



# Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP/YOI Elmley

**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 the establishment

HMP/YOI Elmley is a local prison situated on the Isle of Sheppey which serves the courts of Kent. It was originally part of the Sheppey cluster of three prisons but is now a stand-alone establishment. The operating 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 Elmley at the start of the year was 1137 and decreased to 1043 by the end of the reporting period in October 2025<sup>1</sup>.

The ethnicity of the prisoner population was as follows in October 2025:

- White: 70%
- Black: 14%
- Gypsy Roma Traveller: 4%
- Asian: 4%
- Mixed: 4%
- Any other category: 3%

Elmley opened in February 1992. It was built on the HMP Bullingdon design and originally consisted of four houseblocks, each designed to accommodate 155 prisoners, and a care and separation unit (CSU), which can accommodate 20 prisoners. In later years, two further houseblocks were constructed, and the single cells were converted to doubles. For some time, the cells in the original houseblocks were used as trebles, although these have now been returned to doubles.

Houseblock 7 is currently under construction and is expected to be completed mid-2026. It will accommodate 150 residents.

The future of houseblock 5 has still yet to be finally decided - refurbish, rebuild, or demolish.

The prison houses remand and sentenced adult prisoners, as well as young adults. The population consists of a number of vulnerable prisoners, foreign nationals, those with drug dependency and/or mental health issues, prisoners serving life-sentences, and a growing number of older prisoners, many with disabilities.

Contracted services are:

- Physical healthcare services provided by Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust
- Mental health services provided by Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust
- Education provided by Milton Keynes College
- Maintenance provided by Gov Facility Services Ltd
- Canteen services (prisoner shopping) provided by DHL
- Library services provided by Kent County Council

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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**

#### **3.1 Main findings**

##### **Safety**

- The Board has observed the prison take great strides to engage with and support new prisoner receptions with the 'bus to bed' initiative. An officer will talk with new prisoners and explain the initial first night process. There are also safer custody red bands highlighting vulnerable prisoners, available in reception and the first night house block. These are provided to the prisoners when a vulnerability has been identified in the reception area. These are worn by the trustee prisoners with a photo identification.
- However, there are occasions when the process cannot be implemented due to excessively late arrival to the establishment due to late sittings at court or hold ups in traffic. We are assured that every effort is made the following morning to address this issue.
- Razor blades appear to be the main instrument of self-harm used by prisoners within the establishment. We have been advised that the prison service conducted comprehensive studies on the impact of withdrawing wet shave razors. It concluded that the main risk associated with razor blades was that of violence, potential weapon making and obviously self-harm implements. As such it committed to withdrawing wet shave razors and rolling out electric razors.
- In November 2025 Elmley introduced the use of electric razors. Hopefully, after a period of an amnesty for razor blades to be handed in, and then extensive searching, razors will be eradicated from the prison.
- Assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documentation should be quality assured in three layers.
- The Board has, from time to time, identified some lapses in these procedures which have been taken as learning opportunities by the prison and identified areas for improvement.
- Instances where the prison has had to resort to use of force (UoF) to restrain prisoners decreased over the reporting period, compared with previous years. The weekly UoF meeting is generally well attended by various Governor grades, custodial managers, healthcare representative and IMB member (if available); also, where possible, officer grades. From the Board's observations, the meetings are honest and self-critical in their appraisal of all incidents. Where necessary advice and recommend additional training needs for members of staff are given based on their performance.

##### **Fair and humane treatment**

- The quality of existing accommodation has continued to deteriorate due to inadequate investment to replace broken equipment and insufficient resources to provide effective maintenance.
- In the Board's view, the prison has a very effective Care and Separation Unit (CSU), which is well managed. The Board has observed the staff demonstrating great emotional intelligence and understanding when interacting with some very challenging individuals. Staff are working exceptionally hard to establish positive relationships with the residents of this facility within the context of strict rules, to best support prisoners.
- The Board believes prison's approach to promoting equality and diversity has improved significantly during the reporting period because of proactive analysis and

targeted actions by the prison. In the Board's opinion the prison appropriately considers Discrimination Incident Reporting Forms (DIRFs) in line with statutory expectations.

- Last year the prison trialled monthly meetings between house block representatives (prisoners who voluntarily participate representing the views of prisoners on their wings at prisoner/staff meetings) and senior management to discuss issues raised, this resulted in positive feedback, and many matters have been resolved in a timelier fashion, resulting in more contented prisoners.
- Key working is a vehicle to promote safer custody in prisons. Quality key working delivery at Elmley can sometimes regrettably be the first casualty when there is a shortage of staff.
- Since the last IMB annual report the prison has, in the Board's opinion, demonstrated a commitment to key work development by dedicating a custodial manager to this important task. They are working on the following actions:
  - Setting up a key work suite. Utilising noticeboards with 'how to' guides and good practice examples to support staff.
  - The custodial manager is also working from the key work suite so they are available for advice and guidance.
  - Working to ensure that all prisoners are receiving key work every 28 days.
  - Ensuring all new arrivals to Elmley receive a key work session within 24 hrs.
  - Embedding a quality assurance process.
- The IMB is hopeful that these objectives will become more achievable with the implementation of a new officer shift pattern in September 2025, and the Board will be monitoring this area with keen interest over the next reporting period.
- The unfortunate suspension of the listener scheme was outside the prisons control as it is dependent on community volunteers from the Samaritans.

Thankfully, the scheme restarted in spring/summer 2025, and prisoners do have access to 'listeners (fellow prisoners who are trained by the Samaritans to provide confidential and emotional support to their peers). They are allocated on a prisoners request and should be available 24 hours a day.

### **Health and wellbeing**

- Approximately 35% of applications to the IMB are healthcare related, mostly regarding problems with appointments, mental health needs or issues involving medication.
- At the Governors morning meeting, a member of the healthcare team reports the previous day attendance to various clinics. Invariably, there are numerous non-attendance by prisoners. As a Board, we find this extremely disappointing and frustrating. Missed appointments are due to several reasons:
  - Prisoners declining to attend
  - Insufficient staff to allow the escort to the hospital environment
  - House blocks being unaware of the need for the prisoner to attend an appointment
- In general, the Board believes that healthcare has improved during the reporting period, with a decline in waiting periods for medical appointments or assessment.

### **Progression and resettlement**

- In the Board's view, the education provision has been good during the reporting period, with improvements in the quality of teaching and the recruitment of appropriately qualified teachers.

- However, the real-time cuts of 29% to education delivery can only have a detrimental effect for the rehabilitation of prisoners.
- These are some of the courses and training which may be affected by these swingeing cuts, including:
  - Industrial cleaning qualifications (principles of cleaning and bio cleaning)
  - Laundering qualification in progress (Instructors are booked on the Level 3 award in education & training course, which has taken two years to organise, prior to this being delivered)
  - Land based activity (gardening) – new instructor recently recruited and once trained, we will review qualification delivery in this area
  - Recycling.
- Prisoners' soft and employability skills are tracked, with individual progress recorded towards communication skills, teamwork, timekeeping, problem solving, initiative, organisation, planning and reliability, etc.
- Reading, fundamental British Values, equality and diversity, personal development, and behaviour and attitudes are all supported during course delivery in both education and workshops.
- As part of the Ministry of Justice vanguard programme HMP Elmley was deemed to require an 'housing accelerator' and an 'employment accelerator' programme.
- The housing accelerator was to look at how best to improve post release accommodation for prisoners and the employment aspect to identify employment needs of this cohort of men.
- The impact of these programmes is, sadly, negligible, according to the probation team. Hence, many prisoners being released are without any fixed abode and no employment. Probation has stated that 98% of prisoners released have no fixed abode to go to. Sufficient suitable accommodation is unavailable externally for prisoners to be released to at this time.

### **3.3 Main areas for development**

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

- As was highlighted in last year's report, substantial investment is required to bring existing accommodation up to an acceptable standard, including access to clean working showers with sufficient hot water. Can the Minister advise when funding may be available to carry out these essential works?
- Can the Minister advise whether a change to the cell clearance certificates can be reviewed? The current process is clunky and time consuming for several staff members being engaged with this. An adjustment to recording of property using body worn video cameras may be a suitable alternative. Compensation claims from prisoners would also be reduced.

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

- Vocational work-based and educational opportunities for prisoners to support effective transition back into legitimate paid employment upon release is of critical importance. How will the Prison Service continue to deliver this support with a 40% cut to the budget?
- The removal of contaminated waste is allowed to build up on site. How can the Governor be expected to maintain a safe and secure prison environment when the central budget has been exhausted and the waste remains on site?

## **TO THE GOVERNOR**

- What action can be taken to revisit the contract with the washing machine repair company? At present, and throughout the reporting year, the washing machines on all houseblocks are in a very poor state of repair. The current contractor's failure to keep the machines in a fit state of repair is causing numerous prisoner personal hygiene problems. This problem is highlighted with the prisoners who require clean clothes before prayers on a Friday.
- The Board has concerns regarding prison staffing levels and the implementation of key working as intended in the offender management in custody (OMiC) model. The Board appreciates the fluctuation in staffing requirements. However, we would like to see key working given a much higher priority before being cancelled.
- The Board would encourage the Governor to expedite the refurbishment of the shower areas in all houseblocks.

## Evidence sections 4 – 7

### 4. Safety

The prison operates a safer custody review group which meets monthly to review practice to identify improvements.

#### 4.1 Reception and Induction

The prison has continued to take steps to improve practice in this area amid concerns that some prisoners experience significant anxiety when arriving in prison. The prison put in place a revised procedure during the previous reporting year entitled “bus to bed”, which seeks to make the entry into Elmley clear, informative and above all humane. From the Board’s observations, this approach has had a positive impact and we acknowledge that leaders responsible for reception and induction appear to want to improve provision.

An important aspect of reducing risk to prisoners at the point of arrival is officers taking accurate notes of the prisoner escort record and the suicide and self-harm warning form, if they are provided. Due to the pressure to get prisoners through reception and onto the designated houseblock this does not always happen.

Showers are not routinely provided to new prisoners on their day of arrival.

Providing new prisoners with access to make a telephone call upon arrival does not always occur and is particularly a concern at the weekend, as staff are not available to update prisoners’ PIN numbers. For prisoners with court applied restrictions to phone use, the prison undertakes to inform a named contact of their arrival in prison.

The prison has three prisoners who voluntarily act as ‘insiders’ to provide support and guidance to new arrivals. These prisoners are an invaluable resource and form of support.

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

**There were, sadly, four deaths in custody in this reporting year, two of which were, apparently self-inflicted, while the other two were, apparently, due to natural causes. There were also three post release deaths (within 14 days of release from Elmley).**

Whilst many prisoners report feeling safe within Elmley there remain a significant number who do not. We have identified this through either application to the IMB by prisoners or through direct conversations. Prisoners who have reported concerns often cite factors related to their mental health and worries about violence.

Since the last IMB report, the prison has begun to put in place several key strategies to make the regime safer for prisoners.

Senior leaders in the prison have identified that an effective way to reduce self-harm is for officers, through training, to understand the triggers. The prison has launched an awareness campaign called “just ask why” where officers are encouraged to spend time talking with potentially vulnerable prisoners to de-escalate difficult situations. Research within the prison has shown this to be effective. The Governor responsible for Safer Custody has recorded a noticeable drop in self-harm and self-isolation by the prisoners following the introduction of the programme.

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

The prison has had 418 incidents involving violence during this reporting period.

- Prisoner on prisoner incidents: 276

- Violence against staff: 142

The causes of violence are varied, with debt due to drugs remaining the most significant reason.

The prison has a self-isolator strategy. The number of prisoners self-isolating varies. However, the prisoners self-isolating who we have spoken to are relatively positive about the scheme.

Challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIP) are a positive feature of the prison. Prisoners with whom we have spoken to refer to them as helping them move forward. Observations of CSIP review meetings between officers and prisoners show a productive and positive dialogue.

#### **4.4 Use of force**

The prison operates a weekly meeting where instances requiring UoF are reviewed from the preceding week. This is attended by a combination of senior leaders and senior operational officers supported by an administrative officer.

The weekly UoF meeting is, in the Board's view, highly effective in both reviewing and identifying learning points to improve practice. Each instance is reviewed, and this is followed up by an analytical assessment of what went well and what could have been done better.

The prison has worked to ensure that the weekly UoF meetings are seen by prison staff as positive and part of a culture of learning. To develop this, the inclusion of junior officers on a rotational basis at the meetings is contributing to a broader organisational awareness of the need for consistent good practice.

Whilst body worn video camera (BWC) equipment is new and in good working order, the prison has a less than effective CCTV system. This on occasions has prevented a comprehensive review of UoF instances. Given the importance of this area, care should be given to ensure ongoing investment in the necessary equipment.

Through the introduction of rigorous audits surrounding the wearing of BWC, prison leaders can now pinpoint where low take-up of cameras is occurring. This has been helped by the introduction of new equipment which replaced the older cameras that often failed and led to a lack of confidence in their use. There has been greater focus on BWC being switched on at the appropriate time to capture the lead up to, and justification for UoF.

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

The security team keep records of items found on targeted searches throughout the prison. During this reporting period 344 such searches were recorded, which resulted in the finding of illicit items on 177 occasions. This relates to a 51% success rate, which is in line with that stated in our last report. It should be noted that some such searches produced more than one item. There is increasingly grave concern, not only at Elmley but in all the closed establishments, regarding the use of drones, and there were 17 incidents of drone activity reported at Elmley during the reporting year. The Board would encourage the Minister to explore every avenue possible to eradicate this growing and dangerous activity.

There have also been 82 mobile phones confiscated during searches in this reporting period.

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

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

The cells at HMP Elmley appear tired and in some areas are in poor condition. The completion of houseblock 7 is expected in early summer 2026. It will be imperative that the Governor is afforded all the resources that are required for the successful operation of a full and constructive regime in the new houseblock.

A decision on the future of houseblock 5 is yet to be finalised. However, because of the significant fire risks, major works would be required to comply with current fire safety regulations.

As a result of the unpredictable numbers of prisoners being received daily there appears to be a problem with the first night accommodation process. Houseblock 1 receives prisoners for their first night in custody, but there are regular cell moves late in the evening where prisoners are moved to alternative accommodation within the houseblocks to make available space for the new arrivals. This is both disruptive and a poor reflection on planning by HMP Elmley. As a receiving prison for the courts in the Medway and Kent, the Board would like to see some forward planning in place to alleviate this problem. The prison has identified the late arrival of some prisoners i.e. after 20:00 hours as a problem and has rostered one prison officer to work until 22:00 hours in addition to the standard staffing to ensure prisoners are appropriately received into the houseblocks. There has also been the addition of an early days in custody manager introduced, to help smooth this initial pathway into prison custody.

#### **Personal hygiene**

Hot water provision for showering and attending to personal hygiene has been a huge problem for prisoners on all the houseblocks. Hot water may only remain flowing for a matter of a few minutes at a time during the core day due to a fault in the system. The onsite maintenance provider seems to be unable to find a permanent solution to this ongoing problem. This has obviously been a constant cause of distress and frustration to the prisoners.

Shower areas remain of a substandard nature on all the houseblocks. Some are more effectively cleaned than others. However, overall, the cleaning and reliability is of a low grade. Along with some infestation with insects and poor maintenance (lifting/loose tiles, non-existent tiles) the overall quality of shower facilities is poor.

Again, the time taken to address these ongoing problems is unacceptably long. Numerous amounts of prisoners have informed the Board that because of the poor state of the showers and the low number of cubicles available, they have chosen to boil water in their cells and have a strip wash from the sink. This goes against the prison's own narrative in the prisoner's induction booklet which advises 'regular showers and washing will help prevent the smell of body odour and encourage high standards in personal hygiene' and is not what the Board would consider a fair and humane standard of living.

### **5.2 Segregation**

The care and separation unit (CSU) is, in the Board's opinion, a well-managed area of this prison. The staff have been observed demonstrating great emotional intelligence and understanding when interacting with prisoners. This helps establish positive relationships with prisoners within the context of strict rules and prisoners are invariably polite and well-mannered with the staff when they are allowed out of their cell for the morning regime.

As a Board we have found the CSU staff very accommodating during this reporting period when the morning regime unlock is monitored. We see the residents of the unit separately unlocked and can see them walking, talking, and selecting their choices of meals, and if they want, exercise, shower, and phone call. It is very rare that prisoners have any complaints, they are usually positive about the support and treatment they receive from the officers.

The IMB has monitored GOoD (good order or discipline) reviews and adjudications (disciplinary hearings when a prisoner is suspected of having broken prison rules) throughout the reporting year. They are chaired by a Governor on a rotational basis. Invariably, the Board observed prisoners being treated fairly by the process and on almost all occasions prisoners told the IMB that procedure was fair and they were content with the outcome.

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

From general observations, interactions between prisoners and staff are mutually respectful on most occasions. The prison officers seem to know prisoners on their wings and can interact appropriately with them. A majority of the prisoners spoken to say that their treatment is fair and humane. Gathering concrete evidence where concerns are raised is difficult as the events are not recorded or reported to the prison staff. The percentage of prisoners making representation against a prison officer over the reporting year is approximately 0.35%.

The prisoner/staff forums meet once a month with prisoners representing their wings. Open discussion with the staff and prisoners is encouraged and feedback to the prison wing residents is clear.

#### **Key working**

As a Board, we have noted that the amount of allocated time for key working fluctuates greatly from day to day and week to week. This remains below the expected standard as highlighted in last year's IMB report.

Key work delivery expectations are set via the annual regime planning process. The core expectations for key work delivery are that prisons must utilise all their allocated resource for this task and that it must be profiled. Prisons are encouraged to deliver at least two key work sessions every four weeks and target any remaining resources at an enhanced offer for individual prisoners based on an assessment of risk, need and cohort prioritisation.

A change to the staff working patterns in September 2025 may go some way to reaching these goals.

### **5.4 Equality and diversity**

The Board believes that the prison endeavours to ensure that residents who fall under the nine protected characteristics are cared for: age, race, religion/belief and sexual orientation are all considered. During the reception period, the prison gathers information of the characteristics so that appropriate accommodation can be found for the prisoners. Houseblock 6 has a spur for prisoners with neurodiversity, as well as accommodation for elderly and disabled prisoners. The access issue for some disabled prisoners remains problematic and until completion of houseblock 7 this will not improve.

The prison collects data during the induction programme and allocates prisoners to the most suitable houseblock for their specific needs.

Houseblock 3 has a 'drug free' and 'alcohol free' spur for those prisoners who wish to remain that way.

The prevalence of illegal products such as drugs and alcohol (called 'hooch', an illicitly brewed alcohol) remains a massive problem for the prison as a whole. However, the Governor and staff are working hard to reduce the pervasiveness of these items. A programme of cell searches is ongoing. Intelligence led searches are also undertaken.

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

The chaplaincy within HMP Elmley is welcoming to all faiths. There is a 24-hour faith leader available to all prisoners should they need their support. A daily review of new prisoners is undertaken by the team and support offered if required. Also, there is ongoing care available to all who require it.

In addition, there are courses available which include, exploring Christianity, Catholic studies, Islamic studies and bible studies. Prisoners can also access various religious literature, i.e, Bible, the Quran, the Torah, the Vidas and Bhagavad Gita and the Tripitaka. Prisoners speak positively about the work of the chaplaincy and, as a Board, we work very well together.

### **5.6 Incentive schemes**

When prisoners are received to the prison, they are placed on the standard level of the incentives scheme. If, after three months, they have demonstrated positive behaviour, this can be raised to the enhanced level.

Basic level can be imposed when the individual behaves against prison rules. Regular reviews of the basic regime are undertaken so that the prisoner can rise through the regime levels. The basic level can see a reduction in privileges such as, visits reduced to two per month, loss of television and audio equipment, a loss of the right to work and earn a wage whilst in prison.

### **5.7 Complaints**

Complaints are handled by a team within HMP Elmley. All prisoners are encouraged to initially approach their houseblock prison officers before completing a complaints form, as most issues can be resolved by this course of action. Most complaints are addressed within the seven working days expectation of the prison.

Inevitably, complaints that remain an issue for prisoners come to the attention of the IMB.

The following is a list of written applications/complaints the Board received during this reporting year.

- Missing property, miscellaneous property problems: 74
- Healthcare: 47
- Staff/prisoner relationships: 31
- Wages, finance (private cash): 24
- Sentence related (release dates, re-cat): 14
- Accommodation: 13
- Food: 7
- Education: 7
- Transfers: 7
- Equality: 4
- Adjudications: 3

## 5.8 Property

The transfer into HMP Elmley seems to be a key area where items of property are mislaid or missing. These can be of low or high monetary value – but the items can be of immense personal value to the prisoner. There has been an occasion during this reporting period when a prisoner provided evidence of a high value watch and gold ring being handed over on arrival. Upon receiving a complaint from the prisoner, a member of the IMB reviewed his property list and there was no recording of the watch or ring. However, the prisoner did have a copy of receipt. These items should have been placed in the cashiers' valuables safe as per protocol. Unfortunately, both watch and ring cannot be traced with the prisoner having to resort to the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman for compensation.

The majority of prisoners arrive at the prison in the late afternoon or evening, when the various courts have recessed for the day. Obviously, numbers of prisoners can vary considerably ranging from a few to as many as the late twenties and on occasions more. We suggest that the challenging of processing so many prisoners could be where discrepancies can and do occur in the receipt and recording of property from the courts, police cells or delivered by Serco, who are just as responsible for the safe keeping and delivery of prisoner's property.

There are also occasions when a prisoner must leave their cell for a period of time, i.e. if they are being held in the CSU, or to attend a hospital appointment or court appearance. On their return, there have been occasions when the prisoners' possessions have been taken/stolen from the cell. The IMB has identified that the policy on clearing a cell is on occasion not being adhered to by staff, resulting in more complaints about missing or stolen property. The Board has also observed times when the correct paperwork has not been completed and, on occasion, property is lost by officers.

The concern regarding the loss of prisoners' property whilst they are absent from their cells and subsequent theft of items has been drawn to the attention of the governor during BoD meetings. When on the wings the IMB members will raise this with the prison officers when an application has been received.

We strongly suggest more care and diligence be taken to secure the cell when any prisoner has to leave his accommodation for a reasonable amount of time.

## **6. Health and wellbeing**

### **6.1 Healthcare general**

After diligent calculations of the numbers of applications to the Board for healthcare reasons have halved in this reporting year. Last year 45% of applications received were for health reasons (mental healthcare and medication). This year the number of applications regarding all healthcare is just over 20%.

The Board still receives complaints that there are lengthy delays in gaining medical appointments.

Oxleas has delivered healthcare since April 2022 and judging by the reduction in IMB applications there is strong evidence that provision is improving.

### **6.2 Physical healthcare**

Waiting times for appointments have reduced significantly during the year according to both prison records and our own monitoring observations.

The Board receives concerns from prisoners about changes to their medication, which is sometimes different to what they had been prescribed in the community. We have been reassured that any changes made are strictly in line with guideline and are appropriate.

On occasion, prisoners do not attend medical appointments: on average, 14% of medical appointments are missed and sometimes this has been as high as 25%. This can be because of a prisoners' refusal to attend or because they have not been unlocked by houseblock staff due to staff shortages. The Board finds this a reprehensible waste of a valuable resource.

### **6.3 Mental health**

Oxleas has improved the provision for qualified mental health nurses over the reporting year. This is encouraging, as many of the prisoners have complex mental health needs that affect their behaviour and the level of support they require.

On occasions, prisoners with mental health needs are placed within the in-patient department (IPD). The Board has witnessed prisoners displaying very distressing behaviour that makes the atmosphere unsettling and frightening both for the individual concerned, others located in the IPD and staff.

The assessment and transference of prisoners who require secure mental healthcare accommodation can sometimes be very protracted. We would urge all agencies in this procedure to expedite these transfers for the good of all concerned.

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

**The Board has been heartened by the implementation of a new shift pattern in the late summer of this reporting year. The Governor and staff are optimistic that the new shift working will provide more staff to maximise time out of cell for all residents of houseblocks.**

Prisoners have access to table tennis, pool, and snooker provisions but this is restricted during high-risk times, such as serving mealtimes, otherwise they are freely available for use.

It should be noted that orders have been placed to replace some recreational equipment, including pool cues and table-tennis bats. Staff are currently planning competitions for over the festive period which will include prizes.

All the houseblocks and the IPD have exercise equipment in their yards.

## **7. Progression and resettlement**

### **7.1 Education**

**The Board was appalled to be notified, mid-reporting year, that the education budget would be slashed by up to 40% for the coming educational year. While HMPPS insists that budgets have not been cut but that the cost of delivering high-quality education has risen significantly, either way the outcome is the same: the latest HMPPS figures show that Elmley has seen a 29% reduction in education delivery. We find this totally inconsistent with one of the main objectives of time in custody, which should be rehabilitation and training.**

Attendance for education and vocational training has been a concern for the Board throughout this reporting period. In view of the draconian cuts that have been applied to the education budget, the Board would implore the Governor and the senior management team to ensure that all measures are taken to make sure that if a prisoner is due to attend education, vocational training or workshop, they are able to. Therefore, using these now limited resources to the max.

Teaching that has been observed during the reporting period has been of good quality and prisoners are usually very positive about their experiences in education classes.

The Shannon Trust provides excellent training for prisoners to support other prisoners with reading.

The Vanguard programme never reached its full potential within the prison with the representative of government failing

to attend.

### **7.2 Vocational training, work**

The prison provides many opportunities for prisoners to work. Work is available in houseblocks, kitchens, laundry and general cleaning duties. In addition, there are numerous roles available for prisoners to support other prisoners. Prisoners value work opportunities as it provides a sense of purpose and money.

The prison delivers a dual curriculum of accredited and unaccredited training programmes that can be accessed equally by both remand (unsentenced) and sentenced prisoners. Remand prisoners can access most workshops and wing work. However, they do not meet the criteria for some vocational courses that are designed to support employment on release for sentenced prisoners, 12 weeks prior to release.

The IMB has noticed that the employment of a land-based activity instructor (gardens) has made a noticeable improvement to the aesthetics of the gardens and outside areas.

In addition to this, the Board has been informed that the prison is implementing a project in which staff will oversee a prisoner work group that will be responsible for the refurbishment and installation of whitewood furniture in all prisoner accommodation and some redecoration of houseblocks.

Potential employers attend the prison to advise them that they are happy to employ ex-prisoners. These include Cooks, Timpsons and Iceland. They attend the prison periodically to make prisoners aware of the opportunities available to them on release.

## 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	4
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	5
Total number of visits to the establishment	209

### Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	2023-2024 reporting year	2024-2025 reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	8	13
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	9	3
C	Equality	1	4
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	10	7
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	6	14
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	5	10
F	Food and kitchens	14	7
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	70	47
H1	Property within this establishment	13	36
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	6	20
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	5	4
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorization	6	14
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	22	31
K	Transfers	2	6
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system		18
	<b>Total number of applications</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>234</b>

## **Recommendations**

- Given the importance of this area, care should be given to ensure ongoing investment in the necessary equipment
- The Board would encourage the Minister to explore every avenue possible to eradicate this growing and dangerous activity where illicit items are concerned.
- We strongly suggest more care and diligence be taken to secure the cell when any prisoner has to leave his accommodation for a reasonable amount of time.
- The assessment and transference of prisoners who require secure mental healthcare accommodation can sometimes be very protracted. We would urge all agencies in this procedure to expedite these transfers for the good of all concerned.



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