



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Wormwood Scrubs

**For reporting year
1 June 2024 to 31 May 2025**

Published December 2025



Contents

Introductory sections 1 – 3	Page
1. Statutory role of the IMB	3
2. Description of the establishment	4
3. Key points	5
 Evidence sections 4 – 7	
4. Safety	9
5. Fair and humane treatment	14
6. Health and wellbeing	23
7. Progression and resettlement	27
 The work of the IMB	
Board statistics	31
Applications to the IMB	31
 Annex A	
Main service providers	32

All IMB annual reports are published on www.imb.org.uk

Introductory sections 1 – 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

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

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

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

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

The Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture 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 Wormwood Scrubs is a category B (for prisoners who do not require the highest level of security, but who still need to be held in conditions where escape is made very difficult) public sector local and designated resettlement prison for men, built mainly between 1875 and 1891. Located in a densely populated area of Hammersmith in London, the prison backs onto the large, open area of Wormwood Scrubs.

The prison accepts sentenced and remand prisoners over the age of 21 and young remand adults aged 18 to 21. Young adults are placed on all wings.

As a resettlement prison, HMP Wormwood Scrubs also accepts prisoners for the last 12 weeks of their sentence. Many prisoners stay for relatively short periods, and turnover is high.

At the beginning of the reporting year, the proportion of remand prisoners was around 50%. By the end of the reporting year, the figure for unsentenced prisoners was as high as 70%, of whom about 10% were on recall. Approximately 30% of prisoners held were foreign national prisoners.

The prison has five main residential wings (A to E). Most prisoners share double cells built originally for one occupant in the Victorian era. Only D and E wings have single cell accommodation.

In addition, the Conibeere unit (CBU) accommodates prisoners requiring assessment and support with substance misuse issues, there is a residential healthcare unit (H3), and a care and separation unit (CSU), where men are segregated in single cells. The incentivised substance free living (ISFL) unit, on D wing, was expanded and reallocated to E wing during the reporting year.

The prison has, again, been at, or near, its operational capacity¹ for most of the reporting year, reflecting pressures on space in the wider prison estate. The prison reduced its operational capacity from 1280² to 1274 in September 2024, then to 1212 by the end of the reporting year to facilitate refurbishment work.

¹ This is the safe overcrowding figure agreed with the local prisons group director above the certified normal accommodation (the number of prisoners who can be accommodated without overcrowding) as the maximum of prisoners allowed.

² 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

Safety (see section 4)

- The prison maintained its record for recorded incidents of violence and self-harm at lower levels than comparator reception prisons, and there were some welcome initiatives to identify and manage risk. The differential with comparators narrowed over the year, however, particularly in relation to prisoner assaults on staff.
- The prison continued its safety strategy of managing prisoners in groups to separate men and reduce opportunities for violence. While the prison regards this as a key reason for a continuing record of fewer violent incidents than comparator prisons, it has come at the cost of limitations to regime (the structured daily routine of the prison) and time out of cell.
- There is a continuing serious problem with illicit drug use in the prison. The rate of positive mandatory drugs tests compares unfavourably with other London prisons and has not improved since the last report. Searching of staff and visitors is inconsistent.
- The active use of body worn video cameras (BWVCs) by staff to record incidents has remained stubbornly low.

Fair and humane treatment (see section 5)

- The prison is overcrowded and old, and vermin are a perennial problem. Despite an efficient local repair team and some welcome refurbishments, there are still regular breakdowns of antiquated critical infrastructure, many parts of which are well beyond their expected life.
- The Board's observations suggest that the daily regime is still not consistently delivered, with some activities vulnerable to cancellation.
- Prisoners who are not in work or education still regularly spend more than 22 hours a day locked in their cells. The prison still does not consistently deliver on its target of a minimum 1½ hours out of cell for unemployed prisoners.

Health and wellbeing (see section 6)

- There were welcome initiatives to improve the assessment of risk and the care of prisoners from their first hours in custody. However, unsuitable accommodation, such as the CSU, is still being used to hold some unwell prisoners and others with challenging behaviour, because of a waiting list for a bed in H3.
- Despite overall improvements in planned healthcare, complaints to the healthcare unit substantially increased, with those relating to mental health services almost tripling.
- There was a welcome reduction in the number of clinic cancellations, and fewer planned external hospital appointments were cancelled for lack of prison officer escort this year. However, the mental health team often struggled to meet targets for both routine and urgent referrals.
- Time out of cell for all prisoners is inconsistent and often falls below the prison's targets (see above).
- Property issues, particularly relating to property lost or delayed in transit, are still a major concern for prisoners.

Progression and resettlement (see section 7)

- Attendance at allocated activities remains poor. The prison's ongoing policy of separating prisoners by wing adds to staffing and timetabling demands, and the availability of staff to escort prisoners to activities can be inconsistent.
- Activities, education and the choice of work available to prisoners are dictated by the wing they are housed on. Some opportunities available to prisoners on one wing are not open to prisoners on another. This limits prisoner choice and opportunity and creates an inherent unfairness, in the Board's view.
- While there are some very worthwhile courses and programmes on offer, they are often open to only small groups of prisoners who can meet strict criteria. Activities that are available more widely (such as the gym and library visits) are vulnerable to cancellation, and some are not available at weekends.
- The key worker scheme is still not being delivered as intended. Most prisoners still do not have a key worker, and sessions were often cancelled.
- The Board received more complaints about poor communication and lack of timely assistance from offender management and probation staff, and around issues with sentence management. The prison intends to review the work of the offender management unit, which the Board welcomes.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- What further support will the Minister provide to improve the antiquated infrastructure of the prison?
- What measures will the Minister take to reduce the number of prisoners with acute mental health and behavioural needs that require specialist assessment and care being held in the prison?
- What further progress can be made to help remove the barriers to meeting targets for the assessment and transfer times to hospital for those requiring specialist mental health facilities?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- What further support will the Prison Service provide to improve the antiquated infrastructure of the prison?
- Prisoners using in-cell phones experience frequent breakdowns, long waits for repairs and call costs far higher than those in the community. What will the Prison Service do to improve this?
- Property lost or delayed in transit between establishments is still a major concern for prisoners. What more will the Prison Service do to improve the situation?

TO THE GOVERNOR

- What further measures will the Governor take to improve security and prevent drugs getting into the prison?
- What further measures will the Governor take to improve the length, consistency and quality of time out of cell for all prisoners?
- What further measures will the Governor take to improve the take up and use of body worn video cameras?
- What further measures will the Governor take to improve the range of worthwhile work, education and other activities for all prisoners?

3.3 Response to the last report

Issue raised	Response given	Progress
To the Minister		
What resources will the Minister make immediately available to this prison to improve the living conditions and safety of the prison?	Investment is being made in the prison infrastructure, but demands are much greater than the available funding.	A limited programme of refurbishment continues, but the problems largely remain.
What support can be provided to help remand prisoners with release planning?	Measures are being taken to improve the access of remand prisoners to release support.	Some gaps in provision, notably around homelessness on release, remain.
What further steps is the Minister considering with a view to ensuring an improvement in assessment and transfer times to hospital for those requiring specialist mental health facilities?	The problem is complex, and work is being done to identify barriers and pressures that limit progress towards targets, with a view to reducing referral times.	Delays in transfer times to secure hospital facilities still, on average, exceed the 28-day national target.
To the Prison Service		
What further support can be provided to ensure that the prison has adequate resources to deliver an effective and consistent key worker scheme?	There was an increase of key work support in the prison towards the end of 2024 and the expectation is that key work delivery will increase as it is a core priority for HMPPS in 2025/6,	Key work is still limited to prisoners not in work or education, and even these sessions are often cancelled due to pressures on the regime.
	To the Governor	
What action can be taken to monitor and improve the consistency of adequate time out of cell for all prisoners?	Time out of cell is now monitored and audited by the management team and improvements have been made in consistency.	Too many prisoners still find that activities and regime are cancelled due to staffing issues. Unemployed prisoners are often still spending 22 hours a day or more in their cells.
What further steps will be taken to accurately monitor and reduce the number of therapy and healthcare sessions not		Fewer healthcare and therapy sessions were cancelled this reporting year, but they are still

attended because of the lack of prison staff?		prone to cancellations because of staffing issues.
What plans are in place to address and reduce the availability of illicit substances in the prison?	Work is being done to target supply and demand.	The rate of positive findings on mandatory drugs testing has remained far higher than in comparator prisons.
Are there any plans to allow more flexibility for prisoners to mix outside their wing groups for education and training?	Work is being done to improve the range of activities available to prisoners but there are no plans to change the current system.	Prisoners are still unable to mix outside their wing groups and the range of activities available to them is dictated by their location in the prison.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

Safety data obtained by the Board relies largely on information supplied by the prison and is inevitably a snapshot of a complex picture.

4.1 Reception and induction

The reception area is busy (around 500 arrivals a month), including (until October 2024) prisoners allocated temporarily from St Albans Crown Court. It is a clean and orderly space but at particularly busy times such as the evenings, prisoners can be detained in bare holding rooms for long periods. Members have observed staff in reception working patiently and efficiently with arrivals, many of whom do not speak English as a first language, and some of whom (about 10 to 15 per week) speak no English at all. There are printed information leaflets in the more common languages, and staff also use online translation services when required.

As in the last reporting year, the prison accepted a high number of prisoners with severe mental and other health issues and those exhibiting challenging and often very violent behaviour, some of whom have been transferred from other prisons. Late evening arrivals still cause problems for prison staff who need to access and collect information out of normal working hours, and some prisoners still arrive with inadequate documentation, making risk assessments and other first night processes more difficult.

The body scanner in reception is still not used routinely (4.5).

In part to address concerns identified by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) and others about risk assessment in the early days in custody, reception paperwork has been improved. Healthcare risk assessments on entry are now carried out by a nurse, supported by a review of medication by a pharmacist based in reception and a first night interview in the first night centre (FNC) (6). All prisoners are considered for referral to Forward Trust (6.6), a charity that provides substance misuse services in the prison.

Assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) processes (which provide additional care and support to prisoners at risk of harm) have now also been reviewed and oversight has been strengthened (4.2).

A group of prisoners, including a Listener (a prisoner trained by the Samaritans), offer peer support, organise and provide food, clothing and supplies to prisoners on arrival, provide a peer contact and keep the reception areas clean and tidy.

The FNC is used for the early stages of induction, after which most prisoners go to B wing for a more detailed prison induction. Of 35 beds in the FNC, 15 are in dormitories, which causes problems when the prison is already overcrowded and new arrivals require single cell accommodation.

Induction processes were reviewed at the end of 2024 and split into two sessions, the first on B wing, relating to prison life, and the second an education assessment. All prisoners are required to complete their B wing induction before moving on. Payments have been introduced as an incentive to complete the induction process modules and as a means of addressing early days debt. Prisoners usually move off B wing to another residential wing after about 14 days, although some stay longer due to space pressures, with limited access to activities.

Induction information supplied in writing has been improved and updated and is available in several languages. Board members have observed some examples of enthusiastic and effective delivery of key induction information to prisoners by peer supporters and heard some very positive feedback from their audiences.

Prisoners have continued to complain to the Board about long delays in approving PINs (approved phone numbers used to call outside the prison) during the early days in prison, slow responses from staff to issues with PINs, as well as the lack of menu choices in their early days in prison. Complaints about property lost or delayed in transit to the prison continued at high levels in the reporting year (5.8).

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

There were, sadly, four deaths in custody during the reporting year, of which three were in hospital or the community. All were apparently due to natural causes and in one instance staff had worked hard to secure a release on compassionate grounds before the prisoner died. There were no apparently self-inflicted deaths.

As well as changes to reception procedures (4.1), changes were made from March 2025 to the management of ACCT plans and other processes to manage prisoners at risk (4.4) through identified case managers, allocated and overseen by the safer custody team.

Recorded self-harm (mostly cuts and scratches) remained consistently lower than comparator reception prisons. The prison is proud of its record, which has been maintained since the last reporting year. Months with lower reported self-harm incidents mirrored months where higher numbers of ACCT documents were opened, which may indicate that increased focus on procedures for risk identification and support has had some impact on self-harm figures.

Additional training has also been given to staff around identifying risk factors and developing and implementing care plans for prisoners on ACCT plans, which is welcomed by the Board.

The Samaritans train prisoners to be Listeners, as well as providing a separate service to prisoners by freephone. Listeners are available in reception and in the FNC, and there are rooms for discussions in privacy on the residential wings. They are recruited and trained twice a year, but there are few trained Listeners available across the wings. Both prisoners and Listeners have told the Board that it can be difficult to arrange meetings. Additionally, support is available from the chaplaincy team (5.5), peer activities representatives and the literacy and numeracy charity, the Shannon Trust (7.1), among others.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction

Among many other measures, the prison addresses violence through prison safety representatives on the wings, interventions and weapons seizures, and quarterly weapons amnesties. Monthly safety meetings review the numbers and trends of violent incidents, analyse individual serious violent incidents (defined as assaults on staff, sexual assaults, fights, assaults on prisoners, attempted assaults, restraint and guiding holds), and record details of assaults on staff.

A well-attended safety intervention meeting (SIM) takes place weekly to review prisoners of most concern, including those on a challenge, support and intervention plan, or CSIP (expanded to include drugs this year), those assessed as most likely to self-harm, complex individuals who pose a risk of violence or significant disorder, self-isolating

men, those on constant watch, those refusing food, transgender prisoners and prisoners on ACCTs. Representatives attend from most departments and wings, including the healthcare unit.

In August 2024, the prison introduced an enhanced support service (ESS) in partnership with the healthcare unit and HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPP) psychology services (6.1). The ESS engages 12 of the most violent and disruptive prisoners (particularly those involved in repeated incidents of violent and/or other inappropriate or challenging behaviour) in individual sessions for up to 12 weeks and provides support to the residential staff in managing them. The prison regards this as a key safety intervention for a group of prisoners with very challenging behaviour.

A safer custody nurse was also appointed as a single point of contact for other health and social practitioners during the year (5.1).

As has been the case since the pandemic, the prison has continued a violence reduction strategy of managing prisoners in wing and landing groups ('cohorts'). Prisoners on one wing will have no contact with prisoners from another, so that individuals and groups with known gang and other conflict issues can more easily be kept apart.

The prison is proud of its performance on safety, and the management team considers this strategy to be a key reason for the prison maintaining reported violent incidents at a level generally lower than comparator reception prisons. The differential, nevertheless, narrowed this year (4.4, 4.5, 7.1), particularly in the last three months of the reporting period.

Recorded assaults on staff by prisoners fell back after a marked spike in October and November 2024, but recorded incidents were rising again by the end of the reporting year. Over the whole reporting year, assaults by prisoners on other prisoners showed an upward trend, particularly in the last three months. The Board will continue to monitor any overall upward trends, but causes for fluctuations are often multifactorial, and may relate, for example, to particular individuals or cohorts of individuals whose behaviour is then managed.

As in previous years, most incidents of recorded violence were associated with lower level use by staff of restraints and guiding holds because of resistance or non-compliance.

While some prisoners still report feeling safer because of 'cohorting', it impacts the daily experience of men in many areas, particularly the consistency of the regime and the time they spend out of their cells (see elsewhere in this report). Most violent incidents occur between 9am and 12 noon and between 4pm and 5pm, when medication is collected and regime ends. A proportionally higher number of incidents involve prisoners aged 22 to 33 years, the group also most likely to be segregated (kept separate from the rest of the prison population) and recorded as having a proportionally higher number of ACCTs (5.4).

Violent incidents and injuries impact morale, wellbeing and atmosphere on the wings, particularly when staffing is already stretched. Incidents involving a single prisoner may result in lockdown (where prisoners may be confined to their cells for an extended period) and the cancellation of activities for a whole wing or landing. (One prisoner described it to a member of the Board as like 'a sort of collective punishment.') It can be particularly frustrating for those who are engaging positively and simply want to go about their day.

Severe mental ill health is seen by the prison as a significant driver of violence and incidents of serious self-harm. Shortages of suitable hospital accommodation in the wider estate again saw prisoners with serious mental ill health and/or complex behavioural issues being accepted by the prison; some prisoners with significant health issues were still being managed in the CSU, due to their violence and unpredictability, while waiting for a space in H3 (5) or transfer elsewhere.

4.4 Use of force

Use of force is defined as the planned and unplanned use of guiding holds, restraints, batons, PAVA incapacitant spray, rigid-bar handcuffs or pain-inducing techniques. Incidents are evaluated weekly and considered in detail at a monthly meeting. Where available, evidence reviewed includes body worn video camera (BWVC) footage and CCTV footage (see below).

Many incidents of recorded violence are associated with use of force.

More than 1,100 use of force incidents were recorded over the reporting year (up from the previous reporting year), mostly (as in previous years) at lower levels such as guiding holds and restraint. PAVA was deployed at HMP Wormwood Scrubs, for the first time during the reporting year, in four incidents, but use of PAVA and use of batons were far lower than in comparator prisons.

The main reasons recorded for use of force were assaults on staff, assaults by prisoners on other prisoners and non-compliance in refusing to relocate. Although the prison says that prisoners are routinely debriefed after incidents, the number of complaints to the Board about this suggests this is not always the case.

Improved BWVCs were rolled out in early 2024. However, despite reminders and briefings, in around a third of incidents over the reporting year, BWVC evidence was either not recorded or was partially recorded at best. Although there has been some overall improvement in the number of cameras collected, the wearing and use of BWVCs remains inconsistent and, from some credible reports to the Board, appears to be actively avoided or worked around by some staff, despite management initiatives to improve use. The wearing of BWVCs has been a mandatory uniform requirement for some time, and this has been an issue noted by the Board with concern in successive reports.

As in previous years, there appears to be a disproportionate use of force against black, Muslim and younger prisoners, compared with their population in the prison. The Board notes that while data is collected and reviewed, reasons for the disproportionate use (which is longstanding and mirrors data relating to disproportions in other aspects of prison life) remain unclear (5.4).

4.5 Preventing illicit items

The prison is in a densely populated urban area and backs onto the large open area of Wormwood Scrubs.

Among other physical barriers, the prison uses secure windows and netting and body and airport-style scanners, sniffer dogs, searches of staff and prisoners and interceptions based on intelligence to try to prevent illicit items entering the prison.

The prison acknowledges that drone deliveries and staff corruption are routes for entry of drugs and other illicit items into the prison and has taken measures such as prioritising the repair of broken windows and targeted anti-corruption training and

interventions, which appear to have had some effect. Other productive interventions and quarterly weapons' amnesties, heightened staff vigilance and liaison with the police (who have a permanent presence in the prison) have resulted in some worthwhile finds and reduced the impact of drones to some extent. Advances in drone technology and high-value payloads have, however, made attempts more worthwhile and more challenging to disrupt.

Despite these measures, random mandatory drug testing (MDT) over the reporting year consistently showed positive findings in around 35% of tests; between July and November 2024, it was consistently around 40%, before falling back over the Christmas period. Positive findings were mainly for herbal and synthetic cannabinoids. Levels are higher than in comparator prisons and are little changed from the last two reporting years (when findings ranged between 30% and 45%). Other illicit items, such as mobile phones and weapons, often associated with drug-related activities, are also still widely available in the prison.

Last year, the prison committed to increasing staff training, more surveillance, as in, staff searching and use of intelligence, and more consistent use of the scanners already available in the prison. Nevertheless, and despite current levels of finds, the Board's monitoring has found scanning has, in practice, remained inconsistent and variable in both frequency and thoroughness, particularly in reception (4.1) and for staff and visitors entering via the enhanced gate security (EGS) at the main gate.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

Accommodation

Prisoners are accommodated in five residential wings, plus the Conibeere unit (CBU) (mainly for those requiring assistance or assessment for substance misuse issues), the healthcare unit (H3), and the care and separation unit (CSU), where men are kept separate from the rest of the prison population.

The three largest residential wings (A, B and C) have shared cells with bunk beds, originally built for one prisoner. Some cells have a toilet in an adjoining room, but many only have a screened toilet in the cell itself. D and E wings have single- occupancy cells. Four wings each have a Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) approved cell for wheelchair users on the lowest floor and there are additional single cells on the lowest landing of D wing that have had rails installed for wheelchair users. The Board nevertheless considers that the prison's structure is fundamentally unsuitable for the needs of wheelchair users (5.4, 6.4).

Prisoners have access to laundry and shower facilities on each wing. There are, typically, between eight and 10 showers on each landing, though a number are often out of use. Some shower blocks have been modernised, containing a changing area, cubicles and lino floors. The older-style showers have smaller changing areas, tiled flooring and no cubicles for privacy.

Capacity pressures have again affected the prison's ability to carry out routine maintenance (it is harder to free up cells when the prison is full), although these pressures eased a little towards the end of the reporting year.

The last major overhaul of the prison infrastructure was in 1994, with a 25 year life expectancy now well exceeded. The prison's works department has a long-standing senior facilities manager who understands the prison's antiquated structures well. He and his team aim to carry out quick repairs of damage to cells, which helps maximise occupancy on the wings, where possible. Despite the pressures, the prison has been able to continue a programme of improvements and maintenance, including painting (often using prison workers) and the replacement of cell windows on D wing.

Vandalism by prisoners is a day-to-day issue, adding to a rolling list of breakdowns and other repairs, including some intractable and recurring problems such as roof leaks (a particular problem in the CBU) and fire alarms and tests causing frequent outages of critical infrastructure.

Fire alarm systems and cell bells (that a prisoner can activate to alert staff to an immediate need or crisis) depend on outdated equipment, which is kept operational through pragmatic use of modified parts and workarounds. In February 2025, a fire alarm triggered the closure of roof vents which, in turn, tripped off the heating systems, leaving the CBU and CSU without heating or hot water for several days. Prisoners reported sleeping in their clothes to keep warm. The cause of the problem (which similarly affected the heating on A and D wings in December) is known, but a permanent and workable solution has proved elusive.

Temperature regulation in many cells is poor, and prisoners complain of poor cell ventilation, leading to difficulties with damp and mould.

Work to replace the alarm cell bell system in the CSU was completed during the reporting year and commenced on D wing as part of the continued roll out across the prison. The new system should allow far better monitoring of cell bell use and the recording of response times, which the Board welcomes.

Lift breakdowns remain a recurring problem, despite some replacements having been completed.

Long and unpredictable waiting lists for repairs to in-cell phones are a perennial issue. A remote upgrade by the provider in April 2025 was followed by a long period of intermittent outages across the prison, which lasted several weeks. The introduction of in-cell phones has been extremely popular, but the service provided under existing arrangements (which are centrally managed) seems, in practice, to be lamentable and is the cause of much frustration for staff and prisoners alike. The cost of calls is also far higher than in the community, especially to mobile phones.

While some outside areas of the prison are tidy and colourful, other areas accessed or overlooked by prisoners are bleak and unkempt, with weeds and scattered litter, including food debris, which attracts birds and pests. Although the prison appears to take control measures, rats are seen frequently in the outside areas. Prisoners report problems with mice and cockroaches in cells, a problem likely exacerbated by the storage of purchased food items and men having to keep and eat meals provided by the prison in their cells. It is common to see towels placed across the foot of cell doors by prisoners to try to keep mice out.

In September, a prisoner in H3 complained to a Board member that he had been told he had to stay in a cell, with a bed identified as the source of a cockroach infestation, as there was nowhere else for him to go. The member confirmed this with staff and learned that the bed would take some weeks to replace. After the member's intervention, the prisoner was moved.

Wings are cleaned by prison workers and cleanliness has also been observed by the Board to be variable, with frequent reports of rubbish bags (including food debris) and unwashed clothing being present on landings, stairwells and in storage rooms for some time prior to collection. Some areas (notably stairwells) often look as if they are not regularly cleaned, although most landings do seem to be swept and mopped frequently.

Clothing

Prisoners should be provided with at least two fresh clothing kits weekly. Prisoners have access to laundry facilities for their own clothing on the wings, with prison clothing sent to the central laundry on site. There are intermittent shortages, often blamed on men hoarding multiples of certain items or not producing laundry for collection. The availability of towels is a recurrent issue, which the Board understands is due mainly to prisoners using them as curtains and cabinet covers, as well as to block gaps under doors to keep out mice. Clothing and other articles supplied by the prison frequently go missing or are thrown away by prisoners, and the prison has tried to improve this by providing bins to collect unwanted items.

The Board continues to receive complaints that rules for permitted clothing are not always implemented or fully understood by staff. Property is consistently one of the areas for the highest number of complaints to the prison and to the Board (5.7, 5.8). Much of this relates to lost or missing clothing, as well as to issues and disputes around stored property and problems with timely access to stored clothing needed for appearances in court.

Food

Compared with some previous reporting years, the kitchen generally now has a much better complement of employees, although a lack of staff sometimes means prisoners are not always unlocked to work in the kitchen. The kitchen is seen as a desirable workplace by prisoners. However, other than a food hygiene certificate, it still does not provide a qualification, unlike the prison's staff café, The Escape (7).

The kitchen continues to work on the range, quality and variety of food it produces, and now has a bakery on site. A cold lunch and a small breakfast for the next day are delivered to the cell in a plastic bag; hot food is distributed to the door in foil cartons in the evening, to be eaten by prisoners in their cells.

The prison says using cartons has enabled the service of a hot evening meal at a more appropriate time (6-7pm) and is safer than serving food to unlocked prisoners from trolleys brought to the wing. The Board continues to receive regular complaints from prisoners that meals are lukewarm, unappetising, scant in quantity and frequently not what they ordered or required because of dietary or health restrictions. Prisoners with experience of other prisons report to the Board that the food is far worse than elsewhere, and that having to store and eat food in their cell attracts insects and vermin (4).

The weekly amount a prisoner may spend on canteen (where they can use money from their personal account to buy items such as snacks, toiletries and food) is capped and is lower for sentenced prisoners. Those who can afford it rely on top-up purchases of items from the prison shop, although these are supplied at a cost far higher than supermarket rates and prisoners are still unable to purchase items during their first two weeks in prison. Workers, some of whom have access to microwaves, tell the Board that they often abandon prison meals altogether and prepare their own food. It is well known that cell kettles are often repurposed for rudimentary cooking.

5.2 Segregation (CSU)

The CSU has 18 cells on one upper landing. There are two small exercise yards, one of which is furnished with outdoor gym equipment. Cells are frequently out of use because of 'dirty protests' (where a prisoner has chosen to defecate or urinate in a cell without using the facilities provided), deliberate damage or intentional flooding. There is a bookcase of donated books, and books can be ordered and delivered by the prison library. Activity packs are available. All segregated prisoners are offered daily exercise and showers. At the end of April 2025, the unit became vape free. The prison advertised the update to prisoners well in advance and the change seems to have been made largely without problem.

Towards the end of the reporting year, a full-time Governor was appointed to the CSU but, for most of the reporting year, the unit had a part-time Governor, who worked two days a week. Continuity was maintained by the custody manager (CM), who has been in place for several years and seems to be well respected by both prisoners and staff. The unit is an extremely demanding environment, and Board members have, again, observed many examples of staff showing compassion, patience and a high degree of professionalism towards those in their care.

As in previous years, while the CM conducts regular checks of paperwork, staff shortages and inexperience mean that daily records are still not always checked and monitored effectively. Initial healthcare checks are also still not always completed on time.

Segregated prisoners are visited daily by a Governor, a healthcare representative and a member of the chaplaincy team. Separation monitoring and review group (SMARG) meetings are held quarterly throughout the year and are observed by the Board. Members of the Board speak to prisoners in the CSU on a regular basis.

The CSU Governor and staff regularly review and update plans for the return of prisoners to a normal residential location. Where observed by members of the Board, segregation reviews have generally been conducted empathetically and fairly, and prisoners wishing to do so have had opportunity to contribute. Moving prisoners on from the CSU can present a challenge to staff because of violence and/or gang-related and other issues. In the reporting year, this was exacerbated again by pressures on space, particularly for high-risk prisoners requiring a single cell or space in the healthcare unit (H3).

Mental health staff make regular visits to the unit and offer advice and support with care plans and decision making. However, as in previous years, the Board remains concerned that some prisoners with serious mental health issues are remaining in the CSU while waiting for space in H3, although this has slightly improved since the last reporting year.

The average stay in the CSU was five to six days (seven to 10 days in the previous reporting year). However, four stayed more than 100 days, which is extremely unusual, reflecting, in part, the challenges staff face in finding suitable accommodation for some prisoners to move to, either in the prison or elsewhere (4.3).

The use of special accommodation (where items such as furniture, bedding and sanitation are removed in the interests of safety) is very low; it was used for one hour on one occasion during the reporting year.

Members of the Board have occasionally observed slow responses to cell bells, some of which may be due to staff shortages but also perhaps to reluctance to respond to repeated or continual disruptive ringing of bells by some prisoners. For much of the reporting year, much overdue work was in progress to install new cell call bells, which is welcome. The new cell bell system should make the monitoring of response times much easier, and the Board will continue to report on this.

As in previous reporting years, prisoners aged 20 to 29 years are consistently the largest group held in the CSU, followed by those aged 30 to 39 years. As in previous reporting years, a higher proportion of black prisoners were segregated than reflected in the general prison population, a figure also reflected in use of force incidents (4.4, 5.4).

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers.

Although recruitment and retention of staff is generally good compared with other London prisons, there has been a loss of longer-serving staff in recent years, and turnover of staff at lower level. Staff sickness rates remain a recognised problem, which impacts day-to-day staffing and regime delivery.

Members continued to receive reports from prisoners praising individual members of staff, particularly senior leaders, and we observed many positive and caring interactions between staff and prisoners. This year there was, however, a marked increase in complaints to the prison and to the Board about the negative treatment of prisoners by staff compared with the last reporting year (5.7). Complaints about staff to the Board was the category with the highest number of applications (see section 8), with a

repeated theme of alleged bullying behaviour and unfair treatment. There appears to be some correlation between these figures and an upward trend in assaults on staff (4.3).

Complaints to the Board included rude and aggressive behaviour by some staff towards prisoners. Examples of wing staff swearing (sometimes in 'banter' between staff, sometimes directed at prisoners) were reported by prisoners (and commented on as unprofessional by one prisoner), and have been observed by members of the Board. Some prisoners told the Board that they had stopped asking wing staff for assistance, as they felt there was no point and/or they felt they could not trust them to deal with their request (5.4).

Although the prison overall felt more open and purposefully busy than during the last reporting year, Board members reported that residential wings often still seemed very quiet. Members visiting during the day found prisoners locked up (who had often gone back to bed), and that wing staff were sitting together in the office. When prisoners were unlocked, staff were busy with schedules of movement, and, on occasion, complained to members of the Board that they felt overstretched.

The prison acknowledges that time out of cell for prisoners who are not working is limited to, at best, 1½ hours and that this is often curtailed in practice (6.5). The prison has introduced a regular monthly training day for prison staff, covering a wide range of topics, including training around the management of violent incidents and catch up training for staff who require it. This is welcome, but it comes at the cost to prisoners of another full day of limited regime.

As the Board has noted before, limited time out of cell may also restrict time for staff and prisoners to build rapport and relationships, particularly where prisoners are not working and have fewer relationships and contacts with others away from the wing. The prison's ongoing policy of separating prisoners into cohorts (4.7) also means that transfers to other wings in the prison (not always due to any fault of the prisoner) disrupt peer groups, activities, education and visits, due to the differing activity timetables on each wing. As set out elsewhere (4), it is also perhaps noteworthy that flashpoints for many negative interactions between staff and prisoners are often around cooperation with movements and orders.

The prison acknowledges that the key worker scheme has never been fully delivered in accordance with the offender management in custody (OMiC) model, and that the key work on offer is, at best, limited to prisoners not in work or education, and to those who are self-isolating or referred through the safeguarding pathway. Even that is inconsistent and vulnerable to cancellation when staffing is stretched. In a sample period of nine weeks between September and December 2024, the number of prisoners seen weekly for a key work session ranged from 30 to 76 across the whole prison. Prisoners have again consistently told Board members they do not know who their key worker is or whether they even have one.

Wayout TV is used to provide information to prisoners in their cells, and the Governor records a weekly video message for the men. Prisoner consultation groups take place monthly, with attendances from Governors, other staff groups and representatives from each wing. They cover a wide range of useful topics, but informal sampling by the Board suggests that few prisoners are aware of them, know how they might contribute, or know what has been discussed.

5.4 Equality and diversity

Wings have equality representatives who help prisoners, assist the prison in identifying and supporting their needs and help run activities. At the beginning of the reporting year, there was a temporary equality and diversity advisor while the job holder was on secondment. During this period, there was a continuation of programmes already established.

Since the advisor returned, there have been monthly meetings with staff and prisoners and liaison with the chaplaincy team (5.5) and various provisions and celebrations for certain groups, such as activities around Black History Month, special food for monthly Gypsy, Roma and Traveller prisoners' meetings, and cakes for Pride. Focus groups are held regularly on all wings. Activities for other groups are often dependent on the enthusiasm and availability of individual staff members and are vulnerable accordingly: a popular library session for older prisoners facilitated by a staff member, for example, has been discontinued.

Specialist support is available for prisoners diagnosed with neurodiversity (although the post was vacant for much of the reporting year) in a unit on E wing (the Elizabeth Fry unit). This also provides support for vulnerable individuals such as transgender prisoners, who usually stay for a short period before being transferred.

Few complaints are made to the prison through formal discrimination incident reporting form (DIRF) procedures, but many complaints about other matters (such as staff bullying) also relate to protected characteristics (including religion, race, age, disability and sex, among others). Figures for DIRFs are, accordingly, likely to be unrepresentative. DIRF forms are not always visible on the wings, and the Board's observations suggest that there is some lack of awareness around their use, as well as little confidence in the process.

Analysis of incidents of violence data by the prison in February 2025 found that prisoners aged 18 to 21 years, prisoners aged 22 to 29 years and Muslim, black and mixed race prisoners were overrepresented in use of force incidents, relative to their numbers in the prison (4.3, 4.4).

Black and Muslim prisoners and prisoners aged between 18 and 25 years were also overrepresented at the basic (bottom) level in the incentive scheme, and in adjudication (disciplinary processes) (5.6). Black prisoners were also more often segregated than other groups.

Disproportions affecting certain groups are not new and have been commented on by the Board in successive reports. While data collection now seems more reliable, the reasons for these disparities still do not appear to be fully understood or addressed, and the Board hopes to note an improved picture in its next report.

Approximately a third of prisoners are foreign nationals, of which a small number have completed their sentence and are being held as Home Office detainees awaiting deportation, transfer to deportation removal centres or the outcome of an appeal. During the year, two foreign national coordinators were recruited (the resurrection of a previous successful initiative), and have been making a welcome impact, including working on the better use of translation services.

Of the 26 foreign nationality groups recorded in February 2025, the largest was Indian, followed by Polish and Bulgarian.

Staff and chaplaincy volunteers speak several languages, but much of the documentation used by prisoners day-to-day is in English, with limited translated material available.

The Board remains concerned about the very limited provision for an increasing number of elderly prisoners, and for young adults who can be difficult to engage (7.1).

During the year, the number of prisoners with disabilities and prisoners on indeterminate sentence (IPP) fell, following a government decision to recategorise and transfer prisoners to category C (for those who cannot be trusted in open conditions but are not considered to have the resources or will to make a determined escape attempt) and D (open) establishments. There are only a small number of cells designed for wheelchair users, while some other cells have limited adaptations such as rails but are realistically too small for a wheelchair user. Despite a refurbishment programme, lifts are still frequently out of use, limiting access to education and activities for prisoners with mobility restrictions (5.1, 6.4).

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The highly committed chaplaincy team continues to be very effective and well-respected. With volunteers from many faiths and backgrounds, the team numbers over 80. They provide a hugely valuable source of support and help to prisoners of all faiths and none and have strong links with the community, which can provide continuing support to prisoners after they are released.

Prisoners are visited once a fortnight by a member of the chaplaincy team, while those in the CSU have daily visits. Although wings do not mix and services are scheduled at different times according to location, all prisoners from the main religions can attend weekly communal worship. The Board has received complaints that the arrangements for Church of England services on a Sunday are inflexible, and that prisoners who wish to attend must choose between the service and association, unlike some of the other faith groups. The duration of services is also limited to 30 minutes to allow every wing to attend, which can cause difficulties if unlocking is delayed. The minority religions (generally with fewer than 15 prisoners) can have a weekly service together.

Events are held throughout the year to mark significant dates. A cohort of prisoners from D wing was able to attend the annual carol service, held with staff and visitors in the chapel. There was, again, excellent music from prison choir, a positive arts project started by the chaplaincy team in 2023, and parts of the service were broadcast on prison radio on Christmas day.

The armed forces charity, SSAFA, works with veterans in the prison and their work is much appreciated by prisoners.

5.6 Incentives schemes

Incentives schemes enable the prison to reward good behaviour. All prisoners enter on the standard (middle) level and can progress up to enhanced (top) or fall to the basic (bottom) level.

It has not always been clear to what extent the scheme is sufficiently attractive or relevant to prisoners to encourage and reward positive engagement and behaviour. With the assistance of prisoners, the incentives scheme was rewritten in February 2025, with a view to introducing greater incentives to achieve enhanced level, including, for the first time, financial rewards. There are regular reviews of decisions, and an appeals process.

The Board receives regular complaints from prisoners questioning a change in level, particularly where there has been a demotion to basic as a sanction. Observations by the Board suggest that wing officers are not always sure what is permitted (and what is not) at each level, particularly with remand prisoners, who have more privileges than sentenced prisoners. This is a cause of frustration for prisoners who are often well informed. It is hoped that the new policy will have a positive impact.

Analysis by the prison in April 2025 showed that black and Muslim prisoners and prisoners aged 18 to 25 years were over-represented at the basic level in comparison with their population in the prison. Unsurprisingly, these figures reflect other data relating to adjudications (hearings and sanctions relating to discipline), use of force and segregation (4, 5.4).

During the year, the prison moved the ISFL unit to E wing. Prisoners sign a contract to remain substance free in return for additional privileges. There is regular drug testing to ensure compliance. Initially, the Board received complaints that promised benefits, especially extra gym time, were too slow to materialise, but this seems to have been resolved, and more incentives have been added. The Board will monitor this as it develops.

5.7 Complaints

A total of 2754 first-level internal complaints (Comp 1s) were submitted by men to the prison in the reporting year, an increase of 10.1% from previous year in review. Of the 25 complaint subject areas captured monthly, the top four were property (846), residential (776), staff (503) and food (228), the top three being the same as in the previous reporting year. In comparison with the last reporting year, the marked increase in complaints about staff (from 185 to 503) is mirrored in the number of complaints made to the Board about staff concerns and bullying this year (5.3 and table in section 8).

Despite attempts to monitor overdue responses and reduce backlogs, the on-time average response rate fell from over 67.7% in the last reporting year to around 57% in the reporting year (although figures for May were not available); a marked drop to about 28% in April 2025 brought the average down from nearer 63% across the remainder of the year, for reasons that are unclear to the Board.

The senior management team continued to carry out quality assurance of approximately 30 randomly selected complaint responses monthly. The Board undertook its own quality test exercise in April 2025, reviewing a small sample. The responses were all assessed to be adequate, while some were very good, especially those relating to issues that were easy to verify factually, such as PINS, credit and canteen.

5.8 Property

Property is consistently (and by some distance) the leading reason for complaints to the prison from prisoners (5.7). Many complaints relate to property that has been missing wholly, or in part, for weeks or months, often involving more than one prison. Both the Board and the prison received roughly the same number of requests for assistance (applications) and complaints related to property as in the last reporting period (5.7).

The introduction of the Prisoners' Property Policy Framework (which aims to track property more effectively in transit) still seems to have made little or no difference to prisoners in real life. A great deal of family and prisoner time and prison resource is taken up with trying to track down and retrieve property that has gone missing or been delayed. The prison also reports that substantial increases in the volume of property

moving around with prisoners exacerbates problems with processing and logging items and causes additional work for already stretched staff.

A barcode labelling system has now been implemented. Developed by a member of staff, it aims to help reduce the number of parcels sent to prisoners being lost or rejected at the gate. It has not been without some teething problems but, by the end of the reporting year, the Board was receiving fewer complaints on this matter.

The Board received more complaints about access to property, and slow (and at times unhelpful) responses from staff to requests for access to stored property, particularly stored numbers on phones. Prisoners are often told to arrange to attend reception at a weekend which is, in practice, often difficult to arrange with staff, leading to delays and frustrations. There were, again, complaints about delays and a lack of communication with prisoners awaiting confirmation they could access clothes needed for court.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

Healthcare services have fully integrated the three phases of the New Model of Care: early days in custody, or EDIC (which triages all prisoners on arrival), the planned care team (which reviews and plans care for prisoners with clinical needs) and the unscheduled care team (which handles emergencies and healthcare appointment requests). In addition, a release and transfer coordinator supports prisoners 13 weeks before release to address post-release health needs. Primary care services are provided by Practice Plus Group (PPG), with 85% of staff now permanent. Subcontracted services include mental health services from the North London Foundation NHS Trust and substance misuse services provided by the charity, Forward Trust.

There were some welcome positives in the reporting year: the Board was informed that the planned care team improved their NHS Quality Outcome Framework score (which is a national monthly assessment of GP services) from 82% to 92% over the last four months of the year, which is a 'good' (green) rating. Clinic cancellations have substantially reduced, and the number of therapy sessions has increased. However, there is evidence that not all prisoners experienced healthcare positively: complaints to healthcare (a separate system to the prison's complaint system) increased, with those about medication doubling and those relating to mental health services trebling (6.2.3). Applications to the Board about healthcare more widely also increased significantly this year (8).

The head of the healthcare unit, other health representatives and the Deputy Governor meet monthly at the local delivery board (LDB). A Board member periodically attends to observe this.

The ESS (4.3), introduced in August 2024, supports prisoners with behavioural challenges that interfere with daily functioning and put them and/or others at risk of harm. The team is funded separately and includes a senior mental health nurse, a prison officer and a trainee HMPPS psychologist, working intensively with up to 12 of the most challenging prisoners for 12 weeks. The Board has seen positive feedback from several prisoners who have benefitted from ESS interventions.

6.2 Physical healthcare

6.2.1 Clinic appointments

Clinic cancellations continue due to lack of prison escort officers but have decreased compared with last year. In the last six months of the reporting year, 16 clinics were cancelled, whereas, in the comparable period last year, 36 clinics were cancelled. Prisoners waited, on average 14 days for dentistry, physiotherapy, optometry and podiatry services.

6.2.2 External hospital appointments

The cancellation of planned external hospital appointments, due to officer escort availability, remains an ongoing problem and is discussed regularly at LDB meetings and the PPG regional meeting. The cancellation rate has improved since the last reporting period, for which the Board had reliable data, but monthly rates vary between 5% and a concerning 36% for two of the 12 months. With every cancellation there is clearly an adverse impact, not only for the prisoner, who must wait for another appointment to be rescheduled, but also for the resources of the NHS. The Board

acknowledges that emergency hospital visits must take priority, and are unpredictable in number, but we remain concerned about routine appointments being so regularly postponed.

6.2.3 Concerns and complaints

Concerns and complaints are reviewed weekly, with responses allocated to appropriate staff. Those categorised as a 'concern' (the majority, according to PPG) have a response target of 10 days. 'Complaints' are more serious, fewer in number and require a clinical review. These have a response target of 60 days, although PPG aim to respond within 30 days.

Data provided by PPG set out in the table, below, covers both concerns and complaints. Totals for the last recording year are shown in brackets.

It shows an increase in the expression of dissatisfaction with healthcare over the last year, particularly in relation to medication and mental health services. This may, in part, reflect an increase in the number of prisoners with physical and mental health problems (4), but data from the mental health (MH) team confirms that targets for referral to mental health support were not consistently met (6.3), and this is also a likely contributory factor.

Table: Main categories of healthcare complaints

	Medical treatment	Appointments	Medication	Dentist/ physiotherapist/ podiatrist/ optician	Mental health	Procedure
Q1	36	5	28	16	12	3
Q2	13	19	11	3	15	5
Q3	36	14	33	3	1	6
Q4	36	5	28	16	12	3
TOTAL	121 (105)	43 (64)	100 (48)	38 -	40 (12)	17 -

Source: PPG

Note: some of the categories were not in use in the previous year.

6.3 Mental health

Mental health staff are embedded across all care teams to ensure integrated support. There is a substance misuse nurse on the CBU, a 24-hour service, assisting with the management of detoxification and assessing the level of risk to the patients on the unit. Nursing staff work closely with Forward Trus, which provides the therapeutic input (6.6)

The team struggled to meet targets for both routine referrals (five days) and urgent referrals (48 hours). Routine referrals averaged around 70% compliance, with urgent referrals only averaging 45% compliance during the first half of the reporting period, although this improved considerably and reached 87% compliance by year end. It is

perhaps noteworthy that the improvement coincided with the halving of complaints about mental health during the same period.

The healthcare unit (H3) has 12 mental health beds and five physical health beds. The average waiting time to transfer from normal location to H3 is between seven and 14 days, dependent on clinical presentation (emergency cases are facilitated sooner). However, pressure on capacity means that some individuals with the most complex health needs have had to wait on normal location or, in some cases, in the CSU for a bed to become available on the healthcare unit. As the Board has commented before and repeated elsewhere in the report (5.2), it regards the CSU as unsuitable accommodation for those with acute mental health needs.

Despite government commitments to address the pressure on bed availability in therapeutic settings outside prison (see the Minister's response above), the problem of transferring patients within the 28 days national standard remains. There were 62 mental health transfers during the reporting year, at an average referral to transfer rate of 59.9 days, an increase on last year's 49 days.

6.4 Social care/older prisoners

Prisoners arriving aged 50 and over are placed on the older persons pathway, with assessments for falls risk and frailty conducted by Hammersmith & Fulham council's adult social care team. Improvements in communication have reduced delays in social care referrals. During the reporting year, seven patients were under social care, with no backlog. Nursing support is available in the healthcare unit 24 hours a day, and a wheelchair-accessible shower unit and specialist equipment are available. D wing has some ground floor cells, to accommodate patients needing less intensive care, and prison support workers provide general assistance. Those with mobility aids such as Zimmer frames or wheelchairs are provided with a fast pass for medication to avoid standing for long periods in the medication queue.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

The prison aims for 90 minutes of daily association time, but data provided to the Board shows an average of only 75 minutes. Board observations suggest the smaller residential units achieve this target more consistently, while larger wings often fall short of even this. Prisoners have expressed frustration to the Board about little time out of cell, curtailed association, cancellations of regime at short notice, and inconsistency of unlocking (see 4 and 7 and elsewhere in the report). The Board has now expressed concerns about time out of cell and regime in successive reports and will continue to monitor this.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

Forward Trust provides psychosocial support for substance misuse and is integrated within healthcare teams. All new arrivals in the prison are reviewed for suitability for their service, and those referred are allocated a recovery worker to assess their ongoing planned care. Referrals average 150 per month, with initial assessments completed within five working days. Recovery workers work alongside primary healthcare and mental health teams and offer interventions to service users on ACCT (assessment, care in custody and teamwork) plans and those reported as under the influence of illicit substances.

Six weeks prior to planned release or transfer, recovery workers conduct structured onward planning with service users. Working with other relevant agencies, and

supported by a dedicated prison release recovery worker, Forward Trust staff aim to establish a coordinated and effective plan to support their transition from prison.

6.7 Therapies/soft skills

The Seacole Centre, led by the therapies team, offers individual and group therapy sessions, including music production, art psychotherapy, and psychological groups for prisoners presenting with trauma and other mental health conditions. As the table, below, shows, whilst 436 sessions were facilitated, a further 237 were cancelled. This represents 34% of the total planned and is a slight improvement on last year, when only 366 sessions were facilitated and 38% were cancelled. As the Board has previously commented, however, therapy sessions remain amongst the first activities to be cancelled when staffing levels are under pressure, directly impacting some of the most vulnerable prisoners.

Sessions facilitated and cancelled

Activity	June 24	July 24	Aug 24	Sept 24	Oct 24	Nov 24	Dec 24	Jan 25	Feb 25	Mar 25	Apr 25	TOTAL
Number of sessions facilitated	39	44	39	44	39	47	36	34	52	31	31	436
Number of sessions cancelled	23	26	32	16	19	18	20	22	13	24	24	237

Source: North London NHS Foundation Trust

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

The prison has provision for 1066 work and learning spaces. Most of these are offered on a part-time basis, a prison policy to try to increase the number of roles on offer, although many are still not filled. Over the reporting period, around 800 men were in education/work activities and around 200 were unemployed (unallocated/on waiting lists). The number actively refusing to engage with any activity on offer remained steady, at around 50.

The Board reported problems with attendance at activities in last year's annual report, and this has yet to improve substantially. Over the course of the reporting period, attendance averaged 57% (50% during the previous year). One of the challenges in increasing attendance is the lack of flexibility in timetabling. No mixing between the five residential wings is permitted (4), which greatly complicates movements around the prison and dictates how activities can be coordinated and run. Some activities are available only on certain wings, which creates an inherent unfairness and increases the chances of prisoners being allocated to activities in which they have little interest, so they are not motivated to attend.

On the positive side, there was evidence of an improvement in the quality of teaching: early in the reporting year, the head of education told the Board that the Novus (which provides education and training programmes in the prison) regional learning and skills manager had reviewed 10 random review of learning documents (as part of regular monitoring) and had assessed these as the most comprehensive and consistently good across the London prison estate. The number of prisoners who passed their functional English and mathematics qualifications has significantly improved.

From the Board's observations, the reading strategy continues to be effective and well promoted, supported by the services of the Shannon Trust, which trains peer mentors to help around 150 men to learn to read. Mentors also look after the book rooms on each wing.

The library continues to operate with access timetabled according to wing during the week and no access at the weekend. The Board's observations suggest that many library sessions were cancelled due to the lack of prison officer escort availability on the day, and low staffing levels in the prison more generally. A snapshot survey, taken during March and April 2025, found 24 library closures, 16 of which were due to the unavailability of officers.

Prisoners can order books from the library for delivery to the wings. This is a valued service, although use has declined since in-person library use returned after the pandemic. There is a thriving book club centred on the 'Give A Book' scheme.

There is a good range of other activities on offer such as Vocalise (debating), Stand Out (making positive choices), art, poetry and a successful D wing chess clubs, plus a choir, although relatively small numbers engage.

7.2 Vocational training, work

The prison acknowledges that staff turnover and problems with recruitment into education, skills and work has impacted progress towards improving allocation and attendance at education, work and other activities in the reporting year. The prison has 1066 work and learning places, most of which are part time (7.1). At the end of the reporting year, around 800 prisoners were in education and/or work, with about 200

unemployed. As with education, it seems likely that take up and attendance at work is likely to be impacted by the high level of illicit drugs in the prison (4.5).

Workshops provide prisoners with purposeful activity and transferrable skills, skilled work and qualifications, and some have links to industries that can provide employment opportunities on release. Some workshops also provide a service to the prison (such as food packing and laundry), as well as services to other parts of the prison estate, for which the prison is paid. Workers from the React workshop carry out some repairs around the prison, while the biohazard workshop trains industrial cleaning teams to clean cells, showers and common areas put out of action by the presence of bodily fluids, also developing skills for prisoners in an employment area in demand.

The Escape café is very popular, well supported by staff and provides excellent training for prisoners in catering and other skills. However, it remains vulnerable to closure because of staffing issues and security, as well as other requirements that limit the pool of available prisoners who are eligible to work there.

As the Board has noted before, there are still few work and training options that offer meaningful opportunities for a wide range of prisoners to invest in progressing to worthwhile learning and qualifications. Such opportunities that do exist tend to reach small groups of carefully selected prisoners.

Prisoners in work and/or education have told the Board that they are often collected and returned late, or not taken to an activity at all. They say the unreliability of the regime is demotivating and makes it more difficult for them to make and show progress. There are continuing reports of prisoners feeling that they must choose between attending some activities and having an association period, as staff do not (or cannot) accommodate both. Staff and instructors running the activities still complain that they do not know who will be attending, or why someone has not come.

Although the prison has made attempts to monitor, standardise and improve time out of cell, the impact has been limited (6.5). Some wings are better than others, but prisoners have told members of the Board throughout the year (and members have observed) that unlocking is highly variable. There were regular curtailments of regime, usually because staff were not available or were needed for other duties. There is noticeably more movement around the prison than in the last reporting year, but some prisoners have more opportunity to participate in off wing activities than others, purely because of timetabling (7.1).

7.3 Offender management, progression

The offender management unit (OMU) is responsible for a prisoner's sentence plan and sentence calculation, among other functions.

About 70% of prisoners are unsentenced, and around 10% have been recalled to prison. Most prisoners spend a short period (less than three months) in the prison. The high turnover of prisoners presents its own challenges, and the OMU has, again, been stretched during the reporting year, reflecting additional external pressures on the wider justice system. Policy changes relating to sentencing and release have also significantly increased staff workloads in these highly specialised roles.

Prison offender managers (POMs) support sentenced men, including those recalled to prison for breach of licence. All sentenced prisoners should be allocated a POM on arrival, but increased workloads have again caused delays, and there have been some issues caused by cross deployment of operational POMs due to staff shortages.

Prisoners continue to complain to the Board that they have difficulty contacting their POM and that the regular monthly meetings they should have with them do not always take place.

Towards the end of the reporting year, plans were in place to strengthen oversight and leadership of the OMU, ahead of further anticipated pressures due to the government's planned sentencing review.

The small group of IPP (imprisoned for public protection) prisoners remaining at Wormwood Scrubs has little support beyond forums, which were inconsistently held during the reporting year (5.4).

7.4 Family contact

A contracted service provider, Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT), works with the prison's own family team in the visitors centre and can support prisoners and liaise with family members on a prisoner's behalf, although staff shortages limited this to very few prisoners this year. The prison also runs other positive parenting initiatives and a scheme aimed at fathers of young children.

Approximately 30% of prisoners ask for social visits. Booking visits remains an issue: PACT reported that the national booking system is difficult to navigate for families wanting to book social visits, and prisoners, particularly those on remand, complain that they struggle to book as many social visits as they are entitled to. The prison says there are usually vacant slots available if prisoners want them (particularly in the morning), but prisoners complain that the slots allocated to each wing for a specific weekday are not convenient for family members, while afternoon slots are quickly filled and there are no visits available in the evening. As with other activities, prisoners complained that unlocking for visits is often inconsistent or delayed due to staffing issues.

Social video calls (30 minutes) are available in the evening, but prisoners complain that few appointments are available (10 a week) and they can wait up to two months for their slot to come up, only to have it cancelled. The prison has work in progress to increase availability to 20, but this seems unlikely to meet demand, in the Board's view.

The prison has plans to review the availability of social visits, and the Board will continue to monitor this

In-cell phones have made it far easier for prisoners to speak to family in privacy at convenient times, particularly where prisoners have children. However, broken phones take weeks or months to repair, and prisoners pay far more for their calls than they would in the community, particularly for calls to mobiles (5.1).

Prisoner's families can write to them via the 'email a prisoner' service, which is popular, but it can take several days for emails (which are printed out) to reach the prisoner, and some prisoners dislike the lack of privacy.

7.5 Resettlement planning

The prison prerelease team sees all sentenced prisoners to offer employment support in the 12 weeks before they are due to leave prison, supported by the prison employment lead (PEL).

Valuable help with bank accounts, ID and driving licence applications is available to prisoners (including those on remand), but to a limited number. Various third-party providers offer support with tenancies and benefits, and interventions such as interview

preparation, courses on debt, relationships, and other courses targeted at young prisoners. These often include follow-up support in custody and on release.

The PEL and employment advisory board have forged useful links with companies and businesses willing to offer opportunities for employment on release and advice on training and employment. Workshops and other opportunities such as construction courses, The Escape and Liberty kitchen offer employment-focused courses. Stand Out continues to provide contact with employers as part of their pre-release course. Through-the-gate support is also available for healthcare needs from other providers such as Forward Trust (6.6).

Provision by third-party providers continues to be vulnerable to staffing and other issues. Citizens Advice, which is very well regarded by prisoners, still has only a single staff member in post, and the service is oversubscribed and susceptible to staff absence.

A strategic housing lead, based in the prison and at HMP Wandsworth, provides an overview of housing for prisoners on release. They liaise closely with resettlement team staff based in the prison and St. Mungo's (a charity that delivers a commissioned accommodation rehabilitative service, which supports prisoners before release), while HARP (which focuses on sustaining tenancies for prisoners on remand) provides a wide range of support services and has valuable links with resources in the community. Accurate data is difficult for the Board to obtain, but we understand that around a fifth of prisoners released (increasing numbers were unplanned releases direct from court) were without accommodation on release. As in previous years, provision for remand prisoners remained patchy.

8. The work of the IMB

The information contained in this report derives from the work of the Board and information supplied by the prison, unless otherwise indicated, and is not intended to be read as a comprehensive overview of the prison for the period spanned by this report.

Members of the Board are unpaid volunteers, with differing backgrounds and experience. Members visit the prison weekly but are not permanently based there. Prisoners can contact the IMB by means of a written application or by speaking to a member of the Board. The Board also relies on the assistance of the Governor and staff (and thanks them for it) of the prison to supply information and data to enable it to fulfil its role.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	16
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	15 (one of whom is on leave)
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	12 (one of whom is on leave)
Total number of visits to the establishment	295

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	33	30
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	1	2
C	Equality	8	11
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	20	24
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	27	27
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	17	24
F	Food and kitchens	21	16
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	68	103
H1	Property within the establishment	55	59
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	43	36
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	8	12
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence), parole, release dates, recategorisation	60	56
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	59	138
K	Transfers	7	14
L	Miscellaneous	45	2
	Total number of applications	472	554

Annex A

Main service providers

- Maintenance: Gov Facility Services Limited
- Education and training: Novus
- Advice and guidance service: Shaw Trust
- Escort contractor: Serco
- Physical healthcare and pharmacy, dental health provider: Practice Plus Group (PPG)
- Mental health provider: North London NHS Foundation Trust
- Substance misuse treatment provider: Forward Trust
- Social care: London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham adult social care team
- Visitors centre: Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT)
- Resettlement support: St. Mungo's
- Adult safeguarding: Hammersmith & Fulham Council



This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications>

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at imb@justice.gov.uk