



Independent
Monitoring
Boards

Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMYOI Wetherby

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

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

Introductory sections 1 – 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

The Prison Act 1952 requires every prison to be monitored by an independent 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

Wetherby Young Offenders Institution (YOI), in West Yorkshire, is part of the Youth Custody Service (YCS) and can accommodate up to 288¹ young males between the ages of 15 and 18 years.

Population in August 2025

15 years	16 years	17 years	18 years	19 years
5	22	65	26	1

At the start of our reporting year, on 1 September 2024, the roll was around 150. But, by the end of the reporting year, on 31 August 2025, the number of young people had dropped significantly to 119, 42 of whom were being held on remand. It remained a fluctuating roll, which had been below 100, during the latter part of the reporting year.

It serves young people remanded into custody (awaiting trial or sentencing) from sentencing courts in the catchment area of Humberside, North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire and designated areas of Lancashire and Greater Manchester. However, young people continue to come from other parts of the country.

The living accommodation, all in single-occupancy rooms, comprises Benbow, Collingwood, Drake, Exmouth and Frobisher. Keppel, a self-contained unit, originally opened in 2009 as a national resource for more vulnerable young people. Since the decision was taken to end the placement of young women within the YOI estate, Keppel has returned to being part of the main site provision, offering four separate spurs, each with their own identity.

Whilst it is generally acknowledged that the majority of young people in custody has complex needs, Napier, a six-bed enhanced support unit (ESU), opened in 2019, provides additional support and care for those with the greatest need.

The site also comprises kitchens, education colleges, a library, a multi-faith chaplaincy centre, a visits hall, a sports hall and workshops.

There is no longer a designated residential healthcare unit; however, 24-hour on-site medical cover is provided.

The Board thanks the young people and staff for their cooperation throughout the year, thus enabling us to monitor the establishment.

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

It is the Board's view that the annual report can never truly reflect the state of an establishment, which is ever changing. Statistics, when quoted, likewise are just a snapshot, the roll is variable and the stability of the establishment can be influenced with the arrival or departure of any one particular young person. This year has seen a significant transformation; it has been undertaken at a breathtaking speed, which has, at times made it a challenge to monitor.

In November 2024, the then Minister for Youth Justice commissioned a three-month review, led by Susannah Hancock, a member of the Youth Justice Board (YJB), to consider the placement options for girls in the children's secure estate. As a result of her recommendations, the decision was made by the Government, in March 2025, that girls would no longer be placed in YOIs. This brought to an end a long period of uncertainty for Wetherby, which had previously been responsible for their care,

Following a series of challenging HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) reports, highlighting areas for improvement, the Board welcomes the YCS initiative to draw up a Roadmap, a plan that aims to create a more child-centred, trauma-informed environment. Each of the three YOIs, including Feltham and Werrington, are now setting out their deliverables, key changes and priorities aligned to the needs of each individual site, whilst also ensuring they can promote an integrated care ethos. The timescale set is over a three-year period. The Board is already seeing positive signs and remains hopeful that this reform, given time, can finally drive real and much-needed change in supporting young people held in custody. Working within a system and site that is far from ideal, it would appear that, finally, things may be moving in the right direction, in the Board's view.

In April 2025, the Secretary of State for Justice announced the decision to authorise the use of Pava (a synthetic pepper spray) in all three YOIs for a trial period of 12 months: to be drawn and used only in a life-threatening situation. This will be closely scrutinised by external agencies, with the situation reviewed at the end of the 12 months. In order to allow time for training in the use of Pava, it was not introduced at Wetherby until August 2025.

3.1 Main findings

Safety

- Much work is being undertaken by staff at Wetherby to support violence reduction, which the Board welcomes, including the creation, in April 2025, of the violence reduction officer role. Many young people in Wetherby are remanded or sentenced for violent offences: violent assaults continue to be a cause for concern. Young people say that they carry improvised weapons because they feel unsafe, so it becomes a vicious circle. So far, in 2025 alone, 502 weapons were found. The Board notes the change in the type of weapon carried by some young people, which are extremely dangerous and capable of inflicting life-threatening injuries. It would be naïve to think that the elimination of weapons alone will result in a violence-free environment, as many young people also use physical assault as a method of attack or defence.
- In February 2025, the Board raised concerns arising from our conversations with staff, who believed they knew what to do in the event of a fire but had not received training for some time. There were 27 in-cell fires recorded during the reporting year. Cell fires are not an uncommon occurrence at Wetherby, and there are a few

young people who are known arsonists. We are pleased that the matter has been addressed and that, with training and supervision from the new members of the health and safety team, the situation is improving.

- Whilst there had been one or two serious incidents requiring support from the national tactical response group (NTRG), a team trained to intervene in dangerous, high-risk situations, the number is far fewer than during the previous reporting year.

Fair and humane treatment

- There continue to be areas of the establishment that remain in a poor condition or in need of repair. However, the recent considerable investment in the buildings has undoubtedly improved the whole environment.
- It is the view of the Board that the separation wing, Benbow, has not been fit for purpose for years. The regime (the structured daily schedule and set of activities that govern life for young people) is frequently minimal, with many young people spending up to 23 hours in their room. The size of the rooms only just reaches the basic standard.
- The Board notes, again, the exemplary work done by the establishment, usually at very short notice, to enable and support those few young people to visit immediate family members who are critically ill or dying.
- The Board has received fewer applications (young people's written representations to the IMB) regarding the food. However, some young people have told us that they find the portions too small.

Health and wellbeing

- From our observations, healthcare provision remains generally good. The dental team has worked hard to reduce the waiting list, although this has, unfortunately, risen due to reorganisation following the change of provider. The Board is hopeful that this is temporary.
- Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) informs us that they continue to experience difficulty in delivering interventions, due to the lack of suitable rooms in which to see the young people on the wings.
- Time out of room (TOoR) is slowly increasing due, in part, to the ability to create a single community on each wing. However, from our observations at weekends, this frequently remains unacceptably poor. The number of applications received regarding TOoR or lack of regime had dropped from 97 in our last report to five this year. The Board remains concerned about the lack of TOoR for young people who choose to self-isolate or who are placed in the care and separation unit, although this is usually for less than two hours.
- The Board commends the physical healthcare team for their prompt and skilled response to young people and staff who have been injured as a result of the frequent serious assaults.

Education and training

- In January 2025, there was a rapid exit of the Novus education leadership team. Challenges in recruiting and retaining teaching staff, combined with a curriculum that did not seem to fully meet the needs or interests of young people and which led to disengagement, resulted in an educational provision that required significant improvement.
- Over the last few months of the reporting year, there has been some improvement in the delivery of a more consistent and predictable educational regime, often created by the establishment. The Board commends the prison's efforts in creating

an alternative provision. They have also worked hard to support Novus, the education provider, to improve their offer and delivery. Any progress from Novus is very much in the early stages, but if it is to be meaningful, this must be sustained.

- Gym and exercise remain an important and well-resourced department, playing a significant role in increasing TOoR and also helping to support the young people in a wide range of activities.
- The Board is pleased to note that there have been some excellent and encouraging initiatives introduced by the establishment to engage young people in a wide range of activities, which can help develop their skills and potentially make them ready for future employment.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- At the end of the reporting year, 42 young people were held on remand in Wetherby. What urgent measures is the Minister implementing to reduce these delays and ensure timely access to justice?
- Even with the most stable environment in custody, the transition from Wetherby to the next stage is often complex and high-risk. What decisive actions will the Minister take to strengthen coordination and accountability between YOIs and partner agencies, such as immigration services, the adult estate and local authorities, to ensure a seamless and safe handover?
- The Board remains concerned about the lack of suitable pathways available for the increasing number of young people who have very lengthy sentences. What concrete progress has the Government made and what commitments are in place to develop and implement these pathways?

TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

Returning to the community after a custodial sentence is such a vulnerable and critical moment in the life of a young person. Their success is also a public safety matter. Yet, local authorities are slow to meet their obligations with respect to these young people.

- What specific steps will the local authority take to guarantee that accommodation is secured and assigned well before release?
- What mechanisms will be put in place to ensure local authorities are fully accountable for meeting their statutory duties toward young people in care - both during custody and on release - and what consequences will follow if these obligations are not met?
- What specific actions and resources will be committed to ensure care leavers receive comprehensive support on release, including stable accommodation, access to education or employment and continuity of care, to prevent them from falling through the gaps?

TO THE YOUTH CUSTODY SERVICE

- What steps will the Youth Custody Service take to reduce delays and ensure a smooth, timely transition for young people moving from youth custody to the adult estate?

TO THE GOVERNOR

- How will you support staff and young people to work together towards a less unitive, needs-led culture?

- Despite many valuable improvements to the conditions of care at Wetherby, violent incidents among young people remain a problem, with the severity of attacks and injuries escalating. How do you plan to reduce the severity of violence?
- What specific steps will you take to further reduce the use of separation and self-isolation, while significantly increasing meaningful TTooR?

3.3 Response to the previous report

- The Board thanked the previous Minister for Youth Justice for his full and detailed reply to their annual report.
- We received no response to the report from the YCS, the Governor or any local authority.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

There has been a noticeable drop in the number of young people now placed in custody, although reception remains a busy department, particularly during the day. The staff support all young people as they come to and from court, attend external appointments and when they are being prepared for release or transfer. The Board is pleased to report that very few young people now arrive late from court. Reception staff have numerous roles to fulfil, from accompanying young people to court video links held on site, to chasing up parcels and lost property. There has been a significant reduction in the number of officers now working in reception; we will continue to closely monitor any impact.

The acquisition of an X-ray machine is a welcome and much-needed addition. Property can be screened in-house, rather than having a long wait when it was previously sent to HMP Wealstun and returned, often weeks later. However, perhaps due, in part, to the reduction in the number of officers available to deal with this and the ever-increasing amount of property sent in by friends or family, young people tell us that there continue to be delays in receiving property.

It is the view of the Board that staff deal sensitively and professionally with the young people. For many, the time spent in reception, for whatever reason, can be an anxious period.

Clothing has always been available in reception for those who were attending court or being released and had nothing suitable to wear. This provision has now been significantly developed by staff, who have created a clothing bank, run with charitable partners, which provides clothing at no cost. The Board commends the initiative.

Induction takes place on the Keppel Yellow Spur. While the Board understands the reasoning behind this approach - particularly given the reduced number of young people entering custody - we have reservations. Moving from a small, bespoke, modern unit to a much larger, traditional wing can be a significant and potentially unsettling transition for some young people.

Yellow Spur is intended to provide a dedicated, consistent team to deliver the induction programme. In practice, however, this consistency can vary, as we often find that staff, on Keppel in general but particularly on Yellow Spur, are unfamiliar with the young people. The length of time a young person remains on induction depends on their individual needs: for some, it may be just a day or two, while for others it can be much longer. During their time on Yellow Spur, they have the opportunity to meet with the various agencies involved in their care, and a detailed assessment of their needs is carried out.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

The Board reports that there were no suicides or deaths in custody during the year. Self-harm incidents had been high in our previous report, which was largely, though not exclusively, attributed to young women. Those one or two young people in crisis who are self-harming are most frequently resident on either Napier or Keppel, where they benefit from the additional support. There were 699 incidents of self-harm during the reporting period, involving 78 individuals. A small number of individuals accounted for a disproportionately high number of self-harm incidents, including one young person who

self-harmed 88 times. A constant 24-hour watch was put in place for several of these young people who were, at the time, deemed to be at high risk from their own actions.

When a young person appears, or informs staff that they are, in a low mood, this leads to possible self-harm, so an assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) document (used to support young people who are at risk of self-harm and suicide) is opened. The 'team around the child' meets with the young person at set intervals and looks at how best they can be supported. Weekly ACCT checks are conducted by the safeguarding team.

A total of 183 new ACCTS were opened during the reporting period.

The establishment has significantly increased the number of ACCT assessors and case managers to coordinate and support this. A weekly multi-disciplinary meeting, chaired by the Deputy Governor, reviews the support for those who are at risk of self-harm, or are separated or engaged in violence.

It is the view of the Board that young people are rarely challenged when they use a cover to obscure the observation panel in their room door; indeed, this seems to be the norm. The Board believes there needs to be clarification about whether this is safe or acceptable practice.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

The number of young people placed in custody may be falling, but more than a quarter of Wetherby YOI's population is remanded or sentenced for murder/manslaughter. With the prospect of a very long custodial sentence, some young people feel they have little to lose. Young people may arrive at Wetherby with unresolved community-based issues at the forefront of their mind and a determination to resolve those outstanding issues. Whilst some incidents are clearly planned, other young people tell us that, on reflection, they have no idea why they got involved in incidents. Unfortunately for some, violence has become a way of life.

Staff appear to work hard to understand and hopefully, reduce the culture of violence and the carrying of weapons. The number of weapon finds so far, in 2025, is 502, the majority being sharp objects involving plastic or metal. Previously, weapons used by young people were frequently blunt, such as an object placed in a sock. A new weapons strategy has been introduced. With multi-agency working and the use of intelligence, the hope is to create an environment where carrying of weapons becomes less of a temptation or even unnecessary. Not all violence is through the use of an improvised weapon: physical assaults also take place, which are capable of inflicting equally serious injuries.

In an attempt to reduce the levels of violence, several dedicated officers (violence reduction officers) have been allocated to manage this. Immediately after an incident or being found in possession of a weapon, the young person is interviewed by the violence reduction team. Subsequently, through the time spent together, it is hoped the young person will be encouraged to reflect and learn from the incident. They may subsequently work with members of the conflict resolution (CR) team. In addition, a young person may then be signposted to relevant support such as the psychology team or child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS).

4.3.1 Self-isolation

A young person may choose to self-isolate for a variety of reasons. They may decide to do so if they feel it would be unsafe for them to mix with another person on their wing. However, if a young person is deemed to be under any threat or risk or they themselves

are a threat to other young people, they will be instructed to remain in their room on the wing. All those who are self-isolating have a fairly limited regime. It is the view of the Board that they should be assessed by the necessary agencies and encouraged to re-engage as safely and quickly as possible.

Staff are encouraged to make greater use of the rewards-based incentives scheme, with a move away from the traditional system of adjudications. An adjudication is a disciplinary hearing held as part of the disciplinary system if a young person is alleged to have broken establishment rules. This is part of the change away from punitive punishment, with the focus being on encouraging positive behaviour. However, during the reporting year, adjudications continued to take place as necessary, usually on a daily basis. They are conducted by the Duty Governor, with the support of two additional officers. Most, but not all, young people attend the adjudication; if they decline, the Governor goes to the young person's door and informs them of the outcome. The adjudication process is time consuming and it is important that all the necessary paperwork is available. Of those adjudications that members have monitored, it is the view of the Board that they are generally dealt with in a fair and timely manner. Care is taken to make sure that the young person, although not necessarily in agreement with the outcome, has understood the whole process. The Deputy Governor continues to quality-check the paperwork every month.

4.3.2 Adjudications

September 2024 to August 2025

	Sept 24	Oct 24	Nov 24	Dec 24	Jan 25	Feb 25	March 25	April 25	May 25	June 25	July 25	Aug 25
Main site	205	166	259	199	228	174	177	212	131	153	197	184
*Police	24	36	52	11	45	34	52	22	19	41	24	51
**IA	13	12	5	9	6	6	20	5	8	3	4	4

*A more serious offence that is referred to the Police, who then consider whether or not further action should be taken. (In one case, a young person had an additional 37 months added to their original sentence.)

**Independent adjudications, or IAs, are formal hearings for a more serious breach of the rules. They are conducted by an external person, usually a district judge, who comes in to Wetherby. An IA can add additional days to the young person's original sentence.

Through regular meetings, staff at Wetherby liaise with West Yorkshire Police and other forces to follow up on offences committed in the establishment and also to keep briefed on relevant intelligence.

4.3.3 Serious incidents

Serious incidents, such as a young person climbing on the railings or on the roof, can be successfully managed by the establishment; others, if protracted, require additional extra support from a team trained to intervene in dangerous or high-risk situations. The establishment is making greater use of their own negotiators.

The IMB is generally informed promptly, in which case a member may initially monitor by phone. However, if it is a serious or protracted incident, the IMB member will go directly to the prison.

The Board monitored three occasions, in person, when the Command Suite (the establishment's emergency control centre, used to manage serious incidents) was opened for serious incidents. Those that members monitored were handled appropriately and brought to a safe ending.

4.4 Young people with specific vulnerabilities

Previously, Keppel unit was the national resource for young people with specific vulnerabilities. However, as young women were no longer to be placed in YOIs, the decision was made by the YCS that Keppel should return to being part of the mainstream provision. All the wings are now purposed to provide a more nurturing, less punitive environment.

Napier, an enhanced support unit (ESU), is a six-bed unit within the YCS estate for young people who require a higher level of support, due to the complexity of their needs. It is self-contained and, for the large part, all services are delivered in the unit. There is generally a consistency of staffing, supported by regular weekly or fortnight multi-agency meetings to monitor progress. Staff on Napier complete additional, relevant training. Any young person who needs enhanced support is considered at a multi-disciplinary meeting and is transferred across when a place becomes available. Unacceptable delays continue in securing an appropriate external mental health bed for those few young people who, clearly, are too mentally unwell to be in Wetherby.

During the reporting year, there have been some very complex young people on Napier and elsewhere. The Board commends the patience, resilience and care shown to them by the staff team.

4.4.1 Foreign national prisoners

At the end of August 2025, there were 16 foreign national prisoners at Wetherby, nine of whom were subject to deportation proceedings, 10 were sentenced and six were remanded. In the Board's view, staff have worked imaginatively and, in some instances, used online translation to help communicate more effectively with the young people.

These young people are sometimes transferred to immigration detention centres (secure facilities for holding people under immigration powers, typically while their immigration status is resolved or they await removal from the country) after their term at Wetherby. Resettlement staff have developed their own knowledge about immigration rights and procedures to support these young people. However, immigration agents often do not communicate clearly with staff at Wetherby.

Example: in one instance, a young person was picked up by immigration services, without prior warning, on the day of his release, in front of his parents, who had come to collect him, only to be released from immigration detention two weeks later.

4.4.2 Neurodiversity

A neurodiversity support manager (NSM) was appointed in June 2023 as part of the Prison Service initiative to create a greater awareness of neurodiversity in prison and increase the support. It is taking some time to embed this role in the establishment, which has been frustrating, but we are pleased to report that there has been some progress towards the end of the reporting period.

4.5 Use of force (UoF)

Comparison between this reporting year and the previous reporting year

Total UoF Sept 2023 to Aug 2024	Total UoF Sept 2024 to Aug 2025
1143	963
Total planned UoF Sept 2023 to Aug 2024	Total planned UoF Sept 2024 to Aug 2025
185	231
Total PIT (pain-inducing technique) Sept 2023 to Aug 2024	Total PIT Sept 2024 to Aug 2025
18	11

The Board welcomes the reduction in the number of incidents where restraint has been required, but is disappointed to note an increase in the number of planned incidents requiring the use of force. These are generally when a young person needs to move to another location, such as a planned move to separation, and is reluctant to walk compliantly. A member of the healthcare team is always present during such a move. There was a drop in the number of times a pain-inducing technique (PIT) was used. This should only be used as a last resort to prevent significant harm.

The Board monitors some of Wetherby's own review of force meetings when the multi-disciplinary meeting considers particular instances when restraint of a young person has been used. Any learning points will subsequently be followed up and specific training needs identified. The attendance of agencies at these meetings can be variable and, at times, disappointing. Although the necessary documentation is sent to the Board prior to the meeting, we ideally like to receive it a little earlier. Body worn video cameras (BWVCs) are generally worn by the officer but are not always activated.

Minimising and managing physical restraint (MMPR) staff refresher training is reportedly generally reaching the target of 80%.

The independent restraint review panel (IRRP) visits Wetherby, usually twice a year, to review the use of force. The conclusions from the most recent visit were generally positive.

4.6 Substance misuse

Substance misuse seems to be less prevalent than in the adult estate. The presence of drugs in the establishment fluctuates, depending on which young people are in the establishment. From the Board's observations, staff are generally vigilant, both in listening to and following up on any information or observations of potential drug use.

When a young person is placed into custody, they are offered the opportunity to receive support from the drug and alcohol team. Not all young people want to do this, but they are encouraged to do so. As the presence and use of drugs is variable, testing is not always necessary. In January 2025, 29 tests were requested, whereas in February and August, there was only one request in each month.

1 January 2025 to 31 August 2025

Tests completed	Refused to take a test	Unable to complete	Negative	Positive
63	24	6	29	28

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

General maintenance and the refurbishment of accommodation is ongoing. Unfortunately, a few young people have been responsible for significant damage to the fabric of the accommodation, resulting in some rooms being out of order.

Formerly a naval training barracks and, subsequently, a Borstal, the site at Wetherby is not designed to provide an appropriate rehabilitative environment for the complex needs of the young people who reside there today. However, there continues to be significant financial investment in the site, with many of the wings being updated and enhanced.

Keppel, now a multipurpose unit, which was mentioned in our last report as being in need of updating, has benefited from redecoration and new furnishings. The four spurs now have their separate identity, including Yellow Spur for induction and Red Spur for those young people who work on Q-Branch, a minor repairs work party that is made up of young people supported by experienced officers who also act as mentors. The external environment is, at other times, used by young people from other wings. Activities such as the weekly Park Run, are held in the Keppel grounds, for the benefit of most of the young people.

Redecoration has taken place on the exterior of numerous buildings, with the new horticultural team providing attractive floral displays.

The Board has noticed a welcome improvement in the everyday cleanliness; the whole estate looks less run down and generally better cared for. Much of the work has been undertaken by the young people who comprise the Q-Branch workforce, who are not only acquiring useful skills, but reducing the long wait for maintenance staff to undertake some of these jobs. In winter, Q-Branch were up early and out gritting the pathways, which was much appreciated. The young people take great pride in their work and enjoy telling IMB members what the work entails and what more needs to be done. There had been lengthy delays in undertaking and completing maintenance, so the work of Q-Branch is welcomed.

We have received noticeably fewer applications regarding the temperatures of room this year, which may be due, in part, to the better weather but also the fact that Anson unit is not in use. Historically, it had been difficult to moderate the temperature effectively in Anson.

Young people can choose to wear their own clothes and there has also been an increase in the property they are permitted to have. Unfortunately, this has not been without difficulty, as many of the young people opt for similar items of clothing. Much time is taken up by wing and reception staff looking for identical mislaid items.

Meal menus are pre-selected by the young people on their individual laptops, which can also act as a useful reminder about what they have ordered.

From the Board's observations, the kitchen staff work hard to provide a varied and healthy diet for the young people. Limited by government guidelines and the need to promote healthy eating presents a challenge. Many young people tell us they would prefer larger portions of chips or wedges, seasoned with salt. However, salt has not been available to purchase from the canteen list across the YCS since 2015. We have been told that no extra salt is added during cooking, as the recommended levels are already present in most of the ingredients.

A member of the kitchen team usually attends the youth council to hear the views of the young people regarding food. They seem to be proactive in following up on the matters raised. In addition, questionnaires are circulated by the kitchen staff amongst the young people, with the results providing useful information regarding preferences. The popular themed meals are offered regularly, frequently supporting cultural difference or awareness. Dietary requirements seem to be met, whether for religious or health needs.

The main meal of the day is served in the evening, Monday to Thursday. However, there was a trial period when it was served at lunchtime. Whilst one or two young people had little preference, it was not well received by the vast majority, who were delighted when it eventually returned to the usual time.

When breakfast 'dine out' was initially introduced, 67% young people came to collect their breakfast or remained to eat with other young people. However, that number is falling, as the novelty seems to have worn off for many and they prefer to remain in their room until they go to education. A cereal pack is given at their door.

5.2 Separation

A young person may be transferred to Benbow, which houses the care and separation unit. This can be done for the good order and discipline of the establishment, as the young person's behaviour might be restricting the regime of their peers, or for intelligence reasons. A few may decide to orchestrate a move, with an intentional pattern of poor behaviour, as they want to be on Benbow. One or two others have been placed on Benbow, as it is deemed to be the most suitable place for them.

It is the view of the Board that, time after time, the same young people reappear on Benbow and we wonder if, on occasion, they might have been moved back to the main site too quickly. However, we also understand that there remains a cohort of young people whose continued pattern of behaviour is disruptive, volatile and extremely challenging which, consequently, impacts and restricts the regime of their peers.

The Board has serious reservations about the practice of placing those few young people, who are due to be transferred to the adult estate or released into the community, on Benbow, often for extended periods of time. It is cited that there is nowhere else to put them, or the young person prefers to remain there to 'keep their head down and out of trouble'. It is the view of the Board that neither the environment on Benbow nor the regime it offers are suitable preparation for the significant changes that the young person will next experience as they move on.

Benbow is a bleak, old-fashioned wing where the size of the rooms are 5.5m², which only just reaches the basic minimum requirement.

Numerous rooms are constantly out of use, awaiting repair. Indeed, it is not unusual to have 10 rooms out of order at any one time. Not infrequently we find that there is mould in the shower rooms. There is an unacceptable delay in maintenance and it can be months before the rooms come back in use. We are told that, at times, this is due to a delay in acquiring the necessary parts.

When the number of young people on the wing exceeds 12, it becomes very difficult, practically, for staff to deliver a full regime to all young people. The decision is made that if it cannot be offered to all, then it is offered to none. Although we understand the reasoning behind the decision, it is far from ideal.

From our observations, the Board considers the regime on Benbow generally unsatisfactory, but also acknowledges that a few young people decline to engage with

any part of the regime. Time out of room is poor, regardless of the reason for their placement on Benbow. It is the view of the Board that it is inhumane for a young person to spend up to 23 hours in their room, with no television or other distraction.

CAMHS and other agencies report that it can be difficult to find a room, or suitable room, to be able to speak to the young people on their own. Indeed, members of the Board find that, due to the potential risk posed by a young person on a two- or three- officer unlock, it can be increasingly difficult to talk confidentially to some of them. Education is provided by outreach (Novus), if there is a teacher available, which has not always been the case. The charity, Kinetic Youth, continues to support and engage with the young people on Benbow. Some also have access to the gym, depending on their agreed regime.

When a young person is placed on Benbow, the Board is usually promptly informed. Since the introduction of a single case manager, which is considered to have been a positive move, review meetings can take place at any time of the day, depending on the availability of the allocated Governor. However, we, as do other agencies, struggle to monitor the review meetings of Rule 49 (where the establishment has used restraint on a young person to prevent them injuring themselves or others). We have found that those we are able to observe are of a good standard. Having a single case manager provides continuity for the young person, as the staff involved are generally familiar with, and better understand, their specific needs.

Young people on Benbow frequently tell members of the Board that they think the portions of food are smaller on the unit. For disciplinary and, sometimes, practical reasons, they do not always have access to their canteen (a facility where they can buy snacks, toiletries, stationery and other essentials using their allocated funds). This stays in their room on the wing, which means they are unable to top up their food intake. We have been reassured that all the portions served are the same size as on a main wing. From what we have observed, this would appear to be the case.

There have been one or two instances when, in the view of the CAMHS team, Benbow was not considered to be a suitable location for a particular young person. The Board is pleased to report that CAMHS recommendations were followed.

5.3 Relationships between staff and young people

The officers and staff at Wetherby work in a dynamic, unpredictable and challenging environment. They are generally quick to respond appropriately when under pressure, and on balance, demonstrate understanding and compassion on a daily basis.

Delays in staff vetting are currently the main reason for the high number of vacancies. There are five vacancies for officer support grades (OSGs) at the time of writing; these posts can be filled temporarily by officers on restricted duty.

All administrative posts have been filled, although there has been a reduction in the number of available posts, due to financial reasons.

We do not have the data but, from our observations, we note there has been an increase in the number of officers recruited from a more diverse ethnic background.

During the report period, sickness averaged 18 calendar days for band 3 and 4 officers (youth justice workers) and a custodial manager, with a total of 420 recorded instances of sickness. A total of 32 assaults on officers were recorded, each resulting in sick leave excusal (SLE). This data relies on the member of staff submitting a SLE form for signature for the Deputy Governor to approve. A total of 12 officers attended an external hospital as the result of an assault.

There is a 55% female/45% male gender split in officers, with more men appearing to have been recruited in the last few months of the reporting period. Young people have mixed views: some say they prefer female staff, whom they see as less threatening and less confrontational than some male officers, while others do not express a preference.

During the reporting year, almost 19% of the band 3-5 officers retired, resulting in a huge loss of experience. Despite this, retention is reported to be generally positive, with enough staff to maintain a safe regime. However, some newer officers leave because the role is not a good fit for them, they seek a career change, or they move to other roles in the Prison Service.

Inevitably, relationships between staff and young people are varied. On the smaller units, such Napier, they tend to be better, as there is consistency and officers have more time to spend with a young person. Keppel is a much larger and busier unit, but as each single spur holds up to eight, there is still the opportunity to develop those relationships. From our observations, the Keppel staff handover, comprising a briefing, continues to be of a high standard, with staff being well informed about any matters arising for a young person on the unit. Some young people tell us they prefer a smaller unit which, they feel, 'is more like a family'. Many tell us that they find the single, larger community on the main wings intimidating. Across all wings, weekends - though sometimes short-staffed - tend to have a more relaxed regime, which generally encourages more meaningful interactions between staff and young people.

For those engaged in the practical activities, such as the environment, horticulture waste management and Q-Branch, the interaction between staff and young people is, on the whole, excellent, with staff providing very good role models, in the view of the Board.

5.3.1 Custody support plan (CuSP)

During their induction period, a young person will have an introductory CuSP session. The aim is to offer them the support of one or two designated personal officers to work with in order to build trust and develop relationships. Consistency is vitally important, as young people tell us they become frustrated when having to 'say the same stuff to different people. There are some things you don't want to talk about'. However, since the changes introduced as a result of the 'roadmap' (which aims to create a more child-centred, trauma-informed environment), CuSP is evolving, although there continues to be a lack of clarity amongst some staff and young people alike.

Young people tell us that they are uncertain as to who their CuSP officer is and many are unclear about the purpose of CuSP. If CuSP is to be successful, it would seem vital that there is not only consistency in those who deliver it, but for all to be entirely sure as to its purpose, frequency and quality.

5.3.2 Youth council

The youth council is held monthly and offers young people from each wing (wing representatives) the opportunity to meet with staff from the various agencies to ask questions and raise any concerns. The Board welcomes the improvements taking place. Additional support has been offered by the YCS Lived Experience lead, resulting in a drive to include a greater representation from all wings and units and improve feedback to young people. The attendance of staff, including those from the healthcare centre, as well as from the catering and chaplaincy teams, seems to be generally good and is definitely improving, in the view of the Board. Staff discussions with young people are appropriate, and any issues raised are followed up. The youth council action plan and work in progress on the issues are available on the young person's laptop. Regular community

meetings are held on each wing to consider wider views and concerns. The Board monitors some of the youth council meetings and always receives the minutes and follow-up actions. Many young people remain uncertain about who their wing representative is or how they can contribute to meetings.

5.3.3 Barnardo's advocacy

Young people make good use of Barnardo's advocacy service, which they can access by phone through an app. The advocate is able to support a young person with a variety of difficulties. Whilst they can inform a young person of their legal rights, they can also help fill in complaint forms or discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs).

5.4 Equality and diversity

Wetherby is working towards becoming a fair and equitable establishment. A wide range of diversity activities, such as Black History Month, take place, often supported by the kitchen team, which offers suitably themed menus. DIRFs are generally available on all units. The majority of DIRFs are submitted by staff, although many young people are aware of the systems in place for reporting discrimination but continue to lack confidence in the process. DIRFs are quality assured, in the first instance, by the equality advisor and, at a later stage, by the head of safety and equality and the Deputy Governor. Some young people believe that racial abuse towards white young people from other young people and staff frequently goes unchallenged. The equality action group (EAG) meets monthly and includes some young people. It aims to work towards the successful implementation of the equality action plan. Attendance by other agencies can be variable.

Encouragingly, there is thorough scrutiny and analysis of the ethnicity of young people who have been, restrained, separated or have chosen to self-insolate.

Population: 139

Category	Number	Percentage
Asian	12	8.63%
Black	21	15.11%
Mixed	22	15.83%
White	67	48.20%
White Irish	0	0.00%
White traveller	2	1.44%
White other	7	5.04%
Other	8	5.76%
Undisclosed	0	0.00%

Sexual orientation

Category	Number	Percentage
Bisexual	1	0.72%
Gay	0	0.00%
Heterosexual	134	96.40%
Not recorded	1	0.72%

Undisclosed	3	2.16%
Total	139	

Disability

Category	Number	Percentage
Disability	51	36.69%
No disability	88	63.31%
Total	139	

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

A total of 73 young people self-identify as having no religion or as atheist; 28 as Christian (including Church of England/Protestant); 28 as Muslim; and 10 as Roman Catholic.

Daily visits are made by a member of the multi-faith chaplaincy team to the care and separation wing, Benbow, and also to see young people on the main site who choose to self-isolate. They attend reviews for young people who are on an ACCT or separated, for whatever reason.

When in the establishment, IMB members usually see at least one member of the chaplaincy team on the wings or elsewhere. We were, therefore, surprised this year to receive applications and verbal requests from young people to say that they have not had a response to queries or applications they have submitted to chaplaincy.

We hope that this situation is only temporary, as multi-faith chaplaincy has always been a much-valued part of the care team for young people of all faiths and none.

Young people have attended services or Friday prayers, as appropriate, and religious festivals such as Ramadan. Eid and the traditional Christian services have been supported and celebrated. The Christmas carol service was, as ever, fast paced and enjoyed by those who attended. Some young people have told us that they had experienced difficulty accessing their faith service, which the Board raised with the Governor.

5.6 Rewards and sanctions

As a result of the introduction of the roadmap, there has been a move away from the traditional, more punitive, approach to managing the behaviour of the young people by now rewarding positive behaviour and engagement in the regime.

This has caused much debate, not only amongst staff but also young people. Some young people, in particular, are of the belief that there should be a similar response to all poor patterns of behaviour amongst their peers. In many instances, a needs-led response can be perceived by some young people as favouritism. On Benbow, the care and separation unit, young people often tell us that they feel that not all young people on there are treated equally.

We are, however, assured by the Governors that prison rules remain the guideline and that, if broken, minor reports or adjudications will be used. However, there was one example when disruptive behaviour was addressed in a most unorthodox way. That said, whilst some staff and young people were surprised, another young person said to us,

'Well I know not everyone agrees, but if it improves his behaviour and stops the regime from being shut down all the time, then it's a good thing.'

Staff and young people will need time and support to understand the potential benefits of a more individualised approach, and many will require reassurance that it is the right way forward.

5.7 Complaints

A young person can submit a complaint to the establishment, sometimes assisted by the Barnardo's advocacy service, which will help if necessary. Some young people tell the IMB that they have no confidence in the system, yet we have found that most will submit a complaint when they have concerns. The complaints system generally seems to operate effectively.

1 September 2024 to 31 August 2025

Received	595
Rejected	396

Category	Received
Accommodation	48
Adjudications	13
Activities	6
Bullying	8
Canteen	12
Casework	2
Cultural Needs	4
Education	24
Finance/cash	5
Food/drink	22
Gym	2
Incentives scheme	10
Interventions	1
Medical	5
Property/clothing	189
Recategorisation	2

Reception	9
Security	3
Staff	81
Phone	5
Transfers	1
Use of force	14
Violence	5
Visits	8
Other	116

5.8 Property

Young people are allowed to have an increasing number of items in their possession. This, in itself, has caused an increase in the number of complaints the establishment received, which totalled 189. This is often due to items missing or to a delay in a young person receiving their item from reception. The Board received 21 applications (young people's written representations) as opposed to 10 in the previous year. When out on the wings, we also had quite a number of verbal requests regarding property.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

A 24-hour healthcare service is available to young people at Wetherby. A young person can access a member of the experienced team of healthcare professionals by completing an application on their laptop, to which staff respond. The Board received four written queries regarding healthcare during the reporting year.

6.2 Physical healthcare

The Board commends the skill and professionalism of the physical healthcare team in their response to incidents, some of which have been extremely serious.

The multi-disciplinary healthcare team offers general healthcare, enabling any outstanding immunisations and dental care to be successfully managed. The overall promotion of physical wellbeing remains an important part of their role.

GP services continue to be subcontracted from a local GP practice, who visit regularly, whilst the day-to-day management is delivered by the nursing staff team.

6.3 Mental healthcare

The child and adolescent mental health (CAMHS) and neurodiversity services are provided by the South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, which has a subcontract arrangement in place with a health and social care charity, Change, Grow, Live, to provide substance misuse services.

The CAMHS team is a 32-strong multidisciplinary group, bringing together psychiatry, psychology, psychological therapists, nursing, social work, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, nursing associates, assistant psychologists, mental health practitioners, team managers and administration. Oversight comes from service managers, general managers, clinical leads and quality and governance Coaches.

The Change, Grow, Live substance misuse team is a group of five, made up of team leaders, intervention workers, intervention coordinators and administration support.

At the time of writing, 82 out of 97 young people in the estate were under the care of the mental health team. This reflects the CAMHS position of being an opt-out service so there is an offer for all young people. All young people are supported under the integrated care framework, even if not open to CAMHS.

CAMHS tells us that their service delivery is severely constrained by the lack of dedicated, private spaces and an outdated physical infrastructure that is not designed for therapeutic work. There are no rooms specifically allocated to CAMHS, and practitioners rely on an inconsistent and unreliable booking system, often competing with other services such as education and Kinetics. Even when spaces such as the Gold or Interventions rooms are available, bookings are frequently cancelled, and sessions disrupted by staff or young people. Many spaces are cluttered, unclean and unsuitable for confidential mental health interventions. From our observations, operational challenges, including low numbers of staff, restricted access to movement officers, regime constraints and education-hour restrictions, further limit flexibility and responsiveness, making assessments for ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) difficult to complete. In some cases, practitioners are expected to speak with young people at their room door, compromising privacy and engagement. Overall, the absence of a contained CAMHS or

healthcare space, combined with systemic and operational barriers, significantly impacts the ability to deliver timely, consistent and effective mental health support.

The neurodevelopmental pathway primarily delivers diagnostic assessments for intellectual disability, ADHD, and autism for all referred young people. Assessments are carried out by a multi-disciplinary team, which includes nurses, psychologists, psychiatrists, occupational therapists and speech and language therapists. A total of 27 referrals has been made in the reporting year.

Post-diagnostic support is being developed to help young people understand their diagnosis. Communication passports are created with each individual to improve interactions within the secure estate and on discharge.

The Board is pleased to report that all new diagnoses are shared with the neurodiversity support manager to help build a clearer picture of neurodivergent young people in the estate.

From our observations, CAMHS staff face challenges in attending ACCT and GOoD (good order or discipline) reviews, due to inconsistent communication and scheduling. While arranging meetings directly with Governors can be helpful, the lack of timely information about review times makes planning difficult and often results in CAMHS being excluded or informed at the last minute. This limits the ability to assign the most suitable practitioner, especially one who knows the young person well. The shift to a single case manager model has improved consistency and understanding of the young people, but the absence of set review times and variable communication continue to disrupt CAMHS' scheduling and service delivery.

Many young people at Wetherby are receiving mental health support, which, we are told, they may have previously struggled to access in the community, due to not meeting CAMHS criteria. Progress is evident to the Board, with more individuals completing care plan goals and moving to treatment completion or aftercare.

A notable success involved a young person on constant supervision at Keppel, where open, collaborative discussions among staff led to improved stability and a positive outcome.

CAMHS continues to attend ACCT and GOOD reviews; however, we have been informed that they are no longer required to sign documentation confirming attendance. This may reduce formal recognition of their involvement, which is a concern for the Board. Despite this, CAMHS remains actively engaged in supporting young people throughout these processes.

Optimism is growing around the shift to a more restorative, child-focused approach under the current leadership. Staff report positive changes in behaviour and relationships, with greater opportunities for reflection, understanding triggers, and emotional growth. This approach promotes care, kindness, and professional openness, which are often new experiences for young people.

Adjudications and sanctions remain, but it is the view of the Board that the overall direction is positive. Some staff and young people feel the changes are still in the early stages and need deeper implementation and clearer communication.

6.4 Social care

The team comprises four experienced social workers, who are employed by Leeds City Council and managed through the integrated safeguarding team. The social care team

considers there is a good working relationship and feel well supported by the Governor and the senior leadership team (SLT).

The Board continues to be concerned about the lack of suitable accommodation for a 'looked-after child' (a child in the care of the local authority) to be released. Whilst the number of young people affected may be very small, the impact of the uncertainty on the individual should not be underestimated. Unfortunately, due to the low number involved, the matter does not receive the attention it deserves. It can be as little as a day or two prior to release that the accommodation is finally secured. The shortage of suitable accommodation in an appropriate location, plus the reluctance of local authorities to put down a deposit until the last minute, are frequently the reasons. We were made aware of one young person who had the accommodation changed as he was on his way to the first address.

Receiving financial support in a timely manner or, indeed, sometimes not at all, continues to be a problem for some looked-after children. The social work team reports that the situation is getting worse as local authorities struggle financially.

On 10 occasions, the social work team has been involved in escalating matters to the local authority director of children's services (DCS,) community care solicitors or the children's commissioner:

- Six times to the local authority DCS, regarding accommodation issues.
- Two young people supported to contact their community care solicitors regarding accommodation issues.
- Two escalated to the children's commissioner regarding accommodation issues.

On 13 occasions, the team has also escalated the situation to the local authority DCS, community care solicitors or children's commissioner:

- 11 following no accommodation two weeks prior to release.
- Two due to social care closing or not following their legal duties to support.

The Board commends the social work team for their persistence and dedication in following up on these issues. The IMB spoke to a young person, who said: 'Before I came in to Wetherby, we'd always been told to have nothing to do with social workers, but since I've been in, I've found out that they can help you... quite a lot.'

6.5 Time out of room (TOoR), regime

As mentioned throughout the report, TOoR is improving. The aim to create one single community on each wing, when all young people are out of their room at once, has, for the large part, made this possible. However, at times, this is not always achievable and there is a temporary return to smaller groups, which inevitably reduces the TOoR. We are pleased to report that we have seen a general improvement and frequently TOoR can exceed at least five hours and often much more. Those young people on Benbow or self-isolating have less. The number of applications received regarding TOoR or lack of regime had dropped significantly, from 97 in our last report to 55 this year.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

See 4.6

6.7 Soft skills

Soft skills are encouraged and developed through a range of activities. For some young people, the ability to mix successfully in a single community on the wing might be a first, but important step. The youth council offers a few young people the chance to act as representatives for their wing. The numerous and increasing sporting opportunities and the engagement for a few young people in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award are all positive examples, which the Board commends. The physical education instructor (PEI) team has worked hard and effectively to support and encourage the young people with many activities, but worthy of note are the outstanding Duke of Edinburgh's (DoE) Awards.

- 33 young people have completed their Bronze DoE qualification.
- 4 young people have completed their Silver DoE qualification.

Other successes

- 18 young people completed Emergency First Aid at Work training
- 8 young people achieved certification in First Aid at Work.
- 1 young person passed their driving theory test.
- 3 young people gained their construction skills certification scheme (CSCS) cards whilst working in the community.

7. Education and training

7.1 Education

In the Board's view, if a young person is to be successfully rehabilitated and have the opportunity to build a positive future, education should be the cornerstone of their resettlement plan. However, we are extremely disappointed to report that the provider, Novus, has repeatedly failed to deliver and is now under an Outstanding Issues Notice (a formal signal that problems identified during an HMIP inspection remain unresolved and require urgent improvement), with overall educational attainments remaining unacceptably low.

At the end of December 2024 and early into 2025, the leaders of the education department left in quick succession. With an already existing lack of skilled and experienced teachers, only one teacher of maths, a curriculum that was neither relevant nor engaging to the young people, this frequently resulted in poor and challenging classroom behaviour. The outcome has been far from ideal and has presented significant challenges

At times, a young person is returned to the wing due to poor behaviour or attitude.

Number of young people who have been returned to the wings from education

Month	Number of returns to the unit
September 2024	6
October 2024	7
November 2024	34
December 2024	15
January 2025	32
February 2025	30
March 2025	13
April 2025	15
May 2025	25
June 2025	22
July 2025	11
August 2025	14
Total	224

In the Board's view, the Governor and the SLT have worked hard to try to salvage the situation and, as part of the Roadmap to Effective Practice, are now developing a more appropriate curriculum. It should not only engage but be relevant and enable young people to develop skills that will put them in a good position for future employment. English, maths and basic skills will be incorporated in a programme that offers more vocational options. Many of the young people at Wetherby are active learners, whose previous experience of education has often been minimal and frequently negative. The establishment continues to work alongside and support a hopefully reinvigorated Novus, but there is still much progress to be made. During the period of cancellations and disrupted education, Wetherby staff seemed to do their best to compensate for the lack of educational provision and young people were offered alternatives. The Board acknowledges the hard work done by the establishment to try to improve the situation. PE

and gym were initially provided as an alternative with, most unusually, many young people telling us they were having 'too much gym'.

The Board was pleased to hear that, despite the serious difficulties within the education department, six young people were able to sit GCSEs, including those who had just arrived during the exam period.

Exam results in the summer of 2025

Student	GCSE	Result	GCSE	Result	GCSE	Result
1	Combined Science	2				
2	History	4	Engineering	L2 Merit		
3*	English Language	4	English Literature	3	Maths	C
4	Maths	2	Physics	1		
5*	Maths	4	English Language	1	English Literature	U
6	Maths	5				

Students 1, 2, 4, and 6 had been registered by a school for their exams prior to arriving at Wetherby.

**Started the course at Wetherby.*

7.2 Library

The library, based in one of the educational colleges, is an attractive and well-stocked resource, with a wide range of books, newspapers and magazines. Staffed and run by Novus, it remains a popular venue for many young people. Timetabled sessions for the various wings and groups enable most young people to have access to the facility. A significant development this year has been the introduction of a library application form, available on a young person's laptop. This allows them to submit an online request directly to the librarian for books; encouragingly it has been well used.

7.3 Vocational training

The Board has been very encouraged by the rapid development, quality of employment opportunities and the wide range of courses now available. So much had been lost or dropped that it is encouraging to see the expansion of waste management and the introduction of Q-Branch, a minor repairs work party that is made up of young people supported by experienced officers who also act as mentors. Q-Branch has carried out repairs and maintenance across the establishment, helping to improve its overall appearance and streamline processes, reducing delays and costs, compared with previous arrangements.

The horticulture team has created the Wetherbee hive, an attractive outside area, for the benefit of young people and staff, and for use in family visits. To their credit, the team won a significant award, Royal Horticultural Society Wetherby in Bloom, gaining a Level 3 award (out of 5); the team only having been in existence since May 2025. The acquisition of such skills enhances a young person's job prospects and better prepares them for release.

The Admirals Café, offering a few young people the opportunity to experience Barista training, continues to operate, providing drinks and light meals, which staff are able to purchase.

Another project has involved young people working alongside a charity, 'Physio.Net', restoring wheelchairs, which are then sent abroad. Not only does this develop skills but it encourages them to make a positive contribution to society.

It is promising to hear that a range of other initiatives is being planned.

8. Progression towards transfer or release

8.1 Case management and progression

At the end of the reporting year, 42 young people out of 119 were held on remand. The Board believes that urgent action needs to be taken to address the situation.

In general, young people reported feeling supported by resettlement practitioners, who meet with their assigned young people fortnightly and are otherwise available to them by appointment. Young people transferring to the adult estate receive a transitional phone call from the receiving establishment.

Transfers to the adult estate have become more challenging this year. On several occasions, young people were rejected from adult establishments and left in a cycle of waiting, before a transfer request was finally granted.

Example: a young person, who was given a transfer date, had the move suddenly called off on the day of transfer, when he had already packed up and was ready to go. Several months later, his transfer had been refused by two other adult establishments. He was finally transferred a month after that to a prison at the other end of the country from his family.

In instances where there were long delays and the adult estate refused to accept the transfer, young people reported feeling anxious, frustrated and in the dark about what was happening, sometimes leading to a deterioration in their behaviour.

8.1.1 Use of release on temporary licence (ROTL)

Wetherby is piloting a new policy that allows for earlier eligibility for ROTL, if safe to do so. Throughout the year, ROTL has provided opportunities for working outside of the YOI, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award completion and family and resettlement visits.

Sometimes, overlapping priorities for a young person can cause disruptions to ROTL delivery, such as, for example, when there are educational requirements or psychology interventions that need to be completed first.

8.2 Family contact

Wetherby appears to have made significant efforts to engage families this year, which the Board commends. The external visitor reception area has been updated, the use of closed visits (where the young person and visitor are separated by a physical barrier, preventing any physical contact) is increasingly rare and the list of banned visitors is also minimal. Although the visits hall was damaged during an incident this year, in general it was well maintained, with an area for young children to play safely.

About 50% of young people do not receive social visits. The reasons given are varied. It can be due to lack of finance, transport or the health of a parent or family member. Some young people are worried about the safety of the member during the visit. They are offered supportive visits and 'STEP' sessions, in which staff take on a mentoring role. For young people with families located far away, Wetherby hosted several extended family visits, allowing approved families to have longer visits, often in outdoor settings or on the young person's living unit. These have been well received by the young people and their families.

Wetherby also hosts themed visits around cultural celebrations, such as Christmas and Eid. This year, it also piloted a visit where families could bring their pet dogs. Wetherby has a family therapist, who can work with young people and their parents. It is

encouraging to see Wetherby creatively supporting families to visit their young people in a range of different formats.

8.2.1 Social video calls

Social video calls continue to provide another way for families who live far away to engage with young people at Wetherby. The rooms used for social video calls are well maintained and cosy. Some young people experience difficulty with the use of video links. They report delays in starting their session and the connection is not always satisfactory. Some family members, especially grandparents, may lack the technical skills to set up the necessary link to join; whilst help is available, they are reluctant to ask for it.

8.3 Resettlement planning

A lack of adequate accommodation in the community has continued to cause significant problems for young people released from Wetherby this year and especially for those who are care-experienced. The social work team, healthcare teams and resettlement practitioners seemed to work hard to ensure every young person leaving knew where they were returning to and felt prepared to re-enter society. However, without timely assignment of accommodation from their local authority, young people are often left in a state of limbo until days before their release, which can undermine their resettlement progress. For example, registration with a GP and treatment referrals, or pre-book appointments, cannot be arranged until accommodation is known. Likewise, college, educational or work placements cannot be arranged prior to release.

Care leavers especially suffer from a lack of support by local authorities, which seem to expect them to be released at the gate and make their own way in the world. Additionally, accommodation providers are pulling out at the last minute, causing disruption at the point of release. The Wetherby resettlement and social work teams have had to advocate rigorously to ensure all young people had somewhere to go and a way to get there.

In2Out, a charity that supports young people as they prepare to leave custody, has secured three years of national lottery funding and has continued to work with many of the young people in Wetherby this year. As their service provision follows the young people through their transition from Wetherby, they are now working with young people in other establishments. According to their own data, the reoffending rate among young people they support is less than 15% compared with the national average of 66%. Young people welcome their support and learn basic life skills during their sessions, such as preparing their own breakfast.

There is only so much the resettlement and social work teams at Wetherby can do without adequate communication, engagement and follow through from the outside agencies they liaise with.

The work of the IMB

The relationship between the new Governor and the IMB at Wetherby has been far from easy. However, we remain resolute that the situation will improve.

Delays in the vetting and appointment process for IMB members have been unacceptably slow this year. Such delays can cause prospective and much-needed members to lose interest and drop out.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	15
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	5
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	3
Total number of visits to the establishment	176

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	13	3
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	27	22
C	Equality	9	13
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	97	5
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	27	3
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	0	10
F	Food and kitchens	7	4
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	7	4
H1	Property within the establishment	10	21
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	1	1
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	10	0
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence), parole, release dates, re-categorisation	6	7
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	8	11
K	Transfers	1	1
L	Miscellaneous	40	28
Total number of applications		263	133

Annex A

Service providers

Healthcare

- Primary care is provided by Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust.
- Mental health care is provided by South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, which has a subcontract arrangement in place with Change, Grow, Live to provide substance misuse services.
- GP services are provided by a Wetherby Medical Practice.

Learning and skills

- Novus is responsible for delivering learning and skills.

Maintenance

- Amey is responsible for maintenance and repair.
- Much of the maintenance work is efficiently managed by Wetherby's own staff.

Escort service

- GeoAmey provides the majority of escort services for young people arriving at HMYOI Wetherby.

Other services

- Barnardo's provides an independent advocacy service to all the young people.
- In2Out provides one-to-one mentoring to help young people with a range of practical support.
- Kinetic Youth is a registered charity that uses youth work methodologies to support young people in a custodial setting.



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