



# Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Eastwood Park

**For reporting year  
1 November 2024 to 31 October 2025**

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## **Introductory sections 1 – 3**

### **1. Statutory role of the IMB**

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

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

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

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

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

## 2. Description of establishment<sup>1</sup>

HMP/YOI Eastwood Park is a closed local prison for women, midway between Gloucester and Bristol, by the village of Falfield in south Gloucestershire.

Eastwood Park's 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 prison) is 395 prisoners. Capacity was reduced from 430 to 415 prisoners in January 2025 to allow 15 double cells to be used as single-cell accommodation. A further 20 single cells were lost following the closure of residential unit 7 (Res 7) in October 2025.

The table below shows the overall population and breakdown of sentences:

Year end 31 October	Total sentenced	Total on remand/unsentenced	Those sentenced to less than 12 months	Those sentenced to between 12 months and 4 years	Those sentenced to 4 years or more
2025 (351)	230	121	52	50	67
2024 (366)	256	110	48	73	77

*Source: the prison's offender management unit (OMU)*

Despite the prison's reduced capacity, there has been a notable increase in remand/unsentenced prisoners over the reporting year. There are nine prisoners serving indeterminate sentences (where the individual is given a minimum term but no fixed release date), three fewer than in 2024. The number of recalls, at 48, is higher than the 46 recorded in the previous year.

At the end of the reporting period, Eastwood Park had spare capacity to accommodate 41 prisoners. This comprised 30 regular spaces, 10 on the mother and baby unit (MBU) and one on cherry blossom unit (CBU).

Following the closure of Res 7 in October 2025, Eastwood Park now has nine residential wings. They include the MBU; one wing dealing with prisoners with substance misuse; a personality disorder unit; a wing for prisoners with complex needs requiring significant mental health input (CBU); and five for the general population.

The prison also takes remand and sentenced prisoners from local courts, covering a wide catchment area extending over south Wales, the south, the southwest and the Midlands. Eastwood Park is the local prison for 77 courts. Around a third of its prisoners came from Wales during the reporting period.

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<sup>1</sup> 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

#### Background

- In May 2025 Eastwood Park was reclassified as a complex prison. As posts had been re-banded, members of the senior management team (SMT) were required to enter a competitive recruitment process. To date, the existing Governor and Deputy Governor have been re-appointed to these posts. Further recruitment of SMT members is expected to be complete by early 2026.
- The Board's priority concerns throughout the year were reflected in the report from the Chief Inspector of Prisons, published on 22 September 2025:
  - Too many very mentally unwell women had been sent to prison due to the lack of services in the community, including places in secure mental health hospitals.
  - The rate of self-harm was extremely high, with a very small number of women self-harming repeatedly. Staff often used force to prevent self-harm and many assaults on staff occurred during restraint.
  - Prisoners were unnecessarily locked in their cells while segregated women on the residential units were unlocked individually to take exercise and have a shower. This resulted in significantly less time out of cell for many women, which was a source of considerable frustration.
  - There was not enough resettlement support for remand and recalled women.
  - There were not enough activity spaces to keep women occupied on a full-time basis and enhance their chances of successful resettlement.
- Progress on priority and key concerns from the last inspection were:
  - Safety moved from poor to not sufficiently good.
  - Respect stayed the same as reasonably good.
  - Purposeful activity stayed the same as not sufficiently good.
  - Preparation for release remained reasonably good.

On the 31 October 2025, the prison's only wing for prisoners on an open regime (Res 7) closed, as fire risks deemed it unsuitable for continued use as residential accommodation. All prisoners were either relocated to a unit in the more secure part of the prison or transferred to an open prison.

#### 3.1 Main findings

##### Safety

- The rate of self-harm appeared to be extremely high, with a very small number of women self-harming repeatedly. From the Board's observations, staff used force to preserve life and to prevent self-harm, during which time many assaults on staff occurred during restraint.
- One prisoner was responsible for 1,019 incidents of self-harm, with use of force incidents falling considerably following this individual's transfer.
- The reporting year saw an overall reduction in self-harm compared with last year. It also seems to reflect the change in the prisoner profile and the drop in the number of people who self-harm frequently.

- Following fire safety concerns from the fire service, residential accommodation on Res 7 was closed on 31 October 2025. However, the IMB office remained in use on Res 7.
- In the Board's view, despite the complex profiles of many prisoners, the Governor and the senior management team (SMT) continued to generally keep the prison population safe.

### **Fair and humane treatment**

- The prison did not have a care and separation unit (CSU). Prisoners were usually confined to their cells in their normal location.
- Prisoners were locked in their cells while segregated women on that residential unit were unlocked individually to take exercise. Frustration was frequently expressed by prisoners, who resented their loss of time out of cell while the segregated prisoners were unlocked.
- The IMB observed many positive interactions between staff and prisoners. The increased use of de-escalation tactics encouraged meaningful communication between the officers and prisoners. A policy of mutual respect seemed to be encouraged by the SMT.
- There were 142 outstanding maintenance jobs at the end of the reporting period. For most of this time, Gov Facility Services Limited, also known as GFSL (the Ministry of Justice-owned company that maintains and repairs prisons in the South of England), were four or five operatives short, mainly due to excessive delays in completing security checks and vetting of new employees.

### **Health and wellbeing**

- HMCIP's report (22 September 2025) stated: 'Too many very mentally unwell women had been sent to prison due to the lack of services in the community, including places in secure mental health hospitals.'
- The Board shared concerns about delayed transfers.
- Music and art are offered through education; however, specific provision for prisoners over the age of 50 has not been re-procured.
- It was noted that providing sufficient care and continuity of carers by community-based peripatetic staff was delayed by vetting problems.

### **Progression and resettlement**

- The Board's concerns about resettlement were echoed in HMCIP's report, which noted that there was insufficient resettlement support for remanded and recalled women.
- Reduced core education provision resulted in five members of the teaching staff being made redundant and a curtailment of courses and opportunities.
- Prisoners eligible for release on temporary license (ROTL) were often moved to an open prison, leaving the opportunities and placements vacant. However, this was starting to improve at the end of the reporting period.

## **3.2 Main areas for development**

### ***TO THE MINISTER***

- The Board would like to draw the Minister's attention to the fact that officer recruitment and retention was problematic throughout the year. What steps will the Minister take to address these ongoing difficulties, particularly in light of the

July 2025 Right to Work legislation, which is expected to result in the loss of 19 officers and increased prisoner lockdowns?

- The Board is concerned about the inordinate backlog of potential staff appointments that are awaiting vetting. This includes prison staff, healthcare and maintenance appointments and head of education, skills and work and IMB applicants. What urgent measures will the Minister take to clear this backlog and ensure that operational delivery, safety, and governance are not further compromised?
- Numerous works projects were delayed, including bathroom refurbishments, replacement of Res 7, replacement carpeting on Res 5 and 6, replacement fire ring main and the new video conferencing centre. There appeared to be so much waste in planning these projects, only for them to either be delayed or cancelled at the last moment. How will the Minister ensure that future projects are properly scoped, planned and overseen from the outset so they can be delivered to an agreed timetable and budget without further waste or disruption?
- Concerns were highlighted about two older prisoners who were kept in custody because of the lack of approved premises with disabled facilities or returned to custody due to failings by the Ministry of Justice's (MoJ) tagging contractor. How will the Minister ensure that decisions of this kind are lawful, proportionate and consistent with its responsibilities towards disabled prisoners, especially during a period of severe pressure on prison capacity?

### ***TO THE PRISON SERVICE***

- Following the closure of Res 7, Eastwood Park no longer has bespoke accommodation for prisoners who are suitable for 'open' conditions. When will capital funding be provided for the construction of a purpose-built gender specific trauma informed designed building in accordance with the 2022-2025 Female Offender Strategy Delivery Plan?
- Elsewhere in the public sector, establishments receive an annual devolved budget to undertake routine maintenance and minor capital works. Such budgets provide excellent value and outcomes. Why can prisons not receive a similar devolved budget for Governors to manage directly on locally determined priorities?
- The Board acknowledges the extent of building projects but is concerned by the lack of a segregation wing and the impact on the restrictions placed on the rest of the prison population. What is the Prison Service doing to manage this situation and reduce the impact on prisoners?

### ***TO THE GOVERNOR***

- The Board appreciates the Governor's initiative to ensure prisoners engage in purposeful activities in education, work, vocational training and ROTL. How will you make sure that prisoners continue to have this regular access and that these activities are used fully and effectively?
- The Board acknowledges that key work should be high priority but was impacted by regime change and staffing shortages. How will you make sure that it remains a priority and is carried out consistently?
- How will you ensure that ACCT plans are written clearly and in a way that fully explains the care being provided?

### 3.3 Response to last report

Issue raised	Response given	Progress
<p>We highlighted the number of individuals who prolifically self-harm in prison. To reduce the adverse pressure on Eastwood Park, we asked that these prisoners be more evenly distributed throughout the women's estate.</p>	<p>The Minister shares the Board's concerns around prolific self-harmers, which is eight times higher than in the male estate, but emphasised that an individual's prison is based on their proximity to their home area.</p>	<p>A safety summit was held in May 2025. The women's estate case advice and support Panel continues to support prisons in the management of women with complex needs.</p>
<p>We asked about the planned expansion of the prison due by 2025.</p>	<p>HMPPS advised that the women's estate expansion programme was officially suspended in March 2024. The Women's Justice Board will now address the distinct needs of women in the criminal justice system, with the aim of fewer women in prison and more community support.</p>	<p>Nothing further to report.</p>
<p>Progress with the replacement of Res 7 with a gender specific, trauma-informed designed building.</p>	<p>HMPPS advised that this project did not offer value for money and had been de-scoped from the Rapid Deployment Cells programme. The project will now be considered for capital funding in the current financial year.</p>	<p>Due to ongoing concerns about fire safety, Res 7 was considered to be unsuitable for continued residential use and closed on the 27 October 2025. All prisoners from this open wing were relocated to Res 5, which is part of the prison's more secure accommodation, or to another open prison. There is no information about capital funding for a replacement building.</p>

<p>Prisoners are still subject to lengthy journeys to appear in court. When is the proposed video conferencing centre due to become operational?</p>	<p>HMPPS advised that they are working hard to progress a video conferencing centre at Eastwood Park, but this remains subject to confirmed funding and any subsequent contract award.</p>	<p>As part of the agreed pre-construction plan, the prison decanted staff from an office building adjacent to the proposed site, which caused considerable disruption. It was concerning that, as funding had not been signed off by the end of September 2025, the new building will now not commence until the 2026-2027 financial year at the earliest.</p>
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## Evidence sections 4 – 7

### 4. Safety

#### 4.1 Reception and induction

- During the reporting period there were 3,774 receptions, of which 1,612 were new receptions. Some 1,444 prisoners were released and 429 were recalled to custody.
- The reception area always seemed to be clean and uncluttered.
- From the Board's observations, staff were calm and empathetic, especially when it was a woman's first time in prison.
- Young offender (YO) orderlies (trusted prisoners who take on work to provide services that contribute to the running of the prison) met young arrivals in reception to reassure them and subsequently followed them up with wing visits.
- Orderlies managed a clothes store that was usually well stocked although there were some delays.
- 'Early days' was a service for all women arriving into custody. It covered their initial reception and subsequent 14 days on the induction wing.
- All prisoners were required to have a full prison and healthcare screening, with risks were highlighted and forwarded to relevant areas.
- Orderlies checked that cells were ready with basic toiletries, bedding and underwear.
- Staff received neurodiversity/mental health training to equip them to manage prisoners arriving with a range of challenges.
- Staff compassion was noted when prisoners were leaving for distressing occasions, such as funerals, for example.
- When other prisons reached their capacity (certified normal accommodation), new prisoners were frequently dispatched to Eastwood Park. This resulted in long journeys and very late arrivals.
- When Board members observed a night visit, reception staff remained on duty to receive these prisoners and ensure a safe reception process.
- The Board noted that there were facilities for hot drinks and snacks for the late arrival.
- The 'early days' process was recognised as 'promising practice' by HMIP and nominated for the Butler Trust award.

#### 4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

- Despite the continuing complex population at EWP, the reporting year saw an overall reduction in self-harm. There were 4,479 incidents carried out by 155 individuals of whom 43 were prolific self-harmers. One complex prisoner accounted for 1,019 of the incidents prior to her transfer in July.
- It was noted that 2,040 of the incidents were listed as unknown / no engagement, with no further explanation. The next highest reason were 259 incidents triggered by pre-release worries.
- The frequency of self-harm by a small number of prisoners was deeply concerning. 15 prisoners accounted for 90% of all incidents and one prisoner self-harmed up to 25 times in a day. The Chair wrote to the Governor urging the exploration of alternative ways to manage this complex prisoner, who was impacting the regime for others. There was a risk of staff compassion fatigue.

- Several impactful initiatives were put in place to reduce self-harm. There was an improvement in the reception process, decency and induction. Vulnerable prisoners were put on support plans such as My Experience (ME), Support Through Enhanced Management (STEM) and the HOPE programme.
- Staff received training around recognising and supporting neurodivergent prisoners. The IMB observed patient and caring interaction with complex and challenging prisoners.
- The drive to increase keywork was beneficial but low staffing and regime often reduced the number of sessions. Purposeful activity, either education or work, was mandatory unless there was a genuine reason for absence.
- Thanks to prompt action by officers and healthcare staff on numerous occasions for the second consecutive reporting period there were no deaths in custody.
- 10 October the inquest at Avon Coroner's Court concluded that the death in custody on 10 October 2023 was due to natural causes.

### **4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation**

- The regime improved over the reporting year, becoming more consistent as staff levels rose. There was a strong drive to ensure that all prisoners used their time out of cell purposefully either in education or employment. Only a genuine reason would be accepted for non-participation. This had an overall positive impact on assault levels and self-isolation.
- There were 235 assaults on staff committed by 59 perpetrators. There were 25 assaults in November 2024, peaking at 39 assaults in July and dropping down to 9 in September 2025. This, in part, reflected the profile and complexity of the prison population. One highly complex prisoner accounted for the peak in July. She was transferred at the end of July.
- Assaults were sustained primarily during use of force and when preserving life. Methods of assault ranged from spitting through to bodily harm.
- CBU, where some of the most complex prisoners resided, accounted for 61 of the assaults with 19 perpetrators. The IMB were concerned that the staff had to manage some profoundly unwell prisoners who required specialist care, and as a result sustained injuries.
- There were 139 incidents of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults, which peaked at 18 assaults in March with both February and September recording seven assaults each.
- The IMB observed effective use of de-escalation by staff. Strategies used to manage and reduce violence included Challenge, Support and Intervention Plans (CSIPs) along with a weekly multi-disciplinary Safety Intervention Meeting (SIM).

### **4.4 Use of force**

- Although the profile of the prison population remained complex, use of force incidents reduced for this reporting year, down from over 1,000 incidents 2023-24 to 762 (691 unplanned and 71 planned) this year.
- The leading reason for employing use of force was refusal to relocate to cell (34%) followed by a reduced number for preservation of life (17%).
- Some 41% were guiding/escorting holds whilst 65% involved restraints. 87% of use of force was recorded on body worn video cameras (BWVC) which is the second highest number in the Women's Estate.

- Just 15 prisoners were subjects of 65% of the incidents, of which 73% involved restraints. There was a spike in July due to one individual who was responsible for 171 incidents. Following her transfer use of force incidents reduced.
- ME plans and ACCTs were effective sources of information on interventions and support plans for the more complex, neurodivergent and vulnerable prisoners. These informed staff about triggers and best strategies to manage those who needed it, however the IMB was concerned about the recording of meaningful conversations. As a result, informed de-escalation tactics were extensively employed with success.
- IMB observed staff making every effort to engage with deeply complex and troubled individuals, giving them time to process commands and therefore avoid the deployment of use of force.
- Some planned and unplanned use of force were monitored by the IMB and the actions of staff were judged as proportionate and humane.
- Following any use of force, Healthcare was called to check on the prisoner's welfare.
- The IMB attended the weekly use of force meetings where body worn video cameras (BWVC) and close circuit television (CCTV) footage of incidents was reviewed and learning points followed up.

#### **4.5 Preventing illicit items**

- The Board attended monthly multi-disciplinary security meetings.
- All vehicles that entered and left EWP were searched. Regular assurance tests were all passed. Further searching was completed at the gate due to the increased footfall of contractors and visitors.
- All newly arrived prisoners were given a rub down search. Where intelligence was raised, authority for a full search was gained from the Head of Security or the Duty Governor.
- The prison's trauma informed searching processes were recognised during the recent HMIP unannounced inspection.
- Staff searches have been undertaken at different times so far this reporting year and more are expected. During these searches, there were no illicit finds on staff.
- Specialist drugs dogs recently detected small quantities of medications, tobacco, heroin, a lighter, a crack pipe and wraps containing a brown residue in the establishment.
- EWP met mandatory levels of drugs testing. Those with confirmed positive outcomes who were found guilty on adjudication worked with the drug recovery community (DRC). No further action was taken against those who engage with the DRC for three weeks. If prisoners did not engage, a further adjudication was held to activate the original award of up to 12 days cellular confinement.
- Prisoners' visits were organised and the security team scrutinised any intelligence received prior the visit session.
- EWP continued to photocopy mail (only letters are photocopied; cards and photos are delivered in their true form but tested on the itemiser machine). This policy was reviewed monthly by the Head of Security and annually by the governing Governor. The decision was based on the level of positive test results.

## **5. Fair and humane treatment**

### **5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food**

#### **Accommodation**

- The Board made random inspections of cells awaiting occupation and they were generally of an acceptable standard.
- Following fire safety concerns, residential accommodation on Res 7 was closed at the end of October 2025. Whilst some assurances were given about transferring to single-cell accommodation, a number of prisoners found themselves having to share cells. They also complained that the standard of cells provided on Res 5 left a lot to be desired.
- Shower refurbishments on Res 3, 4, 5 and 6 were several months behind schedule. The final shower room on Res 3 was due for completion by the end of November 2025.
- The net-zero project to replace oil heating with air-source heat pumps continued to progress. A temporary boiler was installed whilst the main boiler room was extended to accommodate the new plant and equipment, and construction of the air-source heat pump compound was under construction.
- The number of outstanding minor maintenance jobs had fallen from 148 to 142 at the end of the reporting period. For most of this time, GFSL was four or five operatives short, mainly due to excessive delays in completing security checks on new employees. Most of these vacancies were due to be filled by the end of 2025.
- A major incident was declared in October 2025, following a digger cutting through the prison's water main. An emergency action plan was put in place and the main water supply was reinstated overnight.

#### **Clothing**

- The Board received few applications (prisoners' written representations to the IMB) concerning clothing. These mainly related to delays accessing prisoners' stored property to swap summer for winter clothes.
- All prisoners who arrived at the prison without their personal clothing were provided with standard issue items from reception stores. The Board monitored stock levels, which were usually good throughout the reporting period.
- Some clothing was donated during the year to the employment hub. This enabled prisoners who had very little to be provided with warm jumpers and trousers. Where required, prisoners attending court or leaving the prison with little of their own clothes were provided with essential clothing.

#### **Food**

- The food budget rose from £3.01 to £3.10 to provide three meals per prisoner per day. The Board noted the challenge in providing nutritious, healthy diets on this sum.
- Board members raised concern that food comment books were not always available on some wings at the point of service. There was not always a record available indicating the outcome of the Duty Governors' daily food-quality checks.
- The Board received 13 applications relating to the quality and quantity of food. Issues ranged across the quality of meals, special diets not being catered for, gluten-free food, carbohydrate-heavy meals and small portion sizes.

- Following the resignation of the catering manager, who was only appointed in July 2024, a period of uncertainty followed. Due to staff vacancies and sickness, temporary catering staff were employed, which resulted in numerous verbal complaints about the quality and quantity of food. A new head of catering was in post before the end of the reporting period and prisoners commented on some improvement in catering standards.
- From the Board's observations, religious festivals were generally well catered for.

## **5.2 Segregation**

- A total of 1,624 adjudications (disciplinary hearings when a prisoner is suspected to have broken prison rules) were held during the reporting period. The Board monitored these regularly and found that, generally, hearings were carried out fairly.
- The process of staff finding and bringing prisoners to hearings was often time-consuming and sometimes chaotic when they were not ready or were already engaged in activities or appointments.
- Some 444 segregations (when prisoners are kept apart from the rest of the prison population) were authorised from 1,624 adjudications.
- The prison did not have a care and separation unit, where prisoners are segregated. Prisoners were usually confined to cell in their normal location, unless a wing move was required for safety or security reasons.
- Keeping segregated prisoners in their normal accommodation was often in their best interests. However, it was not always consistent with running a full regime for other prisoners on their wings.
- Frustration was frequently expressed by prisoners and staff about reduced regime, when others were locked up to allow segregated prisoners time out of their cells.
- Options were considered by management and staff for the provision of a care and separation unit.
- The Board visited segregated prisoners during all our visits, to check on their welfare. In most cases, they had no complaints about confinement and understood the reasons.
- Contrary to the requirements of Prison Service Order (PSO) 1700, the Board was not routinely invited to observe segregation review panels.
- Segregation was between one and 28 days generally and, during the reporting year, averaged 4.7 days. There were three periods in excess of 42 days (the limit allowed without external authorisation), which were referred to the Prison Group Director (PGD) for approval. These were for threatening behaviour, the safety of others and dirty protest.

## **5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers**

- There was a drive throughout the reporting year to prioritise a 45-minute session of key work per month for each prisoner.
- From January to October 2024, there were 1,036 key work sessions. In the same period in 2025, this rose by 134%, to 2,424 sessions. Quality assurance also improved, with targets being met more consistently, although further progress is still needed.
- Meaningful conversations did not seem to be properly recorded and there were issues on accurate recording of sessions, which was vital to enable prisoner

offender managers (POMs) and the offender management unit (OMU) to provide appropriate support to prisoners.

- There was a focus on remand prisoners, who were not supported by the offender management in custody (OMIC) team.
- Key work was not included in the prison officer training course, so new staff needed additional instruction. 'Training Fridays' were introduced to provide this, with a focus on improving the accuracy of key work recording. However, reduced staffing levels continued to affect delivery. Key work was not embedded in the core day, and officers were frequently redeployed from key work duties to maintain the full regime when staffing levels fell.
- The IMB observed many positive interactions between staff and prisoners. The increased use of de-escalation tactics encouraged meaningful communication between officers and prisoners. A policy of mutual respect was encouraged by the SMT.
- It was noted that there was a lack of multi-disciplinary professionals at reviews.

#### **5.4 Equality and diversity**

- The Board supported the prison's commitment to the Equality Act 2010.
- The loss of Rubies, a group for the over 50s, due to a funding cut was a major blow. Around 50 women were directly affected. The SMT were exploring alternatives.
- Disability remained the largest of the protected characteristics group. Mental illness was a key factor for over 50% of the disabled population
- There was a significant rise in the number of female prisoners identifying as male, increasing from four last year to 16 at the end of this reporting year.
- The Board received 17 applications about discrimination (compared with six in 2024). Those who met the criteria were advised to submit discrimination incident report forms (DIRFs).
- Diversity and equality action team (DEAT) meetings were well attended, and several new initiatives were implemented. These included a prisoner representative, providing updated information on all residences, carrying out more regular reviews of prisoner emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs), involving equality orderlies in induction, offering reception packs in different languages and establishing groups for transgender, older and young adult prisoners.
- There were 122 DIRFs submitted between December 2024 and July 2025, although many were redirected to the complaints procedure. The most common themes were religion, race and disability.
- The Board met with the Governor to quality-assure a sample of DIRFs in July. The standard of response was generally good. Some areas of concern emerged and were addressed.
- Prisoners raised concerns with the Board that disabled and mixed-race prisoners seemed to be over-represented on the basic (lowest) level of the incentives scheme and under-represented on the enhanced (top) level.
- Significant dates were marked by events, education or special meals.

#### **5.5 Faith and pastoral support**

- Chaplaincy was a dedicated team covering a wide range of faiths and an essential part of the prison's support system. The team offered spiritual guidance and support to prisoners from a multitude of faith backgrounds.

- It also provided daily assistance to prisoners who were segregated to ensure their needs were met.
- Attendance at chapel services continued to fluctuate this year. Several factors contributed to this, in the Board's view, such as scheduling conflicts with other essential activities, including work and education commitments, and wing staff who failed to notify attendees of services. As a result, some prisoners found it challenging to attend chapel services.
- The team's dedication and excellence was acknowledged in a strong Chaplaincy Quality Assurance and Development Report (QAD) at the end of 2024, following fieldwork in October 2024.
- In line with a recommendation from the QAD report, the equality officer provided the managing chaplain with monthly copies of all DIRF investigations and responses where faith/belief were alleged as a reason for discrimination. The managing chaplain raised any matters of general concern in subsequent DEAT reports.
- Weekly groups/corporate worship were regularly provided for: Christians/Roman Catholics, Jehovah's Witnesses, Muslims, Pagans, Quakers, Buddhists and Spiritualist prisoners.
- A Sikh chaplain was to be added to the team.

## **5.6 Incentives schemes**

- The number of prisoners on the basic level of the incentives scheme steadily rose from an average of 10 in November 2024 to an average of 22.6 in August 2025, before a fall to 15.2 in October 2025. The numbers peaked at a record high of 32 prisoners in August 2025, which was likely due to a crackdown on standards and behaviours.
- The percentage of prisoners on basic status for the reporting year was, however, significantly lower than the national average of 6%, at just 4.23%.
- Whilst it was known that the enhanced wing, Res 7, had been a fire risk for three years, advice from the HMPS National Fire Team in September 2025 resulted in the immediate closure and evacuation of prisoners from the residential part of the wing in October 2025. The move was urgent and, therefore, not well planned. However, the offices on Res 7 were considered safe for use and the IMB office remained in situ.
- Prisoners were relocated to Res 5, previously a general wing that also housed some women with some complex needs. This caused much upset and disruption to the enhanced-status prisoners, who had previously had more freedom of movement and single cells. Many were required to share cells and had to ask to be unlocked if they were on early work shifts.
- Prisoners were offered a transfer to an open prison, HMP East Sutton Park, in Kent, which a few accepted. However, it is a long way for families to visit if they come from the West Country or Wales.
- The Board will continue to monitor the impact on enhanced prisoners of the new arrangements and how efforts to develop Res 5 as an enhanced wing progress.

## **5.7 Complaints**

- During the reporting period, 677 submissions were made under the Comp 1 (first complaint)/1A (appeal) formal prisoner complaints system. This represented a 37% decrease on the corresponding period during the previous year.

- The IMB monitored a random sample of 12% of the total submissions on a quarterly basis. The vast majority of complaints monitored were responded to well within the required timescale.
- In most cases, prisoners were spoken to face to face by the reviewer, and the tone of response letters seemed respectful, clearly worded and helpful.
- Whilst many complaints were not upheld, in most instances the reviewers clearly took a problem-solving approach that generally led to positive outcomes.
- Most responses made prisoners aware of the Comp 1A appeals procedure.
- The Board's observations were fed back to the prison's business hub manager.

## **5.8 Property**

- The IMB received a total of 35 property-related applications, which was a 40% increase over the previous reporting period.
- The substantive issues raised covered property theft, contraband, property not being issued, missing property, property swaps from storage, limited parcel deliveries and withheld gifts.
- A total of 30% of applications related to access to warmer clothing required when the seasons changed.
- Two applications were received concerning property delays following transfer from HMP Bronzefield.
- One application related to a parcel that was mistakenly delivered to HMP Low Newton after the prisoner's transfer to Eastwood Park.

## **6. Health and wellbeing**

### **6.1 Healthcare general**

- The primary provider of health services remained Practice Plus Group (PPG), in partnership with Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust (AWP).
- The Board believed there was a good level of service across most areas of healthcare, but shared HMIP's concerns about women with severe mental health problems having to wait too long to be transferred to secure hospitals.
- The Board was concerned when very troubled women were returned to prison from hospital, only for their mental health to deteriorate again.
- Healthcare delivery was monitored and reviewed through regular meetings between partner agencies, supported by a local delivery and quality board (LDQBs) involving all areas of healthcare and the Deputy Governor, which met every 6-8 weeks.
- Delays to appointments, due to slow vetting processes (a national issue), made it more difficult to offer consistent levels of service.
- The Board received fewer healthcare-related applications this year (52) than in the previous two years (65 and 71, respectively). The largest number (16) related to medication issues, many due to prisoners challenging reductions in their prescriptions following full medication reviews.
- There were nine applications relating to mental health issues: five regarding alleged inappropriate care; and four complaints about staff. Healthcare managers were uniformly helpful in responding to the Board queries, clarifying actions taken and reasons (where possible and within the constraints of patient confidentiality).
- A significant number of applications were difficult to categorise, but prisoners generally appeared to have been seen and their issues discussed.
- Eastwood Park became the first women's prison to acknowledge healthcare issues around menopause.

### **6.2 Physical healthcare**

- The healthcare department remained extremely busy, with a high proportion of prisoners having significant issues. Total appointments and contacts offered for September 2025 amounted to over 5000, including mental health (810), substance misuse (1222), GP (307), dentist (125), physiotherapist (41) and optician (63), plus nurse contacts at over 2600. Successful contacts varied between 80% and 90% for most of these.
- New prisoners appeared to have had access to health professionals daily in their first week in custody.
- Prescriptions matched those high numbers, at over 4300 for September 2025.
- Methadone remained the most frequently used treatment for opiate dependence, but its use was falling, with an increase in the long-acting injectable alternative, Buprenorphine, and the fast-dissolving wafer, Espranor.
- Patient satisfaction with healthcare was monitored and reported regularly by the prison: it varied between 81% for the quarter ending June 2025 to an unexpected 60% for the quarter to September 2025. Managers shared and scrutinised the data at the regular LDQBs. It was thought that problems getting from wings to appointments lay behind the lower figure and measures were implemented to address this (Pathways passes).
- PPG managers have secured funding to establish a health hub in the prison, where women can have scans and minor procedures that would otherwise

necessitate hospital visits and escorts. This should increase uptake, address issues of privacy and decency, and have the benefit of fewer officers needing to be off the daily regime for planned escorts.

### **6.2.1 Perinatal care, mother and baby unit**

- Specialist pregnancy, mother and baby liaison officers (PMBLOs) and midwives screened new prisoners and assessed those who were pregnant or had recently been pregnant to ensure follow-up physical and mental health support was offered.
- Those with children in extended family or alternative care were made aware of what help could be given to maintain family relationships.
- The number of pregnant prisoners appeared to be falling, possibly as courts look to use custody as a last resort.
- The number of mothers with babies or toddlers up to the age of 18 months (or, exceptionally, two years) living together in the prison fell. Sometimes, there were as few as two mothers and babies residing on the 12-bed MBU, rising to four or five at most.
- From the Board's observations, the multi-agency assessment and decision-making process for admission to the MBU was rigorous: the child's best interests were paramount and the safety of other babies and mothers on the unit were fundamental.
- Full-day contact visits were facilitated on the MBU to enable some mothers to spend time with their children living in the community ahead of their release.
- Release on temporary licence (ROTL) was sometimes offered to mothers in order to support their children moving to family or other carers.
- It was extremely rare for the Board to receive applications from prisoners on the MBU. There was a good support system, involving PMBLOs, nursery officers and a range of health professionals.

### **6.3 Mental health**

- There had been a reduction in support for some of the most vulnerable women in the CBU, and those who should have been in secure hospitals remained in the prison for far too long.
- The Board shared concerns about delayed transfers and that there had been a loss of art therapy and music sessions.
- The health service manager acknowledged the continuing difficulties in that the psychiatric intensive care units (PICUs) had raised their thresholds and were focusing on urgent treatment and early discharge, while secure services were often reluctant to accept women with severe mental illness when their offences were less serious.
- In a review of Mental Health Act (MHA) transfers January to June 2025, there were 13 referrals in total. Two were declined and eight met the 28-day deadline for transfers.
- The main issues delaying the transfer of women to hospitals were the home areas not assessing in a timely fashion and the availability of hospital beds (outside the control of AWP). The trust prioritises work on transfers and now makes a safeguarding referral when it has breached the 28-day deadline, so this is recorded and unmet need highlighted.
- The mental health team continued to provide fortnightly training sessions for CBU officers and monthly sessions for early-days staff.

- In September 2025, a fairly typical month, some 92% of appointments were completed and over 92% of urgent referrals were seen within 48 hours.
- Regular liaison with the Nexus psychology services team, which works with those on the personality disorder pathway, aimed to identify and support those with mixed clinical needs.

#### **6.4 Social care**

- Services were provided by the local South Gloucestershire council, with a small team that assessed and provided practical aids and adaptations, as well as made comprehensive assessments for those with complex needs.
- A few prisoners (usually around three or four) had complex social care plans, including one woman who spent some time in a community rehabilitation placement before returning to the prison.
- Those with intensive needs for personal care required peripatetic staff to come in from their community base to provide this. Vetting delays caused problems with providing sufficient care and continuity of carers.
- There were some early discussions with the local authority about whether the prison might provide some social care services directly. This could offer a more flexible, responsive on-site service, address vetting issues in the longer term and provide more consistent support to these staff.
- There was just one application to the Board regarding social care.

#### **6.5 Time out of cell, regime**

- Time out of cell improved as delivery of the regime became progressively more consistent over the reporting year. Staffing levels improved and there appeared to be a concerted drive to ensure that all prisoners attend purposeful activity, whether education or work. Any absenteeism was only tolerated if authorised.
- The complex profile of the prison population, particularly in the first half of the year, had a negative impact on the regime due to the management of individuals who frequently self-harmed and required constant supervision, as well as segregations. This resulted in restricted time out of cell for sections of the general population, which bred resentment. The IMB received multiple applications on this matter.
- Res 7 closed at the end of October and the residents were decanted to Res 5, a general population wing. The IMB received applications about this, as their enhanced status and time out of cell were restricted, along with having to cell share. This created general upset.
- The gym continued to be popular, with 44% of the population confirmed as using the facility. Earlier in the year, when staffing levels were tight, gym staff were subject to cross deployment to other duties, impacting the gym routine. The 12-week Fitness for Life programme had a good take-up, driven by the encouragement and support of the gym staff.
- Prisoners spoke to the IMB enthusiastically about their increased levels of fitness and how they valued their gym sessions. The IMB observed some of the most vulnerable prisoners participating in gym sessions.

#### **6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation**

- Prisoners had access to the drug recovery community (DRC), a 12-week programme to promote abstinence based on the ethos of the 12 steps of Alcoholic Anonymous. The rolling programme was available to prisoners who had

12 weeks left on their sentence, or 12 weeks prior to any court date for those on remand.

- All participants were required to demonstrate good behaviour and commit to full engagement with every aspect of the programme. This included daily group meetings, assignment work, weekly one-to-one support, drug testing and attendance at weekly Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous or Cocaine Anonymous meetings.
- Mutual-aid meetings were also opened up to other prisoners around the prison who were working with the substance misuse team and, on average, 20 prisoners attended this weekly.
- During the reporting period, 46 prisoners passed through the DRC programme. Of these, 21 completed the full programme and graduated: four of these went on to rehabilitation, with two graduating.
- Six prisoners were released before completing their 12 weeks; nine prisoners were removed for various reasons; and ten prisoners completed successful detoxes.
- From the Board's observations, substance misuse in-reach continued to flourish, with many area teams holding multi-disciplinary morning sessions to look at supporting prisoners on their release. Discharge boards continued to support this procedure.
- The substance misuse team continued to support prisoners who had confirmed positive mandatory drug tests (MDTs).

## **6.7 Soft skills**

- Last year, the IMB reported location difficulties for some activities, including the over 50s craft group. This year, the facilitator (who delivered both craft and bereavement sessions) was made redundant in April, due to lack of funding, and these activities have since ceased.
- A grant was secured from the charity, Creative Engagement, enabling some craft groups to function, but there was no specific provision for older prisoners.
- A grant for bereavement counselling was made to the charity, Cruse, but was rejected as there was no Cruse-trained counsellor.
- The digital platform service donated a small grant to fund a facilitator for the Shannon Trust charity, which helps prisoners learn to read and improve their numeracy skills (see 7.1). The Shannon Trust supported the book club on every wing.
- Tier 2, prisoner-led activity afternoon were held on the wings, offering recreational, wellbeing and enrichment sessions, including book groups and art sessions.
- The Nelson Trust supported prisoners with workbooks, housing, sign posting, support in court via video link and liaising with other agencies.
- Some funding was secured from the National Women's Health Review (November 2023) to provide regular weekly drumming sessions.
- Information for all the above was displayed on wings and noticeboards, with additional encouragement from the safer custody orderlies (trusted prisoners who take on work to provide services that contribute to the running of the prison).

## **7. Progression and resettlement**

### **7.1 Education, library**

- The head of education, skills and work left in June. The post has been filled, but the new appointee is still awaiting vetting. To mitigate any issues, the prison has temporarily promoted an appropriately qualified member of staff into the position.
- Attendance at education for the reporting year was 73.74% (88% in 2024; and 84% in 2023 84%). This was lower than in previous years due to a range of other activities that were acceptable for non-attendance at education and also extremely high rates of sickness.
- Course achievements for the reporting period were:
  - English entry, Levels 1 and 2: 92% in 2025 (94.3% in 2024)
  - Maths entry, Levels 1 and 2: 96% in 2025 (65.3% in 2024)
  - Essential digital skills: 100% in 2025 (74.3% in 2024).
- Literacy levels at induction screening found 8% of prisoners had literacy levels at pre-entry or Entry level 1.
- Basic reading needs were identified at induction, with remedial support given by staff from the Shannon Trust and prisoner orderlies.
- Education data was recorded on a new management system, Curious 2.0.
- Remand prisoners were offered the full curriculum but no access to distance learning (a national directive).
- Remand prisoners were offered the full curriculum. Access to distance learning is available to all, although it is only funded for sentenced prisoners.
- Funding was being sought to create bespoke courses aimed at women with longer sentences.
- Mobility and progression pathways (MaPs) were in place, with plans to adapt them in line with Ofsted recommendation (July 2025).
- Six prisoners were following Open University courses and 14 were taking Prison Education Trust (PET) courses.
- The education budget was cut by 30%, reducing course availability, namely budgeting and finance, personal development, ICT and ESOL (English for speakers of another language).
- Five tutors were made redundant on 31 October.

### **7.2 Vocation training, work**

- Vocational courses offered included art, hospitality and catering, customer services and peer mentoring.
- Two balers in the recycling unit were finally repaired, adding further opportunities for skill training for the prisoners.
- Workshop opportunities in the Pye building improved throughout the year, offering ongoing training and skills development.
- The change in contractors for component assembly ensured a consistent supply of parts, which the women then measured, cut and crimped.
- The furniture restoration project expanded, providing experience with a wide range of items, tools and techniques.
- A new project involved packing fish food that required very accurate measuring skills.

- Prisoners also developed useful skills in vocational activities such as horticulture and recycling, as well as barista work in the prison's café.
- As a result of all the above in vocational training, women gained confidence in applying valuable skills they could use in employment or their independent lives.
- During the reporting year, the information, careers advice and guidance (CIAG) service was operating. However, an accurate overview of CIAG figures cannot be given at this time due to national contractual problems. Currently, the system is not recording correctly.
- In the reporting year, there were 387 instances of ROTL (release on temporary licence), of which 240 were paid work. One placement with a construction company led to employment on release. This figure is lower than in previous years, as eligible prisoners took the opportunity to move to open conditions, thus reducing the number eligible for ROTL.

### **7.3 Offender management, progression and resettlement**

- In the reporting year, an individual was returned to custody from home detention curfew because an electronic tag could not be fitted. They were eventually re-released some weeks later, when an alternative tagging arrangement was put in place.
- The Board raised concerns with the Prisons and Probation Minister about a delay in transferring a disabled prisoner to approved premises, as the only adapted accommodation was located a considerable distance from her home area. This would have resulted in unreasonably long journeys for family visits. The situation appears to highlight a wider shortage of suitable provision for disabled women.
- The prison received innovation money to create a remand hub to develop expertise on remand prisoners and their needs. The prison was the Women's Lead in the National Immediate Release from Court Pathfinder.

### **7.4 Family contact**

- There were 18 applications about letters, visits, phones and public protection restrictions, which was more than in the previous year but still a low level.
- The Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT) charity supported 16 all-day contacts this year and also held adult-only social visits for prisoners without children, as well as 'quiet visits for those who find crowds and noise difficult to manage (largely neurodivergent prisoners).
- Women were offered double social visits when there was availability.
- Social video calls were well-established, with fluctuating numbers due to laptop issue. But in the second half of October, there were 22 calls, higher than average across prisons.
- Immediate family members were encouraged to attend meetings/reviews and help support complex and unwell prisoners on the CBU. This had a positive impact.
- The Board regularly observed family visits in the Busy Bean café, which was a bright, welcoming space with a play area stocked with toys for young children.
- It was disappointing that the designated outdoor space was not used.
- Storybook Mums had a good uptake, enabling mothers to record bedtime stories on DVD to send to their child.
- PACT supported 'visiting mum' sessions for Welsh women, providing assistance both to the visitor and the prisoner in more complex situations.

- A full-time PACT social worker helped women navigate family contact, while a resettlement project supported women pre and post release.
- PACT supported 12 women to attend parents' evenings via video link and an all-day event for school staff to visit the prison. This encouraged women to be more involved in their children's education.

## **7.5 Resettlement planning**

- Help was available from 12 weeks before release to set up bank accounts, write CVs, ensure proof of ID and National Insurance, plus interview preparation. CVs were sent to companies and organisations that employ or support ex-prisoners with work placements.
- There were improvements in the finance and benefit provision, with Jobcentre Plus sitting in reception and ensuring prisoners had appointments on the day of release.
- Courses were held to help prisoners get work on release, including the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) levels 1 and 2, required to work on construction sites.
- Prisoners on ROTL for work were limited to 387 individual sessions from January to October, partly, we understand, because of suitability issues. Prisoners on the enhanced level of the incentives scheme were encouraged to transfer to HMP East Sutton Park. (There is a national move to transfer eligible women to open conditions, and the criteria for open-prison eligibility are very similar to those used for ROTL. As a result, many women work towards ROTL and then choose to move directly to an open prison instead. This means that the number of women taking up ROTL opportunities is low and can fluctuate.)
- Good relations were maintained with companies including Eastwood Park Conference Centre, Gloucester Services (a service station and farm shop on the M5), EMR Recycling, Simply Cleaning Solutions, Kier and other local employers.
- Successful placements with Gloucester Services encouraged them to consider significantly expanding their ROTL programme; however, this would only be possible if suitable prisoners were available and staffing was in place to support and transport them.
- In September 2025, a board was set up to review pre-release arrangements for prisoners at both 10 weeks and two weeks before release. All relevant organisations were expected to attend, and the use of online meetings helped ensure participation from external agencies. Prisoners on short sentences or recalls were discussed, although it was often difficult to put plans in place quickly. Prisoners were not invited to attend these meetings.

## 8. The work of the IMB

### Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	14
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	9
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	7*
Total number of visits to the establishment	322

*\*Excludes two new board members who have been waiting several months for security/DBS vetting prior to formal appointment.*

### Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	26	27
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives schemes, sanctions	5	16
C	Equality	6	17
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, time out of cell	14	10
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	16	18
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	13	15
F	Food and kitchens	3	13
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	65	52
H1	Property within this establishment	23	32
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	2	3
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	5	7
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation)	25	31
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	38	28
K	Transfers	1	6
L	Miscellaneous	13	19
	<b>Total number of applications</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>294</b>

## **Annex 1**

### **Service providers**

- Building Maintenance: Gov Facility Services Limited (GSFL)
- Healthcare and pharmacy: Practice Plus Group
- Mental Health: Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust; personality disorder services provided by Nexus
- Social Care: South Gloucestershire local authority
- Substance misuse programme: Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust
- Education provider: Milton Keynes College
- Escort contractor: Serco
- Visitors centre: PACT
- Probation: HMPPS
- Library: South Gloucester Council
- Commissioned rehabilitative services: The Nelson Trust
- Specialist psychology service: Women's Estate Psychology Services (WEPS)



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