



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMYOI Werrington

**For reporting year
1 September 2024 to 31 August 2025**

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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 – 8	
4. Safety	9
5. Fair and humane treatment	12
6. Health and wellbeing	15
7. Education and training	17
8. Progression towards transfer or release	19
 The work of the IMB	
Board statistics	20
Applications to the IMB	20

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Introductory sections 1 – 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

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

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

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

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

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

2. Description of the establishment

HMYOI Werrington is a former industrial school (intended to help children under 14 years old who were found to be homeless or begging but who had not, as yet, committed any serious crime) dating from 1868. Some of the original buildings are still in use, but accommodation is provided in more modern, purpose-designed buildings. These are grouped into two units: Doulton and Denby. Doulton houses two wings, A and B, while Denby houses C wing and the care and separation unit (CSU). Living accommodation is provided on A and B on two floors (landings), while C wing has the CSU rooms on the ground floor and further accommodation and induction rooms on the first floor. The layout reflects the adult estate; it is not child friendly. Every young person is accommodated in a single-occupancy room, all of which are ensuite and have a phone socket; the Doulton has new, purpose-built, heavy furniture. The institution has a total capacity of 118¹ places (originally designed for boys aged 15 to 18 years), with an average population size of 84.3 during the reporting year.

The CSU is used for young people who need to be temporarily separated from others, either to maintain good order or discipline (GOoD) or because they require additional support, in line with YOI Rule 49. Removal from normal accommodation under Rule 49 occurs only when the assessed risk is high. Other young people separated under Rule 49 can also be accommodated on A, B or C wings.

The three wings, A, B and C, each have a youth club room, with games, and a small exercise yard, which can be accessed by the young people during association (this is when they are allowed out of their rooms). There is an additional youth club, in a separate building, away from the residential wings. A and B wings each have one outreach room, allowing education, or other activities such as resettlement practitioner consultations, to take place. There have been several spray paint murals on the exterior of the wings, created by a professional artist.

Most education takes place in the old buildings; the classrooms were refurbished during the reporting year. This included integrating the library, although it has since been relocated to its original building. There is a well-equipped gym with showers. The Board is pleased to report that the climbing wall is back in use. The gym also hosts health education sessions. There is a sports field and a multi-use games activity (MUGA) facility.

There is a modern, well-equipped health centre, and the Board is pleased that each wing now has a consultation room for the Inclusion team, which provides mental health support, to use. The rest of the original buildings are used for a chapel, the Vibe (a more relaxed classroom environment in which some education takes place) and for administration.

The following areas of Werrington are operated by external organisations:

- Education and purposeful activity: People Plus; Kinetic Youth (a charity)
- Physical healthcare: Practice Plus Group
- Dental health: Time for Teeth
- Mental health/substance misuse: Inclusion, which is run by the Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
- Estate management: Amey
- Social work services and library provision: Staffordshire County Council
- Advocacy: Barnardo's

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

3. Key points

3.1 Main findings

Safety

- As with last year, the Board remains very concerned about the general level of violence. We are particularly worried about the severity of some incidents, as well as the number of fights and assaults.
- The Board saw further improvements in conflict resolution and reducing reoffending which has allowed more young people to mix with each other.
- We observed a further increase in self-isolation, which remains a concern.
- The Board welcomes the significant decrease in self-harm and the number of assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) plans, which are used to support prisoners who are at risk of self-harm and suicide.

Fair and humane treatment

- From our observations, management and youth justice workers continued to show care for the wellbeing of the young people.
- Although there have been improvements, time out of room continued to be poor, especially in the evenings and at weekends.
- The Board is concerned about the increase in the use of force.

Health and wellbeing

- From the Board's observations, as with last year, this continued to be good, with needs being met by the departments of physical and mental health.
- The Board has noted early, positive signs in the implementation of the Framework for Integrated Care (which brings together health and justice services to provide consistent, high-quality care for people in custody) throughout the establishment.
- The ingress of illicit drugs has been problematic this year.

Education and training

- The Board has noted significant improvements in the delivery of education, although we remain concerned about the provision of wing education and support for higher-level learners.

Progression towards transfer or release

- In the Board's view, resettlement continued to be impressive, with practitioners working towards a positive discharge or transfer for the young people.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- Given the risk of young people being assaulted by their peers, what measures will the Minister implement to safeguard those convicted of sexual offences, and does this include the provision of dedicated, separate accommodation?
- What assurance can the Minister give the Board that young people serving long sentences will be transferred without delay to the adult estate on turning 18, and what systems are in place to guarantee compliance with this requirement?

- What immediate steps will the Minister take to address the delays in the vetting process, which are significantly impacting the timely commencement of staff and IMB members, and how will the system be reformed to prevent future backlogs?

TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

- What steps are being taken to ensure the continuous delivery of library provision?

TO THE YOUTH CUSTODY SERVICE

- Why are children with complex needs sent to Werrington when there are no specialist facilities available? And why is it so time-consuming to get them transferred? How will this be improved?
- Can the Board be assured that sufficient staffing will be allocated to ensure successful delivery of the Roadmap to Effective Practice?
- What steps will be taken to reduce late evening arrivals?
- How are interventions programmes evaluated and what evidence is there of their success?
- Is there sufficient financial support for families to visit young people when they are located far from home?
- Has consideration been given to the possible benefit of regularly gathering feedback from young people about their YOI experience as they are leaving or transferring to the adult estate?
- Can the Board be assured that budget support for the provision of appropriate visitor reception facilities will be made available in the next reporting year?

TO THE GOVERNOR

- How can self-isolators, who fear mixing, be better supported to access a full regime?
- What more will be done to incentivise good behaviour and give more association to young people on enhanced status?
- How will the induction programme be improved to ensure all young people understand how to access basic services within the first 24 hours?
- What steps will be taken to increase the inadequate car parking provision?
- Can the Board be assured that all R49 paperwork will be emailed to members for review?
- What further steps will be taken to prevent illicit items (particularly cannabis) entering the prison and being passed among young people?

3.3 Response to the previous report

Issue raised	Response given	Progress
Closure of Cookham Wood - impacting of accommodating children far from home.	Long-term plan for YOIs to be replaced with more smaller units across the country. Oasis pilot in Kent.	Echoes issues raised in the previous year. Limited progress. Oasis closed temporarily for various failings.
Whether the Framework for Integrated Care is improving the lives of young people in custody?	Renewed focus agreed and all YOIs have developed a three-year Roadmap to Effective Practice.	This issue was raised in the previous year's annual report. The development of the Werrington Roadmap is welcomed,

		and some progress has been noted.
How are safeguarding concerns addressed for over 18s held in youth custody?	There is continued support for those who have looked-after status. No support otherwise, as is the case in the community.	Resolved. The number of over 18s has also reduced somewhat.
Inadequate provision to support young people studying for GCSE and other higher-level qualifications.	Issue acknowledged. Provider issued with an improvement notice to address this.	A long way to go, but some clear signs of improvement. Some young people sat for GCSEs this year and arrangements for distance-learning provision are in place.
When will new national dataset and KPIs [key performance indicators] for education come online?	Awaiting the introduction of new education database, anticipated in January 2026.	Not expected until 2026. Meaningful KPIs for education remain difficult to access.
Is the YCS [Youth Custody Service] satisfied that education allocations are made in the best interests of young people?	Not getting first choice may be because classes are full or for safety reasons.	Some progress has been made, with a new delivery model in place. Mixing issues are still problematic.
Are the food portions adequate for young people?	The portions are based on UK Government dietary recommendations specific to young people. New framework in development.	Resolved, but young people remain dissatisfied.
Is there confidence that People Plus can meet the learning and curriculum needs of the young people?	Regular contract monitoring in place. Appointment of new head of education, who is committed to improvement.	Some improvement noted: reduction in class cancellations and more emphasis on achieving relevant qualifications.
Time out of room (TOOR): can this return to pre-pandemic levels; increase in purposeful activity?	Implementation of the Roadmap to Effective Practice.	Small increase in purposeful activity, but TOOR remains unacceptable at weekends.
Development of staff and young people's relationships.	Roadmap to Effective Practice.	Some improvement: introduction of regular welfare checks and more

		continuity of staff allocations to wings.
Difficulties in the monitoring of young people on R49 by the IMB.	R49 review meetings are now held on one day.	Not always possible for a Board member to attend the meetings. The emailing of paperwork to the Board is still patchy.
Why has the number of young people self-isolating increased?	Young people self-isolate for a variety of reasons. New process in place to monitor these.	Partially resolved, but the IMB remains concerned about the increasing number of young people self-isolating because they sometimes feel threatened.

The Board has been pleased to see a new focus on the delivery of the Integrated Care Framework during the reporting year. A Roadmap to Effective Practice was formulated and approved by the Youth Custody Service (YSC) to be implemented over a three-year period from the 1 April 2025.

The priorities are:

- **Safe and decent environment:** ensuring safety and security for young people and staff in supportive environments.
- **Staff support and growth:** fostering wellbeing, professional development and recognition.
- **Integrated care:** providing trauma-informed care and support through collaboration between all stakeholders.
- **Effective communication:** promoting inclusion, consistency and collaboration for all.
- **To recognise the value of learning:** enable children to overcome barriers that have previously prevented them from learning.
- **Successful transitions:** assisting young people to successfully integrate into the adult estate.
- **Purposeful activity:** to provide learning activities, including education and life skills.

Although it is early days, the Board has noted some positive signs that this model could provide an effective way forward. In particular, we welcome the introduction of regular welfare checks with all young people in place of the custody support plan (CuSP), which was never delivered as intended. The Board will monitor the progress of the 'Roadmap' closely.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

The Board was satisfied with the first night reception process for most of the reporting period. We still have concerns, however, with the late-night arrival of young people, who are brought from the other end of the country.

The induction programme has undergone a major review and continued to improve over the reporting period. However, despite, or perhaps because of, its comprehensive nature, some young people still tell us that they do not understand basic systems, such as how to order canteen (a facility where prisoners can buy snacks and toiletries, etc, using their allocated funds) or add numbers to their PIN phone.

A room in the Denby unit is used for the induction programme and it is hoped that when CCTV and other technical installations are complete, this will move permanently into the former dog training unit.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

The Board is very pleased to report a decrease in the number of young people who have self-harmed, from 136 incidents to 56. Similarly, the number of assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) cases has fallen, from 93 last year to 70 this year. However, the Board continues to face challenges in monitoring ACCT reviews, because of the way they are planned and due to timing. We welcome the introduction of set days for Rule 49 reviews, although it is not always possible for a Board member to monitor them. While these reviews continue to be monitored online by the Board, submission of documentation by Governors remains inconsistent. The lack of this documentation has, again, been raised with Governor as a recurring concern.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

The Board acknowledges that there continues to be an improvement in conflict resolution, which has reduced the number of 'keep-aparts' and instances of reoffending. However, we remain very concerned that there were still 185 assaults among young people, many of which were group assaults, representing an increase from 154 in the previous year. Some of these group assaults have been particularly violent. The Board notes that the number of young people requiring hospital attendance following these incidents was 13, compared with 12 in the previous reporting year. We note that a new group assault strategy has been implemented, although is too early to assess its effectiveness.

The Board is pleased to report a reduction in assaults on staff, falling from 150 in the previous reporting year to 131. However, 15 staff members still required hospital treatment as a result of these incidents.

There were 166 weapons' finds last year, and the Board is pleased to report that this has increased to 232 in the current reporting year, largely due to more rigorous room searches, as documented in the daily operational manager's reports. A weapons strategy is in place, but the young people still manage to make weapons from various pieces of equipment such as laptops and plastic dustpans

The Board is concerned about the rise in deliberate damage to observation panels, which increased to 210 incidents from 144 in the previous reporting year. This peaked in

September 2024, with 40 panels broken, followed by October 2024, with damage to 34 panels.

The removal of the observation panels again gave young people the opportunity to squirt liquids at other young people who were passing, but mainly at the officers. The type of liquid squirted was either water or urine, which was a health and safety concern. The cost of each panel is £33.92, which is deducted from the young person's account, although this does not seem to act as a disincentive.

The Board is very concerned about the rising number of young people who self-isolate—69 in the reporting year, up from 57 previously—marking another year-on-year increase. Young people have told the Board that this is sometimes driven by fear of others' behaviour, linked to outside affiliations or concerns that details of their offences may become known within their mixing group. In some cases, they simply wish to avoid trouble. The Board is particularly concerned about those who self-isolate because they feel under threat. Where there is no specific intelligence to support these concerns, the prison continues to allocate them to the same group regime. While it is accepted that group allocation cannot be determined by a young person, the Board is aware of two occasions this year where individuals were persuaded to mix and were subsequently assaulted.

The Board is pleased to report a decrease in the number of serious incidents, from seven to four. Members attended the four serious incidents in which the Command Suite was opened (which means the prison is in complete lockdown and the normal regime is stopped). Two of these incidents required assistance from the national tactical response group (NTRG), a team trained to intervene in dangerous, high-risk situations, the majority being incidents at height. From our observations, these incidents have been well managed, and the young people involved are offered appropriate care and support once they have returned to their rooms.

4.4 Young people with specific vulnerabilities

There were 65 young people supported by an education, health and care plan (EHCP), but the Board is aware that not every young person with special educational needs is given this invaluable support.

A small number of young people with complex needs have been received at Werrington, despite the fact that there are no specialist facilities. They have been subsequently transferred to more appropriate settings, although this process appears to have been bureaucratic and time consuming. This not only places additional pressure on staff but can also cause significant distress to the young person.

4.5 Use of force

The Board is very concerned that the number of use of force (UoF) incidents has risen to 846 in the reporting year, up from approximately 768 previously. The reasons for this increase remain unclear. However, we are pleased to note a decrease in the number of incidents involving pain-inducing techniques (PITs), which fell from nine last year to just one.

Board members have observed a meeting of the Independent Review of Restraint Panel and have been pleased to see the small number of learning points taken on board by the prison.

In the reporting period, there has been a disappointing reduction in the number of trained negotiators (whose training is active), from four to only two. This is a critical role during serious incidents.

The Board is aware that Pava incapacitant spray has been approved for use in the youth estate on a one-year trial basis and we will be monitoring its use closely.

4.6 Substance misuse

The Board notes a substantial increase in referrals to the substance misuse practitioner, rising from 57 last year to 104 in the reporting period, an increase of around 50%. Despite this, the illicit use of cannabis within the establishment resulted in only 26 recorded finds (compared with 24 last year), even though the smell of cannabis on the wings has been reported on numerous occasions. Although drug testing has intensified and several finds have occurred during social visits and on individual young people, it is evident that illicit substances can still enter the prison and be circulated relatively easily. To address this, the drug strategy meeting now takes place monthly, following the security meeting, and a draft action plan has been developed to reduce demand and restrict supply.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

In-room showers, phones, furniture and laptops have all improved the humane treatment of young people. New wing furniture has been introduced, and the Board has observed a noticeable improvement in cleanliness on the wings. Spray-painted murals on exterior walls have helped to brighten the look of the establishment. However, as previously reported, both the wings and the grounds continue to look forbidding and institutionalised.

The function of the care and separation unit (CSU) has now been established and is functioning within its remit. The arcade room on B wing has been closed all year.

Young people continued to wear their own clothes, which enhanced their self-esteem, although changes in the rules about what is allowable have drawn some complaints.

From the Board's observations, the food remained generally good, but the small portions were criticised by many young people.

5.2 Separation

During the reporting period, there were 148 incidents of young people on Rule 49, a decrease on the previous year's figure of 188. However, 69 young people chose self-separation, which has continued to increase from last year's total of 57. Again, a cause of concern to the Board is when self-isolating young people reported they did not feel safe or did not want to risk getting into trouble. Those who self-isolate are now reviewed by a specific team and monitored by the Board on a weekly basis, along with all the other individuals on Rule 49. Review meetings are held on the same day each week, but when a Board member is not available to observe, the paperwork is still not being forwarded to us on a regular basis. This issue has been raised with the Governing Governor and the Deputy Governor on several occasions but remains problematic, despite reminders being issued. The Board was pleased to note that the establishment has continued to maintain the brevity of time on Rule 49, except for a small number of young people. There have been times when there has been no record on the wings of healthcare or Governor's visits but, otherwise, separated young people are regularly seen by other prison staff.

5.3 Staff and young people relationships

The Board has welcomed efforts to stabilise the allocation of wing-based officers, which allows the potential for the development of more meaningful relationships, and exceptional care has been noted in relation to some of the most troubled young people. Unfortunately, in general, protracted conversations and warm communication between young people and officers on a day-to-day basis were not often observed by the Board. It continues to be difficult to see how meaningful conversations could be achieved through locked doors. It is also impossible for young people to confide anything confidential, as every word they say would be overheard by their neighbours and staff passing by. The challenges in unlocking young people for private conversations can also impede the work of the IMB, although the use of in-cell phones mitigates this to some extent. As in previous years, positive relationships between staff and young people were most observed by the Board on the CSU, where the ratio of officers to young people is higher and includes some more experienced officers.

The Board has been pleased to see the return of the biweekly young people's forum. It was restarted in the latter part of the reporting year and feeds into the young people's council meeting.

We have seen some progress in the implementation of the Framework for Integrated Care (which involves 'Secure Stairs', an acronym for the principles of the framework) throughout the establishment. We were pleased to note that all young people now have written formulations and officers are having weekly guided reflective practice (GRP), facilitated by the clinical psychologists. Although there were 980 custody support plan (CuSP) check-ins from September 2024 until April 2025, this system didn't seem to work as it was intended, and many young people received no benefit. In April, as part of the Roadmap, the CuSP system was paused, and biweekly welfare check sessions were introduced. The Board has been pleased to see over 90% of the young people have been involved in these sessions.

5.4 Equality and diversity

The Board is pleased to report that an enthusiastic and energetic equality and diversity manager has been appointed, with responsibility for young people with protected characteristics (including, among others, race, religion, disability, age, sex and sexual orientation), which it is unlawful to discriminate against. The young people have engaged well with this agenda and have actively participated in new equality forums. Several successful special events have been organised during the year, recognising and informing both young people and staff in relation to equality and diversity issues. Perhaps influenced by the new regime, only 60 diversity information reporting forms (DIRFs) were received in the reporting year, a fall from 80 previously.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

Again, the Board continues to appreciate the energy and compassion of the inclusive chaplaincy department. The Board has observed excellent pastoral care being provided to young people, particularly those experiencing bereavement and family difficulties. The chaplaincy team has introduced volunteers to visit young people, especially those who do not receive regular family social visits. The team also organises social groups and activities such as film sessions, for the young people.

5.6 Rewards and sanctions

The incentives scheme was revised again in June 2025. Young people on enhanced (top) status were rewarded with access to laptops, Xbox consoles and large screen TVs. However, losing television privileges has had the greatest impact and clearly highlighted the consequences of poor behaviour when demoted to the lowest level of scheme (basic). Some applications (these are young people's written representations to the IMB) reveal a level of misunderstanding of the incentives system. Although some effort has been made to improve association time for those with consistently good behaviour, this has been limited by staff availability and mixing issues. A 'red band' status was reintroduced in the reporting year for young people on enhanced status who have been well behaved and built up trust with the staff. Red bands are given more freedom and can be employed as peer mentors or in departments such as reception. In the reporting year, the Board is pleased that seven young people attained red band status.

5.7 Complaints

There has been a fall in the number of complaints submitted this year. The process is well used, which suggests that the young people have confidence in it. In the reporting year, 311 complaints were submitted, a decrease on the 373 in the previous reporting year. Of these, 81 were upheld, compared with 107 in the previous year - an almost identical proportion. The main issues raised related to property and clothing.

The Board monitors complaints by 'dip testing', which involves randomly sampling and reviewing a selection of complaint responses to check their quality and fairness. Whilst a small number of responses were brief, the majority showed empathy and had been thoroughly investigated. Apologies were given where appropriate.

5.8 Property

During the reporting period, the distribution of young people's property continued to be issued twice weekly. There have been some misunderstandings about the rules governing items sent in by family, such as clothing and CDs, but the main problems on the wings were the loss or damage to clothing in the laundry.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

Based on its observations, the Board continues to commend the work of physical, dental and mental healthcare departments. Only two complaints were received by the healthcare department in the reporting year, both related to medication. They were dealt with, face-to-face, with no escalation.

6.2 Physical healthcare

The department is proactive in promoting preventative care, including sexual health screening. However, it continues to face challenges in bringing young people to the centre for clinic appointments. When a n appointment is missed, the young person often has to wait several weeks for a new slot. Morning medication dispensing by nurses can also delay the start of clinics.

6.3 Mental healthcare

The Board is aware of the continued and necessary presence at most Rule 49 reviews of a member of the mental healthcare team. We are pleased that, with the provision of a dedicated room on each wing, face-to-face interactions/interventions with the young people have improved.

6.4 Social care

The Board is pleased to report that two new full-time social workers have been appointed this year. They have been proactive in following up issues in relation to looked-after children (LAC) and especially where local authorities are not meeting their responsibilities.

There were 253 safeguarding referrals, an increase of 11 on the previous reporting year, which are made where there may be concerns, as follows:

- It is felt that the young person is not being protected from maltreatment (sexual, physical, emotional, neglect).
- It is believed that their health or development may be impaired.
- It is felt that the young person is not receiving safe and effective care.
- It is necessary to enable the best outcomes.

In the reporting year, eight referrals were made to the local authority designated officer (LADO), a decrease from 32 in the previous year.

Whilst the Board has been pleased to see a reduction in the number of 18 year olds held at Werrington, this remains a safeguarding concern.

6.5 Time out of room, regime

The Board is pleased to report some improvement in the time-out-of-room figures for young people. The overall average of 3.63 hours per day appears low, but this masks the reality of provision for most young people and has been particularly affected by the high levels of class cancellations and low staffing numbers. When the regime is running smoothly, most young people can expect 5-7 hours out of their rooms, Monday to Friday. However, for those on restricted regimes or who self-isolate, this is much less and, sometimes, nothing at all. The Board continues to be concerned that opportunities for evening association for all young people are poor, whilst at the weekends time out of room remains especially low. Opportunities for socialising are an important part of rehabilitation.

6.6 Soft skills

From the Board's observations, opportunities to develop soft skills such as leadership, participation and empathy were, again, sadly lacking in the reporting period. However, the introduction of enrichment weeks, which commenced in December 2024, has started to address this gap. By the end of the reporting year, young people were also able to use the student forum to share their feelings and views.

The Board was pleased that the charity, Kinetic Youth, continued to provide a youth worker service to the young people, with group work and 1.5 hours of enrichment activity a week, which included a weekend provision.

7. Education and training

7.1 Education

The Board recognises the delivery of education as one of the most important aspects of provision in a young offender institution, with its potential to develop young people's skills and abilities, increase their confidence and better prepare them for a productive life ahead. Members of the Board regularly observe classes and talk to young people about their experience. Although some statistical data has been made available this year, much of it is obtuse. Accessibility to a set of meaningful nationally agreed KPIs (key performance indicators) for education would assist the Board in monitoring this area.

The contract for education has been held by People Plus since December 2022. A new head of education started in early 2024 but had resigned by the end of the year. The vacancy was filled in January 2025, and the new appointee carries significant senior experience within the school sector. In line with Youth Custody Service (YCS) recommendations, the prison appointed a head of work, education and skills in 2023, to provide educational expertise, advise and assurance regarding the curriculum intent, implementation and impact for all elements of learning. Oversight of the contract is supported by a contracts manager. Observations by the Board are that the operation of these two roles can, at times, be dysfunctional, although some improvement has been noted more recently. It is encouraging to hear that both postholders feel they are fully supported by the Governing Governor.

The Board has had serious concerns about the provision of education, which have been raised over a number of years. Following an unannounced inspection in May 2024, Ofsted rated all areas of provision as inadequate and an Improvement Notice was issued. The new head of education has worked hard to address key concerns and the Board is aware that, following a progress visit, the Improvement Notice has been lifted.

The education department is in the oldest part of establishment and is a rabbit-warren of cramped, dingey offices, despite improvements made to classrooms in the previous reporting year.

The Board understands the challenges in delivering a wide-based curriculum to a very diverse and ever-changing group of young people. Whilst Ofsted judged that provision has been less than satisfactory during much of the reporting period, recent changes, which seek to address fundamental issues, give rise to a more optimistic view of the future.

Positives noted during the reporting period:

- **Environment:** the classroom refurbishment project has improved the learning environment for young people.
- **Delivery model:** a move to smaller group sizes has allowed more young people to access pathways of choice whilst functional Maths and English delivery is now centred on ability groups. Achievement at Levels 1 and 2 has improved.
- **Level 3 study:** following Werrington's approval as a GCSE examination centre, 12 young people sat their examinations on site this summer.
- **Enrichment weeks:** the introduction of regular enrichment weeks provides a welcome break from the standard timetable and offers young people opportunities to listen to outside speakers and prepare them for independent living.
- **Creative writing project:** the Board was pleased to see Werrington's engagement with the 'New Chapters' project, sponsored by the National Literacy Trust. The observed session was inspiring.
- **Attendance:** has improved.

- **Behaviour:** the Board welcomes the drive to eliminate poor behaviour in the classroom. In the Board's view, this must be better supported (and mirrored) by prison staff.

The co-location of the head of education, work and skills with the head of reoffending has had a positive impact on the development of the enrichment programme and in creating a mutually supportive environment.

Outstanding concerns:

- **Meaningful education data:** the lack of easily accessible data remains a source of frustration to the Board (this repeats a concern referenced in previous reports).
- **Route movements:** the process of getting young people to and from classes is risk-based to take account of keep-aparts. Although there have been improvements, it remains very time-consuming and reduces lesson time (this is a repeat concern).
- **Separated children:** although there has been a noticeable improvement, the provision of wing-based education for separated young people remains inadequate. Whilst the number of separated children at any one time can fluctuate widely, this position is further hampered by the lack of suitable rooms on the wings (this is a repeat concern).
- **Class cancellations:** classes are cancelled because prison or education staff are not available. Cancellations throughout this reporting period have been unacceptable, with 40-80 cancellations each month between March and August 2025. The Board is aware that People Plus has made a number of new tutor appointments, but their start has been put on hold due to severe delays in the vetting process (this issue is also affecting prison staff and the IMB). It is worth noting that, whilst education cancellations affect small groups of young people, prison shutdowns impact the whole population (this is a repeat concern).
- **Higher level learning:** whilst many of the young people at Werrington may have been out of mainstream education for some time, there are a number who can achieve at a higher level. We are told that this can now be supported but have yet to see any evidence (this is a repeat concern).

Training

The Board has been pleased to see the introduction of some life-skills sessions delivered by prison staff and as part of the enrichment week provision.

7.2 Library

The Board is, again, very disappointed that young people could not, at the start of the reporting period, access books other than the tattered few on the wings. The situation was partially resolved when the library was refurbished and moved to education. Theoretically, young people are allocated an hour a week in the library but appointing and retaining library staff remains problematic, so access is often restricted.

7.3 Vocational training

The Board has been pleased to note that more young people have been able to access a pathway of choice. In addition, two young people worked alongside the AMEY painter on the CRED (clean, rehabilitative, enabling and decent) scheme, carrying out painting work in several areas of the estate.

8. Progression towards transfer or release

8.1 Case management and progression

As with previous reporting years, the Board continues to commend the work of this team. Resettlement has continued to forge ahead, with the setting up with HSBC bank accounts for young people prior to discharge. Prison money can now be transferred into the new account.

8.2 Family contact

The Board understands and, again, commends the prison's emphasis on maintaining family contact with young people aged 15-18 years. As referenced in our last report, the family engagement manager continues to be effective in promoting interaction between young people and their families. Also, the number of social video calls continues to fall as the number of social visits increases, and the times of visiting have changed to improve access for families and to help young people attend education. The Board is concerned, however, that there is no reception area for visitors to wait.

8.3 Resettlement planning

The Board is pleased to note continued progress in supporting young people serving longer sentences. Groups are arranged to meet with these individuals before transfer, and communication takes place through supervised video calls and letters, offering guidance on life in the adult estate and what to expect. It is disappointing that a number of transfers are confirmed very late in the day, which prevents much of this communication taking place as intended and means that some young people are not well-prepared for this next step.

The Board is concerned that only six young people undertook 99 episodes of ROTL (release on temporary licence) in the reporting year, compared with 16 young people completing 80 episodes last year. The Board is aware that to qualify for ROTL, stringent measures must be met.

On a positive note, we are pleased to report the reintroduction The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, with four young people completing the programme in July 2025.

8.4 Young people's feedback

The Board has had sight of two reports written by a young person as he transitioned to the adult estate. While these accounts were partial, they offered valuable insights and suggest that those leaving the institution could provide a rich source of information to support future improvements.

The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	12
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	7
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	6
Total number of visits to the establishment	281

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	12	2
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives schemes, sanctions	5	5
C	Equality	0	0
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	12	11
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	3	2
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	0	3
F	Food and kitchens	0	1
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	0	1
H1	Property within the establishment	1	1
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	0	1
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	0	0
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence), parole, release dates, recategorisation	1	0
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	3	6
K	Transfers	1	1
L	Miscellaneous	13	18
	Total number of applications	51	52



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