



# **Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP/YOI Portland**

**For reporting year  
1 April 2024 to 31 March 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**

2.1 HMP/YOI Portland is a category C prison in Dorset for adult men with sentences of all lengths, including IPP and life tariff, as well as a young offender institution (YOI) for young adult men (aged 18-25 years). It is a designated training and resettlement prison for prisoners with a home in Avon, Somerset, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire and, over the last two years, further afield. Portland began the process to transition into a category C adult prison for men in January 2020. At this time, Dorset became part of its catchment area.

2.2 The operational capacity (the maximum number of prisoners that can be held without serious risk to safety, security, good order and the proper running of the planned regime) of the prison is 538 prisoners<sup>1</sup>. Accommodation consists of seven wings: Benbow, Raleigh, Drake, Nelson, Grenville, Collingwood and Beaufort. There is a free-standing care and separation unit (CSU). Grenville is assigned the role of first night centre. Young adults are populated in each of the wings. Beaufort wing houses prisoners on the enhanced (top) level of the incentives scheme and the ISFL (incentivised substance free living) group.

2.3 Education, including some vocational training programmes, is contracted to Weston College. The prison operates a number of workshops, providing recognised skills and qualifications.

2.4 Healthcare has been delivered by Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust since late 2023. Resettlement services were transferred to staff directly employed by HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) in early 2023.

2.5 Charitable organisations operating in the prison include the Samaritans, Barnardo's, the Shaw Trust, Key4Life, the Shannon Trust, Turning Point and the 100 & First Foundation, which is a key provider in the rugby academy and resettlement services.

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

### **3. Key points**

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

The prison operated as a functional green/amber (stage 2) regime, which meant a full delivery of activities and services, for the majority of the year, but experienced some days when the regime was restricted or reduced. This is a significant improvement over the previous year, and it benefitted from being fully staffed due to continuous recruitment. A challenge for the prison was the change in Government requirements to accept more prisoners from all over the country, counter to those primarily based in the south west, and the multiple changes in the early release scheme (which has enabled eligible prisoners to be released after serving 40% of their sentence instead of the usual 50%).

#### **3.1 Main findings**

##### **Safety**

3.1.1 The Board has observed a committed, multidisciplinary and thoughtful approach to safety, resulting in a generally safe environment. This has been demonstrated through strong leadership, effective analysis of data and detailed knowledge of prisoners' needs with a high level of care and compassion.

3.1.2 The ingress of illicit substances continued to be an issue. This proved a challenge, although intelligence reports, spot searches and observant staff resulted in an increase of finds over the previous year. (4.5.2). The Board is concerned about prisoner debt increasing the risk of self-harm.

3.1.3 Prison population pressures have exerted a significant strain in multiple areas of the prison. These include:

- Cells: the availability of cells and the day-to-day management of monitoring the available single/double cells, ensuring they are in good working order, with repairs executed same day.
- Offender management unit: the constant churn of prisoners entering and exiting the prison means the assessment of needs for new prisoners and the re-calculation of sentences as the guidelines continue to change.
- Reception: new prisoners being processed into the prison need to be assessed by healthcare and have induction training. Also, prisoners being released, and the due diligence surrounding their release, plus arrangements for accommodation and coordination with community offender management teams, etc.

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

3.1.4 The Board has observed positive relationships and work between staff and prisoners. This has improved significantly during the reporting period, as the prison transitioned smoothly to a fully operational regime and new staff were hired and trained. Diversity initiatives continue to make a positive impact on keeping protected characteristics (including race, religion, age, disability sex, gender reassignment and sexual orientation, which is unlawful to discriminate against) to the forefront in staff interactions and in reporting and monitoring the welfare of prisoners. (5.4.4)

3.1.5 In hot weather, the conditions in Beaufort, the most recently built wing, remain uncomfortable. This is completely unacceptable; bids are currently sitting in a pipeline of works and will be considered for funding in future financial years. Fans reduce the heat in the common areas but are still not sufficient, an issue raised in last year's report. (5.1.4)

### **Health and wellbeing**

3.1.6 Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust continues to provide healthcare over the reporting period. From the Board's observations, it has consistently been able to provide safe and timely medicines based on feedback from prisoners and during morning distribution of medication. Treatment is administered by an in-house doctor and part-time dentist. The Board is not concerned about waiting times for appointments.

3.1.7 With strong leadership, staffing levels increased over the year. The senior leadership team (SLT) addressed the issue of the number of missed healthcare appointments and prioritised escorts to healthcare when treatment was required. (6.1.6)

3.1.8 Collingwood wing has been re-purposed to focus on young offenders with neurodivergent-related challenges during the reporting year, with young men attending a 12-week programme. (6.5.4)

3.1.9 There has been a notable increase in the number of men entering the prison with existing mental health needs, which has led to an increased demand for healthcare services. Transferring prisoners from HMP Portland to secure mental health units improved over the reporting period. (6.3.1). Although the prison has increased the staffing numbers for mental health, they are inadequate to treat the number of prisoners who have ongoing mental health issues.

### **Progression and resettlement**

3.1.10 The prison has demonstrated a consistent approach to operating at a fully functional regime for time out of cell during weekdays.

3.1.11 The prison has not provided sufficient activity spaces to enable every eligible prisoner to have the opportunity to attend work and/or education full time.

3.1.12 The Board continued to see challenges in the resettlement process, in relation to finding accommodation on release for prisoners, although this has significantly improved over the previous year. The Board noted a positive working relationship between the offender management unit (OMU), the pre-release team and the providers of commissioned rehabilitative services (CRS). On average, 90% of prisoners had accommodation on release, with a concerted effort by all involved, which is an improvement over the previous year. (7.5.1)

## **3.2 Main areas for development**

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

3.2.1 How does the Minister plan to support the Prison Service to reduce the prevalence of drugs and other illicit substances across the estate?

3.2.2 What steps will the Minister take to support the Prison Service in providing additional purposeful activity across HMP/YOI Portland?

3.2.3 What steps will the Minister take to ensure that the Prison Service does not lose staff on work visas, given the change in the minimum salary visa requirements when the profession does not offer competitive remuneration?

3.2.4 How does the Minister plan to support the Prison Service to help manage the complex mental health of needs of prisoners so that they receive appropriate care and support.

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

3.2.5 Will there be extra support for prisons to hire additional staff for pre-release teams and offender management teams as the early release programme continues to evolve? (7.5.1)

3.2.6 What steps is HMPPS taking to address the poor service provided by external suppliers, with particular attention on the quality of service provided by Serco with regard to the transport of prisoners? (4.1.5)

3.2.7 Will HMPPS, as a matter of urgency, arrange for the necessary funding to be made available to address the ventilation issues on Beaufort wing during spells of hot weather? (5.1.4)

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

3.2.8 What steps will the Governor undertake to ensure that key work continues to increase so all prisoners benefit on a regular basis? (5.3.2)

3.2.9 How do you plan to reduce illicit substances entering the establishment?

3.2.10 How do you plan to work with HMPPS to secure resources to provide additional purposeful activities and expand the education offering?

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

### **Safety**

3.3.1 Levels of violence have remained static, but the number of self-harm incidents has fallen considerably. (4.0.3)

3.3.2 The ingress of illicit substances continued to be an ongoing problem, but the security team has improved protocols to make ingress and possession as difficult as possible. (4.5.5)

### **Fair and humane treatment**

3.3.3 The introduction, management and supervision of assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documentation, used to support prisoners at risk of self-harm and suicide, improved. (4.3.4). That said, the Board would like to see further improvement with ACCT plans.

3.3.4 The prison has moved from a restricted regime to fully operational during weekdays and changed the schedule for yard time and domestics to encourage more men into purposeful activity.

3.3.5 From the Board's observations, the processes of segregation and adjudication (a disciplinary hearing when a prisoner is alleged to have broken prison rules) were

sensitively handled by staff in the care and separation unit (CSU) and the staff demonstrate the ability to manage complex individuals in the unit. (5.2.2)

### **Health and wellbeing**

3.3.6 Staffing within healthcare is now at the level planned by the prison in 2023, and prisoners received medication on a timely basis each day. (6.1.4)

3.3.7 Positive procedures were introduced in the reporting year to address the problems arising from missed healthcare appointments. (6.1.5)

3.3.8 Procedures were modified to ensure all prisoners are offered naloxone (a drug that temporarily reverses the effects of an opioid overdose) on release. (6.1.7)

### **Progression and resettlement**

3.3.9 The staff appeared to respond well to the pressures of the changes in the early release policy and the challenge of trying to secure accommodation for prisoners on release. (7.5.4)

### **Performance of senior leadership**

3.3.10 During the reporting period, the senior leadership team continued to emphasise education and work placements and they also encouraged staff to strive towards a more consistent regime each day. They have also increased the number of mental health professionals and programmes in the prison.

3.3.11 Throughout the year, it was the Board's experience that all members of the leadership team took serious note of our observations and suggestions. This positive approach to the work of the Board filtered down to all the staff. It was very rare for Board members to be met with anything but supportive and willing assistance.



## **Evidence sections 4 – 7**

### **4. Safety**

4.0.1 The safer custody team (SCT) regularly checked on all prisoners in the healthcare unit, the CSU and those on an ACCT plan.

4.0.2 Where family members contacted the care line at the prison, expressing concern about their relative or partner, officers appeared happy to check on the man concerned and either phoned the caller back or arranged for the prisoner to make a call to reassure.

4.0.3 Prisoners' perceptions of HMP/YOI Portland have improved significantly since our last report and they have told the Board that they are generally well treated and supported by staff.

#### **4.1 Reception and induction**

4.1.1 The reception area is clean and well lit and the Board has witnessed the welcoming and engaging manner in which the staff accept new arrivals into the prison. Prisoners tell the Board they are well treated and supported by staff when they arrive and that they spend the minimum length of time in reception.

4.1.2 Prisoners are initially assessed by prison staff after being identified and their details are checked. They are given a rub-down body search. They are also body-scanned for secreted items. If the results are positive three times, they are housed in the CSU until the scans are clear. Some prisoners have complained about the results, believing them to be a false positive, but the Board is satisfied that the procedure is done properly and fairly based on the 'before' and 'after' scans.

4.1.3 New arrivals are housed in Grenville, the first night centre.

4.1.4 Essential checks are carried out in reception, in private. Addiction recovery workers, the chaplaincy, healthcare and education and offender management unit (OMU) meetings take place on the wing rather than in reception.

4.1.5 There have been issues during the reporting year with late arrivals, after hours, to the prison, due to, we believe, Serco transport issues. This resulted in some prisoners not receiving a first-night health screening, creating the risk that health needs are not properly assessed until the following morning. Serco transport issues also seem to have affected the prison regarding transfers to and from other establishments. This has meant that prisoners cannot transfer to a prison to obtain the training required prior to release and are reliant on the prison to facilitate their own transfers.

4.1.6 The Board have observed that property in the possession of incoming prisoners is recorded accurately and treated with respect and that staff explain to prisoners that excess items, or items that are not allowed, will be securely stored until the prisoner is released.

4.1.7 At the start of the year, when prisoners first arrived in their cells on the induction wing, some reported finding items of bedding or other essentials missing and those requiring clothing often found their size was not available. However, this has improved over the reporting year.

4.1.8 A number of prisoners have said their initial induction didn't cover everything they needed to know about the prison and they would like to see this expanded.

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

4.2.1 The incidence of self-harm fell from 759 in 2023-2024 to 550 in the reporting year. Some of this was attributed to several prolific self-harmers leaving the prison and an increase in key work sessions between prisoners and staff.

4.2.2 The safety intervention meeting (SIM) was the key element in the support of prisoners with complex needs. It met weekly and was cross-disciplinary. It was chaired by the head of safer custody or their deputy and attended by staff from:

- psychology
- drug strategy
- healthcare
- security
- allocations
- residential services

The Board observed the interventions to help prisoners, which were discussed, planned and implemented through this group. The SIM welcomed referrals from anyone in contact with residents, such as, for example, officers, non-uniformed staff, families and the IMB.

4.2.3 There were two deaths in custody during the reporting year: one man died after taking an illicit substance while in custody, while the second man died several days after his release into the community, which still constitutes a death in custody. It was deemed that healthcare team should ensure that prisoners nearing release are referred to community health services when their presentation and history warrants it.

4.2.4 The number of Samaritan-trained Listeners (prisoners who offer confidential emotional support to other prisoners) increased and has been a key benefit to prisoners.

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

4.3.1 A sample of violent and use of force incidents were analysed by the prison at a weekly safety intervention meeting. As trends emerged, they were then fed into the diversity and inclusion panel for discussion in prisoner focus groups representing each of the protected characteristics (including disability, gender reassignment, race, religion, age, sex, and sexual orientation). The average number of violent incidents per month was 19, compared with 21 in the previous reporting period.

4.3.2 The staff have mandatory body worn video cameras (BWVCs). Such footage can then be used by the safer custody team (SCT) when reviewing incidents and as an aid to de-escalation and staff training. However, on occasion, the BWVCs were not turned on at the start of an incident.

4.3.3 Most cases of voluntary self-isolation that occurred were debt-related. The Board determined this from speaking to prisoners about their reasons for self-isolation. After agreed interventions by the SCT, most residents were able to re-enter

normal wing activity. The prison also operated a Lifting the Lid programme to help residents develop strategies for clearing debts and remaining debt-free.

4.3.4 Key work was prioritised for prisoners with complex issues at the start of the reporting period and increased month on month as the year progressed (an average of 243 sessions per month, covering approximately 190 prisoners per month in the reporting period). It was good to see an increase in the number of sessions in the second half of the year, to an average of 348 per month, covering approximately 281 prisoners monthly. This is a critical part of building better relationships between prisoners and staff and is intended to improve safety and help people settle into the prison. The Board would like to see the continued increase in key work sessions in the next reporting period.

#### **4.4 Use of force (UoF)**

4.4.1 A selection of violent and use of force incidents were analysed at the weekly safety intervention meeting (SIM). This meeting fed into the UoF learning panel and the SIM in a 'circle' of communication. For the 2024-2025 reporting year, there were 558 UoF incidents (an average of 47 per month). In the previous period, the figures were 584 (an average of 49 per month), although the Board noted that the number of incidents increased in the second half of the year.

#### **4.5 Preventing illicit items**

4.5.1 Mandatory drug tests (MDT) were restarted in May 2023 on a sample basis of an average of 5% of the population. There were spikes of positive tests during the year, as reported by the prison being due to 'UTI' (under the influence). Portland also carries out drug tests on a 'suspicion only' basis.

4.5.2 Spice (a psychoactive substance) impregnated in paper and self-brewed alcohol ('hooch') remained the prevalent illicit substances of interest. Drones and 'throw-overs' (where people from outside the prison throw parcels over the walls containing illicit items, which are then picked up by prisoners) have not been material at Portland in the reporting period when compared with other prisons.

4.5.3 The security team maintained 100% searching and swabbing of incoming mail, internal mail and incoming parcels for illicit drugs.

4.5.4 Drug use and supply in the prison increased, although prisoners at Portland reported that they were more likely to agree with the 'ordered regime' statements that their prison was 'better-controlled' and 'good at delivering personal safety' compared with other prisons they have been in.

4.5.5 Increased vigilance during social visits resulted in the interception of a number of 'passes', which led to arrests, in the first half of the year, and the levels of Spice fell. However, in the second half of the year, this increased, with a number of men 'under the influence' of an illicit substance. Regular sweeps by dog search teams and intelligence-led cell searches have been productive.

4.5.6 There was a zero-tolerance policy towards violence and drug use. An amnesty was held twice during the reporting year to encourage prisoners to remove all excess items that might be used for substance misuse or pose other risks, such as weapons, for example.

4.5.7 The implementation of the body scanner at HMP Portland helped to significantly reduce the number of illicit items entering the prison. Improvements to physical security enabled further free movement of prisoners around the establishment and increased feelings of normality in the prison setting.

4.5.8 The Board was not aware of any incidents at Portland involving synthetic opioids (netzines) or xylazines. The security team appears to remain vigilant in limiting the entry of these toxic drugs into the prison.

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

### **5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food**

5.1.1 All residential units were clean and generally well-maintained. Cells in Beaufort wing have in-cell showers. Maintenance/repair of damaged cells is a continuous challenge, as the prison is operating close to capacity daily and any cells out of action can make it difficult to house prisoners while cells are repaired. This is monitored daily by management to ensure any damage to cells is repaired quickly.

5.1.2 All residents were able to access notices, make medical appointments, make general applications (a formal way for prisoners to request help on a range of issues, including family contact and educational and work-related matters) and order food and canteen (a facility where prisoners can buy snacks, toiletries, stationery and other essentials using their allocated funds).

5.1.3 From the Board's observations, the prison maintained an excellent response to hygiene throughout the year, with many of the wings re-painted and some of the showers improved.

5.1.4 The Board received complaints about poor ventilation in hot weather, particularly in Beaufort. Despite being the newest wing, the poor design meant that there was inadequate insulation and extremely poor ventilation. In summer, the temperature reached wholly unacceptable and inhumane heat levels, whilst the reverse was true in winter. This issue has been raised in previous reports. The fans used to cool the wing in the summer months are inadequate and noisy, making it difficult to hold a conversation when they are running.

5.1.5 All cells had phones, which allowed prisoners to make external calls and receive internal calls.

5.1.6 The time taken for staff to respond to cell calls improved, with the majority of calls being answered within 60 seconds. In the reporting year, 100% were answered within five minutes.

5.1.7 Prisoners wear their own clothes. Those who arrive with little clothing can access a supply of clothing held by the prison. The in-house laundry facility was closed in October 2023 and prison laundry is sent to HMP Guys Marsh, which is over 40 miles away. The tracking of the laundry sent/received has improved and the centralisation of supplies in Portland made it easier to allocate as required. Collingwood, the wing with no laundry facilities now has a washer and dryer, which is a clear improvement.

5.1.8 There were few applications (prisoners' written representations) to the Board relating to food during the reporting year (2% of all applications received - see 8.3). Staffing levels in the kitchens were good and there were few problems with the supply of fresh ingredients. Special menus for cultural days and religious festivals were much appreciated by the prisoners. Special diets were catered for, although the Board received some complaints, saying that they lacked variety. Work in the kitchens was popular and there was always a waiting list.

5.1.9 Some prisoners complained to the Board about food portions, which they felt were inadequate.

5.1.10 From the Board's observations, canteen provision for prisoners with protected characteristics was good and staff seemed to show a willingness to listen to particular requests.

5.1.11 As far as budgets will stretch, the prison management made a concerted effort to stay on top of regular maintenance, and the unacceptable Victorian double cells have become singles, where possible.

5.1.12 The Governor placed a high priority on the appearance and cleanliness of the prison. Regular Board observations established that common parts inside and outside were regularly and effectively cleaned, with working parties keeping flower beds attractive and the garden area stocked with vegetables.

5.1.13 Staffing levels improved in the reporting year, with continuous recruitment drives to this remote location. A drive to recruit prison officers (POs) proved successful and, by the end of the period, numbers were at the required level. Recruitment is challenging, as pay and conditions are nowhere near attractive enough to compete with outside employment opportunities. An upcoming concern for the next reporting year is the change in visa requirements by the Government for foreign workers in the UK. At the reporting year end, the position was as follows:

	<b>Target</b>	<b>Actual</b>
POs (prisoner officers)	122	122 FTE (full-time equivalent)
OSGs (operational support grades)	48	49 FTE
Physical education instructors (PEIs)	8	7.5 FTE
Instructors	16	13
Weston College staff	16	16

## **5.2 Segregation**

5.2.1 The care and separation unit (CSU) has 11 cells, which are similar to those in the rest of the prison, including one special accommodation cell (where items such as furniture, bedding and sanitation are removed in the interests of safety). Occupancy of the unit fluctuated during the year, with monthly averages ranging from four to 10. Prisoners in the CSU are visited regularly by a member of the senior leadership team, as well as by the chaplaincy and healthcare teams.

5.2.2 From the Board's observations, prisoners with complex needs and challenging behaviour were managed sensitively by staff, with a substantial input from the mental health in-reach team (MHIT) and a multidisciplinary programme reviewed by the segregation monitoring and review group (SMARG). Owing to their complex needs, some prisoners remained on the unit for long periods, with one individual in the CSU for well over 42 days (the limit allowed without external authorisation). All necessary reviews were carried out, as observed by the Board, such as the weekly good order or discipline reviews (GOoD). Staff demonstrated that they were making every effort to integrate all individuals back onto the wings as quickly as possible. The Board noted, in particular, staff's care when authorising continued segregation of a prisoner on an open assessment in care custody and teamwork (ACCT) plan. The Board is not aware of any new ACCTs being opened for segregated prisoners.

5.2.3 Staffing levels fluctuated during the year as the new staff members were released for various training sessions. Any regime restrictions occurred mostly at weekends which, on occasion, affected prisoners' time out of their cells.

5.2.4 The Board observed multiple adjudications (disciplinary hearings held when a prisoner is alleged to have broken prison rules) during the reporting period and was satisfied that they were conducted in line with procedures and were fairly and timely.

5.2.5 A wide range of interventions are being implemented to reduce the number of adjudications, including offering all prisoners purposeful activity and various courses, as well as forums held on the wings that consider if there are any particular recurring themes.

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

5.3.1 The Board heard many comments from prisoners about how 'safe' and 'well-cared for by the staff' they felt during the period.

5.3.2 Key work sessions have increased during the reporting year and continued to increase month on month as the year progressed. The change in focus, with an officer based on each wing so key work can be carried out with current staffing levels on the wings, has worked well. The regular communication between the prisoners and staff has improved and there is generally a good atmosphere on the wings. The Board would like to see key work extended to all prisoners.

5.3.3 All prisoners were allocated a key worker. Key worker sessions were recorded on the digital prison services (DPS) system. It highlights which prisoners did, or did not, have a session in any month. Additionally, a sample of the quality of the key work sessions is performed each month for continuous learning.

5.3.4 The prison council continued to work during the year with a representative from each wing to discuss the concerns being raised by their peers collectively to a member of the SLT (senior management team).

### **5.4 Equality and diversity**

5.4.1 The equality and diversity lead continues to demonstrate a more inclusive and diverse workplace at HMP/YOI Portland for the prisoners. It was good to see prisoners represented at the monthly diversity meeting for them to represent their views.

5.4.2 Over the reporting year, there was an increased focus on protected characteristics. This drive was led by the Governor, the SLT and the equality advisor.

5.4.3 The following are some of the events that have been run in the prison:

- Black History Month
- LGBTQ+ month
- Disability Month
- International Women's Day
- International Men's Day
- Inclusivity Month
- Islamic Awareness Month

5.4.4 The discrimination incident reporting form (DIRF) process seems to be efficient and well-documented, and reports appear to be carefully investigated by managers:

- Responses generally took 14 days but could take longer with approval from the R&D lead; response times were monitored by the SLT.
- Findings were sent back to the prisoner, together with a feedback form.
- Every DIRF was reviewed and quality assessed by the R&D lead and a Deputy Governor
- The Board received feedback from prisoners after reviews and we were satisfied with the investigation and the objectivity demonstrated.

## **5.5 Faith and pastoral support**

5.5.1 During the reporting year, there was always at least one chaplain physically present. The duty chaplains supported prisoners of concern on the wings and communicated with them both by letter and in person. During the period when the Board was not physically visiting, the chaplaincy team was very helpful in highlighting any potential areas, or prisoners, of concern.

5.5.2 Chaplains represented the following faith groups:

- Christianity (all denominations)
- Islam
- Judaism
- Sikhism
- Buddhism
- Hinduism
- Jehovah's Witness

5.5.3 The chaplaincy team proactively engaged in a programme to link prisoners with appropriate local faith communities on release.

5.5.4 The Board heard positive comments regarding Christmas activities, Diwali and Ramadan, in particular, as well as other religious festivals throughout the reporting year.

## **5.6 Incentives schemes**

5.6.1 The incentives scheme has moved the focus towards recognising achievements and acknowledging good behaviour, with three privilege levels (basic/bottom, standard/middle and enhanced/top). Extras, such as social video calls with family, are provided for those with enhanced status (which includes prisoners on the incentivised substance-free living wing).

A new incentives scheme status, called 'super enhanced', was introduced last year in Beaufort wing and has been extended to other wings, which is encouraging for prisoners.

5.6.2 The Board observed that there was more consistency in applying the incentives scheme, such as, which behaviours warranted a reduction to basic status.

5.6.3 Every prisoner had a TV and a phone in their cell. During the year, the conditions for those on the basic level of the incentives scheme were amended so



that TVs would not be removed unless individually sanctioned by either the Duty Governor or the head of residential services.

5.6.4 Approximately 60% of prisoners (300) are on enhanced status in any given month, with the number on the basic level at approximately 6% (33).

5.6.5 There is a zero-tolerance approach to dealing with serious incidents at the prison and the Board is satisfied that no prisoner is placed on a different incentive level without a review by a supervising officer (SO) or higher authority.

## **6. Health and wellbeing**

### **6.1 Healthcare general**

6.1.1 Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust is now in its second year of providing healthcare services to the prison. For the first time in many years, all staff posts are filled and there is currently no requirement for external agency staff.

6.1.2 The healthcare unit is located in an early Victorian building that was never designed for purpose and is far from ideal. In addition to the healthcare block, where most treatments takes place, there are three consultation/treatment rooms situated on the wings and three 'satellite' pharmacies.

6.1.3 The Board is not concerned about the time prisoners wait to see a GP, dentist or a healthcare professional. The GP sees an average of 125 patients per month. Of the 500+ prisoners at Portland, over 350 are on some type of medication. There are five prescribers on site and three pharmacies, which use a double check to validate identity. The whole process is monitored by an officer and runs smoothly.

6.1.4 The leadership of healthcare is efficient, and all staff cooperate fully in providing any information of guidance sought.

6.1.5 With 'healthcare representatives' out onto the wings, prisoners have immediate contact with healthcare staff. The number of missed appointments stands at around 10%. There are also staff available to escort men to and from the healthcare building, which has also contributed to the fall in missed appointments. A regular patient survey, conducted by healthcare, questions men on their experiences within the unit, and this tells us that 80% of those responding felt respected and cared for.

6.1.6 New admissions are always screened by healthcare staff on arrival (those who arrive after business hours are screened the following day), medical records are reviewed, and provision of medications is checked. For non-English speaking arrivals, The Big Word is used to provide an immediate translation and interpretation service.

6.1.7 For men leaving the establishment and requiring care in the community, a visiting social worker provides a bridging service between the patient and the local authority. This service is normally instigated two months before discharge. On release, all men are offered Naloxone and, on average, 50% accept.

6.1.8 A number of specialist clinics run on a regular basis and see patients with diabetes, HIV and hepatitis C. A wide range of vaccinations are offered, but around one-third are declined by prisoners.

6.1.9 The Board dealt with a number of applications related to healthcare, although it dropped from 29 in the previous year to 28 in the reporting period (13% of the total applications received by the Board). This is attributed to healthcare representatives on each wing, who provide care paths and attend a monthly forum to discuss related issues with staff.

6.1.10 Where the Board was in attendance, in a monitoring capacity, a member of the healthcare team was present at all ACCT reviews and safer custody meetings.

6.1.11 Serious medical emergencies are taken by ambulance to Dorset County Hospital in Dorchester, accompanied by prison staff. Out of hours, the 111-phone service is used extensively. All prisoners found to be involved with psychoactive substances and/or hooch are seen by healthcare within 24 hours and offered a range of support.

## **6.2 Physical healthcare**

6.2.1 Dentistry is provided by one part-time dentist, with waiting times of eight weeks, although a triage process ensures urgent cases are seen within two days. There are around 60 men on the waiting list.

6.2.2 Physiotherapy, podiatry and optician appointments are scheduled as required.

## **6.3 Mental health**

6.3.1 A significant proportion of prisoners suffer from mental health issue, which require extensive support.

The pressure to move men to secure hospitals has eased this last year, with three transferred, most of whom were within 28 days of referral. In previous reporting periods, prisoners had long delays in waiting to be transferred to a secure hospital for treatment, as there were no available beds.

6.3.2 Mental health services have benefited from a consistent and committed team and well-appointed and equipped accommodation. From the Board's observations, a more consistent therapeutic approach has benefited relationships, behaviour and the treatment of drug abuse. The mental health caseload seems high, at 110 in a population of around 500-plus men.

6.3.3 As mentioned previously, self-harm has decreased by 27%, from 759 in the previous year to 550 in this reporting period. However, many incidents are repeated behaviours with prolific self-harmers. It appears to the Board that the various support programmes are having a positive effect.

## **6.4 Exercise, regime**

6.4.1 Over the reporting period, the unlock time for prisoners across the establishment has stabilised. All prisoners can now expect to receive 30 minutes of outside exercise, 90 minutes of association within the wing and four-and-a-half hours in education or workshops. As of April 2025, there are plans for the education unit to offer an additional session on Friday mornings. Approximately 5% of prisoners do not engage with programmes and these men are encouraged to participate.

6.4.2 A full gym programme is maintained, with men offered two gym sessions per week, and some prisoners on the incentives scheme enhanced status managing more. The gym and adjacent facilities are well maintained and are popular with the prisoners. There are plans to upgrade the gym equipment post May 2025. The rugby academy continues to provide learning experiences and is well supported.

6.4.3 Few social activities are catered for, with just a few pool tables on the wings. The Board would like to see more on the wings, especially on Collingwood, which houses a larger number of young offenders (18-25 years).

## **6.5 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation**

6.5.1 At reception in HMP/YOI Portland, all arrivals have a first-night screening within 24 hours, at which they can identify any substance issues they might have. On day two, they have a one-to-one healthcare meeting in Grenville, the reception wing. Any prisoner on opioid substitutes is seen by a member of the drug misuse recovery team within 24 hours. Any prisoner already in the establishment who requests a visit from the team is usually seen within five days.

6.5.2 The established protocol for psychoactive substance use appeared to be well embedded in the regime. Prisoners thought to have been under the influence were monitored, interviewed and offered harm-reduction advice.

6.5.3 Given the number of young offenders at Portland between the ages of 18 and 25 (26%), Collingwood has been re-purposed as the Evolution wing. This strategy is aimed at providing support to young people with neurodivergent-related challenges in a wider context and focuses predominantly on rehabilitation. The feedback has been generally positive, with participants expressing gratitude for the help they had received from the recovery team

6.5.4 The national early release scheme (which allowed for prisoners to be released up to 70 days, instead of 35 days, before their sentence was due to end, to alleviate prison overcrowding) has put considerable pressure on the ability of the offender management unit (OMU), the recovery services and the healthcare teams to organise the safe release of those who need ongoing care and accommodation in the community. In the Board's view, the commitment of these frontline services at Portland is worthy of mention.

## 7. Progression and resettlement

During the reporting year, there was a significant increase in the number of activity spaces available to prisoners. There was an increase in activities such as education, vocational workshops, industry workshops, offending behaviour programmes, as well as work as a red band (prisoners with a greater degree of trust and autonomy in their jobs in the prison) and a non-wing based orderly (a trusted prisoner who provides services that contribute to the running of the prison).

### 7.1 Education and library

7.1.1 Education was delivered in the classroom. All prisoners were encouraged to participate, as employers now have minimum entrance qualifications. Prisoners can carry on learning until they reach a certain grade.

7.1.2 Education is not only about the classroom and Portland is well equipped to train prisoners in practical subjects such as fork lift trucks, welding, brick laying, gardening, horticulture, carpentry and other trades. The Board observed the prisoners in attendance on these courses were enthusiastic about learning useful skills and appreciated that, on some courses, a certain level of maths and English were required.

7.1.3 During the reporting year, the number of unique learners was maintained from 962 to 924, which is commendable given the turnover of prisoners this year. A total of 1,361 prisoners achieved accreditation for completed courses. Education is key for prisoners to be able to obtain employment when released into the community and for some workshops there is a waiting list to attend.

<b><u>Learning outcomes</u></b>	<b><u>2023-2024</u></b>	<b><u>2024-2025</u></b>
Unique learners	962	924
Starters	1,498	1,447
Completed	1,416	1,393
Continuing	0	0
Achieved	1,400	1,361
Total withdrawal	82	54
Total withdrawal agreed	81	54
Awaiting results	1	0
Actual success	98.87%	97.70%
Pure success (achieved over starts)	93.46%	94.06%
Pure success minus withdrawals	98.87%	97.70%

7.1.4 Induction assessments, as outlined by the skills for work lead for Portland, have been revised and consist of a five-day initial induction carried out on Grenville (the induction wing). The participants then disperse to the wings and take part in a three-day skills for work programme in the education centre.

## **7.2 Vocational training, work**

7.2.1 Education and industry have expanded placements across the board, such as English and maths, and vocational training also includes brick laying, forklift training, gardening, horticulture, creative music, and creative art. These are dependent on instructors being available, but they run most weekdays. All of these courses were enthusiastically received by the prisoners.

7.2.2 The prisoners in purposeful activity average 390 places each month that vary between full time, half time or part time. The objective is to achieve 30% in purposeful activity which allows prisoner to be out of cell for work / education. Otherwise, the individual is behind their door for the majority of the day. Lack of education or employment opportunities accounted for 12% of the applications received by the IMB.

## **7.3 Offender management, progression**

7.3.1 In the Board's view, the OMU coped admirably with the re-calculation of sentences for early release, where prisoners were eligible. The number of releases (678) and new receptions/transfers each month affected numerous departments in the prison.

## **7.4 Family contact**

7.4.1 Social visits were available for the whole of the reporting year and fell by 30%. The Board would like to see the number of social video calls increase substantially during the next reporting period, as there are only four slots available over four days per week, which makes it difficult for families to book a session. Given the remoteness of the prison location, this is essential for the prisoners whose families are outside the south west region.

<b>Family contact</b>	<b>2024-2025</b>
Social visits and social video calls	3,117

## **7.5 Resettlement planning**

7.5.1 During the course of the year, finding accommodation for prisoners prior to release has improved considerably over the last year, averaging 90%, or greater, each month. The responsibility for this is with the external community offender manager (COM) team, employed by HMPPS, although the OMU often fills the gap if required.

7.5.2 The presence of a Jobcentre Plus employee, based full-time in the prison, was unfortunately not available for the first part of the year. The aim was to interview all prisoners before discharge and arrange appointments with potential employers and with the Jobcentre Plus office local to where the prisoner would be living, to expedite the welfare benefits process. There were some successes with prisoners in employment six weeks after release, but the numbers remain low, most likely due to perceptions in society.

7.5.3 On release, at-risk men were provided with a taxi to Weymouth train station. The new initiative to open the Jailhouse café in the morning for newly released prisoners, to await transport or charge their phones, has been a welcome change for the men.

7.5.4 In HMP Portland, it appeared to the Board that whether prisoners had a positive experience around discharge and resettlement was entirely dependent on the goodwill of staff already working under great pressure.

7.5.5 There has been a challenge with transport provided by HMPPS, where it has been agreed to transfer a prisoner from one prison to another. It is often cancelled or moved at the last minute and, in many cases, the prison has to use its own staff to move the prisoner, to ensure the place remains available.

## 8. The work of the IMB

- The Board continued to monitor the prison throughout the reporting year. Monitoring was primarily in person.
- The Board held a monthly meeting, which the Governor, or their Deputy, attended, in order to brief IMB members on prison matters and to discuss issues arising from monitoring reports. During the reporting year, six meetings took place via video conferencing and six were in person.
- During the reporting period, the Board consisted of five members, two of whom had less than two years' experience. The Board made 109 visits, compared with 130 in the previous period, and received 213 applications, compared with 224 in the previous year. A recruitment campaign was held in January 2024 and by the end of the reporting period one additional members had been appointed, while three established members had resigned.

### Board statistics

	2023-2024	2024-2025
Recommended complement of Board members	12	12
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	6	7
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	7	5
Total number of visits to the establishment	130	109
Total number of segregation reviews and adjudications monitored	54	51



## Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	13	9
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	1	0
C	Equality	1	5
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	9	26
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	6	8
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	7	10
F	Food and kitchens	6	5
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	29	28
H1	Property within this establishment	43	29
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	25	24
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	6	0
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence), parole, release dates, recategorisation	43	26
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	14	11
K	Transfers	8	19
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	13	13
	<b>Total number of applications</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>213</b>

NB: The IMB applications box on each wing was checked at least once during every staffed monitoring week.



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