6 Complaints

The table below summarises the annual data on complaints received by Springhill. It excludes health complaints, which go directly to the healthcare provider.

The number of complaints fell by around a fifth from last year's high. For the first time, complaints concerning the offender management unit (OMU) and release on temporary licence (ROTL) exceeded those relating to property. Confidential access complaints (which allow prisoners to submit complaints about serious or sensitive issues without fear of them being read by the staff member they are complaining about) spiked in December but, on review, most of these were standard complaints; several of these related to OMU issues, further highlighting the level of frustration amongst some men.

Complaint subject	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020
Property	66	136	92	92	97
Canteen	38	56	10	21	34
Food	0	1	2	10	21
Confidential access	22	19	6	14	6
OMU/ROTL	71	41	15	21	13
Staff	17	8	5	10	9
Other	118	151	64	89	178
Total	332	412	194	257	358

5.7 Property

As can be seen from the complaints table, above, whilst complaints relating to the recording and transfer of property between establishments fell by about half, it remains an ongoing and serious problem. If it were addressed, the time staff spend trying to resolve the issues could be substantially reduced.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

The buildings used for general healthcare and drugs and alcohol rehabilitation are impacted by several health and safety issues (see also 'Accommodation', above), including damp, subsidence and rats, making them unsuitable for healthcare delivery.

We noted that the wellbeing hut, staffed by men appointed as healthcare champions, was frequently closed during times when it was scheduled to be open. That said, the healthcare champion role is viewed as successful, as it offers more opportunities for men to engage around healthcare issues, such as high blood pressure, weight management, diabetes, etc. The champions also supported the health awareness events noted below and made information packs for men unable to attend.

Health promotion and screening events featured across the year. For example, an on-site mobile lung screening unit (March 2024) was attended by around a third of the men. However, as it was only available during weekdays, men who worked off site missed out. The healthcare team is looking to address this. Other health awareness events were held at half- and end-year, supported by charities covering prostate, bowel and skin cancer, diabetes and blood-borne viruses.

Smoking rates are higher than healthcare staff would like. Staff believe men would benefit from greater access to smoking cessation services, including different strength vapes being available on the canteen list (operated by DHL).

6.2 Physical healthcare

Healthcare management expressed concerns that service delivery has been impacted by a high number of appointment cancellations and prisoners who did not attend (also known as DNAs) were an increasing problem over the year.

6.3 Mental health

Mental health referrals were actioned within agreed time frames (during the first half of the year), but the influx of men following October's SDS40 release led to a sudden increase of men with mental health issues. This resulted in referral levels that were the 'highest in history', with '50% of all receptions referred' (minutes from the health and social care partnership board meeting in November 2024).

The IMB received a few verbal complaints that mental health support offered for long-term conditions, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), was not sufficient for their needs and at a lower level of provision than in previous prisons.

6.4 Social care

There were several instances over the year where matters that fall under the remit of social care, such as the provision of a special mattress, are slow to be fulfilled. The request, assessment and provision processes are cumbersome and somewhat opaque, in the Board's view.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

As Springhill is an open prison, men can access the gym when they are not in work or education. The gym is a well-equipped and well-used resource, but there were occasions during the reporting year when it had to be closed, which was a source of

frustration for the men. Sometimes this was because the temperature in the gym was far too low (the heating doesn't cope well with 'cold snaps') and other time because of staffing issues.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

Steroid use was a constant problem, with men viewing steroids as a 'body/fitness enhancer' rather than as a 'drug'. Healthcare and gym staff made efforts to raise awareness of the issues around steroid misuse, including organising special events, but engagement from the men remained low.

The drug and alcohol recovery team (DART) received positive feedback from men and managed a fluctuating active caseload during the year of around 30 men a month. Acupuncture and mindfulness sessions were taken up by men to help them manage their withdrawal symptoms.

7. Progression and Resettlement

7.1 Education, library

Staff vacancies in the functional subjects of English, maths and essential digital skills restricted course delivery for much of the reporting period, with positions not sustainably filled until the last few months of the year. For example, an average of 24% of planned sessions were not run across functional and vocational subjects between April and September 2024.

Recruitment is an ongoing issue. There are often no applicants for advertised vacancies, as the rates of pay, working environment and career progression do not compare favourably with other teaching roles.

Men arrived at Springhill still requiring basic functional skills in maths and English, despite previously having been in the prison system. Most men attending these courses passed first time, with just a few re-sits needed. Satisfaction levels with Milton Keynes College courses are consistently high, at just over 90%.

There was a persistent backlog in both rapid and in-depth learning difficulty/disability (LDD) screens during the year. The identified LDD community represented approximately a third of all learners.

Springhill's long-running relationship with Oxford Brookes University continued, with 14 men enrolled on courses at the start of 2024. This had fallen to just two men by the end of the year, following the SDS40 release of men, but staff plan to support enrolments for the next academic year, i.e. September 2025. One man was studying at the University of Westminster, and 13 were studying for degrees remotely at the Open University (OU).

Beyond the OU offering, there are limited facilities to support men who wish to study for further education in their own time, as in, outside of the core working day. Men can apply to use ROTL for this purpose, but accessing course materials and completing assignments remains a largely paper-based activity, with assignments typically handwritten. There is restricted access to Coracle⁴ laptops, with just 10 available (October 2024) for both HMP Springhill and HMP Grendon. Although, as these computers use a Notes system, rather than the mainstream Microsoft Word application, they do not provide the formatting, editing and sharing functionality needed to support the professional and timely creation, submission and review of assignments.

The library is popular, with 800 books borrowed in April and May. The librarian and orderly work hard to create an appropriate environment, holding events to encourage participation and socialising, whilst also improving literacy with film study, quiz nights and communal creative writing sessions.

A library initiative, whereby nominal fees paid by men to rent DVDs are used to replenish stock, has been reinstated after months of complications with the prison's administration systems.

⁴ Coracle provides secure, HMPPS-approved, non-networked laptops to prisons to help improve digital literacy and access to learning.

As the computer in the library is not connected to the Internet, it can neither be used to access the inter-library loan scheme nor to conduct research for studies. Whilst the Shannon Trust has trained several men to act as literacy mentors, the number of requests for mentoring is small, which is disappointing, as a large number of men would benefit from the support.

7.2 Vocational training, work

There were tutor vacancies in Springhill's prime vocational courses at the beginning of the year, including carpentry, plumbing and construction (CSCS) skills, which caused frustration amongst the men. However, this improved from March, as new tutors came onboard. Comments from men suggest that some choose these courses as just something to do or to improve their DIY skills, rather than wanting the skills for future jobs, whilst others say the lack of real-world work experience following completion of these courses hinders their ability to compete for jobs on release.

The proportion of men (as a percentage of the roll count) accessing release on temporary licence (ROTL) for full-time external work has remained low, at just under a third, for most of the year (see snapshot in table below). If the men in education (on site and external), are added to this, around half of the men were engaged in activities that prepared them for post-release employment.

Overall, too many men - about half - were deployed to on-camp work parties. Such work has poor rates of pay (about £10 per week) compared with outside work, and does little to prepare them for release.

This situation worsened in November after the SDS40 release, as the prison struggled to process the new men. Concerns were raised that jobs could be lost as employers would not be able to wait 10 weeks for a position to be filled.

Deployment of men	Early June		Mid-November	
External work	88	29%	35	13%
External education	14	5%	2	<1%
Education	60	20%	69	26%
On-camp work	142	46%	156	60%
Long-term sick	2	<1%	1	<1%
Total roll (excluding retirees)	306		263	

Employment opportunities continued to be dominated by construction and warehousing jobs. Roles often require employees to have their own transport, thereby restricting the number of eligible men. This problem is exacerbated by Springhill's rural location. There has also been an ongoing challenge in fully resourcing driver roles, who transport the men to railway stations or major employers.

Staff made efforts to define a range of 'career pathways' in areas such as logistics and warehouse, hospitality, recycling and Railtrack. The posters set out the aims, 'A pathway to...', followed by the correct 'sequencing' of education, training, job applications, together with expected timescales.

The employment hub was often observed to have a buzz about it at drop-in times. The employment orderlies were well briefed and supported men effectively in what seems a convoluted process. The Board heard several comments of appreciation from the men for the staff and orderlies.

Comments from men indicate that they take the jobs offered to build up savings versus seeking work experience in jobs or with employers they plan to be with post-release.

A couple of events were held during the year to encourage take up of the education, training, employment and funding opportunities on offer. For example, the first ever 'spring fest' (March 2024), showcasing all offerings, was supported by over a dozen men and well attended, as was a demolition construction labourers event (June 2024). However, the time lag for a new employer to be brought on could have been better explained to some men, who became frustrated at the wait.

Although the employment advisory board (EAB) was reinstated in 2024, it did not have its first meeting until October 2024. Meetings are scheduled bi-monthly in 2025.

7.3 Offender management, progression

Several men reported a very positive experience to the Board when developing their digital personal learning plan, which had a near 100% completion rate for new receptions. However, men further commented that, as the variety of opportunities at Springhill was limited, they were subsequently unable to progress towards their aspirations.

The IMB constantly hears complaints that it takes a long time for the initial risk board to be held, with some men waiting 5-6 months. The prison aims for the initial risk boards to be held by the end of the man's eighth week at Springhill (for men with standard risk profiles). Data on how many men meet this aim were not readily available to the IMB.

Whilst there are many contributing factors to the delay's men experience, including the complexity of the case or arriving with an out of date OASys record, of particular concern to the Board is the lengthy wait for outside services, which typically must be chased multiple times (e.g. COMs, police) to provide information to support risk assessments. Of equal concern has been the lack of capacity in the OMU team, which has had high caseloads and staff shortages, which were exacerbated by absences due to illness during the year. There have also been challenges securing bed space in approved premises for resettlement overnight releases (RORs).

These delays affect men in reported different ways, including one prisoner who missed his son's birthday because outside probation had not responded to requests for information by Springhill.

The IMB is also often approached to help men correct 'errors' in their OASys record, as they believe these will be prejudicial to their risk assessments. The Board's investigation into the status of these 'errors' highlighted how complicated and time-consuming it often is for staff to validate and correct any proven inaccuracies. This investigative activity adds a further administrative burden to already stretched staff.

At various points in the year, there was a backlog in updating OASys records. This matters, as an up-to-date OASys record is a prerequisite to any risk board, and it is, therefore, on the critical path for men receiving their first ROTL.

The efficient management of SDS40 resulted in the smooth release of some 80 men on 22 October 2024.

7.4 Family contact

The number of social visits from adults and children was largely consistent over the year, with typically over 100 children visiting each month. Despite efforts by staff to reduce draughts, the area for family visits in the dining hall is cold in winter. Social video calls remain an important supplement to in-person visits, especially for those men who have relatives that struggle to travel.

The numbers of men on ROTL for the purposes of maintaining family ties and on ROR also maintained consistent levels, which represented about 15% (in each of September and October) of all movements through reception for the month. It is not possible to assess from the data to which the IMB has access, what proportion of the men had neither visits nor family-related ROTL.

7.5 Resettlement planning

A total of 34% of men were in employment six weeks after release over the period April to November 2024, which fell short of the delivery target of 47% and placed Springhill last out of the nine comparator category D prisons nationally. The figure for men who were in employment six months after release for the same period was 47%, which was just below the delivery target of 50% but, again, placed Springhill last in its comparator group (HMPPS Performance Hub, unchallenged data, January 2025).

The pathways enhanced resettlement service (PERS), which supports men with complex behavioural issues so that they can safely access ROTL, managed a full caseload (typically 20 men) across the year.

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

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

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

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Current reporting year	Previous reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	0	1
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	2	3
C	Equality	0	0
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	1	1
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	0	0
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	0	6
F	Food and kitchens	0	0
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	0	2
H1	Property within the establishment	1	0
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	3	4
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	0	3
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence), parole, release dates, re-categorisation	5	6
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	0	0
K	Transfers	0	0
L	Miscellaneous	0	0
	Total number of applications	12	26

Annex A

Service providers

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



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