



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Leicester

**For reporting year
1 February 2024 to 31 January 2025**

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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 Leicester is a local male adult prison with reception and resettlement functions and serves the courts of Leicester and Leicestershire. The majority of prisoners are on remand (awaiting trial) or convicted awaiting sentence, and a minority are recently sentenced or held on recall for breach of a prison release licence. Of the prison population, about 90% are local to the county of Leicestershire¹.

HMP Leicester is a Victorian prison built in 1874, behind a gatehouse dating from 1825, occupying a three-acre site close to Leicester city centre. A visits hall and administration accommodation were added in 1990. The main residential unit is a long, rectangular cell block with four galleried landings. Usually, two prisoners share a cell.

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) is 327 prisoners, with works ongoing to increase this to 334 following a cell reclamation project. There are separate areas on the main wing for the care and separation unit (CSU), which houses segregated prisoners, and the My Recovery Unit (MRU), which delivers substance misuse recovery services. There is one main outdoor exercise area.

About 26 vulnerable prisoners continue to be housed in the Welford unit, which is in a separate building, with a dedicated small exercise area. When the Welford unit is full, other vulnerable prisoners are held on the induction unit and are offered their regime on the Welford unit. The healthcare facility occupies the ground floor.

Other buildings on site include those housing reception, the offender management unit (OMU), resettlement services, learning and skills, two workshops, gym, multi-faith room, chaplaincy, IMB office and legal visits.

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

The prison continues to be well led by an energetic Governor and senior management team that strives to provide a good service within the restrictions of old, unsuitable buildings, which will continue to need considerable investment to ensure an acceptable standard of living conditions. The very high rate of 'churn' of prisoners on remand (those held in prison until the time of their trial or subsequent sentence hearing), sentenced, or on recall (when a prisoner released on licence or parole is returned to prison because they have broken the conditions of their supervision) has added to the pressure on staff to ensure a safe and decent regime for all those passing through this very busy local prison.

Safety

There has been a welcome 33% reduction in the number of incidents of self-harm during the year (4.2). However, the total number of incidents remains comparatively high, reflecting the number of prisoners passing through the establishment with mental health issues or who are self-harming with the intent to achieve a particular outcome. Prison staff were alert to the risks to individual prisoners, using the assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) processes, which support individuals who are at risk of self-harm and suicide. Once again there have been no deaths in custody this year; however, the number of men on constant supervision has increased, which uses up a considerable amount of staff resources and takes officers away from other duties. The high turnover of prisoners continues to make it more difficult to recruit, train and retain prisoners in the role of Listeners (prisoners trained by the Samaritans to provide confidential emotional support to fellow prisoners).

There has been a worrying 31% increase in the number of violent incidents in 2024 compared with 2023, both assaults on staff and other prisoners; incidents have almost reached pre-pandemic levels (4.3). Following a peak in the summer, they have now reduced somewhat following the movement of some individuals displaying high levels of challenging behaviour to other prisons. Consequentially, the use of force by staff (4.4) is now high compared with similar prisons. However, much of this consists of low-level interventions, and incidents reviewed by IMB members have generally been appropriate and proportionate.

There has been good use of intelligence to intercept weapons, drugs, and mobile phones (4.5). However, the increased rate of positive mandatory drug tests (27.5%), along with the number of drugs finds and men found under the influence, demonstrates the need to tackle both the demand for and supply of illegal drugs. There have been improvements to the processes for receiving and inducting new prisoners (4.1). However, there is a need for a dedicated confidential space to interview prisoners on reception.

Fair and humane treatment

Despite some welcome capital investment, the condition of the ageing prison cells continues to deteriorate (5.1.1), with a need to replace windows and grills to improve security and decency. There were occasions when there was insufficient basic clothing and kit due to the heavy throughput of new prisoners. Food is of a reasonable standard (5.1.3), although the allocated budget remains insufficient, and there is a need for a programme of replacing aging kitchen equipment, such as walk-in freezers.

The care and separation unit (CSU) has been under considerable pressure throughout the year (5.2), with prisoners often located in less suitable cells nearby. Too many men

remained there for extended periods, often due to delays in transferring those with severe mental illness to secure hospital settings. The level of care demonstrated by CSU staff observed by the IMB has been good, despite the physically and emotionally taxing work involved. The number of adjudications (5.2.4), disciplinary hearings held when a prisoner is suspected of breaking prison rules, rose in line with the increased number of violent incidents, although the proportion proven in 2024 continued to fall. Serious assaults were referred to the police, but it is concerning that some of the resulting charges of assault on staff were withdrawn by the Crown Prosecution Service.

The Board observed many positive interactions between staff and prisoners (5.3) and there was a welcome reintroduction of regular prisoner council meetings, and many forums were held for those with protected characteristics (5.4). The prison was fully staffed for much of the year and the turnover of those who had completed their training was low. Despite the good staffing levels, the number of key working sessions was only 54% of those planned, which was only half of those expected in 2023 (5.3.3). The number of complaints remained high but steady (5.7). There was scope to improve some responses in those reviewed by the IMB, and to follow up the outcomes of complaints submitted to the Prison Group Director that were returned to the prison to investigate.

Health and wellbeing

Healthcare provision was generally appropriate within the constraints of an unhealthy and ageing prison environment. The new healthcare provider, Practice Plus Group (PPG), has managed to fill almost all posts with permanent staff since they took over the contract in March 2024. Physical healthcare services (6.2) were good, though appointment attendance rates have fallen to approximately 75%, and there have been a number of applications to the IMB about missed appointments or disagreement over medication prescribed. Mental health services were good (6.3), but delays in transferring individuals to secure settings were often excessive. Several men were received from the courts who were seriously mentally ill and should have been diverted into treatment services, rather than being sent to prison as a place of safety. Similarly, the prison is not suitable for men with severe dementia (6.4). Psychosocial programmes for substance misusers have started and are being developed (6.6). Time out of cell was comparable with similar prisons (6.5) and was limited by the facilities available. Holding large numbers of vulnerable prisoners on the induction wing is problematic and limits their regime. Exercise in the open air was generally available for an hour a day, and the gym remained a popular and well-used resource.

Progression and resettlement

Education provision is good and continues to develop (7.1). Attendance is improving and the success rate of men achieving qualifications in functional skills was good. The library (7.1.2) was popular, providing a range of events and activities, although poor succession planning means that there is a gap in provision while new librarians are recruited, and the budget available has reduced, which will reduce access. The range of vocational courses on offer increased and the proportion of men obtaining qualifications was high (7.2). Workshop provision was limited, and the work available was low skilled and insufficiently motivational. However, a new workshop is planned producing children's toys, which will involve more skills and interest.

The offender management unit (OMU) was very busy implementing new legislation and release arrangements. Their workload has increased with the faster churn of prisoners, including many men serving repeated 14-day recalls from their licence supervision (as part of their sentence, prisoners may be released 'on licence', meaning they can be recalled to

prison for 14 days if they break the terms of their licence agreement) (7.3). Opportunities for family visits are good and family days for prisoners and their children now happen monthly (7.4).

Resettlement planning is a real strength of the prison (7.5), with the introduction of the new resettlement hub and excellent links with employers. However, with most short-sentenced men transferred elsewhere, the challenge is to enable the work commenced in Leicester, particularly the links with employers, to follow individuals as they move. The proportion of men in accommodation on release decreased, and 33 per cent of prisoners do not have accommodation arranged for the first night they are released, which is likely to result in more of them reoffending.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

Provision for seriously mentally ill prisoners

The Board remains concerned about the number of mentally ill prisoners who are waiting for long periods, often in segregation, to transfer to secure hospital facilities. It is also concerned that seriously mentally ill men are being sent to prison as a place of safety rather than receiving appropriate treatment in the community.

What actions can the Minister take with colleagues in health commissioning to ensure that

- a) liaison and diversion services divert seriously mentally ill men away from the prison system and that*
- b) there are sufficient places in secure mental health facilities for prisoners who require them?*

Prisoner released without accommodation

The Board notes that there have been several initiatives to ensure that prisoners are not released without accommodation. However, 33% of prisoners released from HMP Leicester in 2024 did not have accommodation to go to:

What can the Minister do with colleagues in local government to improve this situation?

Prisoners with severe dementia

The IMB at HMP Leicester was concerned that a prisoner with severe dementia was held in the prison, which was not a suitable place to meet his needs, placing himself and staff at risk.

What pathways can be developed for prisoners with severe dementia to meet their needs in specialist facilities in prison or community facilities?

Resettlement of prisoners on short-term recalls

The board notes the significant number of men who are being returned to prison repeatedly on 14-day recalls where resettlement is ineffective.

What actions can be taken to improve effective resettlement of men released from 14 -day recalls?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

Reducing availability of drugs in prisons

The Board is concerned about the availability of illegal drugs in prisons including HMP Leicester:

What actions can HMPPS take to support the prison in effectively reducing the amount of drugs coming in? For example, inhibiting access by drones by replacement of opening windows with ones with vents?

TO THE GOVERNOR

Confidential interview facilities in reception

The Board notes that there is no space specifically dedicated for confidential interviews with new prisoners in reception, the currently used space doubling as staff facilities.

Given the importance of gaining the trust and confidence of new prisoners to disclose significant information, can a dedicated confidential space be made available for these reception interviews?

Increasing the availability of key work sessions

The Board notes the improvement in the number and delivery of key work sessions. However, they are still falling short of what is planned.

Can action be taken to increase the delivery of key work sessions?

3.3 Response to the last report

Issue raised	Progress
To the Minister Delays in transferring seriously mentally ill prisoners to hospital outside the 28-day standard.	There has been little progress on this outcome. Only two men were transferred to hospital within the 28-day standard in 2024: the other eight experienced delays of more than 28 days, with waits ranging from 32 to 175 days. This compares with nine out of 11 men who waited more than 28-days in 2023, with waits ranging from 50 to 195 days.
Men leaving prison without accommodation.	There was a decrease in the percentage of men accommodated on their first night of release to approximately 67%, (72% last year); the shortage of accommodation on release remains a significant concern.
Short-sentence prisoners transferred to prisons some distance away.	There has been some progress as HMP Fosse Way, a training prison in Leicestershire, is now accepting category C men with less than 16 months to serve.
To the Prison Service Need for significant capital investment.	There has been progress with refurbishment of most showers. The need to replace cell windows for security and decency remains.
Provision of meaningful work in workshops.	Plans are in hand to introduce a workshop making children's toys following a suggestion made by a prisoner at a 'dragons' den' business ideas event.
To the Governor	Induction materials have been revised and are now available in eleven languages. Induction sessions are

Induction of vulnerable prisoners and those with additional needs.	now held in the resettlement hub for main wing prisoners and are delivered by an orderly on the Welford Unit for vulnerable prisoners.
More systematic key working.	Key working has been reviewed and is now targeted more at new prisoners and those in most need. The amount of key working has increased from an average of about 60 sessions per week in 2023 to 81 in 2024, with the target being reduced from 222 sessions per week in 2023 to 111 in 2024.
Introducing a therapeutic holistic regime in the 'My Recovery Unit' for substance misusers.	Inclusion Healthcare now have the contract for delivering psychosocial interventions. Following consultation with prisoners, the first groupwork sessions commenced in November 2024 and a regular programme is being developed.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

4.1.1 Reception

The reception area is extremely small and confined for the high number of prisoners being processed each day. There are only four holding cells and no dedicated meeting room for prisoners' interviews. Generally, the area is well kept and tidy, but maintenance is required to the ceiling where tiles are missing and cables hanging down. The body scanner occupies a central and public place in the reception area, leading to prisoners becoming involved in the results of the scanning process; however, staff deal with this appropriately. A particular issue surrounds those deemed as unable to stand safely, who cannot be scanned by the current equipment. Staff have raised concerns that this could be an issue for the transit of illegal items into the prison.

Late receptions frequently exceed 45 individuals per week, with the majority, 80% arriving at a peak time during the late afternoon/early evening. This can be exacerbated by unexpected relocations from other prisons and/or established prisoners being returned from daily court appearances. It is not uncommon for receptions and transfers to the induction wing not being completed until late into the evening.

Initial induction interviews are conducted in the staff room. It is common for refreshments and meals to be made by staff who are not conducting the interview, while the interview is in progress. It is of concern that this may lead to interviews being rushed with the potential for critical issues to not be explored fully - or missed entirely. The current use of the staff room is not fit for purpose for interviews and the absence of a dedicated meeting room to conduct prisoner interviews is unsatisfactory.

Prisoners are processed professionally, efficiently and diligently by the reception and induction teams. Key items are covered, including the issuing of canteen, bedding, first night and hygiene packs, and, on most occasions, prison information documents are issued and compacts signed. Health care staff including medical prescribers are on duty.

Following the reception process, prisoners are escorted to the induction unit and advised of their prison status; hot meals are served and the opportunity provided for a shower. However, not every prisoner always gets a full set of kit, with towels and duvets the most common items missing.

4.1.2 Induction

The induction unit is generally clean and tidy. The recent refurbishment of the showers contributes to the good standard of the unit. It is disappointing that due to available space on the Welford Unit, the induction unit regularly contains a high proportion of vulnerable prisoners (up to 10% of the unit population). This requires additional officer time and resource to accommodate exercise, healthcare, mealtimes and other regime issues. This is disruptive for the vulnerable prisoners and other occupants of the wing.

The main wing induction presentation is comprehensive, but too long to maintain the viewers' attention. Many items are covered, but induction could be more engaging and impactful if a lengthy PowerPoint presentation was avoided. For those who do not have English as a first language, and those with low levels of literacy, session leaders do not always check understanding of key points with these individuals. Foreign nationals are provided with printed material about induction, which is available in eleven languages. On

the Welford Unit, the induction session is led by an orderly who provides a 'one to one' induction, which is a paper-based version of the main wing presentation.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

4.2.1 Self-harm and constant watch

Year	2022	2023	2024
Number of incidents of prisoners self-harming	226	563	379

The rate of prisoners self-harming decreased by 33% this year. This reduction was matched by a reduction of 55% in the rate of incidents relating to prison transfer and an improvement in HMP Leicester's ranking within the national tables.

Mental ill health remains high amongst prisoners and the majority of prisoners continue to be diagnosed with two or more types of mental health disorder, including alcohol and drug dependency and other forms of mental illness. The fact that some prisoners remain unable to establish a stable routine of daily behaviour before being moved on to a training prison continues to contribute to the rate of incidents.

The number of overall incidents remains high, but the number of incidents related to prison transfer and the percentage of the annual prison population self-harming both reduced this year. Approximately five % of HMP Leicester's population engaged in self-harm each month.

The majority of concerns were identified by officers and healthcare staff during the reception and induction processes. The ACCT process continues to manage all self-harming prisoners and those at risk, with the majority of new ACCTs being opened for mental health, sentence, or other reasons. Prisoners showing manipulative and goal-oriented behaviour continue to be encouraged to engage with an individual management plan, which sets consistent behaviour and boundaries for their entitlements delivered by staff.

70% of prisoners self-harm by cutting, scratching or aggravating their wounds, and this indicates prisoners continue to access a range of implements - the most frequently used were plastic, broken glass, metal and fingernails. The second most frequent form of self-harming, at 17%, was self-strangulation and the third was self-poisoning, at 8%. The prison engaged in a pilot initiative to replace wet razors with battery operated razors, with a view to seeing whether this reduced incidents of cutting. The result was that prisoners appeared to use other implements instead. However, following the pilot, all razors are now battery operated as they cannot be used as a weapon, unlike wet razors.

The number of episodes of constant supervision rose in 2024. These take up a considerable proportion of prison officer resources. Due to significant safeguarding and mental health concerns, one man was supervised for most of the year.

Constant supervision data	2021	2022	2023		2024
Number of episodes of constant supervision	40	24	18		23
Number of individuals involved	28	16	18		21
Number lasting all year	N/A	N/A	1		0
Number of episodes lasting for greater than 30 days	N/A	N/A	6		5
Number of episodes lasting between 15-30 days	N/A	N/A	2		2
Number of episodes lasting between 1-14 days	N/A	N/A	8		16

A dedicated safer custody phone line is available for members of the public who are concerned about a prisoner's welfare. In addition, there is a family contact portal whereby families can now submit a concern through the portal, which is then picked up and actioned by the safer custody team. The portal is hosted by the charity, Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT), and is a nationwide initiative. These calls are properly logged and promptly followed up by a check with the prisoner, and appropriate action is taken.

4.2.2 The assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) process

ACCTs	2022	2023	2024
Number documents opened	195	290	265
% initially closed then reopened	N/A	38%	55%
Number opened per week	3-4	5-6	5
Number opened per month	16-17	24	22
% of prison population placed on an ACCT per month	N/A	7%	7.24%

The number of ACCT documents opened reduced slightly this year. The main reasons for starting the ACCT process continue to be prisoners' individual mental health, and issues relating to sentencing, family contact and transfers. The number of ACCTs initially closed and then reopened in relation to the same person for the same or differing reasons increased this year.

The IMB continues to view the increase in opening or re-opening of ACCT documents as evidence of the increasing vigilance of staff in recording and ensuring that the health needs of prisoners are met through a robust system of support across the establishment. The screening process remains effective in ensuring officers and healthcare staff recognise when ACCTs should be opened, and when information should be shared.

As always, the number of ACCTs open on any day varied, the number opened per week reduced slightly and the overall percentage of the prison population placed on an ACCTs each month slightly increased. The reduction within these figures evidences the effectiveness of the robust quality assurance programme, which continues to include daily and weekly checks, a review meeting with the prisoner, feedback to staff on how to improve and maintain the reporting system, identification of trends and regular update training for staff.

4.2.3 Deaths in custody

There have been no deaths in custody during this reporting year.

4.2.4 Listeners

Listeners are a group of volunteer prisoners, selected, trained and supported by the Samaritans and by safer custody staff. They offer confidential support to prisoners in emotional distress and crisis, and are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The number of trained Listeners has varied during the year. At times there were only two who were therefore only able to provide a minimum service. The Samaritans trained two groups of new Listeners during the year, and at times, Listeners were available in reception, as well as on the wings. It is difficult to retain trained Listeners due to them transferring to other prisons; however, there is now agreement with the Prison Group Director that up to six Listeners can remain at HMP Leicester and not be transferred, unlike other prisoners, if they are in agreement to stay.

When possible, Listeners made themselves available on the landings and subject to requests from individual prisoners. They should normally see prisoners in the dedicated Listener suite and not speak to prisoners through cell doors, as this breaches confidentiality. An assessment should be conducted as to whether it is safe before it is agreed for a prisoner in the CSU to meet with the Listeners. Prisoners can also contact the Samaritans and other advice agencies through their in-cell phones.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

	2022	2023	2024
Number of violent incidents	119	186	270

There was a 31% increase in the number of violent incidents, this year. The number of violent incidents was the highest in six years, with a particular peak in the summer months. Staff continue to face challenging behaviour from groups and individual prisoners. The number of fights and assaults between prisoners increased, due to external and internal issues, gang membership, the sale of illicit items, prisoner debt and mental health.

Staff assaults increased and most resulted from staff challenging prisoner behaviour in order to maintain the regime. There were fifteen serious assaults against staff this year: most of these staff required medical attention and all of these incidents were referred to the police.

The number of serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults increased this year to nine; all victims were offered referral to the police and support as appropriate. Damage to prison property also increased this year.

The number of challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs) opened and used during 2024 to identify individuals who posed a risk to themselves or others increased considerably. Those placed on an ACCT and on a CSIP were allocated a custodial manager to oversee both processes, offering additional managerial support, oversight and integrated action planning.

The Chaplaincy, with the support of volunteers, continues to offer the opportunity for prisoners to study the Facing Up to Conflict course, which is a six-week distance-learning course available through the Alternatives to Violence Project Britain, accredited by HMPPS (see 5.5 Faith and pastoral support).

4.4 Use of force

HMP Leicester is a typical reception prison serving the local courts and has a high turnover of prisoners that on average remain in the establishment around 40 days.

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Use of Force Incidents	544	395	365	315	549	639

There has been a 16% increase in the number of use of force incidents compared with the previous year, and there are now more instances than before the Covid-19 period. The Board views this as in part a necessary response to dealing with the increased number of violent incidents during the year. Part of the reason for the rise in number of incidents is also due to a small number of prisoners with neurodiverse issues requiring enhanced levels of either spontaneous or planned interventions. This is shown in the statistics and has been highlighted at the use of force meetings.

On all occasions where there is a use of force, either video and/or body worn video camera footage is reviewed each week to identify any learning or good practice. A board member observes the use of force and video recording meetings on a regular basis and has always been welcomed. Managers and staff have an open approach to learning how to improve the handling of such incidents.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

The number of intelligence reports raised during the reporting year (7,499), saw an 8.5% increase on the previous year. For all individuals entering the prison, there was enhanced searching and scanning, with an x-ray property scanner in place.

Finds	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Weapons	55	32	38	54	60
Mobile phones	23	19	56	55	69

Intelligence-led searches continue to have a good success rate. Finds of weapons have increased and a worryingly large number of mobile phones continue to enter the prison, including many smart phones, which are difficult to secrete. The number of packages found to have been thrown over the very high prison wall, fell to just one this year. An x-ray baggage scanner scans all staff and visitors' bags on entering the prison, making it more difficult for unauthorised items to be brought in by this route.

There has been evidence of drones making delivery of unauthorised items such as drugs and mobile phones to prisoners through their cell windows. This is a disturbing development. It is difficult to detect during hours of darkness and is made easier by the deteriorating fabric of the cell windows and their grills. A bid for improved CCTV with night vision capability has been made to try and identify drone deliveries. However, these are likely to occur during hours of darkness when the staffing complement is much lower.

There were 2,293 body scans completed on prisoners in reception this year, either when they entered the prison or when there was suspicion that they were concealing items internally. Of these scans, 11.7% (307) were positive, invariably for organic matter such as

drugs. There is evidence of men returning to prison on recall being pressurised into bringing in illegal drugs by this route.

The number of intelligence reports of prisoners seen to be under the influence of drugs has risen substantially to 486 occasions and is now frequently a daily occurrence (this reflects in part a significant improvement in staff reporting incidents supported by observations from healthcare staff). Some prisoners are using substances repeatedly and are requiring medical attention. There were 89 instances of in-possession drug finds. Many relate to new forms of spice (a synthetic cannabinoid), available in paste or liquid form, which is more difficult to detect, and which is routinely soaked into paper or clothes and distributed and smoked in tampered vape capsules.

A total of 371 random drug tests were completed on prisoners in 2024, (10% of the average monthly prison population). The percentage of these tests that have proved positive has increased from 20.5% in 2023 to 27.5% in 2024, indicating a significant and increasing amount of illegal drug use by prisoners.

Drugs	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
In-possession drug finds	58	39	62	76	89
Prisoners reported under the influence of drugs	99	28	74	44	486

The trace detection equipment identified 19 mailed-in items of drug-impregnated paper, usually psychoactive substances, compared with 30 items in 2023. There were also nine detected attempts by visitors to pass unauthorised items to prisoners in the visits room.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

5.1.1 Accommodation and clothing

The standard of cleanliness on the wings is variable and the age of the prison and its facilities makes it difficult to achieve a consistently high standard. Most of the cells require refurbishment and redecoration. The windows are deteriorating, along with their window grills, and replacing them with Perspex sheets with holes in is not a decent solution and results in drafts of cold air in winter, making some cold cells even colder. A programme of window replacement is urgently needed to improve dignity and to reduce the ability of drones to deliver unauthorised items.

The subterranean Parsons unit, along with the adjacent care and separation unit, continues to suffer from damp and the presence of cockroaches. When population pressures eased in the autumn, the Governor arranged for some cells to be redecorated, but with the population increasing again a continuing programme of redecoration and refurbishment has not proved possible. Despite new boilers and an overhaul of the heating system in 2021, some cells remain cold as the mechanism for distributing heat is ineffective in some areas, especially when the outside temperature is low.

A system of decency checks has been introduced to ensure that each cell has the required fittings and equipment. However, there is a constant need to ensure that items are not hoarded and that each man has sufficient clothing and bedding. There is a particular problem with ensuring that each man has a duvet, which is important when the cells are cold.

A workshop where prisoners recycle waste collections has enabled large amounts of used kit to be recycled, having previously been disposed of by prisoners. The increased throughput of prisoners has placed a heavy strain on the available kit and has led to frequent shortages. Some kit is damaged, and prisoners have been keeping kit when they are released by the courts or transferred to other prisons. It is a constant battle to ensure that new receptions have the kit they need. Decency packs are available on application on a weekly basis, providing free toiletries for prisoners who do not have enough money to purchase these items from their canteen (a facility where prisoners can buy supplies not provided by the prison).

5.1.2 Capital investment

The project to complete the fire safety and other alarm systems has finally been completed after four years, taking more than twice the planned time and coming in almost 100% over budget. A programme of shower refurbishment is nearing completion, with only the Welford unit showers awaiting budgetary approval in the new financial year. The prison building will continue to require significant capital expenditure because of its age and condition to ensure the facilities provide an acceptable and decent environment. Considerable sums have been spent re-roofing some of the prison buildings in recent years; however, much of the workmanship has proved defective, resulting in ongoing problems with flooding. We await a period of heavy rain to see whether the subsequent remedial work has proved effective.

5.1.3 Food

Throughout 2024, the kitchen staff continued to deliver food of a good standard, with a reasonable menu choice, despite the rising costs of ingredients on a budget that has not increased sufficiently with inflation and which, as a result, is continually overspent. The

servery is open at lunchtime, when breakfast packs are also issued, and in the evening for a hot meal. A catering course enables learners to gain a range of skills, although they are usually not in the prison long enough to develop them further. Similarly, due to the high churn of the prison population, there are often vacancies for workers in the kitchen, which requires men to complete their education induction and be passed by security before they can be employed in this role.

Much of the catering equipment is aging, requiring frequent repairs and in particular, the two walk-in freezers are nearing the end of their useful life. A budget for replacement of kitchen equipment is needed.

The kitchen continues to provide for a wide range of diets, with special meals created for a range of seasonal and religious festivals.

5.2 Segregation

5.2.1 Accommodation

The accommodation in the care and separation Unit (CSU) reflects the age of the prison. On an increasingly regular basis there are cells out of action for various reasons, including broken cell doors, or cells requiring a biohazard deep clean following a 'dirty protest' (when a person deliberately urinates or defecates without the use of the proper facilities supplied, as an act of non-compliance or protest). With a growing number of prisoners being located under CSU conditions, there are frequently an insufficient number of cells available on the unit. Consequently, cells on the adjacent Parsons unit have been utilised to accommodate the extra prisoners. These cells are less suited to the needs of segregated prisoners.

5.2.2 Population

The growth in numbers of men held under CSU conditions is partly accounted for by the number of prisoners who stay long-term due to their mental health issues and delays in transferring them to secure hospital settings. This is often due to the lack of space in the mental health estate and has a significant detrimental effect on these prisoners. In 2024, one man waited 175 days before being transferred and was acutely unwell throughout this time. At the time of writing this report in May 2025, the CSU has one prisoner who has been awaiting transfer to Rampton for four months and one prisoner awaiting transfer to Arnold Lodge medium secure unit for three months. These delays are unacceptable to the IMB, and it is only the skill and professionalism of the governors, senior managers and staff that has so far averted serious incidents with these individuals (see 6.3.1. Gatekeeping process).

During the reporting year there were 63 defensible decisions made to hold prisoners in the CSU on an open ACCT, with a further 16 between January 2025 and the end of March 2025. This compares to 39 prisoners being located on the CSU with an open ACCT in 2023. While IMB members observed how caring CSU staff were, it was of concern that so many men at risk of self-harm were subject to segregation, although it was recognised that a number posed a risk to staff and other prisoners.

The Board has a default policy that unless there are exceptional circumstances, we do not agree with prisoners remaining in CSU conditions beyond the 42-day mark. It is concerning that in 2024 there were 13 occasions where men stayed beyond 42 days, ranging from 42 to 175 days. While these prisoners remain in the prison the CSU is often the safest location for them; however, we are not in agreement with the reason that they remain in the prison.

The Board is concerned about the number of prisoners who have arrived from the courts via police custody who are extremely mentally ill. They have either not been seen, referred to or triaged appropriately by the court liaison and diversion service or are arriving with no reports or updates on their mental state.

During the reporting year, the Governor asked for a meeting with the head of the liaison and diversion Service, which to date has not happened. Towards the end of the reporting year an acutely mentally ill prisoner arrived, which shocked even experienced CSU staff, and a formal complaint was made to the service by the Governor and an apology received that they had failed this person. This prisoner has now been transferred to a mental health secure unit.

The segregation management and review group (SMARG) meeting is held every three months and is observed by a member of the Board. This meeting is well attended by and is well served by all necessary disciplines across the prison.

5.2.3 Use of the safe cell

There have been two incidents of special accommodation being used during the reporting period. Both prisoners were in special accommodation for a short period due to setting fires and displaying aggressive behaviour. There has been no use of the body belt (a type of restraint to prevent prisoners injuring themselves or others, or damaging property) this year.

5.2.4 Adjudications

In 2024, 1,697 adjudication charges (disciplinary hearings when a prisoner is suspected of having broken prison rules) were laid, an increase of 18% over the number of charges laid in 2023, which was also an 18% increase over the previous year, 2022. The percentage of charges proven in 2024 was 38%, continuing the downward trend compared with 42% in 2023, 42.5% in 2022, and 55% in 2021. In the reporting year, 17% were dismissed and a further 25% were not progressed. In part, this was due to cases being out of time, staff errors, insufficient evidence being produced or prisoners being transferred to other prisons before their cases were heard.

The most frequent charge was 'possession of an unauthorised article' (433 instances) followed by 'disobeys a lawful order' (228 instances), which was usually refusal to share a cell or to transfer to another establishment. There were 176 charges for assault and 227 for failing a mandatory drug test (MDT). Two prisoners appealed their adjudication finding: one person's appeal was upheld, and the other person's appeal was dismissed.

As in recent years, there were few charges referred to the independent adjudicator. Of the two referred, one person was released before the hearing and the other person's charge was dismissed. The Governor takes the view that cases are best dealt in line with the penalties that could be imposed by the prison, which do not include the awarding of additional days in custody. If the matters are sufficiently serious, they are passed to the police.

The adjudication standardisation meeting met on two occasions in 2024. There was scrutiny and interrogation of data, analysis of trends and equalities, and quality assurance checks of paperwork and processes. Adjudications are on the whole being carried out appropriately; however, we observe due to the turnover of new staff, some charges are wrongly worded or put under the wrong rule, and not all are laid within the 48-hour time limit.

Staff processing adjudications have had more training on the new online spreadsheet that details the work that needs to be undertaken to prepare for hearings. This has led to a reduction in the proportion of charges not proceeded with in the last quarter of the year, and it is hoped that this trend will continue into the new year. The training was started due to a number of new staff coming into role who had had minimal training about processing adjudications during their initial training at the prison service college.

5.2.5 Referrals to the police

Several referrals to the police were made during the reporting year of serious assaults on staff by prisoners. Two of these cases went to court, where no evidence was offered by the Crown Prosecution Service and the cases were dismissed by the court.

The Governor made a formal complaint regarding these cases to the Chief Crown Prosecutor for the East Midlands and a reply was received apologising and stating they had been failed by the service. Letters have been sent to the prison officers involved. However, no action plan has been seen by the IMB or Prison Service as to how such failings are being addressed for the future.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

5.3.1 Staff and prisoner relationships

The supportive and constructive interactions between staff and prisoners consistently highlighted in IMB Leicester annual reports remain a strength of the establishment. The Board observed many instances of good staff-prisoner engagement and good humour. There is a regular weekly newsletter for prisoners. The Prisoner Council meetings chaired by the Deputy Governor have restarted. There are separate meetings for the main wing and for the Welford Unit for vulnerable prisoners. These are now scheduled monthly and are a valuable opportunity for exchange of information and for taking up prisoners' suggestions. For example, they have resulted in a new shop facility in reception for prisoners to purchase items on arrival, and a facility for prisoners to access additional pin credit at Christmas.

5.3.2 Availability of prison officer and operational support grades

The staffing situation has remained reasonably settled, with a full complement of prison officer grades at the beginning of the year. However, with seven resignations and four dismissals during the year, as of the 31 January 2025, there were 104.45 band three prison officers, against a target of 108. There were 19 band four supervising officers (four of whom were temporarily promoted), including dog handlers and physical education instructors, and 12 custodial managers (two of whom were temporarily promoted) against an agreed profile of 12. This meant there was little disruption to delivery of the prison regime.

At the end of the year, all band three officers had been in post for at least 12 months and were gaining experience. The national standards and coaching team were also present for 16 weeks, providing newer staff with additional support.

During the reporting year, the turnover rate of prison officers was approximately 9% (11 out of 128) and for operational support grades was 16% (5 out of 31), although some of these individuals were promoted.

5.3.3 Key working

Prisoners should have regular meetings with an allocated key worker to address their immediate needs and future plans; this is an important part of their rehabilitation. All

prisoners are allocated a key worker (a member of prison staff who supports a prisoner throughout the custodial period), who, ideally, should meet with them every week. A revised key work policy was launched in May 2024. The focus shifted to prioritising new arrivals at HMP Leicester for initial key work sessions, recognising that many would soon be moved on to other prisons. At the same time the expectation was changed so that instead of having a key work session each week, prisoners could expect to have one once a fortnight. However, the Board was concerned that during the reporting year the number of key working sessions delivered averaged just 81 per week, set against the new once a fortnight expectation, which required a total of 150 sessions to be delivered each week.

5.4 Equality and diversity

The protected characteristics are stated in the Equality Act 2010. Prisoners self-declare their protected characteristics, which are then recorded on the P-NOMIS (an internal computer system) and used to analyse any disparities. However, the Board notes that there is no nationally agreed methodology for quality assuring the accuracy of data for protected characteristics collated or held by prisons. This not only makes it challenging for the Board's monitoring duties but can result in significant issues being missed or dismissed.

The Board is reassured that despite the complexities involved for collating equality data for a remand prison, HMP Leicester is focused on gathering meaningful data to identify trends, unmet needs, staff training and any disproportionalities that impact prisoners. The prison interrogates equality data on a monthly basis against a range of processes and procedures that prisoners are subject to, including violent incident reporting, use of force, self-harm, segregation and adjudications, amongst others. As the prison population at Leicester is constantly changing with a considerable turnover of prisoners, it would be helpful to monitor key equality data over longer periods to identify any significant trends and disproportionality. The prison, however, remains committed to focussing on useful and meaningful information.

HMP Leicester continues to hold a diverse population. When comparing ethnicity, as of 31st January 2025, 77% of the population identified as white, 10% as Asian, 7% as black or black British and 6% as mixed heritage. As of the same date, 20.3% of prisoners were foreign nationals, the largest group being Albanian (17). In 2024 a streamlined system was devised and implemented to make tailored induction packs easily available for foreign nationals and other prisoners. This will hopefully help them make a smoother transition and adjustment to prison life.

The breakdown of the prison population by age has remained almost static over the past two years, with the most common age group being those 30-39 years of age, averaging 36% of the prison population.

Prisoners who said they were either gender fluid, non-binary or transgender were supported according to their individual needs and preferences. One trans woman was accommodated for a brief period, self-isolating, until ministerial agreement was given for her to move to a dedicated unit in a women's prison.

There were nine applications to the Board concerning equalities issues in the reporting year, most relating to provision of appropriate facilities and products for transgender prisoners. Where concerns were raised these were dealt with sympathetically by prison management.

There were 18 prisoner forums in 2024 to consult with groups of prisoners with different protected characteristics about their particular needs and satisfaction. Cultural and

religious events are promoted through the prison newsletter; these include celebrations of religious events, black history, and Pride. These are widely publicised, and take-up was good.

Products are available to meet culturally specific needs. These have included religious and cultural wear and products for transgender prisoners. The Board is satisfied special requests have been taken seriously, ensuring both the welfare and safety of all, while meeting the needs of specific groups of prisoners according to their race, disability, gender re-assignment and religion.

5.4.1 Discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs)

The monitoring of DIRFs is a complicated task. In 2024 there were 76 DIRFs submitted, compared with 65 in 2023, 60 in 2022, and 41 in 2021. The increase can in part be attributed to the redirection of complaint forms submitted with the harassment/discrimination box checked to be dealt with as a DIRF investigation, rather than as a complaint. Of those forms submitted in this reporting year, four concerned issues of racial discrimination, 11 related to disability discrimination, nine were for religious discrimination, and 36 related to transgender discrimination (mainly raised by one individual). Just two complaints of discrimination were upheld, which is a reduction on the numbers upheld in 2023. In 2025 there will be external scrutiny of DIRFs by the Mubarak Trust.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The prison chaplaincy includes representatives from 12 different faith groups. At the end of the reporting year, 69% of prisoners said they had a religious belief; 40% identified as Christian, 20% as Muslim, with smaller numbers coming from other faith groups. Weekly corporate worship is offered to Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Free Church registered prisoners. Access to corporate worship for Jewish, Pagan, Eastern Orthodox and Church of Jesus Christ Latter Day Saints prisoners is available upon request. Pagan and Church of Jesus Christ Latter Day Saints prisoners are visited weekly by their respective Chaplains.

Smaller study groups, such as Bible studies and Islamic studies also operate, supported by volunteers.

Prisoners were supported to observe recognised religious festivals pertaining to their faith or belief. Where a festival was marked with food, arrangements were agreed with the catering department. There were occasions where faith communities donated appropriate food items to help prisoners mark religious festivals/events, including Ramadan, Eid, Diwali, Christmas and Easter. Notices to staff and prisoners, as well as the weekly prisoner newsletter, are drafted to publicise most events.

The chaplaincy arranged for official prison visitors (OPVs) to meet with prisoners who, otherwise, would not receive social visits and would like such contact. In 2024, 18 prisoners had received at least one OPV visit during their stay at HMP Leicester.

The chaplaincy delivered the Sycamore Tree course, which helps prisoners become aware of the impact of their crime on victims. Learners start to understand their individual responsibility for their actions and what they can do to repair the damage they have caused. In 2024, two Sycamore Tree courses were delivered and a total of 21 prisoners successfully completed the programme. These prisoners received the Gateway Qualification Level 2 Award in Understanding the Restorative Justice Process.

Chaplaincy volunteers co-ordinated the Facing Up to Conflict (FUTC) course. This is a six week in-cell learning course provided by Alternatives to Violence Project Britain, which helps people learn how to handle conflict better, reduce violence, and get on better with others. In 2024, 27 prisoners completed the course, of whom 21 were successful in passing the subsequent assessment.

5.6 Incentives schemes

Over the course of 2024, in HMP Leicester an average of 29 prisoners were on the basic (lowest) level of the positive behaviour incentive scheme - some 10% of the prison population (compared with 7% in 2023), and an average of 52 prisoners were on the enhanced (highest) level, approximately 18% of the prison population (compared with 21 per cent in 2023). The other prisoners were on the standard level.

Prisoners who behave well can achieve enhanced status and earn extra privileges, such as additional gym sessions at the weekend and more evening social visits, and can have a games console that plays DVDs. Those prisoners whose behaviour deteriorates are downgraded from standard to basic and lose their access to in-cell television. The removal of the television was for most prisoners the most significant result of being downgraded to basic. Previously if one man in a shared cell was on the basic level and their cellmate was on the standard level the television would be retained, but during the year this changed and in this circumstance, the television would be removed. The standard prisoner would then have the choice of staying with their cellmate or moving to share with another prisoner. One reason why a prisoner may be downgraded to basic is for refusal to share a cell, which many men find stressful, but which is necessitated because of population pressures.

5.7 Complaints

The number of complaints in 2024 was similar to the previous year and was high compared with similar prisons. However, it should be noted that the numbers are skewed at times due to one or two prisoners submitting a large volume of complaints. There was a reduction in the proportion of complainants who were not satisfied with the outcome of their original complaints and submitted an appeal (COMP 1A). In addition, there were 37 confidential complaints (COMP 2s) submitted to the regional Prison Group Director (PGD). From January 2024, these were no longer submitted to the IMB, and none had been directed to the prison Governor. The Prison Group Director, having looked at the COMP 2s, asked for each to be dealt with locally. Given that the timescale for dealing with COMP 2s is six weeks, these were often returned to the prisoner who often appear not to have pursued their complaint further. The reasons for this require investigation.

The complaints team was energetic, and 98% of responses were returned within the allowed timescale. Prisoners were encouraged to speak to wing staff or to use the general landing application process first, so that issues could be resolved promptly. The most frequent areas of complaints are categorised in this table:

Complaint	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
COMP 1 (ordinary complaint)	677	478	624	637	625

COMP 1A (appeal)	58	47	70	85	69
Property	85	81	155	174	110
Residential	-	98	155	214	184
Finance	77	48	75	54	40
Staff	72	61	57	75	111

A full breakdown of the subjects of complaint can be found in annex B.

A total of 44% of COMP 1s were upheld in full or in part. Where prisoners went on to appeal the outcome of a complaint, 44% were also upheld in full or in part. The Board had occasion to inspect complaints paperwork when applications (written representations prisoners make to the Board) were being investigated and can confirm that the quality of replies from the establishment was generally good.

During the reporting year, the Board took part in a monthly audit of complaints. A random sample of 81 cases was reviewed. The majority of responses were good, with a clear explanation of the investigation that had been done and of the outcome, plus an apology, if warranted. Fifteen, however were judged to be unsatisfactory, and feedback was given to the business manager to feed back to the responder. Some responses lacked a thorough investigation of the concern or did not address all the matters raised. In a few others, it was unclear how more systemic learning from complaints was being taken forward. There is much that can be learned from the best responses, especially where the prisoner has been interviewed about their concerns and treated respectfully and sympathetically.

The complaints department conducted two surveys of prisoner experience of the complaints process in 2024. Every prisoner received a form and was incentivised to complete it with an additional £1 pin credit. 65 completed forms were returned in May and 50 in November. The vast majority of those who had submitted a complaint said they had tried to resolve the matter with staff before doing so. There was a declining trend of prisoner satisfaction with the responses to complaints, falling from 45% of respondents in May to 23% in November. Together with the information from the audit of complaints, this suggests that there is scope both for more matters to be dealt with at an earlier stage and for improving the response to complaints.

5.8 Property

A total of 110 complaints regarding property were submitted during the reporting period – 16% of all complaints. The most common (46) were complaints from prisoners at HMP Leicester chasing their property from other prisons. 35 were complaints from prisoners in other prisons asking where their property was. Other frequent complaints concerned problems with clothing being brought into the establishment on visits or in clothing parcels, and property going missing during cell moves. Of the total property complaints, 63 were not upheld, 18 partially upheld and 29 upheld.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

The healthcare contracts moved from Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust to Practice Plus Group on 1st March 2024. Substance misuse prescribing services continue to be fully integrated, while psychosocial treatment is now subcontracted to Inclusion Healthcare. Most staff transferred to the new provider, but there was some disruption to services following the change of provider; for example, the GP did not transfer and there were initially some increased waits to see a GP, until a new permanent appointment was made. The new provider has worked hard to recruit to the many posts that had been covered by agency staff. By the end of the reporting period, appointments had been made to all but two of the substantive posts. There is a head of healthcare and three clinical matrons responsible for primary care (physical health), mental health, and substance misuse services (SMS) and a new practice manager.

The majority of applications to healthcare relate to failing mental health or skin problems – having to live in the oppressive and often poorly maintained environment is not conducive to good health. The Board received a 50% increase in the number of applications (21) relating to healthcare in 2024, several were disagreements with decisions by clinicians regarding medication, and some related to delays in accessing appointments either in the prison or in outside hospitals.

6.2 Physical healthcare

Subcontracted services include dentist, optician, physiotherapy and podiatry. A dual registered nurse specialising in general and mental health ensures collaborative care for individuals requiring support with both mental health and substance misuse. The waiting list for routine dentistry is approximately three weeks (four weeks in 2023), and GP appointments currently sit at one week. Attendance at internal healthcare appointments has slipped a little this year and is often around 75% most weeks, compared with 80% in 2023 and 85% in 2022.

A full vaccination service is available, including Covid-19 and flu vaccination, and prisoners have been repeatedly encouraged to take this up given the vulnerability of the population.

Healthcare work on the wings included providing reception screening interviews, attendance at ACCT reviews, same day reviews following the use of force, and attending prisoners who self-harmed, and those who developed acute medical problems. There has been a particular focus on increasing the uptake of subsequent appointments following reception screening, to improve identification of health issues.

For a variety of medical health issues, there were 76 attendances at the accident and emergency department between April 2024 and December 2024, and 13 prisoners were on bed watch in 2024 (19 in 2023) for a total of 77 days and nights (30 in 2023). This has involved an increased commitment of prison officers to cover these bed watches.

Healthcare staff are identifying more prisoners who require treatment in outside hospitals; however, a number subsequently decline this treatment, preferring to be back in the prison. Attendance at outside hospital appointments has reached the 80% target most weeks, but occasional appointments are missed when escorting staff are not available.

6.3 Mental health

Mental health provision in HMP Leicester remains good, with a dedicated team providing interventions and care for those with low level mental illness, right through to those with

secondary care needs. This is made up of health care support workers, nurses, psychological wellbeing practitioners, and psychiatry.

The average caseload of prisoners receiving care from the mental health team has reduced to 49 in 2024, compared with 90 in 2023. Waiting times to see the psychiatrist have averaged four weeks. Some severely ill men need to be seen sooner. There has been a worrying increase in the numbers of those coming into prison with significant mental illness requiring treatment, with ten referrals requiring secure care in 2024.

The link between the court liaison and diversion (L and D) team and prison healthcare is tenuous at best and at most times non-existent. This leaves mentally ill prisoners entering the establishment at risk of deteriorating. Several mentally ill prisoners were not picked up by the L and D team and therefore not diverted before entering the prison. The Board is concerned about the prison being used inappropriately as a place of safety for men who are very unwell.

6.3.1 The gatekeeping process

This is the system by which prisoners with serious mental illness are transferred to secure psychiatric accommodation under a section of the Mental Health Act. The IMPACT team for secure services in the East and West Midlands continued to work effectively, and the referral system and assessment process was good. However, there are still insufficient places in the national secure estate. For many of the ten men that required transfer to secure provision, there were significant delays. Only two of these men were transferred to hospital within the 28-day standard; the other eight experienced delays of more than 28 days, with waits ranging from 32 to an unacceptable 175 days. Several of these men were detained in the care and separation unit for extended periods, which is not an appropriate place to keep men with significant and often deteriorating mental health conditions (see Segregation population. 5.2.2).

6.4 Social care

A health care assistant takes the lead on social care and liaises with the social care team from Leicester City Council. During 2024 eight men received a social care package. This includes patients receiving equipment and assistance in meeting their daily living activities. The Board were very concerned about the case of a prisoner with severe dementia who remained in the prison until his release date, when he was discharged to a social care facility. Although he eventually received 24-hour social care support, the prison was a totally unsuitable environment to meet his care needs. On one occasion he was admitted to hospital with dehydration, and he spent several weeks in segregation in order to manage his risk to staff, self and other prisoners.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

6.5.1 Regime

While remand prisoners do not have to engage in work or activities, all prisoners who are working or attending activities get three hours a day out of cell to attend these Monday to Thursday, along with a two and a half-hour domestic session where they can shower, exercise, or go to the gym. Those who did not attend either work or activities have approximately two and a half hours out of cell on weekdays to complete their domestic activities. Kitchen workers could be out of cell for seven hours a day, including early evening association. Those on the induction wing have two and a half hours per day out of their cells for their domestic session, unless they are also involved in education activities.

On occasions the general regime is more restrictive, such as when staff training takes place.

Population pressures mean that for most of the time there are insufficient cells on the Welford Unit to accommodate all the vulnerable prisoners. The overflow of vulnerable prisoners is accommodated on the induction unit and they are offered their domestic session on the Welford Unit, where they have very little to do. This is an unsatisfactory situation, and some vulnerable prisoners choose to stay in their induction unit cell, rather than attend the Welford Unit.

At weekends there is less activity, and prisoners get three and a half hours out of cell each day for showers, gym and exercise. For most prisoners, being locked two to a cell made for one person for the large majority of the time results in boredom and tension due to the lack of privacy. Some prisoners will use substances to try and escape from the reality of their situation.

6.5.2 Exercise and gym

All prisoners are scheduled an hour's exercise in the open air each day, either in the main exercise yard or the Welford Unit exercise yard for vulnerable prisoners and those in the care and separation unit. However, Welford Unit prisoners have, on occasions, not been offered exercise or it has been cut short due to the officer detailed this task not facilitating it, for example, when the regime is running late. The Governor has addressed this issue to ensure it does not continue and the IMB will continue to monitor the situation. Some weights and gym equipment are provided on the exercise yard, supervised by a member of gym staff. The surface of the main exercise yard has deteriorated: it is no longer safe for playing team games and requires replacement.

There are five physical education instructors (PEIs) covering the gym and activities on the main exercise yard. The gym is very popular and heavily used. Groups of up to 20 men can be allocated to each session, but these numbers are often exceeded. Main wing prisoners can attend up to seven sessions per week, and vulnerable prisoners four. Those in the care and separation unit can attend for an hour on Friday mornings.

As it is popular, much of the gym equipment is aging and worn, and a programme of replacement is needed to ensure that sufficient safe equipment is available. The gym staff are very motivational and arrange various physical challenges for prisoners. They also deliver certificated first-aid training and courses in weightlifting. The gym is an important area for prisoners to find some physical relief. It is hoped that the ongoing problem with the leaking roof has now been addressed, following rectification of the previous poor workmanship, which was supposed to have addressed the issue. Once it has been confirmed that the roof no longer leaks, money has been allocated to redecorate the upper gym hall and to bring that into use to increase use of the facility.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

Support for prisoners with addiction problems on reception into HMP Leicester is good. There is a substance misuse prescriber available every day for new receptions and any patients requiring detoxification medication receive it on arrival. There is an established process to ensure patients who are detoxing are assessed regularly.

The separate, 29-bed My Recovery Unit (MRU) reopened in September 2022 for those prisoners wanting to receive help to recover from drug and alcohol misuse. Since then, individuals have received substitute prescribing and individual sessions with the substance misuse staff, but the psychosocial group interventions that were promised were not

delivered until recently. In March 2024, Inclusion Healthcare were given the contract for psychosocial interventions and they have been recruiting staff to deliver these. Following consultation with prisoners, the first groupwork sessions commenced in November 2024 and a regular programme is being developed.

The MRU is supposed to operate as a therapeutic environment, with men receiving 28 days' treatment before returning to the main wing. Given the high levels of drug misuse in HMP Leicester, there is scope to further develop provision to reduce demand and support alternatives to drug misuse. In December, prisoners in the MRU conducted a 'Bake Off' to provide cakes for the homeless. There are good links with community substance misuse provision in Leicester for those who are released to the local area.

6.7 Soft skills

There have been several wellbeing days for prisoners over the course of the year and a wellbeing week in November. This included sessions on health awareness, fitness, supporting charities and a visit from Leicester City Football academy.

With the establishment of the new resettlement hub, a variety of short courses have been delivered, including nutrition courses delivered by Samworths, interpersonal skills delivered by PPL.PRS, and first aid delivered by the Kiely Group.

In April there was a charity fundraiser using the gym cardiovascular equipment to raise money for motor neurone disease, and prisoners and staff together raised £500.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

7.1.1 Education

Education provision has remained good, effectively delivered by People Plus, despite the challenges of delivering training and achieving results with a high remand population and many prisoners on 14-day recall.

Educational attendance has varied, averaging 68% of those allocated and exceeding the 64% target. Factors contributing to improved attendance included use of 'five-minute interventions' promoting the benefits of education, together with provision of hot drinks and flapjacks, and increased payments for attending sessions and achievement of level 1 and 2 awards.

The rates for those who started functional or vocational skills courses, achieving qualifications were good:

- English 78% and maths 91% (HMP Leicester was identified as the best People Plus prison for progress in maths)
- Accredited courses 82% and unaccredited courses 89%

The Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) provider facilitated the completion of personal learning plans. Although less than 30% of men remained a sufficient time at Leicester to have a review, almost all of those that were reviewed had made positive progress.

There are now 40 laptops available for approved personal study; however, they have mainly been used for distraction or enrichment activities, rather than private study.

7.1.2 Library

The library has provided a valued and well used facility on four days per week for most of the year. A wide range of literary events were promoted, including:

- Leicester libraries' adult summer reading challenge, with one prisoner being the overall winner, and a total of 11 men submitting entries
- a popular 'Bookmark' competition to design and describe why people should read a particular book, which received around 40 entries
- a successful event to promote chess by the Inside Times chess correspondent, with reference to his book, 'Chess behind bars'
- two men were highly commended and one commended in the Koestler 2024 artistic awards
- 'More than a book week' was a popular and engaging event across the prison, celebrating reading related themes, including both classics and modern literature
- events featuring variously a hip-hop artist, singer, actress and university professor to promote interest in literacy.

During the year, at least twelve men were trained as Shannon Trust mentors to support men with developing their reading and mathematical skills; however, delivery was impacted by the unavailability of staff. Subsequently, assistance with reading was provided by a reading specialist. It was not possible to reintroduce Story Book Dads, to enable men to record stories on DVD or CD for their children, as volunteers were not available.

Unfortunately, at the end of the year there were no librarians in post, and at the time of this report library services were restricted to a minimum provision. It is to be hoped that,

following successful recruitment, there is an early return to the previous level of service. The budget for future delivery has been agreed and a 2% uplift has been provided to ensure the continuation of this supportive provision.

7.2 Vocational training, work

7.2.1 Vocational training

Training opportunities to equip men with valuable functional skills to aid their reintegration into society and improve job prospects have been good. Of the 333 men who undertook these courses, 90% completed them successfully. Courses were available in digital skills, food safety and basic cookery, customer service, and CSCS (Construction Skills Certification Scheme). The latter has proved a popular course, with 29 men gaining certification, which can improve employability in the construction industry.

The kitchen and gym provided popular courses:

- 13 men gained City and Guilds barista qualifications.
- approximately 100 men achieved first aid qualifications
- Twenty-eight men achieved active IQ at level 1, and eight men at level 2.

7.2.2 Work

Prison policy promotes and encourages men to engage in purposeful activity, but as in previous years, the resulting activity has been negatively influenced by:

- restricted space for workshops, due to the infrastructure of the prison
- the consequential lack of motivating work opportunities
- the high proportion of men who are not required to work

Overall, there are approximately 20 types of work available in roles such as cleaning or orderlies, with 144 part-time workplaces available on weekday mornings and 160 in the afternoons. The only full-time work available is in kitchens or waste management.

The three workshops involve aspects of recycling. Two of the workshops can accommodate 10 men each and a third, specifically for vulnerable prisoners, accommodates four men. Average weekly workshop attendance was 43% of target hours. This varied over the year, but with an overall downward trend. This inconsistency was influenced by the temporary unavailability of staff.

The workshop, which involves recovering and recycling waste materials, has achieved an average saving of over £1700 per month of prisoner's kit and other recycled materials. A positive development has been the development of a new workshop for creating teddy bears, which will replace one of the existing workshops and provide prisoners with new skills (see Resettlement planning 7.5).

7.3 Offender management, progression

The offender management unit (OMU) is staffed by 6.5 equivalent prison offender managers (POMs); a combination of probation and prison staff, managed by a senior probation officer. There are 8.5 administrative caseworkers managed by the head of offender management services. The POMs continue to provide an OMU internal duty line service to answer prisoners' queries, as well as conducting face-to-face work.

As of 1 February 2025, 65% of prisoners at HMP Leicester were on remand awaiting trial or were convicted awaiting sentence. 25% of prisoners were recently sentenced and a further 10% were being held on recall for breach of a prison release licence. All sentenced

men serving more than 28 days are now expected to transfer to training prisons. Until September 2024, the prison was very busy and generally full most of the time with pressure on places and the need to move men swiftly to training prisons. Following national changes to release arrangements in September and October there was some spare capacity during the winter months, but by the end of the reporting year the pressure on prison places meant the prison was once again fairly full.

As sentenced men are transferred out promptly this has meant that the number of men passing through the prison is high, which places considerable pressure on the OMU. Changes to recall arrangements have meant that most men who are recalled on their licence are only recalled for 14 days before being re-released, and many of these men will fail again and be recalled once more.

The number of men eligible for release on home detention curfew whilst at HMP Leicester has fallen, with the result that only four were so released in 2024, compared with 22 in 2023.

7.4 Family contact

A family strategy promotes communication between prisoners and their significant others. Monthly family forums have resulted in provision of improved locker facilities and opportunities for addressing common issues, such as clarifying prison policies.

The 'gateway' visits hall continues to provide a family friendly environment, with PACT (Prison Advice and Care Trust) staff supporting visitors and their children who have use of a well-equipped play area.

Domestic visits happen on five afternoons, both weekend mornings and three evenings each week. There is lower take-up of afternoon visits, which can accommodate 23 men, compared with the evening sessions that can accommodate 10 men. This is because many families are local to Leicester and find evenings most convenient. The combined average attendance has been approximately 58% of capacity, similar to last year. Video visits are available each weekday but are less popular than social visits, averaging 21% of capacity.

Improvements during the year include:

- An increase of family days to one per month. These are well attended and feature seasonal or themed events, such as carnival. Cakes made by prisoners on the food preparation course were provided.
- Money from refreshment sales was reinvested into provision for families
- Supervised play during social visits, and provision of children's highchairs

7.5 Resettlement planning

Resettlement activity remains very good, with some very good outcomes. However, the high churn rate of prisoners, many of whom are on remand, does not allow for even more successful outcomes. At the beginning of the year the resettlement hub was relaunched. This was well attended by local employers and featured on local ITV news.

7.5.1 Addressing homelessness on release

There was a decrease in men accommodated on their first night of release to approximately 67%, (72% last year); the shortage of accommodation remains a concern. There were 60% more men released from Leicester this year than last, due to an increase in 14-day recalls and men serving short sentences. This has increased the challenge for release planning, with no increased resource.

While the accommodation for ex-offenders programme aims to reduce reoffending and homelessness by supporting prisoners to access the private rented sector, only 11% were released to social or private rental accommodation, while more than 30% were either rough sleeping or in an emergency shelter. A limiting factor for local authorities is that most prisoners released do not meet the criteria for the programme, either by being unable to manage a tenancy or due to their level of risk.

15% of men were released to CAS3 (community accommodation service tier 3) accommodation. It is unfortunate that 13 men failed to attend arranged CAS3 accommodation and there have been increasing numbers of men who previously have not complied with the requirements of CAS3 accommodation and been asked to leave. Consequently, these prisoners have been homeless following subsequent release from prison.

Efforts have been made to address the accommodation challenges, including:

- introduction of weekly case conferencing, involving the strategic housing advisor, pre-release team and CRS providers (commissioned rehabilitative services) to discuss potential NFA (no fixed abode) cases
- multi-disciplinary Local Authority pre-release panels every two weeks to discuss potential NFA cases, due to be released into Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland
- since July, in all cases where an accommodation need has been identified, the pre-release team has made Duty to Refer applications in cases where a prisoner was serving less than seven weeks; these were previously made by the COM (Community Offender Manager)
- in November, NACRO (a charity that supports people with complex needs such as homelessness, offending and mental health challenges) extended their community rehabilitation service (CRS) contract and began to assist with accommodation related issues for prisoners on remand, such as sustaining or ending a tenancy or to assist those released from court who have no accommodation. By the end of January 2025, 35 such referrals had been made, but as at the time of writing there was no data on outcomes. This was welcome assistance for such men where support had previously been provided by the pre-release team.
- to strengthen arrangements between the prison and community stakeholders with a view to improving accommodation outcomes, HMP Leicester hosted a housing partnership event. However, engagement by local authorities was disappointing. Despite this, the event was well supported by other accommodation providers which helped to strengthen partnership working
- the strategic housing officer has worked constructively with local authorities and a prison awareness workshop was subsequently held for local authority housing prevention officers to provide greater insight into how referrals work. This resulted in the appointment of a Leicester City Council Housing Prevention officer to act as a single point of contact, who will complete pre-release assessments for prison leavers in need of accommodation.
- a Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Prison Release steering group comprising representatives from Local Housing Authorities, the voluntary sector and probation in collaboration with the strategic housing specialist, has a remit to review and identify gaps and opportunities to prevent and reduce homelessness, in compliance with statutory duties.
- a new initiative by HMP Leicester with Homeless Open Opportunities Football League (HOOF) aims to support prisoners facing homelessness. A football session for 12 prisoners aimed to inspire a love of football and promoting connection with

available support services to help reduce the risk of reoffending, was well received. More events are already planned for the coming year.

7.5.2. Addressing finance and employment

Sentenced men with more than 28 days to serve are transferred to training prisons, with the result that only nine men were eligible to have a 12-week pre-release review (24 in the previous year).

The pre-release team made 630 contacts in respect of debt, of which 54% were for men on remand. Assistance with obtaining birth certificates continued throughout the year with an average of eight obtained per month. Few bank accounts were opened and none since August, due to the six-week turn round time to obtain these being insufficient for the short stays of prisoners at HMP Leicester.

HMP Leicester has had no specific 'departure lounge' but for the first part of the year men who may benefit from ongoing support were referred to a nearby facility run by the Shaw Trust. Subsequently, after a short break, Ingeus provided the facility under the HMPPS CFO Evolution contract.

The percentage of men in employment six weeks after release was the same as the previous year (10%), rising from 6% at the time of release to 24% after six months.

The prison employment hub provides opportunities for men to discuss potential work opportunities. The prison-based DWP work coach is based in the hub and promotes SWAPs (Sector-Based Work Academy Programme), which offers a variety of skills training to prisoners on release and routinely refers all work-eligible men (averaging 32% of releases) to the Job Centre, as well as arranging same day appointments for all who need to claim Universal Credit. For much of the year, a dedicated work coach enthusiastically assisted many prisoners to complete employability skills programmes.

The very effective engagement by the prison employment lead and Employment Advisory Board has resulted in around 40 employers offering potential employment on release to prisoners in areas such as hospitality, construction, cleaning, driving and logistics. Examples of positive initiatives include:

- frequent workshops facilitated by a variety of employers, such as Unlocking Construction and Unlocking Hospitality.
- employers offering potential workers interviews, resulting in five successful work placements for men on release.

As a result of a 'Bars 2 Business' workshop designed to help prisoners develop self-employment and entrepreneurial skills, prisoners made a 'Dragons Den' style series of presentations. The winner with the title 'Bearing Gifts' gained professional support with a view to manufacturing teddy bears in the prison workshop, using disused fabric from local manufacturers. It is envisaged that for each bear sold one will be given to a child that is experiencing poverty, with a resulting positive commercial and charitable outcome. This project was the result of collaboration between prisoners for both the concept and design of the project. One prisoner said: *'this will enable prisoners to develop and use their skills in a meaningful and purposeful way, reducing waste, helping children, and promoting the future employability of prisoners on release.'*

8. The work of the IMB

During 2024, the Board provided face-to-face monitoring with a monitoring visit at least weekly, and Board meetings were held monthly. Two members left the Board, and one new member was recruited.

Members continued to be made welcome in the establishment, and prisoner contact was readily facilitated. Members observed a sample of establishment meetings during the year, including the daily briefing, safer custody, safety intervention meetings, reducing reoffending, segregation monitoring and review group, adjudication monitoring group and use of force. The Board also continued to receive the daily briefing sheet, prisoner and staff newsletters, notices to staff and prisoners, and the minutes of key departmental meetings.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	12
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	10
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	9
Total number of visits to the establishment	225

Applications to the IMB

Application boxes are situated in the Welford Unit, Induction Unit, CSU, Parsons Unit, MRU and beside the servery on the main wing. During the reporting year, the boxes were opened weekly, by an attending member.

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	9	10
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	2	7
C	Equality	1	9
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	1	9
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	11	9
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	1	3
F	Food and kitchens	1	0
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	14	21
H1	Property within the establishment	6	9
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	5	5
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	0	2
I	Sentence management, including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	5	3
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	10	12
K	Transfers	10	0
1	Miscellaneous	6	11
	Total number of applications	82	110

Annex A

Service providers

- Healthcare: Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, commissioned by NHS England (Midlands and East). As of 1 March 2024, the contractor changed to Practice Plus Group.
- Dental care: Time for Teeth, commissioned by NHS England
- Integrated drug and alcohol treatment services (IDTS): Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. As of 1 March 2024, the contractor changed to Practice Plus Group.
- Psychosocial substance misuse: Inclusion Healthcare as of 1 March 2024
- Education and skills: PeoplePlus
- Library services: Leicestershire County Council (LCC)
- Probation services: National Probation Service East Midlands Region
- Escort contractor: GEOAmey
- Catering suppliers: Bidfood
- Maintenance: Amey
- Family engagement: PACT (Prison Advice and Care Trust)

Annex B

Self-harm data

Incidents of self-harm per annum	379
Average number of incidents per month	32
Average percentage of overall prison population self-harming per month	5.26%
Primary reasons for self-harming	Number
Mental health and medication	79
Other	84
Regime	28
Vapes	29
Taxing/bullying and debt	10
Transfer to another establishment	18
Offence	2
Family contact and relationships	19
Primary methods of self-harming	Number
Cutting, scratching and wound aggravation	253
Hanging and self-strangulation, using, bedding, clothing, towels, belts or shoelaces	63
Self-poisoning, using own or others' medication, illegal drugs or cleaning materials	30
Head banging and wall punching	7
Swallowing and inserting objects	7
Burning	3
<i>Locally collected data</i>	

Assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documents

ACCT documents opened	265
ACCT documents re-opened	146
Percentage of overall prison population on ACCTs per month	7.07%
Average number of ACCTs opened per month	23
Person opening ACCTs	Number
Officers	179
Healthcare	66
Custodial managers/supervising officer	1
Chaplaincy/education	3
Public protection	5
Primary reasons for opening ACCT documents	Number
Mental health and medication	96
Other	40
Sentence related	33
Transfer to another establishment	15
Family contact and relationships	20
Taxing and bullying/debt/finance	8
Offence/regime	14
<i>Locally collected data</i>	

All Incidents

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total of all types of incidents in the prison	1258	957	849	849	1169	1268
Total violent incidents	313	119	124	119	186	270
Serious assaults on prisoners by prisoners					8	9
Assaults on prisoner by prisoners	133	53	49	49	60	111
Fights	47	14	12	29	43	49
Serious assaults on staff by prisoners					6	15
Assaults on staff by prisoners	103	54	63	38	60	86
Damage to prison property and environment	300	205	147	172	153	208
Threatening/abusive behaviour	336	132	132	86	62	120
Dirty protests	-	-	-	-	17	17
Disorder (fire, barricades and incidents at height)						80
<i>Locally collected data</i>						

Analysis of complaints by subject area

ISSUE AREA	NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS	PERCENTAGE%
RESIDENTIAL	184	26.91%
STAFF	111	16.22%
PROPERTY	110	16.08%
IEP	47	6.87%
FINANCE/CASH	40	5.85%
WORK	30	4.39%
LETTERS/CENSORS	27	3.95%
SECURITY	25	3.65%
OASYS/OFFENDER MANAGEMENT	23	3.36%
VISITS	20	2.92%
FOOD	15	2.19%
TRANSFER	13	1.90%
CANTEEN	10	1.46%
EDUCATION	10	1.46%
VIOLENCE	8	1.17%
PRE RELEASE/RELEASE	4	0.58%
OTHER	3	0.44%
BULLYING	1	0.15%
RECATégorisation	1	0.15%
RECEPTION	1	0.15%
SEGREGATION	1	0.15%
	684	100.00%



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