



Independent
Monitoring
Boards

Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Dovegate

**For reporting year
1 October 2024 to 30 September 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

HMP Dovegate is a privately run Category B training prison (for those who do not require maximum security but still pose a significant risk) in Staffordshire holding male prisoners aged 21 or over and is managed by Serco.

The main prison consists of convicted prisoners, mainly serving determinate sentences (with a fixed end date), a remand facility (that holds people awaiting trial, or those who have been found guilty but are waiting to be sentenced) and local prison places.

There is also a purpose-built therapeutic community (TC), which takes repeat and mainly violent offenders, who come from any prison in the country and volunteer to address their offending behaviour through group and individual therapy. All prisoners go through an assessment before being accepted as suitable for the challenges which come with the therapy on the TC.

The operational capacity (the maximum number of prisoners that can be held without serious risk to safety, security, good order and the proper running of the planned regime) of the main prison is 98¹⁰ and that of the TC is 180, giving a combined total of 1,160. The number of prisoners held in the main prison over the reporting year has been at or close to, the operational capacity.

The main prison consists of three house blocks. The two original house blocks (1 and 2) each have five wings, built around a central 'bubble'. Each wing has two floors, with each floor having 20 cells and four shared showers. A food-serving area and a laundry are on the ground floor. There are fixed tables and chairs, a pool table and exercise machines in the communal area, plus an outside exercise yard with outdoor gym equipment. Cells in these two house blocks were designed for single occupancy and have an in-cell washbasin and toilet. A further 20 cells per wing are larger and can accommodate two prisoners.

House block 3 has four wings built around a control 'bubble'. This block has a dedicated drug treatment wing. The cells are larger, complying with European Prison Rules standards, and have integral showers. These wings have the same communal facilities as house block 1 and 2.

All cells have a telephone installed, and all calls are security monitored.

The TC, which is separated from the main prison by an internal fence, consists of three house blocks, all having single occupancy cells with in-cell toilets and showers. The fourth block houses the education department and a small TC visits hall with a family room. It shares some of the main prison facilities – for example, the health centre and gym.

The incentivised substance free living (ISFL) wing was moved onto a vacant wing on TC in July 2025 and has benefited from the relative isolation it has gained away from the main prison environment.

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.

The care and separation unit (CSU), where men are segregated, is a separate block and has 18 cells and two special accommodation cells (where furniture, bedding and sanitation are removed in the interests of safety).

Automated teller machine (ATM) kiosks are installed in all the residential areas, as well as in-cell technology. The prison has its own kitchen and laundry, and the prison kitchen produces all meals in-house for prisoners, as well as for staff in a small bistro.

The healthcare centre has two waiting rooms and a range of treatment and consulting rooms for outpatient clinics. The inpatient facility has accommodation for 11 prisoners. Each room has a toilet and washbasin. There is one bath/shower room in the unit.

The prison has a large education and training facility, Dovegate College, five workshops, a gym and a multi-faith centre. The library services are provided by Serco, in partnership with Staffordshire Library Services. The Shannon Trust is active in the prison as an additional support to prisoners with poor reading skills.

Practice Plus Group provides 24-hour healthcare services. Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust provides mental health services.

The prison has a contract with Serco Integrated Services for facilities management.

In the Board's view, the prison has well-maintained and attractive gardens, with productive vegetable and flower growing areas. The TC grounds also have ponds and ducks cared for by prisoners.

The visits hall is spacious and welcoming, with both indoor and outdoor play areas for children.

3. Key points

3.1 Main findings

Safety

- 505 individuals self-harmed during the reporting period, many of them on more than one occasion. Reported reasons for self-harm vary from being in debt or under threat on their wing, to issues with property, kitchens or canteen.
- Use of force has increased during the reporting year, with prisoners who repeated (3 times) refuse to move wings or attend reception for a transfer to another establishment are escorted to their new location in rigid bar handcuffs. The Dovegate management team made this a policy decision after a number of unplanned uses of force when moving reluctant prisoners, for the safety of prisoners and staff and to ensure situations didn't escalate.

Fair and humane treatment

- More specialist resources are needed to manage prisoners with personality disorders, as even experienced CSU to not have the expertise to properly support these prisoners with highly complex needs.
- The Board has some concerns over the lack of exit plans for those with personality disorders. They are often transferred to another prison before a place is found in a specialist unit due to the pressure to avoid surpassing the time limit for holding a prisoner in segregation.

Health and wellbeing

- In the Board's opinion, ensuring all healthcare appointments are kept and maintaining the stability of Dovegate is almost impossible. The majority of appointments have been kept, and consistent efforts are made to ensure the six daily hospital appointments are achieved.

Progression and resettlement

- The changing policies relating to the calculation of sentences and release dates that have occurred over the last reporting period have put significant pressure on the offender management unit (OMU resource).
- Increased numbers of recalls (the return of individuals to custody for breaching their licence conditions) have a significant impact on the workload of this area, with all calculations having to be completed again.
- Sentence plans have been impacted, and work is ongoing to improve these areas.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- When making changes to sentence timings, please ensure that the offender management system has the capacity and capability to implement these changes efficiently and effectively. How will the Minister ensure OMUs have sufficient resources to manage any future changes?

- Public perception of prisoners and prisons negatively impacts on prisoners ability to achieve acceptance back into civilian life upon release. This appears to be driven by the mass media: how does the Minister plan to showcase the positive results of prisoner outcomes to the general public?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- Will the Prison Service increase the provision for suitable long-term accommodation for those who need it, and near to their work if they have been successful in being offered a job through the work of the prisons relevant departments?
- The demand for specialised provision for prisoners with mental health and/or personality disorders needs remains higher than the provision available. Will the Prison Service create a structured plan to increase both spaces and staff to support them, with clinical staff as well as administrative?

TO THE GOVERNOR

- The Board asks that the Director ensures the culture of continuous improvement becomes permanently ingrained at Dovegate.
- The Board recommends that the Director remains vigilant of staff complacency and take measures to minimise it.
- The Board requests that the Director ensures the improvements made in purposeful activity, education and links with outside employers continue, even when the staff who have driven these improvements move on.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

- The beginning of the reporting period continued the population pressures, with around 500 prisoners arriving and leaving during the month of November 2024.
- The digitalisation of recording property arriving at HMP Dovegate has helped to reduce the number of complaints and resolve issues quickly.
- A significant number of prisoners continue to arrive at HMP Dovegate late into the evening, with reception staff not leaving the establishment until around 12 midnight after processing them, which means prisoners sometimes don't arrive on the wings until late in the evening.
- Healthcare staff process new arrivals during the evening and attend any incidents and other duties around the prison when required.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

- There were five deaths in custody, only one of which was expected as the prisoner was on palliative care. One was apparently self-inflicted, two were apparently health related and one was apparently a potential accidental overdose.
- There have been 804 assessment, care in custody and teamwork plans (ACCTs, used to support prisoners who are at risk of self-harm and suicide) opened during the reporting period, up from 694 in the last reporting year; this relates to 505 individuals.
- There were 1018 instances of self-harm by 505 individuals, up from the previous year's figures of 814 acts of self-harm, relating to 197 individuals. In the Board's opinion, these increases are largely due to over population.
- Safer custody representatives have been renamed as 'peace keepers' and meet fortnightly with safer custody to discuss their wings; they have also undertaken training on mental health first aid and mediation.
- Booklets on managing emotions have been distributed to prisoners.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

- Violence is higher than in previous years, the board believes this is due to a more challenging mix of prisoners and increased prisoners related to organised crime gangs.
- A weapons amnesty was undertaken in early autumn, which had limited success as it relied on prisoners handing over weapons to staff. The lessons learned from this have led to a much more structured approach which allows anonymous handing in of weapons which will take place in early 2026.
- Instances of use of force are higher in previous years, this is partly due to the policy of applying handcuffs for prisoners who refuse or indicate they may be disruptive when transferring wings or to other establishments.

- From the Board's observations, self-isolation is well managed at HMP Dovegate, with keyworker and safer custody officers interacting with prisoners to ensure they participate in purposeful activity, etc.
- Some work has been undertaken to look at the link between residence post codes and gang involvement. Debts have been identified by prison management as a major cause of violence and instability in prisons, and the safer custody team have introduced a debt management plan with a community pay back element. So far, seven prisoners have been on the plan, with one defaulting.

4.4 Use of force

- In the Board's opinion, PAVA is used sparingly, and in some cases drawn but not used.
- The IMB has received one complaint relating to the use of force. After reviewing the BWVC footage, we observed that the use of PAVA was reasonable and proportion to the circumstances.
- The weekly use of force meeting with the Director, head of security and other relevant members of the leadership team continues to praise staff who have worked effectively in this area, or allocate additional training for staff, depending on what is required.
- There have been no serious incidents this reporting year, that required the involvement of the national tactical response group (NTRG, a team trained to intervene in dangerous, high-risk situations).

4.5 Preventing illicit items

- Drone activity had been low this reporting period, and in some cases, items have been collected by staff before they were found by prisoners.
- There have been increased levels of prisoners under the influence of illicit substances, which the prison management reacted to quickly, increasing the number of searches of cells, and communal areas.
- Despite the increased searching, illicit items were still present in HMP Dovegate, which then increased the searching to all staff and visitors with no exceptions.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

- Laundry and servery areas are fully utilised and keeping them clean and well maintained is challenging. When standards drop, the IMB has observed there is a concentrated effort from the management team to bring them back up to standard.
- There have been no major changes to the accommodation: general repairs have taken place. However, the major refurbishment of the floors and showers is scheduled to occur in winter 2025, prior to the contract renewal.
- Gutters and roofing refurbishment have taken place during the summer of 2025.
- Upgrades to the fire alarms on house block 1 and 2 have also been completed during the summer of 2025.

5.2 Segregation

- The staff and management of the CSU have been consistent during the reporting period.
- Many of the prisoners who go to the CSU have complex issues, often related to mental health or personality disorders. Those with personality disorders are not considered to be the responsibility of the mental health team; however, even the experienced CSU staff do not have the skills to assist these prisoners to ensure better prisoner outcomes.
- Waiting times to transfer mentally ill prisoners to specialised units remain lengthy, and cause frustration for the prisoner and staff.
- Exit plans for those with personality disorders appears non-existent as the pressure is on the establishment to have them transferred to ensure they don't surpass the maximum days allowed in segregation; therefore, they get transferred to another prison before a place is found in a specialist unit.
- Special accommodation has been used six times in the reporting period and of those, four were by one prisoner.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

- The majority of staff are relatively new and lack experience. A development and support officer, which is a support and mentoring role, was created in early summer to help newer staff develop.
- Despite some of the staffs relative inexperience, many of them have shown exceptional compassion, empathy and professionalism in their dealings with prisoners.
- Some of the long-term prisoners have highlighted to the IMB their frustrations with the staff's lack of knowledge and experience, but also tolerance in giving them a chance to learn.

5.4 Equality and diversity

- 110 disability incident report forms (DIRFs) were received from 74 prisoners in this reporting year. Due to low board numbers the board has not been able to observe the equalities process in person. However the low level of complaints

received by the Board related to this area, give the impression that they are handled efficiently and effectively.

- There is a calendar of one equality and diversity event per month, and no new events have been added to the calendar in this reporting year.
- An autism support pack has been introduced, which includes a special toothbrush and toothpaste, designed specifically to help these prisoners cope in the prison environment and manage their stress levels.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

- There is comprehensive coverage of services and events within the main multi faith unit. Prisoners housed in the therapeutic community have had access to this area. However, concerns about the potential ingress of illicit items to the therapeutic community has recently meant the need for the therapeutic to have its own services and events.
- Staffing levels operate to the Ministry of Justice guide of six full time chaplains, and sessional councillors. This is actually reflected as two full-time chaplains and part time staff, which gives the chaplaincy greater flexibility and holiday cover.
- The current vacancies are for a Rastafarian and a Rabbi, who have been appointed but are waiting security clearance, a Church of England where the job is advertised but is being covered by a sessional chaplain and a pagan who has been offered the role, but funding has yet to be cleared.
- The multi faith team attended most of the CSU good order or discipline reviews (GOoD, where the prison determines if the prisoner should remain segregated), and complete a visit to the CSU every day.
- Chaplaincy take a full and supportive role within HMP Dovegate, covering everything from first night induction, to wedding applications, death and dying support and ACCT visits.

5.6 Incentives schemes

- The Serco Inspire incentive scheme runs along the standard HMPPS system. It allows for initiatives such as 'take away violence', which rewards wings where no violence occurred for a month by giving all prisoners on those wings points, which they could use for additional phone time, to request a clothing package, for a voucher to be spent at the visits tea bar, or limited items from canteen or kitchens.
- Negative behaviour results in suspension from the scheme for weeks, months or completely.
- A total of 2,566,342 points have been received by prisoners in the reporting year.

5.7 Complaints

- The complaints team are experienced and knowledgeable in the prison, its staff and in getting responses from other prisons. They have a structured process for chasing up responses and although the member of staff who undertakes this role has changed a few times this period, the quality of the system as remained high.

- The IMB has seen a reduction in the number of applications (prisoners' written representations to the Board), with 179 in the 2023-2024 reporting year versus 230 in 2022-23. The Board believes that this is due to the prison complaints being resolved to the satisfaction of the prisoner, rather than being escalated to IMB before being resolved.
- The HMP Dovegate complaints process has had a significant increase in this reporting year, with 4279 complaints in 2024-2025 versus 3217 in 2023 -24 and 3518 in 2022-23.

5.8 Property

- Property issues are not being brought to our attention as much as in previous years, therefore it would appear that the computerised system and increased focus and attention to detail has worked.
- There were some issues with property during transfers and court movements. An allegation of theft arose during one such movement, which was dealt with by the police.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

- The Board finds GP and other healthcare waiting times adequate.
- Work has started to place a new pharmacy in the sterile area, ensuring that movements don't need to be halted while deliveries are made.
- A training room in the education block has been offered to allow training for a higher number of medical staff at a time.
- Recruitment of clinical staff continues, and nurses and a pharmacy technician are currently being inducted.
- Health and recovery champions are prisoners trained as trainees at wing level; at house block level they are trained to level 2 RSPH Understanding Health Improvement and Mental Health First Aid, level 3 are experienced as well as trained and help in reception and provide a twice-weekly drop-in service to segregation.
- Health champion meetings take place twice monthly, one with all health champions and one with level 2 and 3s only.
- Patient forums take place on a monthly basis with patients; concerns from prisoners continue to be regarding appointment waiting times and medications.
- Monthly newsletters are distributed to patients, sharing key updates.
- A peer-led initiative on sleep hygiene, run by the health champions, is ongoing. 257 patients have been offered it, 183 have completed the course and 120 prisoners reported an improvement.
- Health, wellbeing and recovery gym sessions are in place for those with a GP referral, high BMI or lacking in confidence due to not attending the gym. Health and recovery champions support these sessions.
- An annual health fair takes place in the visits hall each November.
- Healthcare is part of the West Midlands cancer alliance work, which is looking to improve the pathway for cancer patients in prisons, and to introduce cancer champions to support fellow peers on their cancer journey. Cancer diagnoses are increasing in the overall prison population.
- Podcasts have been aired via the Dovegate TV/in-cell technology to promote the importance of vaccinations, to promote men's health week and patient engagement and health champions.

6.2 Physical healthcare

- The inpatient unit is supported by a registered nurse day and night. There is no dedicated mental health provision, despite the majority of admissions being for mental health reasons.
- There were 80 admissions from September 2024 to August 2025.
- The psychiatrist completes rounds (visits to patients to discuss their care) and visits the CSU every two weeks, and the GP visits every week.
- The inpatient lead, clinical lead and mental health team aim to complete a ward round every week and collate information together to ensure patients' needs are being met.

- All patients residing in the inpatients unit are discussed at the weekly multi-disciplinary complex case clinic which includes a GP, an advanced nurse practitioner, clinical staff, patient engagement lead (PEL), psychiatrist and the mental health team.
- Activities in the inpatient unit include a health champion drop-in service, purposeful activity and development including coffee afternoons, pets as therapy dogs, tombola, bingo, extra gym sessions, library, raffle and an educational drop-in.
- Cooking classes, games and film afternoons are planned in the future.
- Hospital escorts are provided at six per day; work has been done to ensure these take place and that any cancellations can be learned from. Frustrations from prisoners continue due to lack of escorts for emergencies or bed watches.
- Cross-deployment of staff can cause issues, especially if new and inexperienced staff are sent to cover the inpatients unit, who do not know the patients or the regime.

6.3 Mental health

- All individuals are screened for mental health issues on arrival with a referral made to the mental health team if any concerns arise.
- Any member of staff can raise a referral to the mental health team, not just clinical staff.
- All referrals receive an assessment and routine referrals are seen within five working days, urgent referrals within two working days.
- A member of the mental health team attends all initial ACCT reviews and sends a contribution for all subsequent ones on the mental health caseload.
- Employing staff continues to be a challenge, and vacancies are covered with agency staff.
- There are 4.5 visiting psychiatry sessions a week.
- The mental health team conducts outreach on the wings and healthcare and service users are offered self-help materials and distraction tools.
- Group sessions are available for anxiety, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is delivered by the Mental Health team on a one to one basis and Empower is delivered by the mental health team as group work.
- Better Day's men's mental health conversation group has been well received, being run in the wellbeing café for those on main location. Aim to put on a regular group on to the VP wing.
- Work continues around the promotion of the service, which aims to work with the mental health team and to be where patients can go for additional support.

6.4 Social care

- Social care assessments are provided by Staffordshire County Council social care, working with healthcare to deliver the care packages as required.
- A social worker and two occupational therapists conduct outreach with a patient to assess their needs and provide equipment where necessary.
- The Board has noted that patients have an individual care and support plan.

- Currently there are three individuals in Dovegate who receive social care packages, and referrals have increased to 30 in 2025 to the end of the reporting year, from 24 in the whole of 2024.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

- In the Board's view, time out of cell is generally good, although staffing pressures, especially in holiday periods, have created some restrictions on activities and exercise times.
- When the regime has to be restricted, it has been observed to be done in a fair manner and communicated to the men in a timely fashion.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

- Substance misuse is managed by Midland Partnership Foundation Trust. The clinical team is provided by Practice Plus Group.
- Any prisoners arriving in reception who are identified as needing detoxification or stabilisation are placed on the first night wing for continuous monitoring.
- Patients are assessed by the substance misuse prescriber and appropriate medication is given.
- Psychosocial support is given, and healthcare assistants outreach patients on the wing twice daily for clinical observations for a stabilisation period.
- Group sessions include acupuncture, Alcoholics Anonymous and SMART Recovery (self-management and recovery training, a CBT-based programme adapted to support recovery for people in custody).
- There is a hotline number specific to substance misuse.
- There is a peer support scheme in place called 'recovery champions' to support others with addictions. The champions attend groups and provide one-to-one support.
- An incentivised substance free living (ISFL) unit was moved in July to a wing on the therapeutic community that had become vacant. Staff are working to encourage and work with those who are committed to the long-term cessation of drug use. The results so far are encouraging.
- Yoga therapy has been used on the ISFL/Bridge unit to help people with their journey away from substance addiction.

6.7 Soft skills

- Social prescribing offers support from a social prescribing link worker, focusing on 'what matters to the patient' and supports them in developing a wellbeing plan focused on goals that are important to them. This enables them to learn new ways to improve and manage their own health and wellbeing.
- 91 prisoners have had the initial assessment for the social prescribing initiative in the last 12 months.
- A trial day for falconry training and therapy has been undertaken, with the hope that a program can be developed from it.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

- Education attendance and performance continues to improve under the vision and leadership of the head of education and skills. Education averaged 85% attendance through the reporting year and peaked at 90% in April and May 2025.
- In February 2025 HMP Dovegate became the highest performing privately run prison for education, and has been every month since.
- Academic achievements:
 - two graduations with first class honours
 - 23 prisoners completing Open University Degrees
 - 40 learners studying level three (which equates to A level standard) or above courses with the Prisoners Education Trust
 - 14 under 25s enrolled on the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme
 - 458 functional skills certificates achieved
- Learning and Literacy:
 - 5,260 AQA awards achieved. These can be achieved in six hours, which helps when there are so many transfers and movements.
 - 30 learners engaged with the Shannon Trust
 - 1,500 books were donated through the Children's Book Project.
- Seven resident prisoner tutors gained Level 5 Diplomas in Teaching and Learning.
- In July 2025, a resource room opened in the education suite for neurodiverse and learning disability D students.
- Two platinum awards were received by prisoners at the Koestler Awards, an annual competition that celebrates the creative talents of individuals in the criminal justice system.

7.2 Vocational training, work

- The welding workshop continues to be a success, with a company making items for children's playgrounds asking for their own designated workshop after sharing for some time.
- In the woodworking academy, notice boards have been made for parish councils, benches for schools and bird boxes and nests for the national bird watch campaign, giving prisoners both the sense of responsibility for the community project and the tangible achievement of the product made.
- There is also industrial cleaning unit where prisoners are working towards WAMITAB level 1 and 2 in industrial cleaning. Biohazard level 2 qualifications.
- A pre-used clothing store provides the opportunity for those who don't have clothing to receive parcels sent into the prison.
- Fundraising for a local Phab group (a charity that creates opportunities for people with disabilities to end isolation) by turning waste materials into items for raffles, one an R2D2 about 3ft tall made from an old emersion tank.
- The employment hub has organised work fairs, engages with Chevron, Iceland and other employers seeking to help prisoners get work on release.

- 50 job offers have been made in the last 12 months, although the lack of accommodation on release and external factors has meant that not all job offers have come to fruition.

7.3 Offender management, progression

- Changes in government policies to reduce the population pressures have put additional workload on this area.

7.4 Family contact

- Staff holidays around Christmas created a backlog in processing prisoners' family phone numbers; the frustrations of new prisoners led to some incidents on the induction wing. Although additional staff were deployed to process the phone numbers, the lack of understanding of the process with families and prisoners appears to make the process more difficult.
- Security has been tightened up in visits after a few finds of illicit items.

7.5 Resettlement planning

- This reporting year the main focus for the OMU has been the recalculation of sentences for all prisoners based on changes in policy by government/Ministry of Justice.
- A small number of prisoners have met the criteria and been released early from HMP Dovegate.
- On a few of occasions there have been prisoners who have been released a day or two later than they should, due to errors in the calculations.
- There is a significant backlog in the formalising the Oasys sentence plans (offender assessment system, used to assess the risks and needs of prisoners), which is currently being focused on.
- There is concern that a significant percentage of those released nationally have since returned to prison, some to Dovegate as, according to conversations with prison management, the prisoners were not ready for release and did not have support in place in society to ensure they did not breach release orders.
- The set time frame for recalls is to serve 28 days or 14 days. The probation and OMU staff do not believe this give them enough time to ensure prisoners who are released are effectively supported in the community they are released into.

7.6 Programmes

- Prisoners have to be sentenced to qualify for one of the programmes.
- The Kaisen program had 21 completions.
- Thinking Skills Programme had 45 completions.
- Intimate Partner Violence had 50 starters.
- There are 10 facilitators and four treatment managers in the programmes team.
- The new Building Choices program was due to start in July but due to shortages in the spaces for training staff, it didn't start till September 2025.

7.7 Therapeutic community (TC)

- Policy changes to sentence timings, SDS40 (to tackle the ongoing overcrowding crisis in prisons, certain prisoners serving 'standard determinate sentences' (SDS) became eligible to be released after serving 40% of their sentence instead of 50%) and the Sentencing Review has meant that a significant number of men in therapy on TC have opted to return to main location without completing the therapy, to take advantage of the new policy and faster transition to recategorisation and potential release.
- This has created more movement and less stability in the communities as the churn of prisoners have increased, destabilising the bonding and the community culture that previously existed.
- This has also reduced numbers of men in therapy, as Dovegate TC is contracted for category B prisoners and is limited to 15% category C prisoners.
- Prisoners are expected to be drug-free when entering the TC; however, the TC is not immune from the drug culture that exists in the prison system, and an increased movement of prisoners and increased drug availability have given the opportunity for a small number of prisoners to obtain and use drugs.
- The TC constitution encourages prisoners who feel the need to use drugs to speak to staff and use therapy to explore their need; however, this has not been fully utilised, mainly due to ingrained beliefs and fears of owning up.
- As the increase in instances of prisoners under the influence (UTI) on the TC increased, security was tightened up and movement of prisoners to the 'mains' (the main building) for activities ceased.
- Management and staff envisage tackling drug use and culture will be an ongoing and complex issue but are ready for the challenges it will bring.
- The therapy governance meeting was reintroduced to ensure that since movement to the mains for activities ceased, departments can work together to ensure that men on the TC are offered access to activities similar to those offered on the mains.
- TC staff had to provide a significant amount of information to Serco competitors to enable them to submit their bids for the overall Dovegate contract. This caused additional workload and uncertainty for both staff and prisoners.
- The senior leadership team on the TC gave additional time and energy to support staff and the prisoner communities through this time of uncertainty.
- Security and TC management staff have worked together to close the opportunities for movement of illicit items on to the TC.
- For the first half of the reporting period the deputy clinical Director had the role of acting Director, until confirmed in post in May 2025. Although appointed, the new Deputy Clinical Director is unlikely to be in post until March 2026 due to security clearance delays.
- An educational needs analysis was conducted on the TC, and the results have been the basis for educational provision now being offered there.
- Staff have additional training to work on the TC; it is necessary that they believe in the therapy process, as their working relationships with the clinical staff and prisoners helps ensure the best results for the therapy process.

- TC wings are generally the cleanest and tidiest in Dovegate. The prisoners although often say although the therapy is challenging for them, they are calmer and appear happier than those on main location.
- For some of the reporting year there has been a lack of activities for prisoners on the TC, which has now been addressed.
- Cross-deployment of prison officers to main locations does happen, leaving the TC under manned or locked down, which is frustrating for all concerned.

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	16
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	6
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	6
Total number of visits to the establishment	164
Number of 45 GOoD reviews (good order or discipline, where the prison determines if the prisoner should remain segregated) attended	79

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	2024-25	2023-24	2022-23
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	4	3	6
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	6	7	1
C	Equality	2	2	3
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	3	27	7
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	10	9	12
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	5	4	10
F	Food and kitchens	2	4	4
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	21	23	45
H1	Property within the establishment	19	15	18
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	15	13	28
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	0	1	6
I	Sentence management, including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, recategorisation	3	11	5
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	13	7	6
K	Transfers	1	0	3
L	Miscellaneous	11	6	21
Total number of applications		115	132	175



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