

IMB BUSINESS PLAN

2025-26



Monitoring fair and humane treatment in custody

Independent Monitoring Boards are made up of over a thousand unpaid volunteers operating in every prison in England and Wales, and every immigration detention facility across the UK.

IMB members are the eyes and ears of the public, appointed by ministers to perform a vital task: independent monitoring of prisons and immigration detention. They report on whether the individuals held there are being treated fairly and humanely and whether prisoners are being given the support they need to turn their lives around. This can make a huge difference to the lives of those held within these facilities.

Looking back: Achievements against the 2024-25 business plan

The voluntary sector has recently experienced a reduction in volunteers. The voluntary landscape has changed notably since Covid. People are choosing to prioritise different aspects of their lives beyond volunteering and when they do volunteer, they want to do this when it suits them in a way that suits them.

The IMB role is a demanding unpaid role, that requires regular commitment from its members. We have seen the membership numbers decline substantially since before the pandemic, from around 1600 members to a low of 1000 members. In order to sustain this important role the IMB National Board has set a new strategic direction for the IMBs: 2024-25 was year one of this three-year strategy. The new strategy will:

- sustain the role of the IMB
- bring consistency of approach to the monitoring role while allowing Boards some flexibility of operation;
- raise standards; and
- move towards a culture of 'One IMB'.

Extensive consultation, including a large-scale survey of members to gather insights on the organisation's future direction, has taken place with the existing IMB membership, with a focus on 6 key topics:

- Role expectations, including time commitment
- The ongoing role of applications, the importance and the method of taking complaints from detained people
- Clustering, what this could look like and whether it's considered feasible for some Boards
- Complements i.e. the number of members on each Board, what might this look like in light of the new role expectations and approach to applications

- Remuneration, are there some roles that should receive a small financial recognition for contribution above and beyond the expectations of the core role
- The relationship with HMI Prisons and how we can capitalise on shared intelligence.

The focus of the 2024-25 business plan objectives was on working through the membership to develop role expectations; define the role of applications; and to consider the feasibility of clustering Boards. We have also developed a proposal for supporting the IMB through a network of members to help and guide them in applying the changes that are to come.

This was alongside business as usual activities, including:

- Conducting three recruitment campaigns and raising the profile of the IMB taking our membership back up to 1200 for the first time since before the pandemic
- Supporting Boards to produce their annual reports and advising on how HMPPS responses to issues raised could be improved
- Working with the membership on delivering a programme of training to new members as well as Board leaders and delivering CPD events to members, such as lunch and learn sessions and study days
- Providing day-to-day support to Boards to help them meet their statutory duties
- Conducting a complete overhaul of the members' website
- Developing technological support to the membership and IMB staff
- Producing thematic reports, responding to inquiries and consultations, and building relationships with policy colleagues in order to escalate IMBs' findings and to influence positive change
- Continuing to contribute to the National Preventive Mechanism, particularly as a steering group member

Looking forward: Plans for 2025-26

This second year of our three-year strategy will capitalise on the work already achieved on the strategic objectives in 2024-25. 2025 will be a year of consolidation. We will work with the membership to further develop the outputs from 2024-25 and to develop an approach to Board complements based on the new expectations and applications proposals. We will align and launch the new ways of working towards the end of 2025. This will be the start of a 'year of change' whereby Boards will be supported by a network of members to move towards the new requirements by a defined date. The change will be different for different Boards and support will be offered proportionately.

Business as usual will continue alongside. In addition, we will review our EDI approach across the organisation, including monitoring through an EDI lens. We will also continue to build our technological solutions.

We have an exciting but challenging year ahead.

Strategic objective 1: Deliver effective statutory monitoring.	
1.1 Raise public awareness: Use effective national communications through multiple channels to increase awareness of and interest in applying for the IMB. Measure outcomes.	Business as usual
1.2 Member recruitment: Deliver a joint recruitment approach that uses staff and member resource efficiently and effectively; prioritises need; and meets the Public Appointments Code. Measure impact through KPIs and revise the approach as necessary.	Business as usual
1.3 Future Recruitment model: Devise an approach that supports the recruitment of members under the new IMB strategy, reflecting the new role requirements where necessary, any new complements and clusters of Boards and supporting reasonable adjustments.	New
1.4 Member appointments: Ensure members are appointed according to a robust appointments process that applies the right level of assurance and puts in place any required mitigations.	Business as usual
1.5 Member training: Review the training offer with a view to developing a training strategy that aligns with and supports the new strategic direction; applies a collaborative model of delivery through both staff and a wider network of skilled members; recognises the role of professional input; promotes CPD; and applies local/regional, as well as national, delivery models.	New
1.6 Member training: Review the induction package for new members and IMB Board Leaders to take account of the strategic changes.	New
1.7 Member events: Organise member training and events, such as study days, to share good practice in monitoring. Recognise events as CPD.	Business as usual
1.8 Member support: Finalise and operationalise a new monitoring assurance model which provides assurance to the National Board.	New
1.9 Board complement: Based on feedback from members, revisit Board sizes and member allocations based on the new role expectations.	New

1.10 Expectations advisory group: Develop a definitive list of Board requirements, stress test this via focus groups and produce the final output.	New
1.11 Applications advisory group: Investigate the role of applications and link this to the work of the expectations group.	New
1.12 Clustering advisory group: Share options around clustering and consider role as part of strategic direction.	New
1.13 Strategic changes: Programme manage the delivery of a year of transformation, coordinating the delivery of strategic objectives and managing the creation and delivery of a communications plan to IMB staff and members.	New
1.14 Member communications: Desist with the members' bulletin and develop communications with members through the Monitors' Hub.	New
1.15 Relationships with other bodies: Develop operational relationships with other bodies in support of the work of the IMBs.	Business as usual
1.16 Member database: Deliver an internal replacement database which supports the membership by ensuring effective functionality in support of the business.	New
1.17 Disputes: Tender a contract for an independent investigator in support of the disciplinary policy	New

Strategic objective 2: Maximise the impact of Board reporting and Board outcomes.	
2.1 Promoting findings: Maximise the reach of reporting, using both established media and social media to disseminate IMB findings.	Business as usual
2.2 Thematic reporting: Collate, escalate and publish thematic findings to increase impact.	Business as usual
2.3 Annual reports: Oversee the local IMB annual report production and publication including providing direct support to Boards.	Business as usual
2.4 National annual reports: Draft and publish an IMB national annual report for adult prisons, YOIs and the IDE.	Business as usual
2.5 Policy influence: Suggest changes to relevant policy, guidance or legislation drawing on thematic evidence from monitoring.	Business as usual
2.6 Policy influence: Respond to policy consultations or inquiries based on monitoring findings.	Business as usual
2.7 National Preventive Mechanism: Contribute to the governance structure and work of the National Preventive Mechanism.	Business as usual

2.8 Relationships with other bodies: Develop relationships with and learn from other membership bodies in order to develop and share best practice.	New
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Strategic objective 3: Create and promote the principles of a single national IMB organisation	
3.1 Strategy: Lead the second year of the strategy with an emphasis on this being a period of development leading into a year of transformation.	New
3.2 Culture: Build a culture of OneIMB that recognises the value of the unpaid membership and the expertise of the staff.	Business as usual
3.3 Governance: Work with MoJ to develop clarity around the consequences of not delivering against the new strategic requirements.	New
3.4 Diversity & inclusion: Implement a new collaborative model, between staff and members, that ensures equality, diversity and inclusion is at the forefront of all staff and member matters.	New
3.5 Reasonable adjustments: Conduct a review of reasonable adjustments and make changes to policy and practice in order to ensure compliance.	New
3.6 Rewards: Review existing programme of recognition	New

Organisational objective: Provide business assurance in support of the IMB and LOs	
4.1 Staff structure: Embed the new staff structure ensuring that both the IMBs and LOs are supported across the team.	New
4.2 Protocols: Review agreements and MOUs with external bodies by the review date.	Business as usual
4.3 Operational policies: Update operational policies and guidance so they reflect the new strategic direction.	New
4.4 KPIs: Further develop KPIs, drawing on experience of other membership bodies, to provide more robust assurance to the National governance structures.	New
4.5 Data protection: Build and maintain robust data protection by advising on compliance, managing information requests, processing data in accordance with GDPR principles, and offering training to members on safe data handling.	Business as usual
4.6 Risk management: Effectively manage risk through the development and implementation of a responsive risk management strategy.	Business as usual

4.7 Financial management: Provide robust financial forecasting and management that supports the membership and complies with departmental requirements.	Business as usual
4.8 Assurance: Provide business assurance through regular challenge meetings with MoJ; accurate completion of non-/financial returns and commissions as required within timescales.	Business as usual
4.9 Inquiries: Respond to statutory and other official inquiries as required such as the Covid-19 Inquiry and the Manston Inquiry.	New