



# Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Gartree

**For reporting year  
1 December 2024 to 30 November 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<sup>1</sup>

HMP Gartree (Gartree) first opened in 1965 as a category C male training prison. It then became a category B male prison in 1992 with an emphasis on housing prisoners serving indeterminate and long-term sentences. It remains a category B prison and is now part of the long-term and high security estate (LTHSE). The prison is located north of Market Harborough, Leicestershire. The prison remains within the public sector and is operated by the HM Prison Service.

The certified normal accommodation (CNA, the number of prisoners that can be held without the prison being crowded) level for Gartree is 699. However, the operational capacity (the maximum number of prisoners that can be held without serious risk to safety, security, good order and the proper running of the prison) dropped to 608 in July 2020 due to a programme of fire safety works on older wings within the establishment. This work was completed in the summer of 2025, with the population increasing upwards of 650.

The establishment is laid out around nine residential wings, the original four in 'H block' style, forming A, B, C and D wings, each containing around 100 cells on three landings along with E wing, which houses a separation and progression unit (SAPU, for segregating prisoners) which provides a 12-cell segregation block. Gartree also houses prisoners with particular learning disabilities and difficulties in the therapeutic community (TC) and therapeutic community plus (TC+) wings. I wing (recently renamed the Acorn Unit), which stands alone and houses prisoners with more complex needs, offers a substance-free environment.

Two more recently built wings, G and H, are located south of the original complex and have cells on two levels. G wing has continued to operate as the induction wing for part of the reporting period, although the majority of prisoners housed on this wing are permanent residents. More latterly, D wing has become the induction wing, to accommodate the new prisoners arriving as part of the change in population figures after the completion of the fire safety works in the summer of 2025. Part of H wing houses the psychologically informed planned environment (PIPE) unit, accommodating 58 prisoners, with the other wing operating as an over-50s wing.

The main providers of contract services to the prison are currently:

Maintenance:	Amey
Healthcare:	Practice Plus Group
Education:	Milton Keynes College / People Plus Group

The Board acknowledges that these contracts may be awarded by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and not controlled, or performance managed by the Governor at Gartree.

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

### **3. Key points**

#### **3.1 Background to the report**

Despite the low number of Board members, the Board has continued to monitor all areas over the period 1 December 2024 through to 30 November 2025, including safety, fair and humane treatment, health and wellbeing, routine purposeful activity, prisoners' progression and staff training.

The Board considers that the provision of a safe and decent environment for prisoners has yet again been hindered by the deteriorating and unsatisfactory infrastructure at Gartree and remains very concerned about:

- Growing levels of violence – growing perception of the prisoners and of the Board that the prison is unsafe
- Prevalence of illicit items.
- Inadequate healthcare services/staffing issues, particularly mental health.
- The ageing fabric and poor infrastructure, in particular heating, leaking roofs and showers.
- Inadequate facilities and lack of support for some older/disabled prisoners
- Increase in deaths in custody.
- Cutbacks to the education provision.
- Limited access to purposeful activities/rehabilitative facilities.
- High levels of segregation / wing restrictions.
- High levels of imprisonment for public protection (IPP) prisoners.

#### **3.2 Main findings**

##### **Safety**

- There has been an increase in violence during the reporting period and prisoners have told the Board they feel less safe now than they did previously. A recurring theme is the perception from prisoners that violence has increased, as well as the influence of gang control, against which some prisoners report feeling vulnerable and unsafe. There has been a 35% increase in recorded violence. Police referrals increased four-fold, from 31 in the previous reporting period to 130 in the current period (65 for assaults and 35 for 'in possession' (being in possession of illicit items such as drugs, alcohol, mobile phones, weapons). The prison finds it necessary to segregate prisoners for their own protection.
- Levels of self-harm and the use of ACCT (assessment, care in custody and teamwork documents, used to support prisoners who are at risk of self-harm and suicide) have increased.
- Number of prisoners referred to CSIP (challenge, support and intervention plans, used to support and manage prisoners who pose an increased risk of violence) have increased.
- Incidences of use of force have increased.

- Access to illicit items such as drugs and mobile phones, many of which appear to be delivered by illegal drones, continues to pose an increasing threat to safety and control by helping to fuel an illicit prisoner trading culture, which in turn leads to debt, bullying, and violence. It also poses a risk to life to those prisoners who use or test these unlicensed drugs.
- It is sad for the Board to report a total of 10 deaths in custody during the year; six apparently by natural causes, three apparently drug related and one an apparent suicide.
- The number of self-harm incidents has increased in the reporting period to an average of 46 per month (during the previous reporting year, an average of 21 per month over a 12 month period). Many prisoners use self-harming as a coping mechanism, but the underlying causal factors have yet to be established. The majority of self-harm is caused by a small number of prisoners.
- The Board notes that incidents of use of force (UoF) have increased by 21% over the reporting period to 422 from 349 in the previous period.
- However, there has been a significant improvement in the methodology and capture of information regarding each incident and an external quality assurance report in October gave favourable indications. Those areas requiring improvement have since been implemented.
- During the reporting period, applications to the Board about concerns relating to 'staff/prisoner concerns including bullying' have increased from 13 to 41. This will be more closely monitored next year to help establish if this relates more to staff/prisoner or prisoner/prisoner issues.

### **Fair and humane treatment**

- The Board considers that, on the whole, prisoners at Gartree are treated fairly and humanely and relationships between prisoners and staff have been observed to be fair and generally positive. There continues, however, to be issues with the provision of key worker sessions throughout the period.
- Segregation of prisoners both in the SAPU and on residential wings remains high and there are still prisoners held in segregation for unacceptably long periods without adequate access to mental health/secure hospital facilities.
- The general building fabric and infrastructure continues to deteriorate. Promised improvements to heating and showers have not been completed or continue to break down. Repairs are slow and tend to be of a 'sticking plaster' approach.
- Issues with the existence of asbestos were present in the reporting period, but it should be noted that the associated works, and therefore the issues, have subsequently been resolved.
- Segregated prisoners have nowhere to eat food other than in their cells. Prisoners on residential wings A-D have very limited access to communal eating areas.

### **Health and wellbeing**

- The Board remains concerned that healthcare provision for both physical and mental health services is inadequate at Gartree.

- It appears to the Board that access to mental health facilities is inadequate and can often take considerable time; there have been changes to staffing, particularly following the change in healthcare provider in March 2024. This has a massive effect on individuals and can also then spread to the prisoners and staff who look after and associate with them.
- The Board notes the positive actions now being made by Practice Plus Group to reduce the dependency on agency staff.
- The Board acknowledges that there is a lot of effort put into trying to provide a workable and fair regime for the majority of prisoners to ensure they have access to purposeful activity and access to regular exercise and outdoor space.

## **Progression and resettlement**

- The Board is concerned that there have been cuts to the provision of education and training.
- The library continues to provide a welcoming space and inspiring environment, but this too has faced cuts which limit weekend access.
- The relocation of prisoners to fill the wing vacated for fire safety work has gone smoothly, apart from missing property complaints.
- There has been movement in the prison system as a whole, which has allowed some prisoners who have achieved category C status to move on from Gartree to progress through their sentences.
- Psychology: during the year 'Building Choices' was introduced – an offending behaviour programme designed to address both offence-specific and general offending behaviour by helping participants build skills in emotional regulation, healthy thinking, relationships and finding purpose.
- Education: cutbacks to the education provision mean that both outreach work and workshop support has been reduced, with some courses removed entirely. An induction is offered to all prisoners within 14 days of arrival at Gartree, at which point their learning needs are identified. However, the uplift in prisoner numbers attributed to the D wing relocation of prisoners has led to longer waiting times for prisoners to gain access to courses.
- Employment: at the end of the reporting period, since the prisoner movements in D wing, overall unemployment within the prison as a whole stood at 18%.
- National reconfiguration of the prison estate had created new challenges for Gartree as it now receives long-term prisoners much earlier in their sentences. This can cause challenges for prisoners who have been in Gartree a long time, as well as for the staff who have the challenge of managing the expectations of those prisoners focused on meeting the objectives on their sentence plan as early as possible, but are not yet being offered the required courses to do so as quickly as they would perhaps like.
- The prison works hard to promote and facilitate social visits and family days.

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

The Board asks that answers to the following questions focus on HMP Gartree.

#### **TO THE MINISTER**

Will the Minister confirm:

- The Board reiterates its concern about imprisonment for public protection (IPP) sentences, which have no set release date. Previously the Minister stated that resentencing could result in prisoners being released without licence supervision. However, not resentencing is punishing them for their behaviour, which has undoubtedly been impacted by the uncertainty of IPPs that were abolished in 2012, with the Government stating that they were 'indefensible'. Despite the reforms introduced in February 2025 to reduce the qualifying period for consideration of licence termination, no referrals for prisoners at Gartree have been made to the Parole Board. Why? What will it take for the Minister review resentencing?
- Attempts to combat the increasing drone incursions nationally have been woefully inadequate. We note that, nationally, £40m is being invested in physical security measures. However, to date there appears to be little success. The investment in physical security for HMP Gartree has not yet materialised. Will the Minister consider available advanced technology, as well as physical security?
- When will HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) National Services Estates and Ministry of Justice Property allocate funding to address the continually deteriorating fabric and infrastructure? A solution to this specific question appears to be overlooked year-on-year and is eagerly awaited.
- When will adequate provisions be made for the ageing prison population who experience problems with unsuitable access for elderly and disabled prisoners?
- What is being done to improve the provision of mental health services, and the reduce the waiting periods for those in crisis?

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

Will the Prison Service confirm:

- That Gartree will receive a revenue budget and capital funding sufficient to allow prisoners to live, and staff to work within a safe, secure, and decent environment?
- What preventive measures are to be taken to intercept and prevent drones and the influx of dangerous illicit items?
- When a thorough review of issues related to 'property lost on transfer' will be undertaken and necessary improvements made?
- When/if rules covering the possession of prisoner property in the LTHSE is to be standardised?
- Who is ultimately responsible for ensuring that an acceptable level of inpatient care is provided at Gartree? Since the appointment of the new healthcare

provider the Board continues to receive a high level of complaints about healthcare provision and lack of access to a range healthcare services.

- Will the Prison Service provide sufficient funding so that prisoners can access employment, purposeful activity and education?

## TO THE GOVERNOR

The Board acknowledges and appreciates the regular contact and communication with the Governor and members of the SMT.

Please can the Governor confirm:

- That the healthcare provider is delivering an adequate serve of healthcare provision?
- What further support can be provided to ensure that key work is delivered consistently and to a high standard for all prisoners?
- Will issues around the 'roll correct' (the prisoner head count) be addressed to reduce the impact this has on the wider regime?
- Who ensures that the actions requiring the input of AMEY are progressed in a timely manner? Particularly those raised at the health and safety meeting.
- All outstanding repairs to the fabric of the kitchen will be undertaken as a priority and that all broken unserviceable kitchen appliances will be repaired or replaced without delay?
- What additional steps can be taken to keep the prison clear of litter and waste often thrown out of cell windows by prisoners (which encourages vermin)?
- An assurance that all prisoners are allowed access to work, and training opportunities, regardless of their educational attainment?

### 3.4 Progress since the last report

The responses below, summarise the issues raised and responses given in last year's annual report.

Issue raised	Response given	Progress
<b>To Minister</b>		
Failing/poor prison infrastructure	Comprehensive review of showers Fire safety to be completed Repairs to heating system funding to be pursued Site wide boiler replacement scheduled 2025/26	Many problems still exist.
Service providers – delivering poor quality	Capital projects managed by National HMPS estates body, some MOJ. Bids for window replacement and anti-drone measures	The Board considers that not much progress has been made. Work has not yet commenced on the

	approved but no evidence of work	physical security for HMP Gartree.
Challenges for aging population	Adaptations considered on case-by-case basis Social care provider works with healthcare No plans to increase capacity for more older prisoners	Most problems still exist.
Service providers – adequacy and oversight	Service provision assessed as per contracts Board promised access to NHS healthcare performance data	Board still has no access to data despite repeated assurances. Problems still exist.
Access to special mental health facilities	National issue of lack of mental health beds New mental health and Justice strategy group to discuss and have oversight	Problems still exist. No obvious improvements.
IPP prisoners	Govt mindful of challenges Some changes to legislation Some referrals back to Parole boards	No apparent improvement to the predicament of IPP prisoners and their lack of hope.

<b>To the Prison Service</b>		
Improvements to the building fabric and infrastructure	HMPPS will continue to bid for funds to improve the infrastructure at HMP Gartree.	Major issues still remain, with leaking roofs, poor heating and showers.
Searches - Concerns raised regarding methods used and lack of accountability for removing items and recording	Clear process for searching and recording	Some issues still reported regarding dedicated search teams.
Healthcare complaints	Practice Plus Group (PPG) try to resolve complaints face to face in the first instance, before NHS complaints procedure is followed.  Complaint reviewed at quarterly Contract Review Meetings led by the Commissioning Managers. The Governor also monitors complaints linked to healthcare and the data is assured via the Local Delivery Board/Senior Management	Board not provided with data which we have asked for and been promised.  Seems to be no real improvement – based on complains we get from prisoners. Unacceptably long response period of up to 60 working days.

	Team with a contract review escalation process in place if necessary.	
Access to Employment and purposeful activity  Resources to enable effective key work	The current provision for employment, purposeful activity, and education will remain in place pending funding allocation. At present, every prisoner at HMP Gartree can access some form of employment or purposeful activity either on a part-time or full-time basis.	There have been cuts to education provision. New provider.  Still some issues with key work.

<b>To Governor</b>		
Ingress of illicit items and drugs and drones	Part of a national project – some work with police Some initiatives ongoing	A significant and increasing issue.
Concerns about fabric of kitchen and the issues around equipment not being replaced/repared by Service provider(s)		Still issues with broken equipment. Kitchen has continued to have issues with lack of heating.
Purposeful activity – too few engaged in really purposeful education or work	Incentives to encourage all to seek opportunities – access for example to more gym sessions.  Penalties for those who choose to remain unemployed.	Some improvement in the efforts to reduce unemployment levels.  Cuts to education provision and change of course for numeracy/literacy.  Wait to see how new education provider functions.
Security system improvements	Some training and changes to security process on main gate	Funding has been allocated to improve security procedures, with progress made in some areas but yet to commence in others.

## Evidence sections 4 – 7

### 4. Safety

#### 4.1 Reception and induction

- Prisoner movements in and out of Gartree are infrequent due to its categorisation as a prison for men serving life sentences; however, over the past reporting period there has been a re-allocation of prisoners to fill the 'empty' wing (after fire safety work was completed). The reception function has handled this well and reported issues have related mainly to property lost or delayed on transfer.
- New arrivals are given inductions / first night safety interviews to help identify risks and vulnerabilities until full inductions can be carried out on G wing (and now D wing) the next day. The Board often receives complaints about basic items such as bedding, plates, cutlery and clothing not being provided on or soon after arrival. Supplies of some basic items continues to be an issue.

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

- Once again, the number of ACCT documents opened has increased over the past year from 243 in 2023/24 to 266 in 2024/25. See Table 1 and 2 below.
- Prisoners with an ACCT (assessment, care in custody and teamwork) review are recorded on the daily briefing sheet. Prisoners on ACCTs (and in post closure) are discussed at the weekly safety intervention meeting (SIM) to ensure prison staff and other professionals work together as a multi-disciplinary team to agree the best approach for dealing with the more complex prisoners.
- There has been an increase in the recorded number of 'statements of intent', from 80 last year to 117 this year. This could be due to issues around accessing mental health services or due to better recording of reported intent, but either way this is a concern. There has however, been a 50% reduction of ACCTs opened for those reporting as being 'low in mood'.

**Table 1: Safer custody statistics December 2024 – November 25**

	2022	2023	2024	Current reporting period
<b>TOTAL</b> Self-harm incidents	242	266	288	<b>457</b>
Serious self-harm incidents (near misses or hospital attendance required)	27	7	5	<b>7</b>
ACCTs opened (see table 2 below for reasons)	132	185	241	<b>266</b>
CSIP Referrals	272	270	217	<b>434</b>
CSIP Opened	98	49	45	<b>68</b>
Prisoner on Staff assaults	58	69	55	<b>68</b>
Prisoners on prisoner assaults	53	24	75	<b>71</b>
Deaths in Custody	9	1	1	<b>10</b>
Use of Force incidents	228	326	349	<b>390</b>
Figures provided by safer custody team, HMP Gartree)				
Police Referrals Includes contraband, assaults, threats, sexual assaults	N/A	N/A	31	<b>130</b>

**Table 2: ACCTs opened and reasons recorded December 2024 – November 25**

	2022	2023	2024	Current reporting period
Hanging/ligature	6	10	17	<b>124</b>
Cuts minor	24	17	83	
Cuts major	4	2		
Overdoes / self-poisoning	6	9	10	
Food refusal	0	16	3	
Combined – deliberate self-harm	56	40	54	<b>124</b>
Statement of intent	41	75	80	<b>117</b>
Low in mood	46	26	50	<b>25</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	134	185	243	<b>266</b>

The 'Listener' scheme (prisoners trained by the Samaritans to provide confidential emotional support to fellow prisoners) continues to run in Gartree and provide invaluable support, although it lost some of its more experienced members as they have progressed through their sentence plan to category C establishments. All prisoners have access to the Samaritans helpline via their in-cell PIN phone.

### **Self-harm**

There has been a large increase in the number of recorded incidents of self-harm, from 288 in 23/2024 to 457 in 24/2025 (see Table 1 above). It is unclear if this is due to better reporting/recording but an increase of this level is of concern. The Board is aware that in some instances acts of self-harm are carried out by a small number of prisoners, some of whom self-harm multiple times. These prisoners often have personality disorder issues which may contribute to their self-harming behaviours.

### **Deaths in custody**

- It is regrettable to note that over the reporting period there have been 10 deaths in custody; six apparently of natural causes, three apparently drug related and one apparent suicide.
- The prison has dedicated family liaison officers (FLOs) who notify and support relatives, with support available for prisoners and staff affected by the incidents.
- Deaths in custody are investigated by the Prison and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) and their findings not reported until after an inquest has been concluded. PPO recommendations are published and highlight lessons to be learned. Some recent reports stress the importance of checks that observation panels are unblocked and that thorough checks are made of prisoner's welfare at unlock. Wider recommendations have also been made about healthcare input and the need for the prison to consider early release on compassionate grounds when prisoners have a terminal illness or are receiving end of life care.
- In response to criticism from the PPO regarding the prisons' failure to apply for 'early release on compassionate grounds (EROCG), for a terminally ill prisoner, Gartree has taken steps to set up a multi-disciplinary team – called SHARE (support, help, assess, refer and engage) - with representatives from the OMU, healthcare, safer custody and the reasonable adjustments panel. The SHARE team meet monthly to discuss prisoners who may be terminally ill or near end of life and the best ways to support the individuals' needs.
- The FLOs now keep families updated in relation to the SHARE discussions and the wishes of the prisoner, such as a DNR (do not resuscitate) or the desire to not go to an outside hospital. Healthcare has to advise on the prognosis and then balance these alongside the ability of the prison to manage the medical condition and needs of the prisoner. This should now allow OMU officers to make better informed decisions about if/when to apply for early release.

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

- There continues to be an increase in the number of younger prisoners coming to Gartree earlier in their life sentences, and these prisoners can have different needs and expectations to the older more settled population.

- The number of prisoners referred for 'challenge, support and intervention plans' (CSIP) has doubled - from 217 in 2023/2024 to 434 in 2024/2025, and the number of CSIPs actually opened increasing from 45 in 2023/2024 to 68 in 24/2025. CSIPs are noted on the daily briefing sheet and these prisoners may also be discussed at the weekly SIM and monthly safer custody meeting.
- Gang affiliations within Gartree and 'non-associate' (prisoners who cannot associate with certain other prisoners, and from whom they must be kept apart at all times, for violence prevention) information, recorded by the security department, helps to ensure the safe location and management of such prisoners. Much of the supply of drugs and other illicit items is linked to known individuals and affiliations.
- The number of police referrals this year has increased four-fold, from 31 in 2024 to 130 in 2025.
- Following the introduction of an 'isolated prisoner strategy in 2023 – there are now very few prisoners who self-isolate; the positive support provided to get these prisoners reintegrated into the normal regime has been very successful.

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

- There has been an increase in the incidents of violence and violent behaviour, particularly towards the end of the reporting period. The Governor has advised that this behaviour will not be tolerated or go unchallenged. Violent incidents not only harm those directly involved but they also create an environment where others feel unsafe. The Board has been advised on an increasing number of occasions that some prisoners feel unsafe.
- Use of force (UoF) incidents are recorded on body worn video cameras (BWVCs) and/or handheld digital cameras (more likely for planned interventions) and reviewed at a monthly UoF meeting). The meeting looks at a cross-section of both planned and unplanned events and examines monthly and annual trends (wing, age group, religion and ethnicity, time of day events occur and officers involved, etc).
- Within the LTHSE comparator group, Gartree remains the lowest for the number of use of force incidents.

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

- The prison acknowledges the availability/use of illicit items (drugs and alcohol) and has highlighted to prisoners the negative consequences of their use and abuse and encourages prisoners to speak to staff or the substance misuse team to obtain support.
- The Board is concerned about the high level of readily illicit items available in the prison and their prevalence is closely linked to the levels of debt, violence and bullying which occur. Regular finds of drugs, phones, SIM cards/readers, hooch, phones chargers, smoking paraphernalia and weapons are reported.
- A full body scanner is used in Reception and helps detect secreted items.
- Handheld 'wand' scanners are used when prisoners leave/return to their wings, as some items are not to be taken off wings. Additional staff capability training has taken place to ensure this process is robust.

- Incoming mail is now copied and the copy given to the prisoner, as opposed to the original, to reduce the influx of drug infused correspondence.
- The Board has received complaints about appropriately marked confidential Rule 39 paperwork being opened. The Governor in charge has reviewed and improved some of the processes to limit this being repeated.
- Archway metal detectors, handheld wands and rub-down searches are now consistently used in the gate house for all staff and visitors into the establishment.
- Homemade weapons continue to be found during cell/wing searches and on targeted/intelligence-led searches by the DST (dedicated search team). There have been occasions over the past year where wings have been 'locked down' to facilitate intelligence led searches.
- Drug usage is of particular concern when the type and strength of drugs is unknown. Severe reactions can occur, often life-threatening. Some staff are now trained to administer naloxone (an opioid antagonist to reverse the effects of suspected opioid overdose).
- Funding was secured for an incentivised substance free living unit (ISFL). The 'Acorn Unit' is now open, for a number of prisoners who have acknowledged the desire to desist and recover from the use of drugs and illicit items. The Board welcomes this initiative and will continue to monitor its progress.

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

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

- As with past reports, the Board once again highlights concern about the ongoing deterioration of the fabric and infrastructure at Gartree. The Board continues to hear complaints about the inadequate heating at Gartree. Despite some new generators/boilers being installed there are still regular problems reported, where heating/hot water does not work on selected wings.
- Poor condition of the buildings and cleanliness continues to be an issue on some wings and communal areas. We have found servery areas, association rooms and stairwells dirty, with leftover food and rubbish lying around. It is unfortunate as on some wings the communal areas are clean and well-kept and despite the poor fabric and condition of the establishment, staff and some prisoners make efforts to maintain clean and tidy living conditions as best they can.
- The Board has received many complaints about beds (slats missing, dirty and old mattresses), broken or missing cell furniture, nowhere to sit and eat in cells.
- Some prisoners with disabilities and/or mobility issues living on G and H wing have voiced concerns to the Board about issues they experience in accessing healthcare facilities. The prison does refer to social care and ensure that modifications are made where appropriate. The Board is also aware that some wheelchair users are unable to access larger cells with wider doors, and issues have occurred for some prisoners who need 'hospital beds', as these do not fit into a standard cell. However, hospital beds are predominantly used on the Acorn Unit, as the cells on this unit are capable of such accommodation.
- The Board has observed food to be of an acceptable standard and to cater for a wide range of dietary requirements, although we have received several complaints about lack of special allergy or religious diets and some food choices/preferences. The kitchen and reasonable adjustments panel have arrangements in place to consider such specific requests.
- It is encouraging to see religious festivals being recognised and celebrated with special food provided by the kitchen, often at gatherings in the multi-faith room.
- The Board continues to observe issues with broken equipment, heating and other issues in the kitchens. Amey (the appointed maintenance contractor) appeared to still have a backlog of maintenance and repair work, which has an adverse impact on prisoners and staff.

### **5.2 Segregation**

- The segregation and progression unit (SAPU) comprises of 11 cells and one special cell (where items such as furniture, bedding and sanitation are removed in the interests of safety), which is not fit for purpose, but still has to be used on occasion. The SAPU is a busy and full unit, so there are always prisoners segregated on normal residential wings.
- The SAPU staff are committed and constantly dealing with those with more volatile behaviours and complex mental health needs. This often results in violence against staff and/or self-harm.

- The Board remains concerned about the effects that long-term segregation can have on prisoners in a unit, which is in a poor state of repair, with poor natural light and ventilation, and with a shower in a poor state. Repairs to individual cells take a long time. It remains the case that damaged flooring, walls, sinks, toilets and observation panels take far too long to repair, adding to the air of decay – which is further hindered by the ‘dirty protests’ (when a person deliberately urinates or defecates without the use of the proper facilities supplied, as an act of non-compliance or protest) frequently taking place. Over the reporting period, there have also been issues reported with asbestos exposed in cell ceilings.
- Now the daily management and strategic oversight of SAPU sits directly within the safer custody function, the Board has observed a far more consistent approach over the past year. The psychology team continue to provide support, advice and guidance to staff and prisoners in segregation. One page plans, produced by the psychologist in conjunction with the prisoner, support staff and prisoner interactions and encourage prisoners to think about the behaviours they need to demonstrate to help their progression.
- The Board remains concerned about the mental health support for segregated prisoners; transfer to secure mental health facilities seems increasingly limited and lengthy. The Board acknowledges that timescales for such transfers are not within the local control of HMP Gartree. There are regularly segregated prisoners who require two or three officers to be present when unlocking their cells due to safety risks, often in full personal protective equipment (PPE), making day to day duties in the unit challenging.
- Anti-stab vests are now worn by all officers in the SAPU.
- There continue to be prisoners who ‘self-isolate’ and other who are managed under ‘wing restrictions’. It is concerning to hear that they don’t always get access to all of regime.

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

- Throughout the past year, staffing levels for both officers and OSGs (officer support grade staff) have remained stable. New staff continue to be recruited and trained but there is still some attrition, through retirement and resignations.
- The Governor remains committed to delivering a ‘fair’ regime, and on the whole, this has been delivered. However, towards the end of the reporting year there have been changes to the core day and some problems occur with getting the roll (prisoner head-count) correct. This has a knock-on effect to the day to running and access to healthcare, employment, education, gym sessions and time out of cell.
- There are still some issues with key worker support, when officers allocated to key work are redirected to other duties due to staff shortages – but this is less common. Efforts have been made by prison management to give the staff delivering key work the time and skills to improve the quality of sessions.

### **5.4 Equality and diversity**

- The equality officer plays a vital role in ensuring that consideration is given to equality and diversity concerns raised by prisoners, particularly those with recognised characteristics.

- Prisoners who believe they have experienced discrimination or inequality can submit a DIRF (discrimination incident reporting form) and these are investigated/dealt with by the equality officer.
- Throughout the reporting period, the number of DIRFs has increased.
- Equality action team (EAT) meetings are held to address issues raised by the recognised characteristic equality groups, and for each groups there is an SMT champion and also a prisoner representative who attends meetings.
- The prison tries to recognise, publicise and celebrate events such as Pride and Black History Month, as well as publicising notices to all about significant dates and celebrations relating to different faiths.
- The full-time foreign national officer at Gartree supports 100 foreign prisoners from over 30 different nationalities. A number of foreign national prisoners continue to be deported or repatriated.
- For the age breakdown of prisoners see table 3: below. This shows a relatively stable pattern in the age breakdown of prisoners between 30 and 60, with an increase in under 30s and decrease in over 60s.

<b>Table 3: Prisoner population by age</b>								
2023			2024			2025		
Age	No.	%	Age	No.	%	No.	%	
21-25	32	5.5	<b>21- 25</b>	81	14.5	<b>129</b>	<b>19.45</b>	
26-29	59	10.2	<b>26-29</b>					
30-39	182	31.5	<b>30-39</b>	175	31.5	<b>201</b>	<b>30.30</b>	
40-49	142	24.5	<b>40-49</b>	145	26	<b>161</b>	<b>24.24</b>	
50-59	88	15.2	<b>50-59</b>	91	16.3	<b>109</b>	<b>16.41</b>	
60-69	60	10.4	<b>60-69</b>	47	8.4	<b>64</b>	<b>9.6</b>	
70+	15	2.6	<b>70+</b>	19	3.4			
	593			558		<b>664</b>		

## 5.5 Faith and pastoral support

- Faith and pastoral provision at Gartree has suffered through the loss of some long serving members of the chaplaincy team over the past year. Some of these posts/positions remain vacant.
- A duty chaplain makes daily face-to-face visits to segregated prisoners in SAPU and on wings and sees all new arrivals.
- The chaplaincy team can offer support to bereaved prisoners and, in some instances, help facilitate video attendance at funerals.

<b>Religion description - 2025</b>	<b>Total number of Prisoners</b>
Agnostic	2
Atheist	7
Buddhist	23
Church of Jesus Christ (LDS)	6
Christian	61

Church In Wales	0
Church of England (Anglican)	96
Church of Scotland	1
Eastern Orthodox	6
Hindu / Hare Krishna	5
Jehovah's Witness	4
Jewish	8
Methodist	2
Muslim	194
No religion	115
Pagan / Druid	21
Pentecostal	0
Quaker	2
Rastafarian	4
Roman Catholic	100
Sikh	5
Spiritualist	1
Taoist	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>663</b>

## 5.6 Complaints

- Over the past year, a total of 3,835 formal complaints were received from prisoners in relation to concerns they have; this is an increase of 20%, or 634 from the previous reporting period (see **table 4 below**). However, if the period prior to the recant is calculated, this shows an increase in complaints of 12.4% compared to the same period in the previous reporting period.
- Once again, residential issues account for the highest number of complaints submitted - most likely related to particular issues the prisoners experience with the fabric of the buildings, standard of accommodation and facilities, lack of heating, showers or hot water.
- Dissatisfaction with responses to prisoner complaints or a lack of responses continues to generate applications to the IMB. In many instances, such complaints involve missing property following a 'transfer in'. These are difficult to investigate and rarely settled. Management of prisoner property, particularly on transfer, is a national and costly issue which needs to be addressed.

<b>Table 4: Summary of complaints submitted to HMP by prisoners during reporting period (data provided by HMP Gartree)</b>				
	<b>December 2023 - Nov 2024</b>		<b>December 2024– November 2025</b>	
	<b>No.</b>	<b>Most complained about</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Most complained about</b>
Dec	176	Residential 22%	<b>339</b>	Residential (78 – 22.6%)
Jan	219	Residential 27%	<b>305</b>	Residential (59 -20.1%)
Feb	253	Residential 24%	<b>236</b>	Residential (40 – 17.3%)
Mar	277	Residential 16%	<b>281</b>	Residential (51 -19.0%)
April	285	Residential 22%	<b>251</b>	Residential (47 – 19.8%)
May	286	Residential 20%	<b>270</b>	Residential (44 – 17.1%)
June	243	Residential 21%	<b>273</b>	Residential (50 – 19%)
Jul	257	Residential 22%	<b>331</b>	Residential (66 – 20.6%)
Aug	229	Residential 22%	<b>302</b>	Residential (64 – 22.1%)
Sept	259	Residential 19%	<b>426</b>	Residential (62 – 15%)
Oct	364	Residential 32%	<b>451</b>	Residential (100 – 2.7%)
Nov	354	Residential 25%	<b>370</b>	Residential (67 – 18.6%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3201</b>		<b>3,835</b>	

*\*Please note that complaints about healthcare provision are now dealt with directly by Practice Plus Group – who have up to six months to respond to these. Prisoners can also take complaints directly to the NHS. The Board has no data on how many prisoners have submitted such complaints or are awaiting response.*

## **6. Health and wellbeing**

### **6.1 Healthcare general**

- The Board continues to receive complaints from prisoners about the length of time taken to receive healthcare provision, and the Board believes this has a detrimental impact on the health and wellbeing of prisoners.
- Healthcare services are provided by Practice Plus Group (PPG), who took over the contract from Nottinghamshire Healthcare Foundation Trust (NHFT) on 1 March 2024.
- PPG is commissioned to provide integrated services to prisoners, including physical healthcare, mental healthcare, social care, and clinical and psychosocial substance misuse services.
- The healthcare department has been understaffed for much of the past year, relying on agency staff.

### **6.2 Exercise, regime**

- The published regime at Gartree provides those engaged in work, training or education with up to 8.5 hours a day out of their cell. This reduces to 3.5 hours for prisoners who were unemployed, or to 2.5 hours for those on basic level of the incentives scheme (a system of earned privileges used to incentivise positive behaviours).
- In most cases, prisoners are given access to 45 minutes of outdoor exercise each day. Most exercise takes place on the large all-weather football pitch, the gym, or a large separate area in front of G and H wings.
- The gym, which is well-equipped and staffed by, positive well-trained officers, is open daily and offers a wide range of sessions to all prisoners, who are entitled to between one and four sessions of gym a week, depending on whether they are in employment or education and their level on the prison's incentives scheme. The gym had good links with healthcare and substance misuse staff and prisoners were referred for tailored programmes to meet their specific needs.
- However, some parts of the gym cannot be accessed by less able/disabled prisoners as the lift to the upper floor has remained out of action all year.
- The smaller specialised units are able to offer a wider range of activities such as chess, draughts, reading groups and music. On the larger wings this tends to be limited to pool, snooker and board games. Staff on A wing have made great efforts to encourage communal jigsaw participation over the past year.
- In SAPU facilities are limited – a good selection of books is available and others can be 'ordered' from the library. SAPU exercise yards are particularly lacking in equipment.
- Prison-wide groups included a choir, music tuition, drama and book club, and activities are also advertised in the Grapevine magazine.

## **7. Progression and resettlement**

### **7.1 Education**

- For the majority of the reporting period, Milton Keynes College was the education provider. However, their contract ended and this function has been taken over by People Plus Group.
- The Board is aware that there have been significant reductions to the education provision and courses provided.
- There is still an emphasis on promoting/providing maths and English Level 2.
- Some of the prisoners working in the workshops and studio have asked for access to more vocational courses. They are also keen to explore how their skills could be used to provided services that could help the wider community.

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

- The kitchen continues to provide vocational work (and training) but some of the prisoners working there remain frustrated by the working conditions and lower levels of pay.
- Workshops offer a range of jobs, from the less skilled (airline headphone refurb/packaging) to the more skilled (sewing shops and a bicycle refurbishment shop) alongside gardening, recycling, print studio and a laundry.
- The workshops are run by enthusiastic and well-informed staff, and prisoners engaged in work tend to be happy and grateful to be able to spend time out of their cells and earn money.

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

- Progression work continues to be challenging, with the number of resettlement courses being limited, exacerbated by the long sentences and the earlier in their sentence plan that prisoners are entering into Gartree.
- There has been an increase in prisoners transferring to category C prisons, making space for new category B prisoners who are earlier in their sentences.
- In line with the Security Categorisation Framework, those serving indeterminate sentences have their review as part of the scheduled sentence planning reviews (these are every three years for ISPs). This continues to cause frustration to some prisoners who lose the incentive to behave/progress.
- The high number of IPP prisoners at Gartree continues to be a cause for concern, all of whom are significantly over-tariff (they had served well beyond their minimum sentence but had not yet been approved for release by the Parole Board). It is common to find IPP prisoners in the SAPU and many have decreasing hope of meaningful progression, adding to complex mental health needs.
- Key work continues to suffer, with frequent staff re-deployments and explanations given by prison management include emergencies, prisoners being monitored elsewhere in prison, timing and illnesses.

- Gartree has a young adult (YA) strategy and uses a range of measures to support the YA population (age 21-25), who form a growing number of the prison population. The Board is encouraged by the work being undertaken around, safety, wellbeing, building family ties and sentence planning.
- Management of the self-isolating (SI) prisoners seems to have improved, with some long-term self-isolators being reintegrated into the normal regime. However, the Board remains concerned that these prisoners may not have access to all the facilities offered to those who are segregated.

#### **7.4 Family contact**

- Social visits continue to play an important role in the lives of many prisoners, and the Board has observed that efforts are made by prison management to facilitate and encourage this.
- The visits centre is situated outside the main Gate House and welcomes families and visitors before they enter the prison. This is run by a charity, The Prisoner Advice and Care Trust – PACT; it provides a vital service and offers support and advice to those who use it. It is run predominantly by volunteers, who offer hot drinks, snacks and secure lockers to families.
- Some additional family days are offered outside of the basic entitlement to social visits and often run at times such as half term to allow children to attend. These are popular and seem to be appreciated by both prisoners and families.
- Some prisoners also use the facility to hold virtual social visits, and there seem to have been improvements to make sure that these are conducted without excessive background noise and disturbance from the surrounding visits.

#### **7.5 Resettlement planning**

- Releases from Gartree are few and far between, due to the nature of its being a prison where many prisoners are serving life sentences. During the past year, only one prisoner was released directly from Gartree.
- Any releases which do occur are overseen by the Parole Board and Probation Service to direct prisoners to a community offender manager, who will then monitor licence conditions and risk factors.

#### **7.6 Library**

- The library continues to be popular with prisoners and is well used, not only to obtain books, but also as a learning support hub for those undertaking educational courses and for prisoners who support their peers under the Shannon Trust programme, to improve numeracy and literacy skills.
- Unfortunately, weekend and Friday afternoon sessions have now been lost due to reductions in provision, but library staff work hard to support prisoners.
- A 'quiet time' session is offered for those prisoners with neurodiverse needs.
- The library is a bright welcoming space, which runs additional positive activities such as a book club, origami class and 'spelling bee' competition to encourage literacy and reading.

## 8. The work of the IMB

### Board statistics

	2023	2024	Current reporting year
Recommended complement of Board members	14	14	14
No. of Board members at the start of the reporting period	5	6	6
No. of Board members at the end of the reporting period	6	5	6
Total number of visits to the establishment	286	326	307
Total number of segregation reviews attended	206	217	290

## Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	2022/23	2023/24	Current reporting period
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	11	23	21
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	3	17	32
C	Equality	8	13	10
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	13	12	16
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	4	15	24
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	5	15	21
F	Food and kitchens	8	8	6
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	32	56	40
H1	Property within this establishment	17	25	25
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	5	10	18
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	4	2	3
I	Sentence management, including HDC, release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	3	8	21
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	13	41	35
K	Transfers	2	4	6
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	11	25	30
M	Inappropriate	2	0	0
	<b>Total number of applications</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>308</b>

## Annex A

### Glossary of terms

ACCT	assessment, care in custody and teamwork
BWVC	body worn video camera
CCTV	closed-circuit television
CSIP	support intervention programme
DBS	daily briefing sheet
DIC	death in custody
DIRF	discrimination incident reporting form
DST	dedicated search team
GOoD	good order and/or discipline
HMIP	His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons
HMPPS	His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service
Hooch	Illicit/illegally brewed or distilled liquids
IPP	imprisonment for public protection
LTHSE	long term high security estate
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
NHFT	Nottinghamshire NHS Foundation Trust (healthcare provider)
NHS	National Health Service
OASys	offender assessment system
OMiC	offender management in custody
OMU	offender management unit
PACT	Prisoner Advice and Care Trust
PEEP	Personal Escape and Evacuation Plan
PIPE	psychologically informed progression environment
POELT	prison officer entry level trainee
PPG	Practice Plus Group (healthcare provider)
PPO	Prisons and Probation Ombudsman
SAPU	Separation and Progression Unit
SIM	safety intervention meeting
SMT	senior management team
UoF	use of force
YA	young adult



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