



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Full Sutton

**For reporting year
1 January 2025 to 31 December 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

HMP Full Sutton is a high-security dispersal prison accommodating male prisoners in category A (those whose escape would be highly dangerous to the public or national security) and category B (those who do not require the highest security, but for whom escape must be made very difficult), which forms part of the long-term high security estate (LTHSE). It is situated about 11 miles east of the City of York. It has a certified normal accommodation, or CNA (the number of prisoners a prison can hold without being crowded) of 660¹, and an operational capacity, or OpCap (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 594. As of 31 December 2025, the number of prisoners held was 580.

Full Sutton continues to hold a majority of prisoners who present significant risks to security or to the public at large. A small number of prisoners have committed offences connected with, or sympathetic to, terrorist goals and some have achieved significant criminal notoriety for other reasons.

HMP Full Sutton opened in 1987 as a purpose-built high-security establishment. There are six residential wings: A, E and F are general wings, while B, C and D wings accommodate vulnerable prisoners (those considered vulnerable due to the nature of their offence or for other reasons) and there are a number of separate, specialist units. The STEP unit is a reintegration wing for prisoners with complex needs who are leaving long-term segregation. There is also a segregation unit, close supervision centre (CSC), separation centre and a healthcare unit, which has in-patient provision.

In addition, the site includes a kitchen, an education department, a workshop complex, chaplaincy, gym, library and a visitors' centre for social and legal visits. A reception and registration centre area for prisoners' relatives is located outside the main gate.

¹ Figures included in this report are local management information. They reflect the prison's position at the time of reporting but may be subject to change following further validation and therefore may not always tally with Official Statistics later published by the Ministry of Justice.

3. Key points

3.1 Main findings

The Board's observations reflected those of the previous report, with HMP Full Sutton continuing to be a safe and generally calm prison. Governors and staff also continued to approach security, safety and prisoner welfare proportionately.

We reported on ongoing staffing concerns in 2022, 2023 and 2024. However, throughout 2025, continuing daily shortages of staff as a result of unfilled vacancies, illness, restricted duties and resignations played a major part in the prison regularly not being able to deliver the desired regime levels. This regularly required the introduction of curtailed or restricted regimes in order to maintain safety for staff and prisoners, while providing predictability for prisoners. The rotational, restricted wing rotas, which continued to the end of the reporting year, were publicised in advance for prisoners and meant that they were not, for the most part, prevented from attending work, education or gym sessions during the year. Access to corporate worship and delivery of programmes was also maintained (with the exception of a number of Friday prayer dates following the assault of a prison imam (see 4.3).

Communication about the changes as they occurred were led by the Governor through the monthly prisoner council meetings with prisoner representatives, and supported by clear notices setting out core day timings. Unfortunately, these restrictions had an impact on the delivery of regime (the structure of prison life, such as how the prison day is organised and what activities prisoners are able to take part in) to all prisoners but particularly in areas such as safer custody (see 4.2), drug testing (see 4.6) and key worker sessions (see 5.3). Regime curtailments were further extended in July to remove evening duty domestics and association periods in the evenings and at the weekend (Friday to Sunday) for the separation centre and main residential wings on a rotational basis. At this time, the close supervision centre (CSC) and the STEP unit were locked up on all weekday evenings and Friday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons. A new core day was introduced in October, removing midweek core day restrictions but retaining loss of association in the evening on a rotational basis. In this new regime, the CSC, STEP unit and separation centre prisoners were all locked up in the evenings, from Monday to Friday. These restrictions, after further slight amendments to the core day in November, were still in operation at the year end. For the most part, as noted in last year's report, the restrictions appeared to be accepted by prisoners, albeit grudgingly; however, the Board observed increased tension in some areas of the prison as frustration grew.

Despite this, from the Board's observations, a decent regime and a generally safe environment were maintained.

Safety

- Assaults on staff almost halved in 2025 compared with 2024, and the number of such assaults classed as serious fell in 2025 (see 4.3).
- In 2025, levels of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults remained consistent with 2024, with the number of incidents classed as serious unchanged, at six (see 4.3).
- The number of assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) plans (used to help manage those at risk of self-harm and suicide) opened increased in 2025, but the number of incidents of self-harm fell (see 4.2).
- There was a reduction in the number of challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs) opened during the year. CSIPs are used to help manage prisoners who pose an increased risk of violence or who require additional support through difficult periods of their sentence (see 4.3).

- In response to a serious assault at HMP Frankland (5.2), the Government announced funding for specialist training to increase local resilience within response teams in the LTHSE, which Full Sutton will be taking part in.
- Body worn armour for officers in the separation centre, CSC unit and segregation unit was mandated by the Secretary of State for Justice in 2025 (5.2).
- The facility for prisoners to cook and prepare food in kitchen areas in the separation centre and CSC unit was withdrawn in April, with these units subsequently only providing prison-prepared food from a servery (5.2)
- Access to vegetable oil for self-cooking was withdrawn across the establishment in June following a risk assessment.
- A new-style vape pen, which is harder to tamper with and repurpose for smoking illicit substances, was introduced in October.
- Disposable razors were withdrawn in December and replaced with prison-issue electric shavers in December, both as safety mitigations.
- There was a further increase in the number of young adults (aged 18-25) serving long sentences. However, the alternatives to violence programme (AVP), which started in March, together with a designated young adult custody manager, young adult mentors and tailored programmes, appears to be having a positive impact on reducing violence and incidents of self-harm within this cohort. The average segregation unit roll fell by 15% over the course of the year, but transferring prisoners to other establishments continued to remain a challenge (5.2).
- The prison held prisoners with complex needs who self-harmed regularly, and there was a further increase in 2025 of the number those who self-harmed, although the number of incidents fell by 18% (para 4.2).
- Vulnerable prisoners, and those with particularly complex needs, continued to be discussed and reviewed regularly and supported during the reporting year.
- Drug testing capacity remained reduced; however, there was an increase in the number of positive results from random testing compared with 2024. The proportion of positive outcomes from suspicion-based testing remained unchanged, despite significantly fewer tests being carried out.
- There is still no provision under the mental healthcare contract for a dedicated mental health practitioner for the segregation unit (5.2).

Fair and humane treatment

- Accommodation continues to be of a generally good decorative standard and is kept clean. However, cell flooring and shower recess areas still require replacement/repairs in many areas and issues of mould need addressing (5.1).
- Again, disappointingly, due to ongoing staffing shortages through unfilled vacancies and staff absences, rotational lockdowns and regime restrictions were in place for most of the reporting year. The CSC and STEP units were disproportionately affected by the regime restrictions and prisoners had less time out of cell in the evening period than those on the mainstream wings.
- The segregation unit average daily roll fell from 36 in 2024 to 31 in 2025, but the available daily regime was often still restricted, with showers and access to the phone not available every day.
- Segregation unit staff continued to be required to regularly deal with disruption, challenging behaviour and assaults by some prisoners, as well as a number of 'dirty' protests (where a prisoner has chosen to defecate or urinate in a cell without using the facilities provided). The introduction of door screens seemed to significantly reduced the number of times urine/excrement has been squirted

through doors at staff and other prisoners as they walked past. Treatment in the unit appeared to remain fair and humane, despite the high roll.

- Food in the prison seemed to be generally of a good standard, and access to opt-out self-cooking was retained for some prisoners in exchange for a weekly allowance on the mainstream residential wings for those on the enhanced (top) level of the incentives scheme.
- The cost of calls to landlines and to mobile phones was reduced by 20% on 1 April (5.1).
- The time during which phone lines were available for calls was increased, as was the number of minutes prisoners could spend on the phone each day (5.1).
- Focus on equalities has been hampered during the year by a high turnover of custodial managers (CMs) responsible for equalities (5.4).

Health and wellbeing

- The healthcare contracts, which had significantly affected prisoners' access to healthcare services for an unacceptable period during 2024, showed marked improvement during the reporting year, with additional services becoming available to prisoners. However, the Board is concerned about the healthcare providers' difficulties in recruiting sufficient healthcare professionals. At the end of the year there was still no seven-day service provision from the mental health services provider, some 18 months after the contract began (see section 6).
- Alcoholics Anonymous sessions were run but Narcotics Anonymous still did not get underway in 2025, as had been intended. It is unclear whether these latter sessions will now go ahead in 2026.
- Prisoners' continued to have access to employment, education, the gym and corporate worship was maintained, despite the restricted regimes.
- In the Board's view, the neurodiversity support manager (NSM) has continued to significantly raise awareness of the challenges facing neurodivergent prisoners and contributed to a much better understanding amongst staff of prisoner behaviour. Regular contacts are maintained and assessments of prisoners' neurodivergent needs are made as part of the induction process for new arrivals.
- The work of the prison chaplaincy team was hampered in the second half of the year by the absence of a managing chaplain following the retirement of the postholder, as well as reduced availability of Imams after a serious assault on one of their number. However, chaplaincy staff continued to maintain regular contact with prisoners, including new arrivals, through wing visits and daily visits to healthcare and the segregation unit.

Progression and resettlement

- There remained a cohort of prisoners serving IPP (imprisonment for public protection) sentences for whom progression continued to be frustratingly slow. Of particular concern to the Board, and distressing for the individuals involved, it was reported at several IPP meetings towards the end of the year that two IPP prisoners were approved for progression to lower-category establishments outside the LTHSE; however, they were unable to proceed because the receiving category C prisons declined to accept them.
- The unemployment rate fell to 9% of prisoners available to work, the lowest level for several years.
- The long-planned woodworking workshops once again failed to open in 2025, repeating an unresolved issue highlighted in the previous year's reports. In the Board's view, they are now unlikely to become operational until the first quarter of

calendar year 2026. This will create approximately 35 employment opportunities to prisoners.

- The STEP unit was able to progress eight prisoners in 2025 to psychologically informed planned environments (PIPE) - which support prisoners with complex emotional needs to manage their behaviour and progress safely in the prison system - or the mainstream location.
- Sufficient qualified facilitators were available to deliver offender behaviour programmes (OBP) and the majority of planned interventions and programmes appeared to be successfully completed.
- A new suite of treatment programmes, Building Choices (designed for both mainstream prisoners and for men convicted of sexual offences), commenced in August. Further courses for this latter cohort were paused until 2026 to allow for additional staff training, aimed at strengthening effective practice to support PCoSOs (prisoners convicted of sexual offences) in reducing risk, as recommended by HMIP in 2019.
- The Storybook Dads scheme continued in 2025, allowing 11 prisoners to record stories to be played to a total of 19 children.
- The new education contract allows limited provision for the CSC and other specialist units, and there are, as yet, no firm plans for what this provision will look like in 2026.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- What actions and timescales will the Minister commit to in order to ensure that the Building Choices suite of treatment programmes is rolled out more widely, enabling PCoSOs to access accredited treatment at Full Sutton and beyond? (3.1)
- When will the Minister approve a restorative justice course to replace the Sycamore Tree scheme, which was withdrawn in 2025 without any alternative? We understand that the scheme is still approved in Scotland (5.5).
- When will the Minister allocate funding for a long-term solution to the poor state of the workshop complex roof, given the ongoing issues of water leaks and the associated and risks to machinery, particularly in the newly commissioned Woodmill workshops? (5.1)
- When will the Minister commit to a dedicated funding programme to repair, upgrade or replace cell windows, which are the original windows from the time of construction of the prison? Many have deteriorated over time and become largely opaque, significantly reducing natural light entering cells (5.1).
- When, in 2026, will the Minister allocate funding to install trace heating, or similar measures, on the approaches to B wing and other wings, following the successful trial on the approach to C wing, to prevent ongoing mould growth? (5.1).
- When, in 2026, will the Minister provide funding, and how will it be rolled out, to carry out shower recess refurbishments on other wings, following the refurbishment completed on D wing's landing? (5.1)

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- When will HMPPS review the healthcare contracts introduced in 2024 with NHS England? In particular, when will this review consider additional funding to enable dedicated mental health provision for the segregation unit, given that this opportunity was missed when the new contracts were introduced in June 2024?(6.1)

- The repair and maintenance contracts are due to be re-let. Will HMPPS review the reactive maintenance contract conditions? The current arrangements allow a backlog of repairs to build up without any contractual measure to reduce it. (5.1)
- When will HMPPS take urgent steps to address the deficiencies in the IT system used in education, which is now in place since it took over the supply of IT services from the nominated education services provider at the contract changeover in October 2025? There are multiple daily connection failures and outages, as well as data input hurdles, which waste staff time and reduce access to the system for prisoners. (7.1)

TO THE GOVERNOR

- In view of the rising incidences of prisoners under the influence of suspected illicit substances and reduced drugs testing activity, apart from KPI-driven random testing, will the Governor consider other methods to ensure that drug testing teams are available more widely than currently via the MDT team? (4.6)
- Will the Governor consider ways to re-start Narcotics Anonymous in order to offer exit strategies for prisoners wishing to reduce or cease their dependence on drugs in prison? (6.6)
- A review of the former healthcare provider’s ‘over the counter’ product list of healthcare-related items that prisoners could purchase was promised in 2024 and repeated to prisoners at prisoner council meetings in 2025, but has not yet been finalised. Will the Governor undertake to conclude this review and determine what additional items could be added to the local DHL canteen list so that prisoners can purchase these items?
- Will the Governor ensure that, despite the reduced budget, there is a clear plan for the provision of educational access in the CSC, STEP unit and separation centre, where there is currently no structured support?
- Will the Governor consider the disproportionate number of evening lockdowns that the CSC and STEP units have endured and work towards a more equitable arrangement for these units?

3.3 Response to the previous report

Issue raised	Progress
Development of the STEP unit and its effectiveness as a path to breaking the cycle of segregation was only partially successful.	Largely met. More long-term STEP unit prisoners have been progressed to other pathways or back to the mainstream location, although education and work opportunities are limited.
Ensure equality meetings are held consistently.	Partly met. Not all scheduled equality action group meetings with prisoners were held or equality reports prepared for them.
Ensure that the focus on drug testing (random, suspicion and reception) is maintained and takes place to the required levels.	Partly achieved. There were several months when suspicion tests were not carried out that could have been, and reception and frequent testing programmes have been neglected due to availability of testing staff.

<p>Increase the drop-down allowance for prisoners from their private cash accounts to their spends accounts in recognition of rising canteen [the system that allows prisoners to buy approved items] prices.</p>	<p>Achieved. A 10% drop-down increase from prisoners' private cash to spends accounts was authorised by HMPPS in April 2025.</p>
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Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

Healthcare has screening facilities in reception with access to the SystemOne medical database and prisoner NHS records. Prisoners transferring in during the day receive healthcare screening on arrival. When prisoners arrive at Full Sutton in the night state, screening takes place within 24 hours of arrival.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

Prisoners with complex needs and those who present a risk, because of vulnerability or violent behaviour, continue to be reviewed at weekly multidisciplinary safety intervention meetings (SIMs), led by the Governor responsible for safety. The IMB monitored many of these meetings and we saw thorough discussions of these prisoners' needs.

The meetings are attended by representatives from safer custody, equality and diversity, mental health, primary care, psychology, wing custodial managers, residential and segregation governors, offender managers, the neurodiversity support manager, security and chaplaincy.

The meeting reviews prisoners with particularly complex needs whose behaviour may be causing concern, prisoners on challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs), which are used to manage those who pose an increased risk of violence, and prisoners subject to assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) procedures, due to self-harm and suicide concerns. It also reviews prisoners of concern in the segregation unit, transgender prisoners, young adults aged 18 to 25, and any violent incidents that have occurred in the previous week, as well as information about prisoners in debt to other prisoners and prisoners potentially bullying others. In addition, the meeting shares information about prisoners with potentially challenging issues who will be transferring into Full Sutton or who have recently transferred in.

The Board considers these meetings to be an effective forum to discuss the management of prisoners with complex needs. However, we continue to raise, as we did in last year's report, concerns about the frequency with which the safety team is reallocated to other areas to cover for staffing shortages on residential wings. This amounted to approximately 61% of profiled hours per month in 2025.

As stated in last year's report, the Board considers it preferable, where possible, for the safety team's planned hours to be ring-fenced so that they can effectively audit safety baselines, such as ACCT documents and CSIP investigations.

Concerns were raised by the safety team over the course of the year that the quality of some ACCT document entries was, at times, sub-optimal in the segregation unit and also on some residential wings. Audits of a random 10% of ACCT document entries were made by the safer custody team, comparing these ACCT entry times with reviews of CCTV for those entries. These audits resulted in an assurance that the checks were being carried out on prisoners and correctly recorded.

A total of 63 individuals committed 410 acts of self-harm in 2025 compared with 69 prisoners who committed 507 acts of self-harm in 2024. This represents a 20% reduction in acts of self-harm over 2024. Many prisoners self-harmed on more than one occasion and some on multiple occasions. Nine prisoners accounted for 228 of all acts of self-harm in 2025 (56%), with one prisoner alone accounting for 49 acts of self-harm (12%).

A total of 227 ACCT documents were opened in 2025, an increase of 43% over the 159 ACCTs opened in 2024, involving 90 prisoners, with some having ACCTs opened on multiple occasions. The IMB observed a small number of ACCT reviews during the year, but monitored the management of these through the weekly SIMs and from statistical information distributed daily.

The number of Listeners (prisoners trained by the Samaritans to offer confidential and emotional support on a rota basis to fellow prisoners) was 25, across all wings, compared with 15 Listeners available at the end of 2024, although the number of active Listeners on the rota was 12 in 2025, compared with 13 in 2024. Listener recruitment was ongoing throughout the year, as some prisoners transferred out or resigned from their positions.

There were six deaths in custody during 2025, one fewer than in 2024. One death has been endorsed by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) as due to natural causes. Of the remaining cases, one was reported as apparently self-inflicted and four as apparently due to natural causes; PPO reports for these deaths are still pending.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

There were 42 assaults on staff in 2025, a decrease of 38, or 48%, against 2024, when there were 80 assaults. Five of these were classed as serious against seven in 2024, a decrease of 28%. There were nine assaults on staff in the segregation unit, a decrease of 80% from the figure of 45 in 2024. One of these was classed as serious, a decrease of 96% from the 25 serious assaults recorded in the segregation unit in 2024.

There was a serious assault on an Imam during the Friday prayers session in August, a highly unusual event and one which led to him not returning to work in the prison. The knock-on effect on the Muslim faith community was an inconsistency in provision of Friday prayers for the rest of the year.

The number of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults was 53 in 2025, an increase of one over 2024, with six assaults classed as serious (the same as in 2024). Despite these figures, the atmosphere within the body of the prison generally remained calm.

During the year, 62 CSIPs (used to support and manage prisoners who pose an increased risk of violence or who are under pressure or threat from other prisoners) were opened to investigate potential violence or bullying between prisoners. This was a 13% reduction compared with the 71 opened in 2024, and reflects a reduction in overall incidents of violence.

4.4 Use of force

Incidents of use of force decreased from 349 in 2024 to 246 in 2025, a fall of 30%, which reflects the reduction in the number of incidents of violence in the year.

Pava incapacitant spray was drawn on 11 occasions, or on 4.5% of occasions where force was used, and deployed five times in 2025. This is a reduction from 2024, when Pava was drawn on 12 occasions and deployed six times.

As outlined in our previous report, use of force by prison staff is reviewed at monthly use of force meetings, chaired by the head of security and intelligence, several of which the Board monitored. In addition, the Board observed weekly use of force scrutiny meetings on seven occasions. These meetings involved reviewing all use of force incidents from the previous week, including CCTV and BWVC (body worn video camera) footage, as well as officers' statements relating to each incident. Based on this combination of monitoring – and consistent with the findings reported last year - the Board is satisfied that use of force

was well monitored by senior prison managers. We will continue to monitor use of force scrutiny at the prison in 2026.

The Board remains satisfied that the prison's focus on security and safety was maintained in 2025 and that prison managers proactively encouraged both the wearing and use of BWVCs. The wearing of BWVCs and the drawing of Pava is mandatory for trained operational staff.

As noted in our previous report, for the most part, security issues that arose in the year continued to be low level and minor, and there was little requirement to open the command suite to control serious incidents. On those occasions where the command suite was opened, IMB members were appropriately notified and were able to monitor at the scene and from the command suite.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

During 2025, 10% fewer confirmed weapons finds were made than in 2024 (55 against 61 in 2024). Targeted cell searching continued to take place where there was intelligence. There were 28 finds of mobile phones in 2025 (up 22% from 23 in 2024) and 33 finds of hooch (alcohol illicitly brewed in the prison), which was the same as in 2024. It is of note that almost all finds of phones were detected whilst prisoners were transferring into Full Sutton, or on staff entering the prison. These latter finds were not considered malicious attempts to convey phones into the establishment.

All prisoners transferring into Full Sutton must successfully pass a body scanner to detect concealment of unauthorised items prior to location on their allocated wing, and all property transferring in with a prisoner is checked by a dedicated search team (DST). As with last year, a number of significant finds of illicit items were made in these searches, preventing the entry of such items into the prison.

During 2025, the presence and circulation of illicit drugs in the prison were consistently highlighted as an ongoing concern at drug strategy meetings monitored by the Board. These were identified as a continuing potential threat to good order and discipline in the establishment. This remains a concern due to the risk of prisoners accruing drug-related debts, which can in turn increase the likelihood of violence between prisoners or towards staff.

In 2025, all incoming mail (except R39 legal mail) continued to be photocopied and prisoners given the photocopy rather than the original document. This further reduced the threat from illicit substances coming into the prison via mail (as drugs can be impregnated in paper). Exceptions to this were made for photographs received from bona fide greetings card suppliers, where the card was received directly from the supplier. Colour photocopies were made for prisoners of photographs received. Prisoners could elect either to have the originals retained in their stored property, or destroyed. Phone communications are also subject to monitoring.

Prisoners' visitors are subject to a mandatory search and pass through airport-style scanners prior to accessing the visits hall. Additionally, passive detection dogs are used to detect illicit items. During 2025, several attempted conveyances of illicit items were intercepted and two visitors were arrested by police.

Drone activity appeared to be extremely low in 2025, with successful interceptions of illicit items such as mobile phones, mass storage devices and drugs, which if not detected could have been security threats. The prison will be taking further counter measures in early 2026 to further reduce the likelihood that drones will be successful in their potential to deliver illicit items.

4.6 Substance misuse

Through direct observation of drug strategy meetings, and from reviewing the minutes of those meetings, it was clear to the Board that the availability of drugs within the prison - and the routes by which they entered and were distributed - was being taken seriously.

The prison also reported and briefed on prisoners allegedly under the influence of illicit substances in daily reports and this was also discussed at weekly safety intervention meetings, which the Board observed. However, other than the mandated random drugs tests carried out, the Board was not satisfied that the prison was taking advantage of all avenues open to it to detect and monitor the use of illicit drugs in circulation in the establishment. We believe that opportunities were missed to identify users and users in the prison in 2025. In some months, there was no capacity to conduct suspicion or other (non-random) tests.

The Board noted in the 2024 report that the rate of suspicion tests, when carried out, resulted in high positive detections (38%). Therefore, we are disappointed that more time was not able to be allocated to this important area of detection in 2025.

The table, below, shows test and outcome data for random, suspicion, reception and frequent drug tests in 2025 compared with 2024:

Test type	Tests 2025	Positive in 2025	% Positive in 2025	Tests 2024	Positive in 2024	% Positive in 2024
Random	350	38	10.7%	354	36	10.2%
Suspicion	6	1	16.6%	62	28	45.2%
Reception	1	0	0.0%	2	1	50.0%
Frequent	2	2	100%	20	5	25.0%
Overall	359	41	11.4%	438	70	16.0%

Random drug tests

Random drug testing continued to be carried out in 2025, with the drug testing team meeting the required level of testing a random 5% of the prison population each month. A total of 350 tests were completed, including those required at weekends. Of these, 38 tests returned a positive result (10.7% of the total), with substances detected including synthetic cannabinoids, buprenorphine, pregabalin, cannabis and dihydrocodeine.

Suspicion drug tests

Suspicion drug testing is time-limited and must be carried out within 72 hours of the evaluation of the intelligence assessment of the report from staff. It is, therefore, heavily dependent on the availability for duty of mandatory drug testing (MDT) staff. Suspicion testing fell from 62 tests in 2024 to six in 2025. Consideration is being given to improving the effectiveness of suspicion testing and the staff group carrying these out. The drug groups identified from positive suspicion test results were gabapentin and cannabis.

Reception drug tests

One test was carried out on new arrivals at the prison compared with two in 2024.

Frequent drug tests

Only two frequent tests were carried out in 2025 (20 in 2024) on prisoners previously found guilty at adjudication of refusing to take a drug test or failing a drug test. Both tests returned positive results, with the drug reported as a synthetic cannabinoid.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

From the Board's observation, the standard of accommodation continues to be of a generally good standard, and all prisoners occupy single cells. Overall, the prison is well decorated and clean. Low-risk and some medium risk prisoners from the wings continued to be employed as painters and cleaners on the landings, corridors and in communal areas. This serves not only to widen the scope for employment opportunities on wings, but is also effective in ensuring a decent standard of cleanliness.

A concerted effort has been made to find a solution to the problem of black mould on the walls and ceilings in some of the corridors and approaches to wings. A trial solution with trace heating has been installed on the approach to C wing, which has improved the position significantly, but the approach to B wing and other areas is still a growing problem and needs to be addressed. The Board would like to see funds allocated to rolling out of this solution to other areas, as it is both unsightly and a potential health hazard.

The prison has again resorted extensively to self-help solutions using volunteer staff on rest days to repair or renew cell flooring and flooring in other areas, as the maintenance contractor does not have the capacity to carry out this work.

A number of wing shower recesses are in a poor condition and require refurbishment. One such recess, on D wing, was successfully refurbished in late 2025, with improvements to the steam extraction, walls, ceiling, shower enclosures and flooring. The Board believes that there is a plan to roll out further such improvements if funds are allocated during 2026, which will improve decency for prisoners. We will continue to monitor this position in 2026.

A large number of cell windows have become almost opaque over time. Most of these are the original windows dating from when the prison was opened and the lack of light is concerning. There appears to be no budget allocated by HMPPS or any current plan to refurbish or replace affected windows.

The prison's review of the condition of the roof in the workshops area has revealed serious concerns regarding watertightness (particularly in the woodmill workshops) and poses a potential risk of damage to expensive machinery. Mitigations have been put in place, but there needs to be a properly funded strategy to bring about a long-term solution.

A number of the snooker table and pool table cloths in the residential wing association areas have become detached or torn and have been in need of repair or replacement for some time. However, we understand that contractors are due to undertake refurbishment in the first quarter of 2026.

The turnaround time for fixing broken equipment (cookers, laundry equipment, fridges, stairlifts, water heaters, etc.) is often far longer than the targets set for the maintenance contractor.

The contractor comfortably met the contractual 90% completion threshold for reactive repairs, achieving 92%. However, this masks a flaw in the oversight arrangements, as the 8% of 'non-completions' of reactive repairs (which typically may comprise 30 separate work orders) do not appear to count in the performance measure for the following month, allowing a backlog to build up, without a contractual mechanism to require this backlog to be cleared.

Some repairs took a very long time. A serious example of a repair that the Board considered unacceptable was the timescale to reinstate into use of one of the only two

safer custody cells in the healthcare in-patient unit, which had been damaged by a prisoner. The cell was out of action between May and early December. This unavailability carried the risk of a seriously adverse impact on prisoners, as the reduction in cell capacity meant that the prison and healthcare had to choose between prisoners to decide which were in most need of a cell in healthcare.

In-cell telephony, which was introduced at the end of 2023 to all cells, has been widely welcomed as a success and a major improvement for prisoners, who no longer have to wait for access to landing phones to make social calls to family or legal representatives. The 60 minutes per day allowance was increased to 90 minutes per day in July, as were the times between which access to use the phone was extended, to between 6am and 11pm. These remained in place at the end of the reporting period. There was a reduction in the cost to prisoners of calls to landlines and to mobile phones of 20% on 1 April.

The ability for some prisoners on the enhanced (top) level of the incentives scheme to opt out of the prison servery food service continued in 2025: approximately 120 prisoners took advantage of the weekly £15 budget to purchase their own food and cook for themselves.

In addition to homemade bread and pizzas, the kitchen continues to offer an extensive range of meals, sandwiches and other menu items, prepared from scratch daily. It has expanded the range of homemade meal items, particularly desserts, to reduce the impact on the catering budget. Wholemeal bread is now baked in the kitchen, rather than white bread, and adjustments to salt and sugar levels have been made in response to the Food in Prison Policy Framework, introduced in the middle of 2025. This includes the removal of the quarterly issue of 1kg of sugar to prisoners. Fresh fruit is available daily.

The ingredient ordering and menu choice software package used in the kitchen failed regularly during the year, requiring manual interventions to overcome the problem. This has been an ongoing problem for some time and its proposed replacement in 2026 is welcome.

The Board received few applications (prisoners' written or verbal representations) about the quality of food in 2025. We regularly monitored the kitchen and have tasted food on the wings, as well as monitored portion sizes. The Board had no concerns in this regard. In order to improve access to more healthy methods for cooking, a trial was run on A wing of combination microwave/air fryers. This was successful and will be rolled out to other wings early in 2026.

Appropriate arrangements were made for Muslim prisoners who were fasting over Ramadan to receive their hot food at appropriate times.

Prisoners attending workshops can order hot drinks from a barista-style service area at the entrance to workshops. Pre-paid purchase cards can be used for these orders. This activity provides additional employment to several kitchen workers, who take and deliver the orders to workshops.

5.2 Segregation unit

Following a serious assault on staff at HMP Frankland in April 2025, the mandatory use by staff in segregation units, CSC units, and separation centres of body worn armour was announced by the Secretary of State for Justice. This became available from December 2025 for segregation unit staff and is now worn by all segregation unit staff to provide additional protection.

The number of prisoners held in the unit over the reporting period averaged 31, which was 15% lower than the 2024 average of 36. The average daily roll reduced in the final quarter

of 2025 to 27 prisoners, standing at 25 at the year end. The roll was influenced by violent incidents on residential wings, the refusal of prisoners to locate onto a wing on arrival and transferring-in prisoners failing to pass the body scanner check for secreted items. In addition, there were many 'directed' transfers in to Full Sutton of prisoners who subsequently refused to locate and, therefore, found themselves in segregation as a result. The initiative, which began as a trial in 2024 to discourage long-term segregation of prisoners who had been risk assessed as suitable for location at Full Sutton but initially refused to do so, involved reducing access to certain privileges. This was later confirmed as an ongoing policy and had a positive effect, with some prisoners ultimately choosing to locate there. Additionally, a number of prisoners transferring into Full Sutton, who initially indicated that they would not locate, decided to change their mind when they learned of the restrictions in the segregation unit, which would have been their destination had they not located.

The average length of stay in the unit was 49 days, broadly similar to that in 2024, when it averaged 50.5 days. Whilst attempts have been made to reduce the number of long-term residents in the unit, the average length of stay remains stubbornly high.

It remained difficult to achieve transfers for some segregated prisoners to other prison establishments, which would have reduced the roll, except on a one-for-one swap basis, because of the ongoing capacity issues across the long-term high security estate (LTHSE) estate, including in segregation units. Pending transfers to secure hospitals extended some prisoners' time in the segregation unit due to prolonged waits for bed availability, even where referrals had been accepted. Good use continued to be made of 'virtual' segregation unit meetings, at which prisoner swaps with other establishments are proposed. Unfortunately, despite the best efforts of the Governor with responsibility for segregation, these hoped-for moves often failed, due to the reluctance of the proposed receiving establishment to accept 'difficult' prisoners.

There are frequently one or more prisoners in the unit who are on an open ACCT, a situation which is expected to take place only in exceptional circumstances. The number of such prisoners is highlighted on a daily basis and efforts seem to be made to achieve a move back to normal location as soon as practicable.

The high roll regularly impacted the ability of the unit to deliver the desired regime. There were regular curtailments of daily access to shower facilities or landing phones, although access to daily exercise in the open air was usually achieved.

Despite the pressures of the unit, the Board observed examples of staff responding professionally to challenging or disruptive behaviour by segregated prisoners. The Board also saw instances where inappropriate behaviour was appropriately challenged by staff, and where staff successfully de-escalated tensions between prisoners and staff.

The Board received very few applications concerning allegations of inappropriate behaviour by staff that could be upheld. Where such concerns were raised, however, the Board is aware that the prison treated them seriously. Investigations were carried out following complaints from some prisoners, and in a number of cases this resulted in staff being removed from the segregation unit or receiving appropriate advice. The Board believes that this demonstrates the prison's commitment to taking complaints seriously and to taking action, where necessary, to maintain accountability and high standards. Importantly, this also reinforces to prisoners that alleged incidents will be properly investigated.

There were 19 incidents of dirty protest in the year. This represented a significant increase from 2024 when there were 8 such incidents. These were mainly of short duration,

although one mentally unwell prisoner maintained their dirty protest for just over 100 days prior to transfer to a secure hospital. In all cases of dirty protest, the Board is satisfied that these prisoners were asked on a daily basis whether they wished to have a shower and end their protest and in the case of the extended period of dirty protest referred to above, the Mental Health Team also monitored this prisoner.

Restraint by use of body belt was again not used in 2025. Special accommodation (cell where items such as furniture, bedding and sanitation have been removed in the interests of safety) was not also used in 2025.

The IMB observed 25 of the 26 fortnightly segregation review boards held during the year and were satisfied that prisoners were given the opportunity to contribute to their review board through written submissions, whether or not they attended in person. When attending in person, prisoners were given the opportunity to ask questions regarding their exit strategy. The review boards were multi-disciplinary and, unlike in 2024 when the Board was disappointed to note that it was not always the case, these usually included a nurse from the mental health team to assess a prisoner's suitability for continued segregation.

Prisoners had daily access to duty Governors and duty chaplains during their rounds, twice-weekly access to a GP or the head of clinical services, and daily access to a primary care nurse. However, the Board is disappointed that prisoners who are, or may be, in need of mental health care remain reliant on self-referral or referral by staff or primary care nurses. This is due to the continued lack of funding from commissioners under the mental health services contract for a dedicated mental health practitioner to have a regular presence in the segregation unit.

The Board was concerned to note that prisoners' stays in the segregation unit were sometimes extended due to delays in completing location risk assessments, as well as while awaiting police confirmation on whether proceedings would follow incidents involving violent assaults on staff or other prisoners. Our principal concern, however, is the length of stay and presence in the unit of those with significant mental health problems, which are likely to be exacerbated by segregation.

The unit accommodation was, generally, of a good standard and regular use continued to be made of the secure on-unit medical consultation and dispensing facility, removing the need for prisoners to leave the unit for daily medication. Regular damage was caused by prisoners to observation panels, windows alarm bell systems and other cell fixtures, but these were usually addressed quickly by the maintenance contractor. The exercise yards, whilst austere in nature, are secure and contain items of exercise equipment.

The Board continued to observe the quarterly segregation, monitoring and review group (SMARG) meetings, where detailed information regarding the previous quarter's activity in the unit was reported. We are satisfied that, overall, the segregation unit provided a decent regime for prisoners.

STEP unit

Part of the LTHSE's Pathways to Progression Programme, the STEP unit aims to break the cycle of long-term segregation and prepare prisoners to re-enter mainstream location through a high level of purposeful activity and other psychologically informed services. The unit continues to be open for admission of both 'mains' and vulnerable prisoners (VPs), and referrals to the STEP unit are possible from all establishments within the LTHSE.

The STEP unit has capacity for 18 prisoners in total - 14 standard accommodation places and four peer-support prisoner roles. However, for much of the year there were only two

peer-support prisoners resident on the unit. Their role is to engage with prisoners referred to the unit and to encourage participation in the regime, as well as interaction and socialisation with other prisoners - opportunities that many have previously lacked due to extended periods in segregated conditions.

In 2025, there were 14 referrals to the STEP unit, six of whom were accepted, which is roughly comparable to 2024. Three prisoners were de-selected from the unit, due to behavioural issues whilst there. At the end of the year, there were eight prisoners on the unit and one peer-support prisoner. One prisoner was awaiting a move from the unit to a secure hospital.

The Board has previously reported that some prisoners had become 'stuck' on the unit, in certain cases for several years, with no clear pathway for progression. However, we were encouraged to see that, during the year, eight prisoners progressed either to PIPE units (psychologically informed planned environments) or to the normal location. This suggests that the unit is, once again, fulfilling its intended role in supporting progression for prisoners when they are ready. This improvement may reflect a combination of effective key work by staff, psychological interventions, and proactive planning by the management team, alongside the motivation of prisoners themselves to pursue progressive pathways.

There is still no structured education offer or work for prisoners on the unit and the initiative to offer work by starting a small bike repair activity was short-lived. But there are plans to facilitate some form of education and work again in 2026, within a very limited budget allocation.

Although there is no dedicated unit manager, the STEP unit is managed by the B wing manager and a team of allocated senior officers (SOs) and staff, who also provide the key worker sessions to the prisoners on the unit. There are plans to upskill staff in managing challenging behaviour, to give them additional skills to support more effective interaction with prisoners on the unit.

The Board hopes that this positive progression in the performance of the unit will continue into 2026.

Separation centre

The separation centre is a national, specialist resource that accommodates prisoners convicted of involvement in, or the planning of, acts of terrorism, as well as those assessed as posing a risk to national security or actively seeking to radicalise others. It is separate from the main prison wings and is fully self-contained, including provision for recreation, exercise and education. The centre is one of only two such units operating nationally. At the end of the year, it held eight prisoners.

In the Board's view, the separation centre is well run. However, relationships between staff and prisoners were strained for much of 2025. This reflected the impact of unpopular evening lockdowns and restrictions introduced following a serious assault on staff at the separation centre in HMP Frankland in April. As a result, prisoners were placed on Rule 45 (segregation with no communal association) shortly afterwards.

This position ended in October with the introduction of association in cohorts of two prisoners, which remained in place at the end of the year. The Board monitored a number of Rule 45 segregation review boards held during the period in which Rule 45 was in operation. Generally, prisoners did not attend these boards or submit representations to the chair, although they were given the opportunity to do so.

In addition to the R45 restrictions, access to cooking facilities was withdrawn as part of a national policy for separation centres and CSC units after serious assaults on staff at HMP Frankland. Instead, the provision of hot food from the kitchen servery was the only source of hot food available. This remained the case at the end of the year.

Staff were mandated by the Secretary of State for Justice to wear personal body armour following the serious assault at HMP Frankland in April. This became fully available in October.

There is limited use by prisoners of the virtual campus (a secure, web-based learning environment) to participate in courses, including degree courses. Exercise is possible on one of the two small, austere yards, with an adjacent yard not currently accessible due to a growth of moss, although there are plans to clean this and prepare it for use very early in 2026.

Under the current arrangements for separation under Rule 46A, the appropriateness of prisoners' continued separation must be reviewed every three months. One Board member has remotely observed several separation centre management committee meetings, which conduct these reviews for prisoners held at Full Sutton and other separation centres. The member was satisfied that discussions about whether to extend or end separation were thorough and informed by detailed reports from separation centre staff, registered psychologists and other relevant professionals.

At the end of 2025, a review of separation centres conducted by Jonathan Hall KC, the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, and commissioned by the Secretary of State for Justice, Shabana Mahmood, in May 2025, had been completed but not yet published. It is understood that the report will be published in early 2026. The Board will continue to monitor the separation centre and any changes arising from the recommendations of this review.

Close supervision centre (CSC)

The CSC is a small, self-contained unit situated away from other wings and units, which houses a small number of prisoners who have committed very serious acts of violence in prison. It has an integration section for newly arrived prisoners, or prisoners undergoing assessment prior to future potential acceptance into the CSC system, and a segregation cell. The self-contained unit has showers, a gym, an association room with recreational facilities such as board games, a pool table, a small library and a separate visits room.

The ratio of staff to prisoners is high and staff appear to have a good knowledge of the prisoners. During our monitoring visits, we have observed professional and respectful relations between officers and prisoners, which appears to have created an atmosphere of trust in this small community.

There is a small outside area with exercise yards, which is also taken up with an array of pot plants and small fruit trees. Prisoners grow tomatoes and other crops and have the use of polytunnels for cultivating seeds and propagating plants. During the summer, significant numbers of hanging baskets were produced to be sold to staff to generate funds to re-invest in compost and seeds for future seasons. They also brighten up the otherwise austere environment.

Work on the unit consists of cleaning, participation in horticultural activities and catalogue representative roles, but there was no formal education offer to prisoners. 'Virtual campus' PCs, which provide access to educational databases, were installed, but prisoners were disappointed that access to services such as Britannica was not possible due to technical issues. The new education contract allows for little provision for the CSC and other

specialist units and, disappointingly, there are, as yet, no firm plans as to what form that provision may take.

For the most part, the accommodation is decent and prisoners have access to showers and to exercise in the fresh air. All cells have in-cell phones. Prisoners have access to the same healthcare services as other prisoners at Full Sutton and can engage with psychology services on the unit. Two CSC prisoners also are held in 'CSC designated cells' in the segregation unit and are managed by segregation unit staff under CSC conditions.

There have been concerns at times about the ventilation system in the unit, which some prisoners have complained does not work effectively. The IMB has intervened with the prison to arrange for inspections of the shower and general ventilation systems to ensure that they are operating as designed, which has brought some improvement. This included unblocking some of the air vents, which have been painted over in recent years and adjusting the extract rate of the fans in the shower.

There were separate unlock cohorts for much of the year, due to the mix of prisoners held and numerous regime adaptations. However, the main frustration for staff and prisoners alike has been the regime restrictions, which resulted in the CSC being locked down every evening for most of the year.

The Board noted that the CSC, along with the STEP unit, experienced a disproportionate number of evening lockdowns compared with the main residential wings, having been locked up on most evenings throughout the year. The very good relationship we have observed between staff and prisoners has certainly had a positive effect on prisoners' willingness to accept these arrangements, although there has been some pushback. Initially, weekend lockdown periods affected the ability to arrange social visits, but an alternative solution has since been found and appears to be working.

As mentioned elsewhere, restrictions or safety mitigations were introduced in the CSC as part of a national response to serious incidents in small units (including a CSC) elsewhere in the country. This led to the withdrawal of all access to self-cooking facilities and changes to cell lock protocols. Staff were also mandated by the Secretary of State for Justice to wear body-worn armour at all times when engaging with prisoners or escorting them off the unit, as part of the safety review.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

From the Board's observations, staff and prisoner relationships were generally good. The Board saw regular instances of positive and respectful day-to-day interactions between staff and prisoners, including those with complex needs, both when patrolling and in responding to questions from prisoners.

Planned fortnightly key worker contact sessions were lower than expected in 2025. Time allocated for these sessions was regularly cancelled due to staff redeployments and restricted regimes. However, key worker sessions with priority prisoner groups were maintained on a weekly basis. These groups include prisoners on an open ACCT or post-closure ACCT, those subject to a CSIP, TACT prisoners (those convicted of terrorism offences under the Terrorism Act 2000), IPP prisoners, those isolating, prisoners under the age of 25, and those newly transferred to Full Sutton. Wing SOs and wing custodial managers regularly carry out audits of key worker sessions completed or cancelled, as well as checking the quality of key worker entries on CNomis (the core electronic case management system, which allows staff to record, store, and access key information about prisoners throughout their sentence).

Although generally tolerated by prisoners, wing restrictions or lockdowns did at times cause friction and frustration between staff and prisoners.

In 2025, the number of applications to the IMB under the category 'staff/prisoner concerns' increased from 18 to 24 (see section 8). However, very few of these concerns related to allegations of bullying, poor treatment, or assaults by staff; most related instead to searching, property issues, or frustrations about staff responses to prisoners' concerns.

5.4 Equality and diversity

Full Sutton continues to have a very diverse population, which does not reflect the local community and, as a result, differs from the ethnicity of officers working in the prison. At the end of 2025, there were 38 prisoners (6.5%) under the age of 25; 194 prisoners (33.4%) under the age of 35; and 38 prisoners (6.5%) over the age of 65, the eldest of whom was 84. There were five transgender prisoners. All faiths are represented, with those identifying as Christian (42%) and Muslim (29%) being in the majority. A total of 106 (18%) declared no religion. There were 60 foreign national prisoners at the end of 2025, making up just over 10% of the population.

The focus on equality has been hampered during the year by a high turnover of custodial managers (CMs) responsible for equality and periods during which there was effectively no one in post, either due to sickness or transition from one CM to the next. The limitations on resources across the prison have also resulted in staff regularly being diverted to other duties.

Reports analysing the data relevant to equality (showing information such as the number of discrimination incident reporting forms and the breakdown by ethnicity of incentives scheme status, incidents of use of force, adjudications, etc) are still produced but have, on a number of occasions, not been available at meetings due to the lack of a CM responsible.

The Board observed that the equality action group (EAG) meetings have been relatively short, with limited discussion, and that meetings have, at times, been postponed or cancelled. For example, the meeting held on 17 November lasted only 30 minutes and there was no discussion under a number of the standing agenda headings. No equality manager's report was available for that meeting and, as the Board has noted as a recurring issue, only a very small number of issues raised by prisoner representatives.

SMARG meetings in segregation have also been without equality data on occasion (such as 20 October, for example), limiting the ability of the meeting to analyse the trends.

The data presented to the adjudications meeting on 12 August and to the equality meeting on 30 July showed an adverse weighting against ethnic minority prisoners in respect of the factors measured. On both occasions, this fact was noted but not discussed further.

There is an acknowledgement by the prison management that more needs to be done to upskill staff to address potential unconscious bias. If funding is approved, there is a plan to make use of 'show racism the red card' as a resource. In addition, individual officers who have particular development needs in this area will be invited to join the prisoners in the AVP (alternatives to violence project) as observers. We will monitor progress on these points in 2026.

The response time for discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs) has improved during the course of the year, resulting in a number of weeks towards the end of the year in which there were none outstanding (whereas there had previously frequently been a backlog). This appears to have been encouraged by an initiative to review performance statistics

(including response times to complaints and DIRFs) on a weekly basis at the Governor's morning briefing.

During 2025, 142 DIRFs were received by the equality team, compared with 173 in 2024, representing a fall of 18%. New non-operational staff have recently been recruited to lead on equalities and are planned to start in 2026. Having non-operational staff (who will therefore not be diverted to other duties) will represent a significant improvement on the current position; for example, there were only eight hours of staff time dedicated to equality work in December. This is an area whose progress the Board will continue to monitor in 2026.

The AVP for young adults under the age of 25, which started at Full Sutton in March 2025, has been a measurable success. Prison data shows that incidents of violence and self-harm fell to zero for this cohort in the fourth quarter of 2025. There are now plans to run a similar session for prisoners in the 25-30 age group.

A questionnaire has been developed to gather prisoners' views on diversity and is due to be rolled out wing by wing in 2026. This is intended, in part, to address concerns that existing forums for raising prisoner issues are insufficiently representative and may help bring to light concerns that are not raised (for whatever reason) at the EAG. Events were held throughout the year to mark a range of cultural and religious occasions and initiatives, including Black History Month, Ramadan and Eid. In 2025, there were only two applications to the IMB concerning equality (see section 8).

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

There was no managing chaplain between April 2025, when the incumbent retired, and the end of the year. A new managing chaplain was appointed and commenced duties in early January 2026.

For most of the reporting year, there were two full-time chaplains: one Anglican and one Roman Catholic. There are three part-time Free Church chaplains and a volunteer Quaker chaplain, who visits regularly. A Rabbi visits on a monthly basis and there is a Jehovah's Witness chaplain, who visits for one day a week. There is still no pagan or regular Rastafarian chaplain, although there is a Rastafari group led by other chaplains and volunteers.

Unfortunately, one of the full-time Imams was seriously assaulted in August and did not return to the prison, while another full-time Imam also left the establishment. As a result, for most of the year the Muslim faith population was served by a single part-time Imam, with Imams from other establishments providing cover where possible. This situation meant that prayers could not be offered on some Fridays. A new part-time Imam is due to join in early 2026.

From the Board's observations, the chaplaincy team is active and visible throughout the prison, both on the wings and at ACCT reviews, as well as through daily statutory visits to the segregation unit and the healthcare inpatient unit. The team also administers the official prison visitors (OPV) scheme as part of the Strengthening Family Ties Policy Framework. There is a weekly Bible study group and a fortnightly music group for prisoners, run by a chaplain, and the team has a number of keyboards and guitars, which can be loaned to prisoners.

The Sycamore Tree restorative justice scheme, facilitated by the chaplaincy team in past years, was withdrawn by HMPPS in England in 2025, so no courses ran during the

reporting year. The Board believes that to remove the scheme with no equivalent replacement available was a mistake, especially as we understand that the course is still an approved scheme in Scotland.

5.6 Property

In 2025, there were six applications to the IMB relating to property, representing a 57% reduction compared with 2024. Most property-related issues concerned delays by sending establishments in forwarding prisoners' property, or losses of property that should have been transferred but was not. In general, property arriving at Full Sutton is searched by DST in order of arrival. However, there were regular delays in the distribution of property once searched, as reception staff were often redeployed to assist in other areas of the prison. Similarly, at weekends, when staff redeployments were more frequent, this continued to affect the distribution of prisoners' excess property following visits.

The volume of property with which some newly arrived prisoners presented often far exceeded national volumetric control limits, creating additional difficulties in both searching and storage

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

Healthcare is operated as three individual contracts: primary care (PPG); mental healthcare (Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV); and dentistry (Time for Teeth). In 2024, we noted the dysfunctionality of the way in which these contracts were operating, where there was no overarching healthcare controller in charge of services to prisoners.

In 2025, there was an improvement in coordination between PPG and TEWV in relation to prisoner health services, with daily joint meetings held between the respective teams to ensure that relevant information is shared and issues are not overlooked. Representatives from both TEWV and PPG also attend the weekly safety intervention meetings (SIMs), where they are able to respond to concerns raised and share information on individual cases within a multidisciplinary setting.

The Board still has concerns over the delays in recruitment and onboarding of some professional staff to meet the contract, including permanent GP and psychiatrist cover. This latter gap extended the waiting time for psychiatric appointments and was only resolved in the second half of the year when the appointed psychiatrist had a significant backlog to work through.

We are also concerned about the continued inability of TEWV to provide a seven-day on-site service. Provision remains limited to five days on site, with weekends covered by on-call phone support. In addition, there were interim arrangements in place for much of the year for an on-site TEWV team manager.

The initial mental health service contract did not fund contact time for mental health services in the segregation unit. This position remains, which the Board believes, again, is a missed opportunity and relies on mental health referrals being either self-referrals from a prisoner or referrals from unit staff, who are not qualified mental health practitioners.

The Board repeated a healthcare attitudinal survey in November 2025 amongst 50% of all prisoners across the establishment, where similar questions were asked to those in 2024 (see Annex B).

Many of the outcomes reported in 2025 were still perceived as negative, although overall levels of dissatisfaction had reduced. For example, 72% of prisoners reported difficulty accessing medical services in 2025, compared with 87% in 2024; 46% rated the quality of healthcare services as good or reasonable, compared with only 27% in 2024; and 63% reported that mental health services were effective in meeting their needs in 2025, compared with 38% in 2024.

From its face-to-face interactions with prisoners and through applications, the Board noted a perception among prisoners that their first contact with healthcare services would be with a GP. In practice, however, the structure of healthcare provision has shifted towards specialist nurses working closely alongside GP services, reflecting community practice. Some of the survey outcomes may therefore suggest that primary care and mental health services need to communicate more clearly how services are structured and what prisoners can expect in 2026.

The Board has monitored the regular local healthcare delivery board meetings, where the Governor and senior members of the management team meet with the healthcare contract providers to discuss the implementation of the contracts. There has been an improvement in the sharing of statistical information relating to service times and other operational

matters. We believe that these meetings have proved useful in highlighting the issues facing healthcare providers and in enabling the exchange of ideas to improve service delivery for prisoners. This has included the prison facilitating changes to some operational practices. For example, improvements to the delivery of controlled medications and access to dental treatment for prisoners in segregation have resulted from these discussions.

The IMB received 27 applications relating in some way to primary care or mental health care in 2025, roughly the same number as in 2024. Some of these related to matters outside the healthcare provider's control, such as waiting times for external hospital appointments after initial referral, and many were still as a result of frustration about waiting times, missed appointments and long waits for responses to applications or complaints.

The Board was pleased to note that in 2025, in contrast to 2024, a mental health nurse was consistently present at segregation review boards. This ensured that the Board Chair was able to receive a professional opinion on a prisoner's mental health and whether it was likely to be adversely affected by a further period of segregation, should that be the decision of the board.

Improvements within the overall offer to prisoners from healthcare providers were made in 2025, including the introduction of talking therapies, counselling and a mental health panel from TEWV. PPG introduced reminders by phone at weekends for prisoners with appointments in the following week and appointed a patient engagement lead to increase the standard of communication with prisoners in primary care forums.

Further specialist appointments were made in late 2025, which will result in the introduction of new services, including a social worker and an older persons' specialist. These additions are expected to improve and extend care provision for prisoners. The publication of regular, practical healthcare advice and information bulletins, together with up-to-date waiting time expectations in the prisoner newsletter by both PPG and TEWV, is a welcome improvement in communication from healthcare providers to prisoners.

6.2 Physical healthcare

Full Sutton has a nine-cell inpatient unit, comprising six healthcare cells and two safer custody cells, as well as a nursing suite for end-of-life care.

The average waiting times for routine primary healthcare services varied but, at the end of the year, stood at: GP: 3-4 weeks (although urgent/emergency cases would be seen on the same day when a GP was in the establishment); nurse: one week, although requests triaged daily with same-day availability if clinically urgent; optician, two weeks; dentist, around 17 weeks; podiatrist, seven weeks for new referrals; and physiotherapist, 4-6 weeks for new referrals.

Prisoners continued to be referred to outside hospitals for treatment when needed, and significant use was made of phone consultations. Chronic disease management for at-risk prisoners was in place, as well as monitoring of long-term conditions and access to MRI scanning from a mobile unit, which visits four times each year and avoids prisoners having to be escorted to hospital. An in-house X-ray and ultrasound service was introduced under PPG, alongside a physiotherapy service. The planned acupuncture offer expected to commence in early 2025 but is now due to start in 2026.

Dental care is contracted to Time for Teeth. At the end of 2025, there was still a significant waiting list for initial appointments, with prisoners breaching the NHS England target of eight weeks for the initial waiting time for first treatment. Prisoners are, to an extent, blocking their own access to dental treatment either by not signing healthcare applications

or by not describing the issues that they would like to be treated, for instance by writing “I want to see the dentist”, which does not allow the service to properly allocate appointment lengths. At the end of 2025, the waiting time for first treatment was approximately 16 weeks.

The Board remains concerned about prisoners’ dental hygiene. Time for Teeth has produced oral hygiene advice leaflets for prisoners, including guidance on the importance of using interdental toothbrushes. However, these products, which were previously available for prisoners to purchase via the pharmacy list, are no longer stocked, as this is not Practice Plus Group’s policy. Despite an indication that this would be reviewed, interdental brushes are not yet available on the local DHL canteen list.

6.3 Mental health

Vacancies across a number of posts characterised staffing within the TEWV mental health team for much of 2025, which contributed to extended waiting times for prisoners. This led to significant use of agency nurses, extended working hours and overtime. The majority of vacancies appear to have been filled by the end of the year, and TEWV aims to have most specialist staff in post in early 2026, subject to the completion of security clearance.

Earlier in the year, the impact of mental health staff attendance at ACCT reviews, including in the segregation unit, on their ability to complete other duties was underestimated. As a result, routine work was disrupted or delayed for a period.

The continued inability to deliver the contractual seven-day service, with provision instead limited to a five-day, Monday-to-Friday service, supplemented by phone support at weekends, is disappointing and is likely to continue into the first quarter of 2026.

At the end of 2025, the mental health caseload stood at 152 prisoners compared with 167 in 2024, representing 26% of the prison population, including those engaged in counselling or talking therapies.

The IMB healthcare survey (see Annex B) indicated that just over 63% of prisoners using mental health services rated them as good or reasonable, compared with 38% in the previous year’s survey.

At the end of 2025, mental health waiting times were as follows: primary care new assessments, four days; secondary care assessments, two days; psychiatrist initial assessments, five weeks; follow-up psychiatrist appointments after initial assessment, four weeks; counselling initial assessments, four weeks; counselling following initial assessment, a further four weeks; psychologist initial assessments, five weeks; and follow-up psychologist appointments after initial assessment, nine weeks. The IMB will continue to monitor anticipated improvements in 2026.

6.4 Social care

The Board considered that satisfactory arrangements were in place to undertake social care assessments for prisoners in need of in-cell aids and adaptations. Three prisoners has social care plans at the end of 2025 compared with two in 2024 .

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

The regime remained restricted throughout 2025 due to ongoing staff shortages and daily staff sickness. This disproportionately affected the CSC and STEP unit, as officers were frequently reallocated to the residential wings when required. Evening lockdowns operated on a rotational basis, and the emergency regime was not relaxed until October, with the

introduction of a new core day. This was subsequently adjusted on 1 November following feedback from staff and prisoners.

These changes were designed to take account of around 50 officer vacancies at the time, with the aim of reducing restrictions and delivering a more predictable and stable regime, providing greater certainty for prisoners. Advance notice was given to prisoners through published schedules, and strenuous efforts were made to limit the impact on workshop activity, education, the gym, and corporate worship. The Board observed that the planned lockdowns were fully discussed with prison council representatives prior to implementation.

Information about staff vacancies and sickness statistics are shared in the leadership team daily briefings, monitored by the Board. Given that daily absences and forecasts for unfilled vacancies are not improving, regime restrictions will undoubtedly continue well into 2026.

The availability of in-cell telephony, introduced in November 2023, and increases in daily phone call minutes allowed, as well as the extension of the hours that the in-cell phones were available to make calls, partially reduced the impact of continuing restrictions on the maintenance of family ties (see 5.1).

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) groups continued in 2025, held every three weeks, with an average of six prisoners attending the meetings. The Narcotics Anonymous (NA) groups did not resume in 2025, as intended, due to security concerns, and it is unclear whether these will resume in 2026. Given the use of illicit substances in the prison, the Board hopes that a way can be found to resume NA groups. We will continue to monitor the progress of these services in 2026.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

Following a tendering process, the education service provider changed from Milton Keynes College (MKC) to Novus on 1 October. For the first time, the library service, previously provided by East Yorkshire Council, was included within the overall contract with Novus. This change was accompanied by a £132,000, or 25%, reduction in the education budget. Savings were achieved largely through an overall reduction in staff hours, the introduction of shorter courses and more non-accredited courses, and a significantly reduced level of educational provision in the CSC, separation centre, and STEP unit, where there is now no structured education offer.

Almost 25% of prisoners engaged in some form of education in 2025, an increase from 21% in 2024. In total, prisoners started 749 accredited courses in 2025, a 4% increase on 2024, and 275 non-accredited courses, representing a 63% increase, with some prisoners undertaking more than one course. There were 574 successful accredited course achievements and 241 successful non-accredited course completions.

Accredited courses in English, Maths, business, industrial cleaning and catering ran up to the end of September, together with a non-accredited course in art. From October, these courses and a new general studies course (non-accredited) was added. A planned mentoring course did not run in 2025, but there are plans for this to resume in 2026.

The general studies course was well received and well attended by prisoners. It comprises a series of lectures delivered by external speakers, followed by seminar sessions in which prisoners are encouraged to discuss the lecture topics and any associated issues in more depth. The Board has monitored a number of these courses and was impressed by the level of engagement and the quality of the discussions observed.

In a long-term high-security prison, it is particularly positive to see sessions designed to encourage prisoners to engage with learning for its own sake, or to relearn how to learn, rather than solely to obtain qualifications linked to future employment. Engagement with both accredited and non-accredited courses provides good evidence of prisoners' commitment to developing a more pro-social lifestyle, and, in the Board's view, the range of non-accredited courses should be further encouraged.

The Board observed good engagement with tutors in education, who held learners' interest in class, and also examples of in-class support work carried out by prisoner education mentors with their peers. These mentors are also used to encourage engagement of prisoners on their wings with the education opportunities on offer.

Systematic work continues with the identification of prisoners' specific educational needs during their induction after transfer in and has involved key workers.

As noted in our previous report, the neurodiversity support manager continued to provide excellent support to neurodivergent prisoners, as well as raise awareness and improve insight of prisoners' neurodivergent needs and understanding of some prisoners' behaviours amongst staff.

There were significant early issues with the IT systems provided to the education department, and these problems continued through to the end of the year. Under the new education contract, IT hardware and software are supplied by HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), rather than by the education contractor, as was previously the case. Feedback to the Board from learners, the provider and prison managers indicates that the

technology is unreliable and inconsistent, with frequent difficulties for learners to access the system to complete work or carry out basic functions such as printing.

This has resulted in wasted education sessions, particularly affecting Open University and distance learners. The reporting and contract-monitoring functions available within the current software, Curious 2, are also more limited and offer less functionality than the previous system. By the end of the year, there had been little improvement, and no permanent resolution appeared to be imminent. The Board will continue to monitor the impact of IT-related issues on education provision during 2026.

An effect of the change in the library arrangements is that prisoners no longer have access to the wider stock of library books that were previously available through East Yorkshire Council libraries.

The prison-wide reading strategy continued to develop in 2025. This focuses on non-readers and early-level readers who need to improve their reading skills to access further learning and work opportunities. The library has obtained 'dyslexia friendly' titles and aims to promote reading for pleasure across the whole prison population. Magazines and books are also available in the workshops. A number of prisoner-led book clubs were facilitated and mentors from the charity, the Shannon Trust, operated on the wings, in education, workshops and in the library, supporting prisoners with reading and writing skills.

The provision of education in the prison's small units, as in 2024, remained very limited in scope in 2025. The new education contract allows for a very limited provision in terms of hours available for the smaller units – five hours in total, per week, spread across all units.

7.2 Vocational training, work

Prisoners who are in work or education are often much more settled and stable. Investing in providing work and education for prisoners is, therefore, one of the main building blocks to creating a safe and secure environment for both prisoners and staff.

In this context, the Board was pleased to note that the level of unemployment amongst prisoners who were able to work was significantly reduced in 2025 compared to previous years. Unemployment at the end of 2025 was 9%, down from the 14% and 20% that the Board recorded in 2024 and 2023 respectively

Levels of unemployment appear to be declining as a result of the provision of additional workshops and the expansion of some existing workshops. This has been further supported by opening certain workshops to both mainstream and VP prisoners (in separate sessions), who had not previously had access to these opportunities.

In addition to existing employment opportunities in textiles, waste management, lighting, DHL (the prison shop where orders are received and processed for a number of prisons, including Full Sutton), charity bike repairs, the print shop, and the prison kitchen, new activities were introduced in industrial wipes, furniture restoration and upcycling. Further opportunities were also created through a barber shop and in-cell fine embroidery work, providing additional activity places for prisoners. Plans are in place for 2026 to expand the capacity of the waste management workshop to enable recycling of a wider range of materials produced in the establishment, and to increase the number of prisoners employed in DHL.

Preparations for the opening of the Woodmill workshops continued to be a challenge, as it has been for several years. By the close of 2025, the workshops had still not yet opened for prisoners, although the machinery has now been installed, commissioned and instructors recruited. It is unlikely to be fully utilised before the end of the first quarter of

2026. It will start by employing small numbers of 'mains' prisoners (aged 25-30), developing gradually to capacity. The Board will continue to monitor this and other employment opportunities in 2026.

There is cooperation between Full Sutton and the adjacent, newly opened Category C establishment, HMP Millsike, which supplies wooden pallets from its goods-in deliveries for use in the upcycling workshop at Full Sutton.

7.3 Offender management, progression

In 2025, the Board again saw evidence of effective interaction between prisoner offender managers (POMs) and prisoners seeking progressive moves to other establishments or specialist treatment units, as well as engagement with sentence plans and support for periodic category reviews. We observed safety intervention meetings (SIMs), segregation review board, and IPP review meetings at which POMs were fully engaged in supporting prisoners' progression, or in explaining clearly where this was not possible.

Towards the end of 2025, no new Kaizen or Identity Matters (IM) treatment programmes started for prisoners due to the phasing out of the existing suite of programmes and staff training for the facilitation of courses from the new Building Choices suite of programmes, which commenced in August.

Accredited intervention programmes were delivered, with a total of 28 prisoners starting programmes and 14 completing them by the end of 2025.

Building Choices programmes for PCoSOs (prisoners convicted of sexual offences) initially commenced, but further courses for this cohort were paused until 2026. This pause was pending the completion of additional staff training to strengthen understanding of effective practice in supporting PCoSOs with risk reduction, in line with HMIP recommendations made in 2019 for establishments delivering accredited programmes for this cohort.

Psychological support for staff in high pressure areas, specifically the segregation unit, STEP unit, CSC and separation centre was provided regularly.

There were 20 IPP prisoners at Full Sutton at the end of December (compared with 21 at the end of 2024). Of those 20 prisoners, 14 were RAG-rated red or amber, reflecting a lack of confidence that they are on track to progression. Many of the prisoners rated red or amber refuse to engage with either their POM or psychology. In some cases, this reflects a loss of trust in the system, which has resulted in them remaining in detention for many years beyond their original tariff.

Structured bi-monthly meetings continue to be held to review the status of each IPP prisoner, with detailed input from both the prison offender manager (POM) and the psychology team. These review prisoners' engagement with intervention programmes and sentence planning, completion of which will enable them to show evidence of their risk reduction. As noted in our previous report, a number of these prisoners continue to refuse to engage with any planning for progression or have committed further offences, thereby increasing their risk to the public and being able to demonstrate reducing their suitability for parole.

Although a substantial number of prisoners in this cohort do engage, progression remains slow. In particular, two prisoners had made sufficient progress to warrant a recommendation for transfer to category C prisons; however, neither HMP Warren Hill nor HMP Wealstun, the establishments identified as their onward pathway, would accept them. This is disappointing, as these prisoners may now feel there is less prospect of future progression. At the end of the reporting year, the position remained unchanged and the prisoners continued to be held at Full Sutton.

7.4 Family contact

At Full Sutton, given its role as a dispersal prison, many prisoners find themselves a long way from home. Social visits are still held three days a week, and the prison continued to run monthly extended family days, which bring together prisoners and their families with children outside of their statutory entitlement to social visits, usually in more informal settings. These extended social visits lasted six hours and were supported by the prison, with refreshments provided, structured activities with children encouraged and the opportunity for family photo to be taken. Seven family days are planned for 2026

Prisoners who cannot have visits because their families live too far away can still stay in touch through free monthly social video calls.

The Storybook Dads a scheme, whereby a prisoner can record himself reading a book to send to his children, continued in 2025. The scheme had 12 successful prisoner applications, recording readings for 19 children. This is a significant initiative to maintain and strengthen family ties, administered by the library team, which is not widely known but represents a valuable and supportive resource. The Board will monitor the progress of this initiative in 2026.

7.5 Resettlement planning

As explained in our previous report, very few prisoners are released directly from Full Sutton. This only happens when prisoners continue to require management within the high-security estate prior to release and are, therefore, unable to transfer to a lower-category local prison beforehand. On the occasions when this has occurred, the Board has observed the efforts of the offender management unit and is satisfied that release planning and resettlement arrangements are appropriately managed for these prisoners.

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics 2025

Maximum complement of Board members	17
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	6
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	6
Total number of visits to the establishment	341
Total number of segregation review Boards observed	24

Applications to the IMB in 2025

Code	Subject	Reporting year 2024	Reporting year 2025
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	3	8
B	Discipline including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	9	13
C	Equality	1	2
D	Purposeful activity, including work, education, training and time out of cell	20	14
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	9	14
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	6	5
F	Food and kitchens	2	7
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care.	26	27
H1	Property within the establishment	14	6
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	12	12
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	2	2
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence), parole, release dates, recategorisation.	22	21
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	18	34
K	Transfers	1	3
L	Miscellaneous	23	36
	Total number of applications	168	204

Annex A

Service providers

The prison is part of the public sector, and although HMP Full Sutton is responsible for the operation of the establishment, the main service providers are:

- Practice Plus Group (PPG): primary care services and substance misuse
- Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV): mental health services
- Time for Teeth: dental services
- Milton Keynes College: education, learning and skills (until 30 September 2025)
- East Yorkshire Council: library services (until 30 September 2025)
- Novus: education, learning and skills and library services (from 1 October 2025)
- GeoAmey: prisoner transport
- AMEY: provision of facilities management and site maintenance
- DHL: prisoner canteen (shop)
- Bidfood: main food supplier

The prison also works in partnership with:

- The Samaritans: Listener training and ongoing Listener support
- Origin: gym equipment supplier
- Sportsafe: gym equipment maintenance and repair

Annex B

IMB prisoner healthcare survey: November 2025

A total of 283 surveys were distributed to a random sample comprising 50% of prisoners on each residential wing and unit, of which 77 were returned, giving a response rate of 27%.

- 1 How old are you?**
18-25 4% 26 – 50 61% 51 -65 23% over 65 12%
- 2 How easy is it for you to access medical care when needed**
Easy 28% Difficult 72%
- 3. Have you experienced delays in receiving medical attention?**
Yes 84% No 16%
- 3a If Yes, what was the service that you needed? (top 4 responses)**
GP 40% Nurse 22% Pharmacist 21% Dentist 15% Other 2%
- 4 How would you rate the quality of the healthcare services that you have received in 2025**
Good 14% Reasonable 32% Not Good 54%
- 5 Do you feel that healthcare staff listen to your concerns and take them seriously?**
Yes 38% No 52% Don't know 10%
- 6 Have you used any mental health services here at Full Sutton?**
Yes 54% No 46%
- 6a If yes, how effective was the service in addressing your needs?**
Good 26% Reasonable 37% Not Good 37%
- 7 Have you undergone any routine health screening (e.g. blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes, bowel, vaccination)**
Yes 65% No 35%
- 8 Are you currently taking any prescribed medication**
Yes 79% No 21%
- 8a If yes, have you had any difficulties accessing your prescribed medication**
Yes 69% No 31%
- 9 Have you received any health education or preventive information (e.g. HIV, substance abuse, diet, lifestyle, etc.)**
Yes 20% No 80%
- 9a If yes, do you find these programmes helpful?**
Yes 64% No 36%
- 10 Have you faced a medical emergency at Full Sutton?**
Yes 43% No 57%
- 10a If yes, were you happy with the way it was handled?**
Yes 27% Reasonably 19% No 54%
- 11 Would you find it helpful to be reminded of appointments by telephone?**
Yes 86% No 14%



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