



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP/YOI Preston

**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 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 Overview

HMP/YOI Preston is a predominantly Victorian radial prison (designed with a central hub and multiple wings that extend outward, resembling a spoke-and-wheel shape) constructed between 1840 and 1895. It operates as a category B reception prison for men (for those considered a risk to public safety but not categorised as a maximum-security threat), servicing courts across the northwest of England. It holds men aged 18 and over who have been remanded in custody, are awaiting trial, serving sentences of 12 months or less, or are awaiting transfer to another prison after sentencing. It is situated on a very confined site near Preston city centre, and experiences all the difficulties typical of this style and age of establishment. Its location, however, allows good transportation links for visitors.

2.2 Prison roll

The prison roll averages around 670¹, with an operational capacity (the maximum number of prisoners that can be held without risk to safety, security, good order, and the proper running of the planned regime) of 680. Being a local prison, serving the courts, requires Preston to release and/or transfer out approximately 50 prisoners each week, in order to create spaces for those remanded to custody by the courts. This entails a consistently high administration workload.

2.3 Prison facilities

In addition to the core residential accommodation and prison facilities, the following is available to the prisoners:

- a 30-bed healthcare centre, with regional beds for northwest prisons
- a 28-bed recovery wing for those with addiction problems
- a dental surgery, which meets current NHS guidelines
- a well-stocked and managed library, plus an employment hub
- an education department that includes an IT centre, which has 48 computers and an art suite
- well-equipped physical education facilities, inconveniently across three sites but well managed and delivered
- a textile workshop
- a horticulture centre
- a laundry that allows prisoner's clothes to be laundered on a personal basis

There has been recent improvement work on the perimeter wall, which is now in a sound condition.

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

3. Key points

Staffing levels

HMP/YOI Preston has been allowed to recruit staff above its target establishment level. The numbers recruited have varied throughout the reporting year, so there has been no constant level of over-staffing.

3.1 Main findings

Safety

- There were **two deaths** in custody in Preston in the reporting year, which are still under review by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO), the organisation that carries out independent investigations into complaints and deaths related to the prison and probation services in England and Wales. A third prisoner died at HMP Frankland following, a transfer from Preston.
- A fourth person died five days after being released from Preston in March 2025. This is recorded as death in custody, as it occurred within 28 days of release.
- Self-harm rates continued to be **quite high** in comparison with previous years. In every case, it seemed that where concerns had been raised about the wellbeing of a prisoner, an assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) review process was initiated. These are used to support prisoners who are at risk of self-harm and suicide. Between **25 and 30 ACCTs** were opened every month and there were **70 reviews** of open ACCTs every month. These were quality assured by senior officers (SOs) and custody managers (CMs).
- The levels of violence continued to remain high, with **18-to-25-year-olds being the main perpetrators** according to data analysed by the Board. This meant that the use of force was also high, although Pava incapacitant spray and drawn batons were rarely used.
- There has been some low-level intelligence regarding drones, primarily involving prisoners with the capability to organise deliveries; however, there have been no reports of packages being received through windows. The prison ensures that prisoners linked to drone activity at other establishments are *not* placed in cells identified as vulnerable to drone drops. All windows are checked daily as part of perimeter patrols and accommodation fabric checks.

Fair and humane treatment

- As noted in our previous report, improvements to the showers have continued.
- Conditions of cells are generally good, but the ageing fabric of the building leads to obvious problems. The height of the railings on the wings is to be increased, which will help make them safer.

Health and wellbeing

- Mental healthcare is provided seven days a week. The mental health ward has been, on average, between 8 and 10 patients.
- As noted in our previous report, significant effort seems to have been made to increase the time out of cells for most prisoners, which includes vocational training and education, attendance in workshops and gym sessions and allocated library time.
- All prisoners are screened for drug and alcohol addiction on arrival. Those testing positive continue to be able to apply for the Inside Out Programme,

based on therapeutic models such as the Alcoholics Anonymous 12-step programme.

Progression and resettlement

- Education provision now seems to better match the requirement of short-term prisoners. More programmes are delivered in 'bite-size' courses to help improve key skills levels within the limited time prisoners are at the establishment.
- As a reception prison, vocational training is limited but includes painting and decorating, as well as industrial cleaning, laundry, sewing and horticulture.
- Family contact is through the usual social visits and specific family days (which bring together prisoners and their families outside of their statutory entitlement to social visits, usually in more informal settings). Our observations of the visits centre noted a well-run and humane regime.
- The employment hub is based in the library and is well attended by prisoners. A number of employer-facing events have taken place.
- The offender management unit (OMU) is responsible for sentence planning, and sentenced prisoners are allocated a prison offender manager (POM). While there is no equivalent support or guidance for remand prisoners, all prisoners - including those on remand - are assigned a key worker who provides support and guidance.
- All prisoners are interviewed by the pre-release team (staffed by Probation Service officers), which offers advice about accommodation and finances prior to their release.

Key general issues

- Prison PINs (personal identification numbers) remain an ongoing problem: these unique codes are assigned to prisoners and allow them to make calls only to a pre-approved list of phone numbers. Under the new public protection policy, all prisoners received into custody must undergo a public protection sift. While these checks are being completed, there can be delays in identifying and recording prisoners with public protection concerns, such as those posing a risk to children or with a history of domestic violence. The Board recognises the importance of security, particularly for vulnerable individuals; however, it remains concerned about the potential impact of such delays on family relationships.
- Lack of space in the first night centre: this means that it is difficult for staff to carry out interviews and screenings for health and risks.
- Kitchen and catering issues: the Board spends a lot of time looking into these problems and, despite the best efforts of the kitchen staff, it will require constant monitoring.
- Complaints system: there have been improvements but, again, it will require constant and close monitoring.
- Clothing/property/laundry: cell clearances and transfer of property between prisons remains problematic and pilfering has been identified in the new laundry system.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- We have repeatedly raised concerns about the fabric of this Victorian prison. The reception area and the gatehouse are not fit for purpose and the offender

management unit's prefabricated structure was condemned 15 years ago. Despite previous responses acknowledging these problems, there has been no apparent progress to address this or secure alternative solutions in the past year. What is the immediate timeline and budget for starting and completing a major refurbishment or alternative solution, and what specific steps will be taken to ensure this work is not delayed?

- Early release programmes have led to many prisoners being recalled for short periods, due to their failure to comply with licence conditions. What strategies are being taken to improve community offender management to reduce the number of recalls for non-compliance, and how will the Minister ensure that the prison is not unduly impacted by recall rates?
- The prison has been allocated bail information officers, but they can make little impact without the development of a whole network of community support. In previous years, there were bail hostels, bail support schemes and bail beds. To reduce the number of prisoners unnecessarily remanded in custody, we need to consider re-developing these facilities. Will the Minister consider re-establishing these services? If not, what specific actions will be taken to create a comprehensive community support network beyond just bail information officers?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- Roll out of the Lancaster Farms' staff development pilot project and the development of core capability packages.

TO THE GOVERNOR

- Will the Governor continue to develop the digitalisation of PINs and prisoner applications.
- How does the Governor intend to improve cell clearance procedures?
- Will the Governor continue to explore ways of overcoming the lack of space and over-crowding in the first night centre and reception area?
- Bearing in mind the demise of the YOI initiative (Time 4 Change), how will the Governor develop new initiatives for providing extra support for young offenders and target the disproportionate levels of violence amongst this group?
- What steps will the Governor take to ensure that the prison provides good quality meals for prisoners, with adequate provision for special diets? This requires kitchen equipment to be functioning at optimum level.

3.3 Response to the last report

Issues raised	Response given	Progress
To the Minister 1. The national contract for kitchen maintenance is not well delivered at HMP/YOI Preston. The main issue is faulty equipment: the repair of crucial equipment is constantly delayed for weeks, and the subsequent costly hiring of temporary replacement equipment eats into the prison budget. What	1.A change to the service provider has brought some improvement, and there is now an asset replacement plan in place that should reduce faults and breakdowns.	1. No progress.

<p>does the Minister plan to do about this?</p> <p>2. There are serious problems with the fabric of this Victorian prison. The reception area and the gate house are not fit for purpose and the offender management unit's (OMU) prefabricated structure was condemned 15 years ago. How will the Minister address this problem?</p> <p>3. The policy whereby the NHS Reconnect service [which helps individuals with health needs transition from prison to a community-based service] rejects some prisoners as not being suitable for their support on release is a gap in provision, which potentially results in early reoffending. What steps will the Minister take to rectify this issue?</p> <p>To the Prison Service</p> <p>4. The professionalism displayed by many prison officers in their interaction with prisoners is commendable. There are a small minority who treat prisoners in a disrespectful way, and this can be very damaging to the prison and prisoner relationships. The Board recommends reviewing the refresher training and mentoring with regard to pro-social modelling, de-escalation and neurodiversity awareness.</p> <p>To the Governor</p> <p>5. Ongoing delays with prisoners' applications for PINs (personal identification numbers that prisoners use when they want to make <i>phone calls</i>) is causing prisoners and wing staff continual frustration and needs to be addressed.</p>	<p>2. Currently investigating options to move the gatehouse to Ribbleson Lane (away from a very busy road junction) and also to replace OMU.</p> <p>3. The matter will be investigated. Some regional variations occur due to local contracts.</p>	<p>2. No progress.</p> <p>3. The Reconnect Service is being renegotiated.</p> <p>4. New initiatives in bespoke training and the appointment of enabling officers at HMP Lancaster Farms looks promising. This scheme is all about sharing good practice.</p> <p>5. Preston is about to launch a pilot digital system for PINs and Apps that could lead to huge improvements.</p>
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<p>6. Property continued to be a major source of concern for prisoners, as evidenced in the number of IMB applications (prisoners' written representations) we received. Whilst there were improvements, the handling of prisoners' property should continue to be an important focus for the prison. More effective management of the cell-clearance process has the potential to considerably reduce instances of loss and, therefore, the number of complaints.</p> <p>7. The OMU has a senior probation officer (SPO), who also acts as head of OMU operations. Other prisons have two SPOs to undertake these rolls. This should be a consideration for future planning.</p> <p>8. The F wing initiative (incentivised substance free living), which encourages prisoners to lead drug-free lives, showed excellent results. An increase in the accommodation allocated to this project has the potential to increase the number prisoners that could benefit.</p>		<p>6. This is ongoing work and the Governor is fully committed to further improvements.</p> <p>7. The OMU now has two senior probation officers.</p> <p>8. This initiative has continued throughout the year and is viewed as a big success.</p>
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Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

HMP/YOI Preston operates as a reception prison, taking remand and convicted prisoners from both magistrates' and Crown Courts in the northwest of England.

The Board remains seriously concerned about the physical limitations of the reception area, an issue we have raised repeatedly in previous reports. The numbers of prisoner movements and the lack of space often make it impossible to hold confidential conversations about risk with individuals. Prisoners are usually reluctant to divulge important information about their potential risk factors, leaving both themselves and the prison vulnerable.

Similarly, lack of storage negatively impacts the logging and tracking of prisoners' property, leading to repeated, time-consuming investigations for both the prison and the IMB.

Despite these constraints, in the Board's view, staff continue to work to improve effectiveness of reception. Increased staffing and training have reduced complaints and compensation, whilst also achieving the best performance nationally for the turnaround of vehicles dropping off and picking up prisoners.

Last year's Ministerial response suggested that some changes to the configuration of access to the prison might be an option. To date, we have seen no evidence of this option being explored, although the Governor is constantly looking for ways to improve the facility.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

Work to improve quality assurance of the ACCT process is regularly reviewed within the prison, and further improvements are planned for the coming year.

One of the consequences of being a prison with a high level of remand prisoners and the consequent high churn rate is the number of ACCTs that are opened for recently arrived prisoners – and also in the elevated levels of self-harm.

A scheme to replace wet-shave razors with electric shavers, where appropriate, is under development, in an effort to help reduce razor blade-related violence.

Prisoners continue to have access to Listeners (prisoners trained by the Samaritans to offer confidential peer support) on a 24/7 basis. If a prisoner wishes to speak to a Listener during night-time lock up, the duty Governor is summoned and can arrange for the prisoner to be taken to the Listeners' suite.

The number of Listeners varies over time but is typically 20-25, the same number as last year. There is a comprehensive training and support programme for prisoners who want to become Listeners, which is managed by the local Samaritans branch. Security clearances are a key part of the initial recruitment and selection procedures for all new Listeners.

The incentives programme, to encourage prisoners to lead drug-free lives and involves a move to F wing, where there are improved facilities and less contact with other prisoners, has continued successfully. Within this substance free living regime,

prisoners sign a compact (contract) and undertake increased levels of drug testing. The IMB continues to believe that this is an excellent initiative. We would like to see an expansion of the accommodation available for this project, which we believe could enable more prisoners to benefit from this opportunity.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

The Board remains concerned about the number of violent incidents in the reporting period, although it is typically below that found in comparator prisons. The main type of incidents have been prisoner-on-prisoner assaults, followed by prisoner-on staff assaults. All incidents continue to be reviewed at the use of force meetings, with drivers of incidents being carefully analysed.

4.4 Use of force

Figures for the number of occasions when force was used remain quite high, but Pava incapacitant spray and drawn batons were rarely used. From our observations, use of force meetings have been efficiently conducted. There have been occasions when body worn video camera footage revealed that the reporting wing officer may have escalated, rather than de-escalated, incidents, which led to the controlled use of force. The latter, however, seemed to be conducted in a professional way, with additional staff training provided where inexperience had resulted in incidents unduly escalating.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

The prevention of illicit items primarily refers to drugs and mobile phones entering the prison, as well as to the trading or selling of medication within the prison.

Mandatory drug tests (MDT) show that the most common drugs remain cannabis and psychoactive substances (PS), with a significant increase in 'homemade' PS, which have varying effects on users.

However, Preston currently has the seventh lowest positive MDT rates amongst reception prisons (18.47% for 2024-2025).

The body scanner in reception continues to identify newly arrived prisoners who have items concealed in their body. In all cases, these prisoners are held in a segregated cell, where they stay until they are shown to be clear of any concealed items. There have also been successful intercepts of attempted conveyances through reception and social visits through analysis of local and national intelligence.

As reported last year, photocopying prisoners' mail and the 'email a prisoner scheme' have helped to reduce the incidence of paper impregnated with drugs reaching prisoners. Mail, including unopened legal mail from solicitors, is regularly presented to a drug-detection dog. If the dog indicates a positive reaction, the mail is swabbed and tested. Sometimes, intelligence suggests that Rule 39 mail (letters protected from examination through legal privilege) needs to be tested; if found to be positive, this is recorded and the mail photocopied, with the copy given to the prisoner.

Currently, HMP Preston does not appear to face the same level of drone-related issues as other establishments. The prison remains alert to the risk of drones dropping items into the grounds, and any intelligence received in this area has been acted on promptly. The dedicated search team (DST) conducts regular checks of the grounds during their duties.

Preston operates an enhanced gate security at Tier 2, with local searching routines and levels agreed with the Governor and Prison Group Director.

Inevitably, as with the national picture, staffing influences the ability to be proactive in regard to security, but this seems to be managed well and provides a continued security presence around the estate.

A significant investment has been made in a new mobile phone detector. It continues to be used, especially at night, with any indications actioned the next morning.

CCTV is critical to maintaining security, particularly for an inner-city prison. However, the system is showing its age and it's common for incidents not to be caught on camera or for there to be unmonitored areas (although body worn video cameras continue to be invaluable). Maintenance costs of the CCTV are, anecdotally high, but capital bids for replacement have not been approved.

4.6 Debt

The Board remains concerned about the prevalence of debt and its implications for bullying and the good order of the prison. Prisoners are often placed in difficult situations as early as in the first night centre, where limited funds make them vulnerable to 'helpful' approaches from other prisoners. Given Preston's high turnover of prisoners, this is an issue that can affect a lot of men. From the Board's observations, the prison continues to take steps to reduce the debt problem.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation

HMP/YOI Preston is a Victorian prison and, as such, does not meet modern accommodation or access standards. Cells do not meet the standards laid out in HM Inspectorate of Prisons' (HMIP) report, *Life in Prison: Living Conditions*.

The Board has observed cells that are in a poor state, with evidence of mould, condensation, broken plaster and inadequate ventilation.

5.1.1 Kitchens and food quality

The manager has confirmed that, since the last reporting period, there has been a marked improvement in the maintenance and/or replacement of kitchen equipment, which is obviously essential to providing meal services to prisoners.

During the reporting period, the kitchen has been able to obtain much-needed heated trolleys, which greatly assist transportation of food to the wings. They now have an additional dishwasher, and boilers and brat pans (heavy-duty, large-scale commercial cooking appliances) have been replaced or repaired, within a more acceptable response time from the contracted engineers.

In order to ensure compliance in the serving of all meals on the prison wings, a 'RAG' (red, amber, green) rated system has been implemented – following the guidance of the wing servery, food safety and hygiene log book. This new system will enable spot-checks to be carried out, in order to maintain compliance in all servery areas.

Under this guidance, all wing serveries are required to:

- Monitor the temperature of both hot and cold food daily.
- Ensure each servery is cleaned daily, as per recommended guidance.

These procedures are supervised and signed off by the custody manager of each wing. The paper-based information is then checked by the kitchen manager and the head of residence, before the collective data is transposed on to a database spreadsheet.

All servery wing areas that show a green RAG rating are rewarded with a cake for their efforts and commitment to meeting the requirements. Those areas that show an amber or red rating are given support to enable them to improve their performance. If, after additional support has been given and little or no improvement is evident, steps are taken to replace those servery staff, affording others the opportunity to learn and thus ensuring continued maintenance of food and safety hygiene standards.

To enhance his knowledge of halal food preparation - ensuring that the food consumed is permissible according to Islamic law for Muslim prisoners - the kitchen manager is to undertake additional training in specific areas of preparation of halal food. This knowledge will then be passed down to both kitchen and servery staff to ensure full compliance in meeting halal dietary requirements.

HMP Preston is a transitional/remand prison and the constant turnover of prisoners can, at times, present difficulties in the retention of good kitchen staff. However, with the implementation of a new system in relation to prisoner employment and activities, it is anticipated that this may have a positive impact in retaining prisoners who want to work in the kitchen areas.

There is no certificated training provision option available to the kitchen staff. Last year, there were preliminary discussions around the possibility of in-house National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 2 training for prisoners who worked in kitchen areas. To date, this has not happened and is yet to be confirmed.

5.1.2 Laundry

The new laundry arrangements for prisoners at HMP Preston, which were implemented last year, continue to grow from strength to strength in their operations. The facility allows for all prisoners' clothing to be washed on site and returned to the individual.

During the reporting year, there was a large fire in the laundry, caused by a faulty dryer. This had a major impact on the laundry service provision, necessitating laundry being sent to other prisons for approximately three months.

However, once up and running again, the laundry quickly returned to its earlier successful service provision and has proved to be an impressive addition to the prison, affording a great improvement in decency for prisoners who are able to wear their own clothes and have them cleaned individually.

There are stringent laundry processes and protocols in place, resulting in minimal complaints of the service. All prisoners are given an individual net laundry bag, together with an itemised laundry list, which is completed by the prisoner, prior to their items being taken to the laundry. Once in the laundry, the bag and itemised list is checked for accuracy by a member of the laundry staff, prior to the items being placed in the washing machine. The laundry area deals with approximately 570 bags of washing per week - each bag weighing 6kg - and offers a same-day turnaround service as standard.

There is a one band 4 Instructor and nine prisoners working in the laundry. It is anticipated that, following a recent recruitment exercise, an additional band 4 instructor will join the team.

As a transitional prison, retention of suitable prisoners to work in the laundry is difficult and there is no accredited training available to prisoners within this specific area of work. However, when prisoners start working in the laundry, they are given a Progress to Work booklet. Whilst completion of the booklet is not mandatory, prisoners are encouraged to diarise their time working there, which could prove to be a useful tool to any future employer.

Of note is that the new in-house laundry service model at HMP Preston has attracted interest from other prisons. The new laundry arrangements have been very successful and are to be commended.

5.2 Segregation

The care and separation unit, or CSU, where prisoners are segregated, has 15 single-occupancy cells and one constant-watch cell. It continues to be a self-contained unit, with own servery, plus showers and an adjudication room (where disciplinary hearings are held for prisoners who are alleged to have broken prison rules), in addition to direct access to three exercise yards.

As noted in our previous report, prisoners are entitled to a shower and exercise each day, which they request when picking up breakfast. They also have a radio and can request distraction packs and access to the prison's library service. They are visited each day by a Governor and a chaplain, and twice a week by a nurse and a doctor. The

IMB visits the unit several times a week and speaks to new arrivals. The most frequent reason for segregation is concealment of an illicit item, followed closely by GOoD, or good order or discipline (when a prisoner's behaviour puts other people in danger or risks causing problems in the rest of the prison). The IMB observes Rule 45 reviews (where it is determined if the prisoner should remain segregated), when we are able to do so.

In previous years, a mental health nurse was assigned to the CSU, which led to a regular and consistent input into prisoner care. However, this was a pilot scheme and was not included in the new healthcare contract.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

The key worker scheme operates to full capacity and seems to be working well.

The custody manager responsible for the operation of key working regularly quality assures key worker reports and provides support and advice through the key worker hub. The IMB has continued to scrutinise a sample of key worker reports and has been impressed by the improved quality. As noted in our previous report, managers of other units (employment, healthcare and safer custody) have acknowledged the positive input of key workers to Board members.

5.4 Equality and diversity

Equality and diversity continue to be monitored. The regular analysis of prisoners with protected characteristics (including, among others, race, religion, age, disability, sex and sexual orientation) in each meeting is presented in the minutes.

The diversity and inclusion team closely monitors and identifies disproportionate or inconsistent application of the use of force, incentives schemes and access to training, education and work for protected groups, as well as younger prisoners (those aged 18-24).

For a short period, there was a YA lead custodial manager, with some equality and diversity oversight responsibility.

There were 67 foreign national prisoners in HMP Preston in March 2025. A full-time member of staff with specific responsibility for these men is due to start in April 2025. An immigration enforcement officer from HMP Risley visits HMP/YOI Preston every week.

Each senior leadership team member has responsibility for one protected characteristic group and leads at the relevant forum, which happen four times each

The chaplaincy plays a crucial role in making the prison a multi-racial and multi-religious tolerant establishment, in the Board's view.

After an all-time low number of discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs) in 2022, these have been increasing, year on year. It is not clear whether this demonstrates an increase in incidents or more confidence in the system. In the reporting year, 23 DIRFs were submitted (18 in 2023). From 2025, all DIRFs will be investigated by one staff member, to ensure continuity of response.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The chaplaincy team continues to comprise a full-time manager and a team of 19 part-time chaplains from a diverse range of faiths. The team speaks to every incoming

prisoner, providing an important pastoral support function, alongside any specific religious observances. For any faiths not represented on site, prisoners are given a weekly faith information pack.

As noted in our previous report, the team provides pastoral support to prisoners who have requested it, as well as to men who have suffered a bereavement or who have a loved one with a serious illness. They also attend ACCT and R45 reviews.

They carry out generic duties, including daily reception visits, healthcare and CSU rounds and discharges. They also respond to general applications on faith and non-faith related queries.

The multi-faith chapel provides an important focus in the prison for faith activities, as well as for prison-wide meetings, events and activities.

5.6 Incentives schemes

The prison has an incentives scheme based on a prisoner's behaviour and not the 'infraction' committed. The level allocated is reviewed every three months. When prisoners enter the prison, they are placed on the standard, or middle, level. They are informed that, with good behaviour, they can progress to the enhanced (top) level, but with poor behaviour they can be downgraded to basic (bottom) status. Each level has certain privileges, including how much money prisoners can spend and how many family social visits they can have, with enhanced prisoners allowed to wear their own clothes.

5.7 Complaints

While, in general, the complaints system works effectively, there are still issues with the time taken for responses. It is rare for prisoners to receive answers to their complaints within the specified timescale and, on occasion, there have been delays of multiple months in dealing with issues.

While having matters investigated in a timely manner within a shift-based workforce will always be problematic, an effective follow-up system to ensure investigations are completed as quickly as possible would reduce IMB time spent chasing up outstanding complaints on a prisoner's behalf.

The effective management of the complaints system is critical for the effective operation of the IMB applications (prisoners' written representations to the Board) process.

5.8 Property

The number of applications submitted to the Board concerning property remains similar to the previous year, comprising 21% of the total number of applications received. These figures are slightly enhanced by multiple applications for the same issue, where it was not resolved quickly enough for the prisoner, such as compensation for lost items.

It continues to be the case that the cell-clearance process is not always carried out in a timely manner, leading to a significant loss of property for some prisoners and additional administrative workload and financial burdens for the establishment. There have been improvements in the management of prisoners' property, but the IMB still deals with significant numbers of applications, some of which seem to be due to prison staff negligence, in the Board's view.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

During the reporting period, healthcare has settled into the new contract with Practice Plus Group, which was re-tendered from 1 April 2024. As noted in previous reports and confirmed by the last HMIP inspection report, HMP/YOI Preston has a well-managed healthcare unit.

The healthcare department continues to aim towards making sure that patients are seen within the same timescale as in the community. There have been some increased waiting times for GP appointments, although these have been managed by adding additional GP sessions to ensure patients are seen within a suitable timeframe. All urgent care needs are seen on the same day via the clinician application triage pathway. Emergency calls are responded to immediately, whether they relate to physical issues, such as self-harming, or medical ones, such as heart attacks.

Healthcare staff are invited to all ACCT reviews and attend all whilst working collaboratively with the safer custody team. They also attend all Rule 45 reviews in the CSU.

6.2 Physical health

All prisoners have an initial healthcare screening by a nurse on arrival in reception. Those requiring medication for addictions are seen by the clinician at the first reception health screening; on the following day, they have a more detailed review in the first night centre. The OMB regularly check with the Health Care Manager that this is the case.

Patients who are withdrawing from substances are offered appropriate symptomatic medications and are monitored twice for the first five days in custody. If a patient is located on the CSU immediately from reception and is withdrawing from substances, the care pathway and checks remain in place, ensuring safety. If the body scanner in reception has indicated that a prisoner has a secreted item internally, it is always assumed that it contains addictive substances..

Preston continues to have a GP presence three days a week. The unit also has an advanced clinical practitioner and a non-medical prescriber (NMP), who support the GP services. Other appointments offered include podiatry, substance misuse (including 12-week reviews), ophthalmology, sexual health clinics, smoking cessation, vaccinations, abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) screening, plus primary care clinics, including leg dressings and wound reviews. Prisoners are regularly screened for hepatitis C at the first point of contact on arrival at HMP Preston.

Attendance at appointments is not always 100% and collaborative working and problem solving continues to tackle the enablement issues surrounding locating and escorting prisoners to appointments. This collaboration has seen the development of a healthcare clinic rota and also increased enabling-officer oversight. There is also a booking system in place with the admin team to ensure that any patients who decline to attend appointments sign a disclaimer form.

The prison has a regional enhanced care unit, known colloquially as the 'hospital wing'. One landing is for physically ill patients and another is for patients who are mentally unwell. The Wing continues to accept referrals from both internally and externally from other prisons within the region.

With an increasing age demographic of referrals, an end-of-life pathway has been developed to include providing memory boxes for families, which include a fingerprint key ring, an organza bag for a lock of hair and a short poem. This initiative was recognised by PPG, with the healthcare team nominated for an excellence award.

Healthcare and HMP Preston were successful in a bid for funding to be provided for end-of-life care and develop the prison's education package from the Linder Foundation in conjunction with St Catherine's Hospice. This will be delivered to both healthcare and prison staff following a training needs analysis.

The kitchen unit is provided with a list of prisoners subject to special diets and any allergens that require omitting from their diet.

6.3 Mental health

With the implementation of the new contract with the Practice Plus Group (PPG) last year, there have been some changes to the previous range of professionals within the in-house mental health team (IMHT).

The IMHT is staffed with a band 7 manager and a range of professionals, including a psychiatrist, nurses, counsellors, senior counsellors and psychological wellbeing practitioners. As yet, the IMHT is not fully staffed, as it has no psychologist or higher assistant psychologist. The plan is to replace counsellors with clinical associate psychologists.

The IMHT provides a service seven days a week. This year, they have received 2965 referrals for mental health support and attended 2277 ACCT reviews. These figures represent a significant rise from the previous year's figure of 2184 referrals for mental health support and attendance at 1967 ACCT reviews.

Although there is a waiting list for mental health team support/treatment, this is not long in comparison with services in the community. Currently, approximate waiting times for mental health support at HMP Preston are:

- EMDR (eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing therapy aims to help an individual heal from trauma or other distressing life experience): 33 weeks.
- Counsellor services: 23 weeks.
- Psychological wellbeing practitioner: 17 weeks.

The waiting times for mental health beds in a secure unit under the Mental Health Act are variable and can change at any time in the referral process, as access is based on priority need. If the prison has a prisoner who is deemed urgent, they will take the next bed that is available. The required level of security at the hospital, be it a psychiatric intensive care unit or a low, medium or high security unit, is made on the basis of presentation, history of violence, risks to others and previous convictions.

On occasion, the Ministry of Justice does not agree with the level of security, so will not provide the prison with a movement order. The prison will then have to refer the prisoner to another setting. Currently, there are five prisoners awaiting admission to an NHS Foundation Trust's secure mental health in-patient hospital, and one prisoner awaiting admission to a psychiatric intensive care unit.

Latterly, a working group of all interested parties has been set up to look at the reasons for the delays in waiting times for mental health beds in secure units. Guidelines

advise that beds should be made available within 28 days of referral, but this rarely happens.

Prisoners are often recalled to prison on a 28-day recall. Some prisoners are coming into prison who remain acutely psychotic and due to a lack of beds in the community, the courts use the prison as a place of safety. This gives the mental health team little time to prepare them for release. When this is not achievable, the prisoner may have to be subject to a gate section. This is when, on the day of release, they are stopped at the gate, transferred to hospital in a secure ambulance for assessment and treatment and held under the Mental Health Act. To accomplish this, a referral is made, and the prisoner is assessed either the day before or on the day of release by a psychiatrist and an approved social worker. If they deem the prisoner to be appropriate for admission, they have to find a bed in a mental health hospital and arrange transport there. This is a very time-consuming process. If no bed can be found, the prisoner is released into the community.

In terms of rehabilitation, the release arrangements are crucial for vulnerable prisoners with mental health issues. The IMHT care team does have regular contact with the community mental health teams (CMHT). However, it is sometimes difficult to hand over care to CMHT, as they will not acknowledge the clinical diagnosis of the IMHT. Often, these patients are homeless and, without an address, the CMHTs will not accept them. If they have to go to approved premises, this is identified at the last minute, delaying the referral to a CMHT.

Reconnect is an initiative set up by the NHS to provide wraparound support for a patient. The prison refers prisoners to Reconnect on release. Some prisoners who have returned on remand may already be under the CMHT. On release, Reconnect will not accept these prisoners, who then miss out on its support.

The use of different technological systems by both the HMP Preston IMHT and the CMHTs has been highlighted as a possible contributory factor in delays in securing the appropriate care and treatment for those vulnerable prisoners with ongoing mental health issues. This means that 'live' data is not available at any given time to the relevant providers/areas.

To this end, meetings are currently underway between both HMP Preston IMHT and the CMHTs to look at a 'one-stop' technological system, with a view to resolving the issue, including follow-up support for prisoners on discharge.

6.4 Time out of cell regime

This continues to be a major focus in the prison during the past year. The Governor remains committed to increasing opportunities for prisoners' time out of their cells, with a good deal of success, in the Board's view. A new initiative has involved allowing prisoners an extra hour in the evenings, on a rota basis.

The education offer is the same as noted in our previous report and ranges from Pre-entry level to Level 2. It is designed to meet the needs of prisoners in a short-stay prison environment. Provision is divided between Prison Education Framework (a system for providing core education services in prisons, focusing on basic English, maths, ICT, and English for speakers of other languages), delivered by (Novus), and prison-delivered activity in industry and residential areas. Novus provision has a mix of accredited and unaccredited courses in small units, enabling men to make progress whilst in a reception prison, as well as prepare them for their next custodial destination

or release. There are prison employment opportunities, for 'main' and vulnerable prisoners, in the kitchens, recycling, waste management, horticulture, the laundry and textiles. There are a range of wing-based and orderly (trusted prisoners who take on work to provide services that contribute to the running of the prison) roles, including Here2help, mentors and neurodiversity support representatives. The overall out-of-cell places amount to 505 daily and 3786 weekly. These continue to be impressive figures, in the Board's view, typically reflecting 75% of the total prison population.

Provision for under 21 year olds

Prisoners under the age of 21 can access all the above, subject to Maths and English assessment levels and security clearance. In addition, they can also access a minimum of two gym sessions per week.

Provision of physical activity for workers such as kitchen staff

All full-time workers can access four gym sessions each week during the evenings and weekends, which means they can fulfil their work obligations.

There have been issues with prisoners working as orderlies in reception not being given the opportunity for exercise in fresh air. The Board has raised this issue and continues to monitor it.

Use of gym

There continue to be dedicated weekly sessions for prisoners from G wing (addiction recovery unit) and a weight management class that also incorporates remedial activity. The gym functional skills programme remains a popular option for men to combine their English and Maths development alongside physical training.

6.5 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

With the majority of people entering HMP Preston coming directly from the community, drug and alcohol rehabilitation remains a pivotal part of the establishment.

In common with 60 other prisons (eight in the northwest), Practice Plus group (PPG) is now the provider for the Integrated non-clinical and clinical substance misuse service. PPG is also the main provider of primary healthcare and mental healthcare. From the Board's observations, having a single provider is showing clear advantages for the delivery services.

On entry to custody, men are triaged by the primary healthcare team to identify medical concerns or immediate needs. It is at this point that substance misuse may be disclosed or present in a stage of withdrawal. The clinical staff discuss support options and agree a plan of action. This may just be a period of observation and prescribing symptomatic relief whilst withdrawing; for others, prescribing is required. Clinical Interventions are available to help, encourage and promote legal, controlled use of drugs or to control withdrawal if abstinence is desired.

Clinical interventions continue to be delivered alongside psychosocial interventions through engagement with the non-clinical drug and alcohol service.

Referral to the non-clinical drug and alcohol service can be through various routes:

- Clinical referral: a referral can take place following healthcare screening in reception.
- Self-referral: either on reception or after a period of reflection in custody.

- Offender management unit/resettlement team/probation: a prisoner may be advised to engage with the service by their offender management team as part of their sentence.
- Other agencies, such as, for example, chaplaincy, the mental health team, the education unit, gym staff, etc. Or from outside agencies (e.g. probation, community teams).
- Personal officer: allocated personal officers may identify a need for referral.
- All new referrals are seen by the non-clinical drug and alcohol team within five days.

Various interventions are offered:

- SMART Recovery Inside Out: this involves sessions that are delivered as a programme or as individual modules.
- Facilitated Narcotics Anonymous meetings, offering a 12-step study group, particularly aimed at what recovery looks like in prison or the community (for those who may be released after time served or on shorter sentences).

The prisoner will continue to work with their drug and alcohol practitioner throughout their time in custody, with appropriate continuity of care arrangements on release.

Working with the non-clinical drug and alcohol service is voluntary but encouraged, especially with prisoners who are receiving substitute prescribing, such as Methadone, Espranor or Buvidal for continuity of care.

Interventions that may be accessed during this time of engagement include Onward referrals, a peer mentor scheme and a harm-reduction awareness programme, as well as family support and the offer of a Naloxone pack on release (a medicine that rapidly reverses an opioid overdose).

Recovery unit

The recovery unit is located on G wing and can house 28 prisoners. In a partnership between the drug and alcohol service and the prison, the wing enables men to develop individual motivation towards making positive changes to their drug and alcohol misuse. The programme offers a short-term introduction to tackling substance misuse whilst focusing on planning the next steps in their recovery, whether that is preparing for release, reintegration into the main population or transferring to another establishment.

Recovery unit testimonial

'The recovery wing has helped me to develop the confidence to work towards a better future, maintain sobriety, learn new skills and build confidence in myself. I feel more prepared to live a substance-free future and build a positive future for myself. I feel well placed to develop relations with my family and be there to support them properly. I will forever be grateful for the recovery wing.'

PF, a former recovery unit resident, positive release to Mulberry Project

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Library

The sad death of the librarian had an inevitable, but unfortunate, effect on the provision of a service highly valued by prisoners. The time needed to fill the vacancy has resulted in reduced opening hours, occasional closures for staff holiday and significant limits on the Storybook Dads sessions (a charity programme where prisoners record audio or video bedtime stories for their children to listen to or watch at home).

With the imminent arrival of a new member of staff, rebuilding Storybook Dads has been identified as a priority, due to its importance for family connection.

The library also promotes other initiatives:

- The Turning Pages initiative is a programme where fellow prisoners act as mentors to help prisoners with their reading skills.
- The Reading Ahead programme is a national scheme where a dictionary is given as a reward for people who have read six books.

7.1.1 Education

New prisoners undertake screening for both Maths and English during induction. If necessary, they are allocated to a functional skills class to raise their level. Bespoke functional skill classes are also provided, alongside the horticulture and gym offers.

The curriculum has been designed to suit the high turnover of the prison population in HMP/YOI Preston. Courses are typically delivered in bite-size sections, which most prisoners can complete during even a short stay. This means that prisoners can complete a course that will be recognised at their next prison, rather than having to start the course again.

There are a range of accredited IT qualifications available to prisoners on a bite-sized basis, but they can also gain the full award. These consist of one full-time IT class, one full-time graphics class and one full-time interactive-media class.

From over 260 prisoner questionnaires returned to the education department, there was a 96% satisfaction rating with the courses provided.

7.2 Vocational training, work

Work is seen as an essential part of prison life. It provides social contact, gives prisoners an experience of a working environment and enables them to earn money. As a reception prison with a turnover of 50 prisoners a week, it continues to only offer two vocational training courses: painting and decorating, and industrial cleaning. Both are provided by the educational provider, Novus. Prisoners completing these courses obtain a City & Guilds qualification.

The prison still offers approximately 400 places in employment and education each day. It aims for attendance levels of 80%, but achieves, on average, just over 60%. Mindful of other demands for time (social visits, court visits, solicitors' interviews, etc) and the fact that prisoners on remand do not have to work, the Board consider this to be a good performance rate.

Some work roles can lead to externally recognised qualifications. Posts in horticulture can obtain a City & Guilds certificate in horticulture and those in waste management can obtain the waste management training and advisory Board's qualification. Listeners are prisoners trained directly by the Samaritans to their national standards to offer confidential emotional support to other prisoners. They are monitored by Samaritans whilst practising, with regular support network meetings in prison.

7.3 Offender management, progression

During the reporting period, the offender management unit (OMU) has remained fully staffed. In 2023-2024, the Board noted that long-term probation officer vacancies were affecting OMU management. The unit now comprises three operational prison offender managers, five non-operational prison offender managers and three probation prison offender managers.

The OMU continues to complete offender assessments (OASys) in a timely way, in the Board's view, and all sentenced prisoners seem to be allocated POMs appropriately. The Board is concerned that remand prisoners, who account for the 80% of the population, do not always have this level of support and guidance.

MAPPA (multi-agency public protection arrangements) reviews, which assess and manage the risks posed by sexual and violent offenders, are attended remotely using video conferencing.

The early release scheme has led to an easing of the national prison population but had limited impact at HMP/YOI Preston, albeit that the increased rate of recalls led to a higher churn rate in remand prisons which, in turn, increased work pressures. The support hub continues to offer support to prisoners on release.

The IMB has received positive feedback and is pleased with the prison's partnership with ACE Project, which supports ex-offenders to lead more stable lifestyles and provides volunteers.

From the Board's observations, weekly reducing reoffending meetings are well established.

7.4 Family contact

HMP/YOI Preston is a town centre prison in a city with a good transport hub. Regular family social visits should be one of the advantages of a prisoner located here.

Issues arising from changes to the booking system two years ago now seem to be resolved.

In the visitors' centre, the charity, POPs (Partners of Prisoners), provides a family support service, which includes assisting with the 'meeting and greeting' of prisoners' families and helping with childcare during visits. POPs also holds regular family forum groups outside prison to provide a support network for families.

There continues to be a partnership between the prison and neighbouring church, which provides parking and visitors' centre facilities, including refreshments. It is acknowledged that family support is a vital positive factor for a prisoner's release, but there still seems to be a need for more family engagement by the OMU.

7.5 Resettlement planning

The employment hub is based in the library and is well attended by prisoners. The IMB continues to visit the hub and to be impressed by the enthusiasm of the staff. The hub is supported by a multi-agency monthly forum, which is attended by a number of key partnership agencies. IAG advisers (information, advice or guidance) continue to oversee the employment hub.

The focus for 2024-2025 was on the delivery of the Future Skills Programme (Waste Management and Warehousing, Level 1) and the training and introduction of more mentors on wings.

A new induction process has been introduced for all new prisoners, which includes information on education, skills and work.

There is a new Personal Learning Plan, tailored to an individual's preference for education, skills and work, which includes an introduction to pre-release sessions and banking and ID sessions for those with a release date.

The Progress Into Work booklet has been completed in all industry areas to monitor work, with LSM training sessions for industry staff around completion of progress to work booklets.

Continuing population pressures and the focus on quick transfers once sentenced has led to courses being unfinished and incomplete.

Those on very short sentences and, possibly, being released without accommodation, are unlikely to be able to take up work until settled.

The job offers through the Future Skills Programme have led to some prisoners leaving custody with a firm job offer.

Realise Potential Event, which involves men with 'lived experience' returning to the prison to showcase the importance of work and how they succeeded, has had a noticeable positive impact on attendees.

Performance hub data for April 2024 to March 2025:

- CU151: employment within six weeks was 19.63%
- CU175: employment within six months was 35.16%

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	15
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	8
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	9
Total number of visits to the establishment	318

It is anticipated that additional new members will be recruited following the latest recruitment drive. Induction will take some time, but the development of new members will be important, as several of the highly experienced existing Board are approaching the end of their 15-year terms.

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	17	29
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	6	11
C	Equality	3	5
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	13	13
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	40	47
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	11	19
F	Food and kitchens	21	14
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	44	54
H1	Property within the establishment	7	56
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	46	16
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	5	6
I	Sentence management, including HDC(home dentation curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence), parole, release dates, re-categorisation	15	17
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	22	35
K	Transfers	7	6
L	Miscellaneous	47	17
	Total number of applications	304	345

Annex A

Key service providers

- Healthcare has been provided by the Practice Plus Group since April 2024. It provides:
 - primary healthcare services
 - integrated substance misuse services
 - pharmacy services
 - GP sessions
 - mental health services
 - non-clinical substance misuse services
 - optical services
 - a range of therapies (including physiotherapy and podiatry)
- Dental services are commissioned directly by NHS England
- Prison education framework provider: Novus
- Escort contractor: GeoAmey
- Works contractor: Amey

Partner agencies

- Organisations supporting families of prisoners: Partners of Prisoners (POPS)
- Library services: Lancashire County Council
- Employment hub: Career Connect; Through the Gate; Prison Employment Lead
- Department for Work and Pension



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