



# Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Risley

**For reporting year  
1 April 2024 – 31 March 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 also to the prison's records.

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

## **2. Description of the establishment**

**2.1:** HMP Risley is one of the largest category C training and resettlement prisons in the UK, with a temporary operational capacity of 1,042<sup>1</sup> male prisoners at the time of writing this report (January 2026). At the end of March 2025, it marked 60 years in operation as a prison.

**2.2:** The prison continues to be a hub for foreign national prisoners in the Northwest and Home Office Immigration Enforcement (formerly UK Border Agency) staff are permanently based in the prison.

**2.3:** At the start of this reporting period, April 2024, the population consisted of up to 200 foreign nationals, approximately 400 prisoners convicted of sexual offences (PCoSOs), with the other 400 spaces being for mainstream category C prisoners. This made the prison a complex establishment to manage, as there was a need to run two parallel regimes (the structured timetable of daily activities, routines, and services for prisoners; PCoSOs needed a separate regime to the mainstream prison population for safeguarding purposes).

**2.4:** As a result, the Prison Service decided to designate HMP Risley as a fully PCoSO establishment, including foreign nationals, and this re-roll of population started in September 2024. There was a concentrated period of population change over the next few months and by the end of the reporting period the regime was largely integrated, with only approximately 190 mainstream foreign national prisoners remaining in the prison who did not wish to integrate into the predominantly PCoSO regime. The full population change was completed by August 2025.

**2.5:** The Risley site consists of seven residential wings, and a care and separation unit (for segregating prisoners). With refurbishment and expansion over the past 60 years, most of the buildings are now at least 30 years old. All residential areas have their own outside exercise areas.

**2.6:** The activity facilities within the establishment provide 12 workshops, 14 education classrooms, and a library.

**2.7:** There is a health centre with access to GPs and nursing staff. In addition, dental, podiatry and physiotherapy services were provided. There is also a mental health team, with nurses and psychologists based on site.

**2.8:** Other facilities include a sports hall and two gyms.

**2.9:** There is a multi-faith centre / chapel, which are supported by the chaplaincy team, consisting of several ministers from various faiths.

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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**

- Regarding the changes referenced in sections 2.3 and 2.4, the IMB concludes that overall, the transition was managed well and that the change will ease some of the difficulties experienced in the past, e.g. the necessity to run two parallel regimes to protect the safety of PCoSOs whilst moving around the prison.
- Self-harm rates, which were higher than most category C prisons in the previous reporting period, reduced following the change in population. There were 852 recorded incidents in 2024-2025, compared to 1,068 in 2023-2024. This 2024-2025 number included several serious incidents and repeated behaviours by a small number of men. There were four deaths in custody during the year, compared to six in the previous reporting period (which was two years combined), all apparently from natural causes.

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

- The Board has observed that the fabric of wings A and B and, to a lesser extent, wings C and D, is degraded. This is partly a consequence of the age of the buildings but is exacerbated by the maintenance regime. The standard of accommodation, particularly showers, has continued to cause concern. Throughout this reporting period the Board has observed delays to repairs, e.g. showers, heating and burst pipes. Temporary showers, situated outside of the wing, have been in use for A wing for several months, including through the winter, and the new showers were still not in use at the end of March 2025.
- The Board notes again the ongoing issues regarding loss of prisoners' property within HMP Risley and losses associated with transfers from other establishments across the prison estate. The system for reuniting men with their property does not seem to be fully understood by all staff across the prison. While this remains a concern, there was a slight reduction in the number of applications (written representations from prisoners) to the IMB concerning property: 45 in 2022/23 rising to 61 in 2023/24 and falling slightly to 56 in 2024/25.

##### **Health and wellbeing**

- In April 2024 Practice Plus Group (PPG) assumed responsibility for the substance misuse psychosocial care service and social care packages, in addition to the provision of the primary healthcare service. Whilst the primary healthcare service continued seamlessly, there was some disruption in the social care packages as PPG had not accounted for the need to provide carers from the start of their contract. Similarly, there was disruption in the substance misuse provision, which meant men had reduced access to the

interventions previously available to them. This was gradually addressed during the year.

### **Progression and resettlement**

- There was a shortfall of around 300 activity places required to meet the needs of the total prison population. The prison tried to address this, but there are still insufficient spaces for all men to be engaged in meaningful activity.
- The changed population caused an increase to the workload of the offender management unit (OMU). This increase was partly due to pressures around finding approved premises (specialist, community-based residences used to house those released who present a high or very high risk of serious harm) for release, which is more challenging for the PCoSO population.

### **3.2 Main areas for development**

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

- The IMB continues to be very concerned about the service provided by the maintenance contractors (AMEY) at HMP Risley. Although this has not yet required a performance improvement plan, we ask whether the Minister plans to introduce more robust methods of monitoring the quality of service and ensuring its cost effectiveness?

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

- The IMB shares the concern of prison management about the shortfall in activity places for the men. The Board appreciate that work is ongoing to try and maximise what is available and increase the overall number of places in both core (Tier 1) and additional (Tier 2) activities. What work is planned to ensure that all activity spaces are used to the maximum effect and men are adequately prepared for release?
- The IMB is concerned that property remains an issue. Whilst we appreciate that transfer of property between establishments is a challenge, there are still shortcomings on dealing with property within the establishment.

### **3.3 Response to last report**

<b>Issue raised</b>	<b>Response given</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Work and activity space availability	Plans to reopen a workshop space and the expansion of existing activity areas wherever possible and also increase Tier 2 activity	Despite considerable work to address the shortfall to address the deficit in activity places, there continued to be a lack of full-time activities for approximately 300 prisoners.
Staffing provision	Recruitment of new staff and ring-fenced time each week for staff development.	Protected staff development time each week made a considerable difference to consistency across most of the prison. The transformation of the population

		into almost solely PCoSOs with a single regime has also eased some of the staffing challenges.
Resettlement Processes	The resettlement team is now fully resourced, and collaboration with prison offender managers (POMs) and community offender managers (COMs) has significantly improved across all cases	Resettlement challenges continue and are heightened by the difficulties for men with convictions of sexual offenses to be employed on release.
Pay structure for prisoners	A review of prisoners' pay resulted in an increase in pay for all prisoners. The prisoner earnings budget increased. Where possible, prices for items that can be purchased by prisoners are set lower than the manufacturer's recommended retail price helping to keep everyday costs manageable for prisoners.	The IMB received no concerns from men about the prisoners pay structure during this reporting period.

## **Evidence sections 4 – 7**

### **4. Safety**

#### **4.1 Reception and induction**

**4.1.1:** The Board continued to monitor the running of two regimes that were implemented to protect PCoSO prisoners. At the start of this reporting period HMP Risley had three different types of prison populations, namely PCoSOs, foreign nationals and mainstream prisoners. Historically, it has been a complex and difficult environment to manage.

**4.1.2:** The prison continued to have a transient population, with an average of 205 prisoners arriving each month in 2024. The change in the population during the year resulted in an increase in the number of prisoners arriving compared to the previous period. Since the change has been completed, the average monthly number of arrivals has reduced to 142.

**4.1.3:** In general, the Board observed well-run reception and induction processes for all types of prisoners.

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

**4.2.1:** There were four deaths in custody in the year. One death was within three months of release, and all were apparently from natural causes.

**4.2.2:** The incidence of self-harm reduced significantly in the year, following the change in prison population. There are fewer issues of prisoner debt which in some cases, prior to the change in population, was given by prisoners as the reason for self-harm, as well as being under threat. Other reasons given were not having vapes available, to annoy staff and as an attempt to get out for a hospital visit or to secure a move to the care and separation unit (CSU).

**4.2.3:** There was a significant reduction in the number of men identified as prolific self-harmers. In total, there were 22 men in 2024/25 compared to 246 in 2023/24.

**4.2.4:** There was less use of illicit substances than previously. In the 2024-2025 reporting period there were 852 'under the influence' recorded incidents, a 20% decrease from the 1,068 incidents during 2023-2024.

**4.2.5:** The safety intervention meeting (SIM) regularly reviewed individuals who presented a risk of self-harm, were self-isolating or presented a risk of harm to themselves or others through arson.

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

**4.3.1:** The number of violent incidents recorded in 2024/25 (273) was lower than that of 2023/24 (337). There were 82 assaults on staff in 2024/25, a slightly lower number than in 2023/24 (93). In total, 27 of the incidents were classed as serious in 2024/25, compared to 31 in 2023/24.

**4.3.2:** Previously, a significant factor in both violence and self-harm was prisoner debt, primarily involving drugs. Substance abuse has reduced with the change in

population and it would appear that 'vapes' have become the 'currency' among the prisoners.

**4.3.3:** Since the change in population, there have not been any men self-isolating for their own protection. By April 2025 all wings except one had PCoSO men on them, so it was easier to move men to other wings if there were any concerns.

**4.3.4:** Violent incidents were reviewed routinely at violence scrutiny meetings and from the Board's observations, appropriate actions were taken.

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

**4.4.1:** There has been a decrease in the number of incidents where force was used in the 2024/25 reporting year since the change in population. Incidents were mainly associated with fighting and escorting (usually from a wing to the CSU). The incidents have been spread across all wings. Most incidents involved lower-level use of force.

**4.4.2:** There was no evidence found by the Board that the number of times force was used in incidents involving protected characteristics were disproportionate to the prison population.

**4.4.3:** The use of force review team met weekly and monthly throughout the period, reviewing a random sample of approximately six incidents, 40% of the total incidents that had occurred. The Board has recently been advised that all incidents are now being reviewed, rather than just a sample. Body worn video camera footage, fixed camera footage and officers' statements were used to aid the review. All prisoners who have been subjected to the use of force were debriefed after the event against a five point debrief plan. The body worn video cameras were activated in most instances. There was approximately 85% coverage of incidents by fixed cameras, which means that in some cases reviews were totally reliant on the body worn camera having been activated.

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

**4.5.1:** The prison has seen a reduction in drug related problems since the change in population. Naloxone, the emergency medication that temporarily reverses the effects of an opioid overdose, was introduced to the prison during the reporting period. By January 2025, 13 staff members had been trained in its administration. It was administered, saving lives during the reporting year.

**4.5.2:** The frequency and timeliness of cell searches was hampered by lack of resources. This was the case for intelligence-led searches as well as random searches. Regional search teams were deployed, but in-house staff searches were not consistent across the prison.

**4.5.3:** HMP Risley has its own full-time dedicated dog handler based on site. The use of the dog search teams was very effective.

**4.5.4:** Whilst the entrance to the prison had x-ray scanners, these were not always functioning due to staffing issues.

#### **4.6 Health and safety**

**4.6.1:** There were 21 cell fires in 2024-2025, of which 18 were judged to be deliberate. These numbers were similar to the previous year. The change in population did not result in a reduction in cell fires as there were several men in the prison with complex issues. The figures show fewer men involved in fires than previously, but there were more individuals who repeatedly caused fires. The prison had a robust policy of prosecuting those responsible, supported by Cheshire Police and the Crown Prosecution Service.

**4.6.2:** In-cell fire detection has been installed in all cells apart from those in A wing, which are planned. It is not possible for men to interfere with the detection systems.

**4.6.3:** The foam filling is exposed on some items of furniture. This increases the risk of harm during a fire.

**4.6.4:** In the winter there were a few incidents of people slipping on ice whilst walking around the site. This was due to inadequate gritting being carried out by the contractor.

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

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

**5.1.1:** Most of the accommodation blocks were in a state of poor repair. A refurbishment programme was ongoing in March 2025 after many months of delays. However, there was a regular painting programme on the wings, which kept the internal areas of the prison looking satisfactory.

**5.1.2:** Although showers are being updated and, in some areas, much improved, by the end of this reporting period in March 2025, residents of A wing are still having to take showers in a mobile shower area outside the main residential block. This was particularly difficult for the men during the winter months. There was no alternative to this as population pressures required the wing to remain open while the showers were being refurbished. At the end of the reporting period, the refurbished showers on C and D wings were still out of use and awaiting sign-off between the contractor and the prison.

**5.1.3:** The IMB was concerned at the delays in repairs and whether adequate quality checks were always made before contracts are signed off.

**5.1.4:** Vermin control remains an issue, especially in the older wings (A and B). Improvements have been made using humane traps and better management of kitchen facilities, i.e. ensuring food all food is cleared away, to help control the rat problem.

**5.1.5:** The re-roll in autumn 2024 resulted in damage to many cells by the outgoing prisoners, e.g. broken phone sockets, offensive graffiti and damage to bedding. Recent fabric checks have led to the removal of many mattresses and other bedding leading to reports of shortages, despite the prison ordering large amounts to replace the losses during the re-roll.

**5.1.6:** As the re-roll progressed and the PCoSO population exceeded the mainstream prisoners, PCoSOs were assigned work in the kitchens. Issues arose as some of the mainstream population refused to have food prepared by PCoSOs. The situation was well managed by the prison staff and the men involved were given a limited selection of pre-packed food as an alternative.

**5.1.7:** Food within the prison is adequate, bearing in mind the budget constraints the kitchen staff works under. The catering department continued to experience significant delays in the repair/refurbishment of some of the kitchen equipment.

**5.1.8:** During the year work to improve fire safety in the residential wings had to stop abruptly when the contractor was unable to continue the work due to the company's financial situation. Consequently, this resulted in a limit on the number of spaces available to take men at a time of national pressures on prison places.

### **5.2 Segregation**

**5.2.1:** In the opinion of the IMB, the care and separation unit (CSU) was well staffed and well managed.

**5.2.2:** Prisoners in the CSU had access to the library, gym sessions on the yard and acts of collective worship.

**5.2.3:** The IMB monitored the CSU regularly, including observing almost all segregation reviews. The segregation monitoring and review group complete a detailed analysis of all CSU statistics every quarter. The IMB found these reviews to be well run and completed in the appropriate timescale. The IMB wishes to credit the staff on the CSU for the diligence and accuracy of their record keeping.

**5.2.4:** The average length of stay in the CSU remained steady over the reporting period at eight days, down from 12 days during the previous reporting period. The change in the prison population resulted in significantly fewer prisoners (from 129 to 20) being segregated under Rule 53 (awaiting adjudication for allegedly breaking prison rules). Foreign national prisoners were segregated at a higher rate than PCoSOs (9% compared with 1.3%).

**5.2.5:** Mental health issues were often linked to the reason for men being held in the CSU. However, there were no uses of 'special accommodation' (dedicated cells where items such as furniture, bedding and sanitation are removed to reduce risks to men) during the reporting period.

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

**5.3.1:** Interactions between men and staff observed by the IMB were generally good.

**5.3.2:** 'Key work' sessions were not used optimally and prison managers reviewed regularly how this could be implemented more consistently, particularly during the re-roll to a single population.

### **5.4 Equality and diversity**

**5.4.1:** The prison had good systems in place for dealing with those with protected characteristics. Following the re-roll, men were more willing to take up the role of equalities representative, although they often gave up the role to take other jobs that were more likely to help them move to G wing (enhanced living). There was an equalities representative on all wings, apart from A wing, where representatives were difficult to recruit because of prisoner turnover (transfers or deportation).

**5.4.2:** Regular forums were organised for those with protected characteristics. Men appeared to speak freely at these forums. Older prisoners and disabled prisoners had a joint forum until October 2023. From this date, forums were separated to better serve the needs of the groups. A new process, 'explain or reform' was introduced whereby discussions at the forums were data-led and men were able to discuss any apparent trends. For example, where men from the black, Asian and minority ethnic population believed they have been passed over for work for reasons of race.

**5.4.3:** During the reporting period there were 47 DIRFs (discrimination incident reporting forms), of which, 29 were related to race. This is a similar proportion to that noted in the previous year's reporting period (62% vs 60%). The IMB recognises that at HMP Risley the large foreign national population during the reporting period, helps to explain these findings.

**5.4.4:** DIRFs were usually responded to within 14 days of receipt and, where this was not possible, e.g. Staff availability or complexity of the complaint, a 28-day response time was permissible. In such cases, the prisoner was informed in writing of the delay. The response process was audited externally. No cover arrangements were in place for the equalities manager, which could result in delays in response

times. The equalities manager was keen to develop some of the issues brought up in forums and DIRFs, and included them as staff training points whenever possible and appropriate.

**5.4.5:** A concern from some physically disabled prisoners was that they were prevented from benefitting from the independent living regime available for PCoSO prisoners as all the cells were upstairs and there was no other access. This is an issue for the prison moving forward as there are likely to be more older and disabled prisoners in the future who cannot access some living areas.

**5.4.6:** There were six cells adapted for use by disabled prisoners and of these, one is in use as a double occupancy cell. The induction wing was unsuitable for those in wheelchairs. Wheelchair users had to go elsewhere for a shower while on this wing. Only one wing had a lift (G wing). Staff on G wing are being trained in EVAC (safe evacuation procedure) so that disabled prisoners can be accommodated in the upper levels of this wing. As the number of older and more disabled prisoner rises because of the re-roll to a PCoSO only population, the Board is concerned that the needs of this group of prisoners cannot be met without some major adaptations to cells.

## **5.5 Faith and pastoral support**

**5.5.1:** The chaplaincy team was well regarded by prisoners.

**5.5.2:** A representative of the chaplaincy attended all segregation reviews and aimed to attend all ACCT (assessment, care in custody and teamwork – the process used to manage those at risk of suicide or self-harm) reviews.

**5.5.3:** A schedule of services for different religions was in place and an additional service for Rastafarian prisoners was included. Non-denominational events, such as a Service of Remembrance, were also organised.

**5.5.4:** The team also provided pastoral support to men who requested it, as well as taking calls from family members and prison staff who might voice concerns about men in the prison. This is particularly important now with the significant increase in the number men in the prison who are PCoSOs, many of whom do not receive any visitors from family or friends.

**5.5.5:** The chaplaincy facilitated video calls between prisoners and sick family members. Following a death in custody, for example, the chaplaincy team spoke with the man's family and supported the men on the wing where the man was accommodated.

**5.5.6:** As the number of Muslims increased to nearly 200, the chaplaincy arranged for prayer meetings to take place in one of the sports halls. The integration of the mainstream prisoner population and PCoSO men attending services for the Church of England and Roman Catholic faiths was successful.

## **5.6 Incentives schemes**

**5.6.1:** At the end of the reporting year, 2% of the prisoners were on the basic (lowest) level of the incentives scheme, a system of earned privileges used to incentivise positive behaviour, compared with 6% in the previous reporting period, 48% were on standard (the middle tier) compared with 55% and 50% were on enhanced (the highest level) compared with 39% in the previous reporting period.

This reflected the re-roll and the efforts of the prison to encourage men into meaningful work and/or education.

**5.6.2:** The scheme appeared to be very well-run and good records were kept. All new prisoners started at standard level. How the scheme operated was explained to new arrivals during the induction process.

**5.6.3:** The prison regime changed at the end of the reporting period, allowing men to spend more time out of their cells provided they are engaged in purposeful activities such as work or educational programmes.

**5.6.4:** The prison is also looking to introduce peer-lead workshops to add to these activities. Prisoners who are actively seeking employment and want to participate in the regime but have not yet gained employment were also unlocked for longer periods during the day.

**5.6.5:** Only enhanced prisoners, full-time and part-time workers, and retired or disabled prisoners had access to the evening exercise and domestic periods.

**5.6.6:** Prisoners who refuse to engage in activities and employment have less access to the open regime. Prisoners on the basic level of the incentives scheme do not have access to the evening period.

## **5.7 Complaints**

**5.7.1:** Between April 2024 and March 2025 there were 1,558 complaints from prisoners. Property and residential conditions were the main areas of complaints. Issues around property are addressed in section 5.8 below. Complaints classed as 'residential' were largely about the fabric of the building, e.g. showers, or cell damage which were a result of the re-roll. Complaints relating to PIN (personal identification numbers needed for prisoners to be able to call friends and family) were also common.

**5.7.2:** There were weaknesses exposed in terms of prison staffing of areas, which affected the wellbeing of men. Key roles, such as complaints clerk, were not covered during periods of sickness or annual leave. This is particularly important when matters must be dealt with according to a prescribed timeframe.

## **5.8 Property**

**5.8.1:** Although concerns about property issues at the end of the reporting period remained high, the prison did introduce a new system in early 2024 which led to this area of the prison being more organised than before, with a better recording system in place. On arrival in reception, property was checked and property cards were completed with the prisoner present. However, the process for reuniting men with their property, once at HMP Risley, did not seem to be fully understood by staff and this could be very frustrating for the men concerned.

**5.8.2:** The turnover in the prison population (as it moved to a PCoSO/ foreign national facility), meant that applications to the IMB from prisoners concerning property remain at a high level (61 applications 2023/24, 56 applications 2024/25). A significant number of these related to lack of reimbursement for loss of canteen when men transferred into the establishment. Although this issue was largely the responsibility of the previous establishment, HMP Risley accepted liability, and

compensation was made. However, the process was protracted and frustrating for the men concerned.

**5.8.3:** There appeared to be a big variation across the prison estate about what property and personal items the men were allowed to have in their possession. For example, X-boxes, family photographs etc. While the IMB understood the need to approve photographs, given that the population was becoming predominately PCoSOs, the procedure was not always carried out in a timely manner.

**5.8.4:** There were delays in the receipt of mail by prisoners, especially in the early part of 2025. The IMB understood that this was largely because of staffing issues within the prison. However, this was frustrating for the men involved, especially when the mail came through five to six weeks after a special event, e.g. Christmas. There were also delays in men receiving newspapers meaning they were, on receipt, out of date. This appeared to be because the process for getting the newspapers from the gate to the men was not fully understood by all staff.

## **6. Health and wellbeing**

### **6.1 Healthcare general**

**6.1.1:** This reporting period was a year of significant change, with the transfer of the contract for primary physical healthcare, psychosocial substance misuse services and social care provision packages to Practice Plus Group (PPG) commencing from 1 April 2024.

**6.1.2:** Additional workload challenges were presented by the re-roll of the prison population and ECSL 60 and SDS40 (early release schemes). The Board observed that healthcare, in general, was well managed throughout this period. Staff responded to the challenges and improvements were made.

**6.1.3:** Quarterly Local Delivery Board meetings were well attended and there was evidence of a constructive approach to identification and resolution of issues.

**6.1.4:** The Board received a reduced level of complaints related to healthcare throughout this reporting period. In the year 2023-24 IMB received 32 complaints; this reduced to 17 in 2024-25, equating to 7% of the total applications to IMB, a notable reduction.

### **6.2 Physical healthcare**

**6.2.1:** PPG primary care services provided a full range of healthcare clinics, including for long term chronic conditions, discharge clinics, daily treatments and dressing clinics. The GP held 11 sessions per week with acceptable waiting times for appointments. Physio, podiatrist and optician sessions were held four times per month plus a range of other visiting clinics e.g. X-ray and diabetic retinopathy.

**6.2.2:** The previous report by the IMB highlighted the inadequacies of dental services which then were delivered off site. The new dental suite at HMP Risley became operational in November 2023 bringing improvements which continued through this reporting period, with clinics held 4.5 days per week. Demand for treatment was high with waiting lists typically in the region of 100 to 130 equating to waiting times for first appointments between 8 to 12 weeks. Emergency treatment was available on the same day. IMB conversations with men confirmed this initial wait but reported that follow up treatment was prompt and to a good standard.

**6.2.3:** A regular concern raised to IMB by men and staff was the issue of missed appointments. It was clear that service providers were aware of the problem and tried various approaches to secure attendance. Men, however, regularly reported failure to receive notice of appointments. The Board considered this is a matter which requires closer scrutiny to secure improvement. The number of appointments not attended was high. Men have stated that, on occasions, they were notified late at night with appointments for the following day but then prison officers were unaware of them and refused to let the prisoner attend his appointment as it was not on their wing's list.

**6.2.4:** Management of medication continued to be a major task, with wing-based dispensing to C, D, E and G wings. The IMB noted that it was challenging to complete the task within timescales and non-attendance was followed up with wing staff. Men expressed concern regarding delays that impacted on their ability to get to work on time, risking being recorded as not attending.

**6.2.5:** Health and wellbeing were actively promoted through initiatives, including the appointment of men as health and wellbeing champions to provide signposting to support services, production of a health and wellbeing directory, and newsletters widely available to men and mini health checks running weekly on the wings.

### **6.3 Mental health**

**6.3.1:** The number of self-referrals over the 12 months stayed within the range of four to 20 per month, with referrals from primary care being much higher, in the range of 60 to 150 per month. The total number of prisoners at HMP Risley varied between 982 and 1030 in the 12-month period.

**6.3.2:** During the year covering the transition period from mainstream prisoners to PCoSOs, the data showed that in September 2024, 205 prisoners arrived in reception with mental health problems, 319 in October, 98 in November and 33 in December. The trend appeared to be downward as the new PCoSO prisoners were settling into the prison. The mental health team are continuing to screen referrals across the working week, with up to five prisoners seen per day.

**6.3.3:** A remodelling exercise due to the changeover of prison population was completed, with more psychological provision made available. With the assistance of residential managers, additional spaces on the wings were identified to provide additional appointment spaces for an expansion of the mental health service.

**6.3.4:** There were many instances of self-harm, with the mental health team working hard to reduce this. The team prioritised attendance at the high number of ACCT reviews.

**6.3.5:** With the changes in the prison population, there was an inevitable turnover of men who were trained and supervised as peer 'Listeners' (prisoners trained by the Samaritans to provide confidential emotional support to fellow prisoners). However, this group continued to be an invaluable resource in being available to other prisoners in need of someone to talk to.

### **6.4 Social care**

**6.4.1:** After a hesitant start, where there was no provision in place to fulfil the existing social care packages, it has been reported that there have been considerable improvements during the reporting period in this area under the Practice Plus Group contract. Needs continued to be assessed by the local authority, but PPG employed carers to deliver care services on site and worked to spread support as appropriate throughout the day. Social care packages and needs were reviewed every six months. Men were also assessed prior to release, with reports being sent to the local authority where the man was moving.

**6.4.2:** Local authority occupational therapists assessed men for a range of disability aids and adaptations, including wheelchairs. The number of men using wheelchairs or requiring a care package in the prison was relatively low (ranging from three to seven care packages and approximately eight wheelchair users in the reporting period). However, an increase is anticipated as the age profile of the prison population changes.

**6.4.3:** A 'buddy' system by which men were 'employed' to provide some care and assistance to those in need was in place and there were 97 emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs) in place to assist men with physical and/or mental health or neurological needs.

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

**6.5.1:** In the previous IMB Risley report, the concern was raised that the regime did not provide sufficient time out of cell for a category C prison. Following the implementation of a new core day in mid-September 2024, all prisoners received more time out of their cells for exercise, association, and domestic tasks. Those prisoners who were retired, disabled or working full time and had enhanced status received an additional evening domestic session which resulted in them gaining an extra 10 hours out of their cell each week.

**6.5.2:** The weekend regime remained unchanged from last year's reporting period, with retired, disabled, enhanced status and working prisoners still spending approximately 6.5 hours out of their cells. About a fifth of the population were unemployed and/or on the basic level of the incentives scheme, and whilst they were spending an extra half hour out of their cells, this still meant they were locked up for 21 hours a day.

## **6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation**

**6.6.1:** With the change of provider in April 2024, staffing issues meant the team was unable to offer a full psychosocial service. By the latter period of 2024, this had resulted in a backlog of assessments. At that time, the team was receiving around 30 referrals a day because of the number of men found to be 'under the influence' of illicit substances. To try and manage this more effectively, the residential wing managers moved those prisoners regularly under the influence near to the wing office. This enabled them to monitor men's movements, who visited their cells, etc. Disruption moves took place, as well as regular searching by the dog search team and security staff.

**6.6.2:** With the increase of prisoners found under the influence, the supervision of the dispensing of drugs on some wings was addressed to prevent prisoners not taking their medication properly and then selling it on when back on the wing. As mentioned earlier, naloxone was also introduced to the prison and staff trained in its use.

**6.6.3:** Alcoholics Anonymous offered a 12-step programme and there were around 48 men participating. Plans were also in place to invite 'Cocaine Anonymous' to offer similar support.

**6.6.4:** The opiate substitutes, e.g. methadone or buprenorphine, were prescribed to men to act as a blocker and be effective in reducing their dependence on opioids.

**6.6.5:** There is regular drug testing by prison staff on C wing, where the incentivised substance free living is located.

## **6.7 Physical exercise**

**6.7.1:** Men had good access to physical exercise both on the residential wings and through a well-structured timetable whereby men from each wing had the opportunity to book in for designated slots. Full-time workers were able to attend after work and enhanced prisoners in the time slot after that. Regular gym sessions were available with special sessions for over 40s and 60s, including seated exercise. Efforts are made to encourage activity through a programme of activities, including events such as a weekly Riskey 5k run, football tournaments, sports day, and strong man competition. Prisoners told the IMB that they enjoyed their time in the gym and look forward to time away from their wings.

## **6.8 Soft skills**

**6.8.1:** Men reported to the IMB that they regretted the loss of the previous 'retirement clubs', which had been provided by Age UK. However, the prison reintroduced these towards the end of this reporting period which was much appreciated.

**6.8.2:** The IMB also observed a 'theatre in prison' (TIP) production. This engaged and encouraged prisoners to think of the impact of their offences. It was hoped that these performances would be held every three to four months over a two year period.

## **7. Progression and resettlement**

### **7.1 Education, library**

**7.1.1:** A lack of available spaces both in education and workshops continued to be an issue. However, the men who can access education engage well and told the IMB they would like to be able to have more time in class.

**7.1.2:** The library at HMP Risley continued to be well used, with a good selection of materials, including foreign language texts. Men can request books that are not held in stock. Whilst there was still a lack of capacity, slots increased from around 800 to 1,000 visits available per month due to a revised timetable. This meant five groups visited in the morning and another four groups were allowed library sessions in the evening. However, during the population change there was a period where prisoners from A wing, primarily foreign nationals, did not have access to the library. The Board also observed sessions by Shannon Trust mentors, working to support men in improving their reading skills.

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

**7.2.1:** There were several workshops available to the men, and these were generally well attended, with the men reporting being satisfied in their work. However, there were still insufficient places in work for the size of the population.

**7.2.2:** There were issues with equipment in the laundry workshop, requiring maintenance/repair that resulted in the facility being temporarily unable to operate at full capacity and a reduction in the amount of laundry that could be processed for contract work. This reduced the opportunities for work as a result.

**7.2.3:** Vocational training was well regarded by the men, with some talking about possible self-employment after release, due to less employment opportunities being available to the PCoSO population.

**7.2.4:** There were plans to offer paid opportunities for men to do mentor work on the wings, for example, running chess clubs or reading groups. This would provide a valuable uplift in Tier 2 activities.

### **7.3 Offender management, progression**

**7.3.1:** There was a substantial churn rate, with, on average, around 50 receptions per week throughout the year and similar numbers of discharges and transfers. This rose by approximately 50% in October/November 2024 with the prison re-roll. This had a major impact on the work of the offender management unit (OMU), as staff had a significant turnover of men they were dealing with and requiring them to quickly get to know their new caseloads.

**7.3.2:** The 'Building Choices' programme started being delivered in HMP Risley as a pilot in January 2025. Priority for this was being given to men in the final year of their sentence. The Discovery Programme was delivered to men in the final 13 weeks of their sentence and focused on veterans, although other groups of prisoners were included, especially those serving short sentences and care-experienced prisoners. It was popular and there was a waiting list to join the programme.

## **7.4 Family contact**

**7.4.1:** The Board observed several family days that have been arranged by 'Partners of Prisoners' (POPs). There were a total of six POPS-run family days and two 'prison-run' family days over the course of the reporting period, catering for different parts of the population – those with families, foreign nationals, etc. These were well attended and families reported being happy with the ease of booking these visits and their treatment by staff. Family days are over-subscribed with 70 applications for 18 places on one occasion. There are also neurodivergent-friendly visits, which take place once a month. These catered for a maximum of six families at a time and have been very well received.

**7.4.2:** The changing population meant that a significant number of men do not have visits. However, the majority were reported as being in contact with family and friends via phone or video contact. POPs organised four wellbeing events for those who do not receive visits.

**7.4.3:** Family forums were also very popular, with each forum full and more families on the waiting list (a regular meeting where prisons and prisoners' families discuss visits, communication and wider support to help maintain family ties).

**7.4.4:** During the year there were some issues with letters and emails not being received in a timely manner. However, that seemed to settle after the re-roll. There were also some issues with phone numbers being approved and allocated to men, which had a negative impact on family contact.

## **7.5 Resettlement planning**

**7.5.1:** The change in population had an impact on the links between HMP Risley and employers, as many employers were unwilling to employ PCoSOs. Some work around supporting men for self-employment was carried out, for example, a course from the New Futures Network on 'unlocking self-employment' and information from HMRC around taxes, etc.

**7.5.2:** Links with HMP Haverigg (the category D prison for PCoSOs in Cumbria) were developed, as this is the most local open prison that men can progress to.

**7.5.3:** HMP Risley has been just over the national target of 90% for prisoners to be accommodated on the first night after release and a low number of men were released without accommodation. When men are released without accommodation, the risk of reoffending is increased. However, it is acknowledged by the OMU that it has been difficult to place PCoSOs, since a lot of local authorities may only have access to hotel or B&B temporary accommodation, which would be declined as PCoSOs would not be allowed to stay in a hotel where members of the public may be staying, including with children. The situation is further compounded by the multiplicity of private accommodation providers across the Northwest.

## 8. The work of the IMB

### Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	15
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	12
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	10
Total number of visits to the establishment	566

### Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	6	12
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	17	10
C	Equality	4	3
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	12	7
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	15	41
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	15	10
F	Food and kitchens	2	4
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	32	25
H1	Property within the establishment	33	29
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	28	17
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	3	10
I	Sentence management, including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	15	12
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	20	21
K	Transfers	4	6
L	Miscellaneous	15	25
	Total number of applications	221	223

## **Annex A**

### **List of service providers**

- Estate maintenance: Amey
- Resettlement accommodation services: Seetec and Ingeus
- Primary healthcare: Practice Plus Group (PPG)
- Psychosocial services: Practice Plus Group (PPG)
- Mental healthcare: Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust
- Education services: Novus



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