



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at Holme House

**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

2.1 During January 2025, HMP Holme House was reclassified to a category B reception, training and resettlement prison, serving the courts of Teesside and parts of County Durham for men on remand and convicted prisoners (aged 18 and over). Prior to this it operated as a category C training and resettlement prison, holding convicted adult men (aged 18 and over). This change was prompted by growing capacity pressures across the estate, particularly within reception prisons.

2.1.1 The re-role of HMP Holme House to category B in January 2025 has impacted all aspects of the prison’s routine and operating protocols. The Board observed that the planning and implementation work of all staff teams in the run up to the reclassification meant that the transition was very well delivered, given the high level of complexity involved and the tight timescales that it was delivered within. **The significance of the re-role cannot be under-estimated when reporting on the performance of the prison and the experience of prisoners, as the prison population and the operating regime are those of a category B prison, not a category C prison, as reported in 2024 annual report.**

2.1.2 Prior to January 2025 the prison held a relatively settled population and as to be expected the move to be a category B establishment has led to a far more transient population, leading to considerable ‘churn’ of prisoners, typically 300¹ or more prisoners arriving each month. This is evidenced in the table below, which shows from December 2025, of length of time prisoners have been held in Holme House [Figure 2.1]:

Figure 2.1 Residence time in Holme House, December 2025

Time resident in HMP Holme House	Number of prisoners	% of total population
Less than 1 month	280	25
1 month to 3 months	307	28
3 months to 6 months	218	20
6 months to 1 year	191	17
1 year to 2 years	56	5
2 years to 4 years	36	3
4 years of more	28	3

2.1.3 Prior to January 2025, all prisoners held in Holme House were convicted and sentenced (with a number on license recall). The re-role to category B, coupled with national policy changes to license recall rules, has meant that many prisoners are on remand or serving a short-term recall, arriving either straight from the local courts or from police cells. A snapshot of the makeup of the prison population during December 2025 is in figure 2.2. During the year, the Board has noted that the level of remand prisoners has at times been higher than the data snapshot in December.

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.

Figure 2.2: Prisoner status, December 2025

Prisoner status	Number of prisoners	% of total population
On remand	225	20
Convicted but not yet sentenced	131	12
Sentenced serving standard sentence	564	51
Sentenced serving a recall	190	17
No of detainees (foreign nationals, sentence served, waiting transfer to immigration estate)	6	1

2.2 The prison is part of the northeast prison group, together with HMP Durham, HMP Kirklevington Grange and HMP Deerbolt. The majority of prisoners are from the local region, with a small number from further afield. From January 2025, 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) was 1152 (with a certified normal accommodation (CNA) of 1006, which is the number of prisoners a prison can hold without being crowded). Following the completion of the building works relating to the new houseblock (house block 8) being completed in Spring 2025, the operational capacity increased to 1173.

2.3 Since 2022, the prison has housed young people (18-25), as well as adults. During 2025, young people have typically made up to almost 15% (c.170 prisoners) of the prisoner population.

2.3 During the year, the prison increased the number of houseblocks from seven to eight, with the erection of an eighth houseblock that houses 21 prisoners who would otherwise typically be housed on the vulnerable prisoners' houseblock. One of the eight houseblocks is used as a psychologically informed planned environment (PIPE). One block contains both an incentivised substance free living unit (ISFL) and the DRP (drug recovery prison) therapeutic community. There is also a wing on another block where veterans are accommodated together.

2.5 There is an in-patient healthcare provision with 14 cells in use as bed spaces, and an end-of-life suite, with two beds.

2.6 The segregation unit has a CNA of 30, which includes two special accommodation units (where items such as furniture, bedding and sanitation are removed in the interests of safety) and two have doors fitted with smart glass that can change between clear and opaque electronically, providing privacy on demand.

2.7 Education is delivered in three separate areas of classrooms and learning spaces (known as regimes). A suite of training kitchens and a bistro are available for catering training.

2.8 There are a number of workshops delivering services to the prison and other establishments, including a laundry, in addition DHL delivers the canteen service. Woodwork, upholstery and other workshops are available to train prisoners, where goods are manufactured for internal and a small number of external customers.

2.9 The garden and grounds maintenance service, along with yards and bins work, are based in external sheds and greenhouses.

2.10 The prison has a large, well-used gym and sports hall. A large kitchen provides work for prisoners, as well as delivering three meals (two meals and a packed breakfast) each day to over 1,100 people.

3. Key points

3.1 Main findings

The re-role of HMP Holme House in January 2025 has impacted all aspects of the prison's routine and operating protocols.

The significance of the re-role cannot be underestimated when reporting on the Board's main findings relating to the performance of the prison and the experience of prisoners, as the prison population and the operating regime are those of a category B prison not a category C prison as reported in last year's annual report.

As in previous years the senior management, staff and stakeholders strive to reform and treat prisoners fairly however there remain challenges, many outside the direct control of the prison establishment.

Safety

- There has been a shift in key safety metrics, including:
 - an increase in prisoner-on-prisoner assaults from 317 (2024) to 394 (2025)
 - an increase in the use of force, with 1,037 spontaneous incidents and 73 planned.
- The problems associated with drug abuse continue to be significant for the prison.
- There has been a reduction in self-harm from 937 (2024) to 807 (2025).
- There were 17 deaths in custody, of which 10 were post release within 14 days; of the seven deaths inside the prison, the vast majority were apparently from natural causes.

Fair and humane treatment

- Just under 18% of the expected key worker sessions were achieved (10,461 out of 58,660).
- A new houseblock has been completed, housing 21 prisoners.
- During the year, works have taken place to upgrade accommodation areas, including flooring in servery areas and showers.

Health and wellbeing

- Delays in occupational health assessments were caused by delays to therapists being approved and vetted to enter the prison.
- The waiting times to see a GP or dentist were, in the Board's view, adequate.

Progression and resettlement

- The impact of the prison holding remand prisoners and having far greater 'churn' has detrimentally affected the delivery of prisoner employment activities (e.g. prisoners employed in canteen provision to other prisons, prisoners cleaning the walkways etc).

- The use of the library improved slightly, although numbers could be better if it were a higher priority for houseblock managers, and if staff resource levels were at full complement.
- Over the course of the year just over a third of prisoners released were housed in 'sustainable' accommodation, that is accommodation that is considered to be of a permanent nature.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- Can the Minister reassure the Board that all major capital works (particularly to various roofs) will be funded and executed during 2026? If no reassurance can be given, can the Minister explain why? What is the expected completion date for the works?
- Can the Minister confirm that funding will be made available to support:
 - Refurbishment and upgrading of site-wide CCTV to support maintaining a safe environment for prisoners and staff?
 - Equipment directly linked to supporting infrastructure resilience, e.g. backup generators, kitchen equipment that is powered by electricity, etc?
 - Building enhancements to support the current occupational capacity (compared with original design intent), e.g. enlarged storage buildings, enhanced kitchen facilities, etc?
 - Shower upgrades for decency?
 - Continued enhancements to the reception area to facilitate the appropriate segregation of prisoners?
- Can the Minister advise what additional funding and support is being provided to the Prison and associated services to increase the number of men who are released to sustainable i.e. permanent accommodation?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- In light of rising food costs and inflation, will prison budgets be aligned to ensure food quality is maintained and improved?
- In light of the demands on prison staff, will the resource levels be enhanced to ensure delivery of high levels of key work whilst operating the normal regime?
- Can the prison service confirm there will be a review of prisoner wages, in light of rising costs of items being stocked by the canteen?

TO THE GOVERNOR

- What improvements are planned to ensure operational movements of prisoners all happen in a timely manner and prisoners are encouraged to access all the facilities/ service available e.g. library, gym etc?
- What is being done to encourage prisoners who are required to attend education or work to engage with these activities?
- Can the Governor comment on the increased UoF, and whether it is at proportionate levels to similar prisons?

- Despite many steps being taken, there are still significant numbers of illicit items, including phones, entering the prison each month. How does the Governor think that staff, contractor, visitor and prisoner security be improved?

3.3 Response to last report

Issue raised 2024 report	Response given	Progress
<p>To the Minister</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the Minister reassure the Board that the major capital works to the roofs will be funded and executed during 2025? If no reassurance can be given, can the Minister explain why? 	<p><i>'I can confirm that an outline business case has been submitted for a proposed roofing project covering the laundry, workshops, gym and visit areas.....'</i></p>	<p>Roof repairs remain to be executed.</p>
<p>To the prison service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the Prison Service advise the IMB why educational attainment has reduced over the last five years? 	<p><i>'Although, there were disruptions in education delivery due to the early release scheme and the prison re-role; over the most recent reporting year, there has been improvement.'</i></p>	<p>The Board will continue to monitor the delivery of education.</p>
<p>To the Governor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the Governor provide assurance to the IMB that the re-role will not have a detrimental effect on the wellbeing and progression of all prisoners? • Can the Governor advise what is happening in response to the increased level of prisoner self-harm? • Can the Governor comment on the increase in use of force and whether it is at proportionate levels to similar prisons? • Can the Governor confirm that there will be a review of prisoner wages considering rising costs of 	<p>The Governor reported on the impact on prisoners of the re-role at the monthly IMB Board meetings.</p>	<p>This annual report demonstrates evidence of changes to the prison, there does not seem to be evidence of detriment for existing prisoners.</p> <p>There has been a significant reduction in self-harm from 924 in 2024 to 803 in 2025. More information is available in para 4.2.</p> <p>The use of force continued to increase during 2025. More information in paragraph 4.4.</p>

items being stocked by the canteen?		
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Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

The re-role to a category B establishment has had a significant impact on the reception and induction activities within the prison. The Board has observed the staff teams at the 'front line' of receiving prisoners in reception are aware that this can be a very difficult time for many prisoners.

The Board notes that the building changes made to accommodate the increased number of prisoner movements through reception were delivered swiftly and made good use of the existing space. However, the physical facilities are stretched and congested when reception is very busy and different cohorts of prisoners need to be kept segregated.

During 2025, reception received over 3,550 prisoners from the courts and police cells, in addition to over 700 transfers in from other establishments. The prison transferred out over 1,550 prisoners to other establishments. Just over 2,600 prisoners were released from the establishment during the year. The impact of the recategorisation of the prison can be starkly seen in the churn of prisoners (2,565 in 2024 compared to 8,371 in 2025). The Board is aware that there has been a very small number of situations where prisoners have been released in error (the Board notes that the reasons for these errors have been investigated and the factors leading up to the incidents arise from a variety of different functions across the whole justice system).

During the year, the IMB observed the reception area to be well-run, and prisoners being treated with care at what can be a very anxious and confusing time for them. Arriving prisoners are given food and a drink whilst they wait to be processed. Due to circumstances outside the control of HMP Holme House, prisoners may arrive well into the evening. The IMB has observed that staff across all relevant functions work conscientiously to ensure prisoners arriving in the evening are processed swiftly and moved to first night accommodation.

During 2025, the national rules governing license recall changed; an impact of this has been that higher number of prisoners are being returned to custody on short-term licences. There is evidence that some prisoners either deliberately bring in illicit substances on them when recalled or are pressurised into doing so. Additional training has been provided during the year to increase the number of staff who are able to operate and interpret the bodyscan equipment used as part of the reception processes. In light of the very high risk of illicit substances entering the prison via reception, all prisoners are scanned on arrival into (or back into) the establishment. Across November and December 2025, 1,366 body scans were delivered in reception, of which 244 were positive (a rate of 18%).

Observations in reception evidence that, on arrival, prisoner property is dealt with diligently. The Board has observed that many prisoners arriving from courts and

police cells have very little property with them. Induction for mainstream prisoners starts on their first morning at Holme House daily (Monday to Saturday). We are pleased to report that all prisoners are required to undertake induction, even if they have been in Holme House previously. Sessions include meeting with a Listener (a prisoner trained by the Samaritans to provide confidential emotional support to fellow prisoners) a drug and alcohol recovery team (DART) staff member and the chaplaincy team. New prisoners attend a session on their second morning, covering numeracy and literacy assessments, as well as employment opportunities. New prisoners do not move on from the induction houseblock until they are signed off as having undertaken induction.

The Board is aware that in the first few months following the re-categorisation there were sometimes shortages of pieces of bedding and some eating utensils for newly arriving prisoners on immediate arrival. The Board is also aware that the process for adding and approving telephone numbers for prisoners was frustrating the men and not satisfactory, in part due to the far higher number of arrivals in the prison. Both concerns have reduced as the year progressed.

The Board observed that in the first few months of the change to category B, newly arriving vulnerable prisoners were held on mainstream induction locations because there was insufficient capacity in the vulnerable prisoner houseblock.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

There has been a reduction in self-harm within Holme House during the year. The most common means of self-harm were cutting, strangulation, ligature and overdose. A total of 807 deliberate self-harm incidents were recorded in 2025 (937 in 2024) [appendix B: figure 4.2]. The Board notes that there have been fewer prisoners who self-harmed frequently within the prison population during this period; the Board is aware that work has been carried out with these prisoners to support them.

The main reasons given for self-harm were mental health issues. Feedback from prisoner representatives at safety meetings referred to some prisoners challenging changes in the regime and using self-harm to achieve a particular outcome.

During the year there was the introduction of a razor '1-for-1' management scheme; this contributed to reduction in self-harm through cutting.

In 2025, 913 ACCT's (assessment, care in custody and teamwork); (used to support prisoners who are at risk of self-harm and suicide) were opened or re-opened; this compares with 632 opened or re-opened in 2024. The Board has observed ACCT reviews and has observed clear action and support plans being put in place to help prisoners who self-harmed. The Board notes that, in part, this increase in number of ACCTs could relate to the increased number of prisoners arriving and the focus given to prisoners in reception.

There were 235 incidents at height (mostly going onto the netting for a very short period of time to disrupt normal operations or prompt a response from staff).

At the end of the year the prison had 31 Samaritan-trained and supervised Listeners. Prisoners can also telephone Samaritans directly from their cells. The principal reasons for wishing to speak to a Listener were problems with people in prison, mental health/ illness, self-harm, legal and problems with staff and pre-release issues. Samaritans also provide a support system entitled 'postvention' for staff and prisoners when a prisoner has died or taken his own life. The increased level of 'churn' within the prison population has put pressure on ensuring that there were sufficient trained Listeners available.

There were seven deaths in custody during 2025 (seven in 2024), five of the deaths were anticipated/apparent natural causes. 10 prisoners, who had been released from custody during 2025, died in the community within 14 days of release (this is a sharp increase on the number in 2024).

The Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) investigate all deaths in custody and those within 14 days of release. The PPO investigation into the anticipated death of a prisoner during 2025 recorded that a prisoner wrote to the PPO investigator praising healthcare staff at Holme House who sat with and comforted (the deceased) at every opportunity. They also commended in their report prison staff who allowed (the deceased's) fellow prisoners to sit with him to distract and comfort him in his final days.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

During the year there were 394 incidents of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults, compared with 324 in 2024 [appendix B: figure 4.3]. The Board notes that the transition to category B has resulted in higher prisoner turnover and prison management report there is evidence of an increase in community issues relating to prisoners entering the prison and higher drug finds, all factors which may have influenced this upwards trend.

During the year there were 125 incidents of assaults by prisoners on staff, compared with 90 in 2024. These incidents can range in severity. The Board is aware that efforts are continuing to ensure that prisoners who assault staff are dealt with through referring to the police service, if appropriate.

The Board is aware that the age and positioning of CCTV infrastructure means that it can be difficult to capture clear footage of incidents. The Board notes that the newly installed CCTV in the recently upgrade reception area is of a far higher standard, which aids in scrutinising incidents that happen in that area.

Use of illicit substances has contributed to levels of violence both towards staff and between prisoners, when prisoners are under the influence.

There were 14 incidents in which prisoners barricaded themselves in cells and 59 cell fires. It is concerning that the number of cell fires has increased from 42 last year, and the Board is aware of activities to try and reduce this.

Challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs) are used to challenge or support managing prisoners who are a danger to others or are vulnerable to harm through

violent behaviour. Fortnightly CSIP assurance meetings check that reviews of the plans are completed on time and documented the facts and improvements. 280 CSIPs were opened in 2025.

According to prison management, debt is one of the reasons for violence occurring across the establishment; however, since the re-roll, community-based issues following prisoners into prison are also believed to be a contributing factor to the violence.

The prison has a debt strategy, which is reviewed annually, the aim of which is to help prisoners avoid and reduce debt to maintain their safety and wellbeing, as debt often leads to threats, intimidation, and violence. Staff are encouraged to be aware of prisoners stockpiling canteen items, since a common method for repaying debt is the use of canteen items. According to prison management, larger debts could involve family and friends making payments externally, and there is a risk that the family could be subjected to pressure and threats. Managing and resolving debt remains challenging because it requires prisoners to actively engage in mediation and agreed solutions.

The transition to becoming a category B local remand prison has meant there has been an increase in community-related tensions between prisoners entering the prison. High profile local cases have the potential to introduce multiple problematic connections within the prison, either through individuals or organised crime gang affiliations. A growing concern for prison management is the challenge of safely locating those involved in high profile cases to reduce risks within the prison and to other prisoners. Collaborative working continues between the prison and police to analyse the dynamics that threaten the stability and security of the establishment.

Involvement of prisoners under 25 in violent incidents is disproportionately high.

4.4 Use of force

During the year there were 1037 spontaneous incidents compared to 809 spontaneous incidents in 2024 that required use of force (UoF) [appendix B: figure 4.4]. Of these, 697 (63%) of the spontaneous incidents were handled with the use of guiding and/or escorting holds only. There were 73 planned removals during the year (47 in 2024). In 2025, 534 prisoners were involved in UoF incidents, and eight prisoners were involved in over 10% of the incidents.

The principal reasons for the necessary use of force in 2025 were:

- Refusal to relocate (249)
- To prevent harm or assault (151)
- Risk reduction application (136)
- Under the influence (110) (Prisoners who are under the influence away from their cells and are compliant require an escorting hold to ensure their safety).

PAVA (an incapacitant spray) was drawn and used 18 times (24 times in 2024) and drawn and not used 12 times (18 times in 2024).

Batons were drawn and used three times and drawn but not deployed once.

The body belt was not used during 2025 (not used in 2024).

Following each UoF incident the procedure is that the prisoner is debriefed by an officer from safer custody who is independent from officers involved in the incident. Prisoner are asked if they understood why force had been used, 'did staff act reasonably?' and 'did staff attempt to de-escalate the situation?'

Over 200 of the incidents have been scrutinised by the use of force scrutiny committee. All planned incidents, incidents involving PAVA, incidents where the prisoner has submitted a formal complaint and a proportion of other incidents have been scrutinised. Particular attention is made to considering how officers tried to de-escalate the situation before the use of any force. The committee also scrutinises if there any disparities on protected characteristics. A member of the Board observes both the strategic and scrutiny UoF meetings. Their observations have often reported the professionalism of staff in challenging situations when UoF has been deployed.

Body worn cameras continue to be deployed. Over the year 73% of incidents were recorded on body worn video camera. The Board considers that this rate could be improved on.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

The prison faced an ongoing challenge to prevent illicit items entering the prison during the reporting year. Routes for illicit items into the prison include prisoners arriving at the prison with illicit items secreted and through visits.

Drugs have continued to be an ongoing threat to the stability of the prison and the wellbeing of prisoners and staff throughout 2025. The Board notes that attending to prisoners who are 'under the influence' (UTI) continues to put strain on medical personnel and prison officers as they seek to respond promptly. The Board also notes that when prisoners are UTI they can become violent, resulting in need to deploy the UoF and a heightened risk of assaults on staff

The level of positive finds of illicit items on prisoners as they arrive into the prison has risen steadily during the year [Q1 2025 965 scans, 39 positive; Q4 2025 2137 scans, 382 positive]. The Board notes that a number of factors may have impacted this, including the changes to short term recall rules, the local protocols being adopted within reception in relation to scanning and the investment in staff training to ensure more staff are able to use the scanner. During periods of the year, an amnesty has been offered to prisoners arriving who hand over illicit substances in reception. The increase in finds of illicit articles secreted on prisoners in reception has put pressure on the number of cells that are available to hold them. The Board welcomes that investment has been found to adapt some more cells in the segregation unit to accommodate prisoners identified as having concealed illicit items.

Whilst netting and the use of the prison drone have acted as deterrents for drone drops, it is clear that drones are able to access windows, which can lead to illicit

items entering the establishment. There have been a small number of reports during the year of drones entering the vicinity of Holme House prison.

Passing illicit items to prisoners during social visits continued. The regional dogs' team is regularly in attendance during social visits. We welcome the sensitive nature in which the dog handlers operate when around visitors, particularly children and babies.

As in previous years, illicitly prison-brewed fermented liquid (hooch) was seized during 2025 (over 100 litres across over 50 finds). Focussed work was carried out in the run up to the Christmas period, resulting in over 35 litres being seized across 10 finds.

The security team undertakes targeted searches using detector dogs. The Board notes that the search dogs are a regional resource, of which Holme House provides funding for two.

During most months of the year, several mobile phones (and associated paraphernalia) were found in the prison. As in previous years, the Board notes that the prevalence of phone finds (over 20 found during 2025) is very concerning and indicates that there are channels available for phones to be entering the prison regularly.

Across 2025, just under 200 weapons were found; the vast majority had been 'fashioned' from items such as plastic cutlery, damaged furniture, strips of metal from fixtures and fittings, etc, augmented with small items such as razors and screws.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

Accommodation

A significant accommodation development has been the establishment of houseblock 8, which has the capacity to hold 21 prisoners.

There has been a focus on decency in the prison, which has resulted in some notable improvements in accommodation. All houseblocks, as well as healthcare and the segregation unit, are inspected monthly. Overall decency scores have improved during the year:

- CRED (clean, rehabilitative, enabling and decent) has recommended in houseblock 1 to improve the standard of accommodation, but there are still some issues with privacy curtains and rails in a minority of cells.
- Cell flooring repairs have been completed in houseblocks 2 and 4
- All prisoners have been issued with a cell toilet cover for decency
- Notice boards and murals have improved
- Showers in houseblock 1 have been upgraded to a high standard and others, where necessary, repaired
- A new washer dryer stack has been fitted in healthcare, after very long delays
- Houseblock 2 visits and exercise corridor flooring has been replaced

There are advanced work requests for the following improvements to begin as soon as possible:

- Upgrade to showers in houseblock 2 and segregation unit
- Servery flooring in houseblock 1 and 3
- Work has begun in the segregation yard to divide the yard - this will mean prisoners are able to have one hour exercise; CCTV will also be installed.

Whilst the overall picture is one of notable improvement, the Board has observed that on occasions the general tidiness and cleanliness of some walkways and stairwells is not always to the standards it was in 2024. However, this is likely a result of the re-categorisation of Holme House, meaning there for short periods there has not been a consistent supply of prisoner cleaners for these areas due to prisoner 'churn'.

During 2025 there have remained intermittent heating issues in houseblock 7.

Clothing

Generally, as reported last year, this has remained good for most of the year. The Board has observed a small number of issues regarding supply of clothing, bedding and some kit on houseblock 3 (reception wing) due to the high churn of prisoners. These appear to have been addressed as the year progressed.

Food

The improvements noted in last year's report have been maintained based on feedback from the food forum and observation. Although the food forum has not been well attended; to remedy this, the opportunity for prisoners to comment has been moved to the end of the general consultation forum meetings. Along with the above, anecdotal evidence suggests that any negative remarks tend to be around the quantity of food rather than the quality. There have been fewer complaints from prisoners.

There remain issues particularly for prisoners on special diets, because of the kitchens having to rely on one supplier.

Over the past year many individual items of kitchen equipment have been replaced or repaired, although the concern of the Board is that the kitchens in general are showing signs of age and some of the major infrastructure is particularly affected. The kitchen is very reliant on gas for its equipment. Items are replaced or more often repaired but then something else breaks down. On two occasions in the year, prisoners did not get their statutory hot meal at the due time because of the above, despite the best efforts of kitchen staff. One positive from this is that maintenance is now in the hands of another contractor who is quick to respond and reliable.

Environmental Health issued six legal requirement notices in September 2025. Four of these have been addressed but at the time of writing in Spring 2026 the remaining two notices were outstanding (both involve equipment). Plans are in place for them to be completed by early summer 2026. Again, these appear to be the result of aging equipment. The Governor is making every effort to address these issues.

Regarding the soon to be introduced 'food in prisons policy framework', trials have been carried out and the response from prisoners has been largely positive, especially regarding the replacement of red meat with fish and chicken.

Two further staff members have successfully gained Level 4 awards in food safety.

5.2 Segregation

The segregation unit has 30 cells, including two 'special accommodation' cells. Notably the number of 'trap' cells, used to hold prisoners suspected of secreting items has been increased and there are now eight available.

Segregation unit occupancy started the year in low teens but increased until by the middle of the year there were spells when it was almost full (when allowing for cells out of use and two contingency cells). Subsequently, occupancy reduced back to the low to middle teens.

Cells are often damaged, requiring prompt repairs. Special accommodation use has increased compared to 2024. During 2025 it was used 14 times (10 times in 2024) all for short durations (few hours rather than days). The main reason was very challenging prisoner behaviour, including staff assaults and cell fires. The Board

observes that the staff in the segregation unit have handled periods of very disruptive prisoner behaviour very professionally.

The Board remains concerned that a small number of prisoners during the year, with significant mental health challenges (which require specialist intervention and care) have had to wait many weeks for a place to become available at a specialist establishment. The Board notes that the segregation unit is not an appropriate place to accommodate these prisoners (who need to be accommodated away from the wings due to their very challenging and often violent behaviour), and segregation staff do not have specialist training in caring for such prisoners. The Board is aware that prison and healthcare management have worked well together to find appropriate care pathways for these prisoners, but the delays remain unacceptable for both prisoners and prison staff safety.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

During the year there were only 10,461 key worker sessions delivered against a target of 58,660, representing only 17.8% achievement. The reasons given for the low achievement include staff shortage, diversion to other work, sick leave and officers on detached duty. This low level of achievement inevitably affects staff/prisoner relationships as prisoners become frustrated by having their sessions cancelled. The Board understands that when resource is stretched prison management has to make choices about whether to operate a full regime or provide keywork sessions. However, the Board remains disappointed and concerned that staffing levels are not always sufficient to allow both full regime and key work sessions to happen.

5.4 Equality and diversity

The prison holds a monthly diversity and inclusion forum. Membership includes departmental heads and prisoner representatives. It has operated throughout the year, monitoring and discharging the responsibilities of equality and diversity in all areas of prison life and, where necessary, identifying and taking remedial or improvement action. The data provided help to identify any potential disproportionality against protected characteristics across various facets of prison life, such as use of force, complaints, employment and the incentives scheme.

Data indicate that many prisoners consider themselves to have a disability – typically anywhere between 35 and 45% of prisoners declare a disability.

Prisoners and staff are encouraged to report incidents of victimisation, harassment and discrimination within the prison by using the discrimination incident report form (DIRF) and to increase their confidence in the investigation processes and actions following the investigation findings. In 2025, 84 (2024:42) DIRFs were submitted (after those recategorised as complaints were excluded); of these, 16 were upheld. A cross section of reasons are behind the DIRFS. Other common themes in the period were for religion and the cancellation of a study group; several DIRFs have been submitted by staff in the period.

During the year, the Board has continued to note the bias in some metrics, indicating that younger prisoners are disproportionately represented in areas such as the use of force, unemployment and the basic level of the incentives scheme. The Board has not seen significant evidence of analysis of protected characteristics being reported in the context of diversity and inclusion meeting through the lens of sentence status of prisoner (remand, convicted, recall etc).

A total of 12 work streams/focus groups operate to support protected characteristics. These groups have had varying levels of activity during the year.

The prison has recognised and celebrated special days and seasons in the diversity and inclusion calendar, such as the Holocaust Memorial Day and Black History Month.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The chaplaincy continues to deliver a wide range of pastoral services to the prison through its team. All recognised faiths represented in the prison population are celebrated and acknowledged.

The chaplaincy team is supported by several external volunteers, and one official prison visitor (OPV) has been appointed during the year.

At any one time, over 500 prisoners identify as Christian, which is almost half of the prisoners. There has been a slight increase in the number of Muslims, with about 80 against 60 to 70 during 2024.

All prisoners, whatever their faith, receive the pastoral services of the team and their support is vital for some prisoners who may be going through difficult times.

5.6 Incentives schemes

The national incentives policy framework allow Governors to incentivise positive behaviour and tackle negative behaviour and breaches of the prison rules through a system of earned privileges, helping prisoners to make the right choices to prepare them to re-integrate into the community and reduce re-offending when they leave custody. There are currently three incentive levels: basic level is the lowest level of privileges, for those prisoners who have not abided by the behaviour principles. Standard level is for those prisoners who adequately abide by the behaviour principles, demonstrating the types of behaviour required. Enhanced level is the highest level of privileges, for those prisoners who exceed standard level by abiding by the behaviour principles and demonstrating the required types of behaviour to a consistently high standard, including good attendance and attitude at activities, education or work and interventions.

The proportional split between enhanced, standard and basic had remained steady over recent years, at 45% enhanced, 45% standard and 10% basic. However, in 2025 the re-categorisation of the prison has led to the proportions changing to circa 25% enhanced, 70% standard and 5% basic. The reduction in enhanced is due to

the various release schemes which saw experienced prisoners either released or transferred out, whilst the increase in the standard level is due to the influx of remand prisoners who all start and generally remain as standard. The basic category has remained reasonably constant in numeric terms, with the number of prisoners on basic being circa 100.

5.7 Complaints

Prisoners submitted 2,216 complaints (Comp 1's) in 2025, less than the total of 2,541 submitted in 2024. The numbers of complaints has trended down slightly over the last two years [appendix B: figure 5.7]. A total of 197 appeals (Comp 1A's) were submitted, slightly more than the 188 submitted in 2024. The Board notes that given the far shorter average stay time in the prison and the increased population movement, this could account for the reduction in complaints in 2025.

The Board notes that in the same period it has seen the number of applications submitted to it also fall to 155 (177 in 2024).

The three highest categories of complaints related:

- property during transfers in and out, cell moves, etc. 525 (an increase of 4% over the total for property in 2024),
- DHL/canteen, with 296 complaints
- residential, which includes in cell items, repairs, heating, association, unlock, cell occupancy, noise, etc, with 264. It might have been predicted that there would be a significant increase in the number of complaints about property when the numbers of arrivals and departures increased after the re-roling of the prison in January. The numbers of complaints about residential issues and DHL/canteen each month decreased from maximum of 39 and 38 per month respectively in the spring to nine per month each at the end of the year.

There continues to be a very small number of late responses, most of which were attributable to delays by external establishments, mainly relating to property and transfer.

Prisoners in the PIPE unit (houseblock 5) again submitted significantly fewer complaints than the rest of the prison.

Prisoners often made negative verbal comments to Board members about food but only made 101 formal complaints (140 in 2024).

Quality assurance of the complaints process is undertaken by checking a sample of complaints received each month. These are checked against the standards set out in the prisoners' complaints policy framework. During 2025 an average of 12% of complaints received were checked each month.

Complaints related to healthcare and dentistry are handled through a separate complaints system administered by Spectrum.

5.8 Property

The number of applications to the Board relating to property has fallen (section 8 table). However, the Board is very mindful that any property going astray can be distressing for a prisoner. As already noted, concerns with property whilst in prison remained the highest category of prisoner complaints during the year. The Board has observed throughout the year management focus being given to seeking to process property in reception swiftly. However, the complaints data indicate that property remains an area of concern.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

Spectrum Community Health is contracted to provide healthcare including GPs, nurses, in-patient care and administrative support, clinical and alcohol misuse treatment and pharmacy services, as well as oversee dental care.

During 2025, the staffing model was amended to reflect the categorisation of the prison. The Board is aware that during 2025 there was a period of instability and change in Spectrum local leadership. The Board has been advised that audits from relevant healthcare authorities found no deterioration in provision during this period.

During the year, challenges have remained to maintain a full staff complement at all times due to sickness and other absences. Bank staff have been utilised to provide cover where necessary. There is one GP who works full time and two who work one day a week. The Board observed that waiting times to see GP and dentist are adequate.

The prison has an outpatient department, with various clinics being held. Vulnerable prisoners are held in a separate waiting room. The 18 bed in-patient unit includes two palliative care beds, which are a regional resource and during the Board's observations, patients were treated with compassion and kindness. All patients have a care plan.

Spectrum categorises complaints as 'formal' complaints, 'informal' complaints and concerns. In 2025, there were 292 complaints and concerns raised (see Table 6.1 in Annex B) compared with 307 in 2024. Over two thirds of the complaints and concerns were related to access to medication or treatment.

6.2 Physical healthcare

All new prisoners are screened in reception on arrival. Any referrals needed are made at this point.

There is a specialist nurse who oversees prisoners with long-term health issues. An appointed nurse oversees health promotion, including prisoners' diets, spirometry, diabetes and tissue viability. A complex needs nurse monitors all chronic conditions, with 15 patients on the complex needs register at the year end.

All prisoners who were eligible were offered covid boosters and flu vaccinations. Interdisciplinary weekly meetings are held to discuss prisoners who have complex conditions.

The Board has observed the attentive care given to long-term in-patients and those nearing end-of-life by both healthcare staff, prison staff and prisoners assigned to roles within in-patients (e.g. cleaning).

6.3 Mental health

The mental health service in Holme House is provided by Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV) as part of the overall health provision contract arrangements.

The mental health team delivers the following:

Primary care intervention, (PWPs, Counsellor and Health and Wellbeing Coach) and offer a range of one to one intervention and group intervention based on a low intensity cognitive behaviour model.

Secondary mental health intervention (Clinical lead, Psychology, High Assistant Psychology, Psychiatry) and offers assessment and intervention tailored to the prisoners' needs/ goals.

During the year there have been staffing vacancies in the team.

During the year there have been six mental health peers drawn from the prison population. Care navigators are also in place and have supported some individual prisoners prior to release into the community.

The Board is aware of a few occasions where prisoners who required specialist mental health care and treatment (which HMP Holme House is not able to provide) have waited an unacceptable number of months for a place to become available. This has put pressure on prison staff and health care staff, as well as potentially causing unnecessary suffering to the patient.

6.4 Social care

The prison relies on occupational therapy (OT) services from Stockton on Tees Borough Council for assessment and referrals for adaptations and equipment. In the earlier part of the year there were challenges in getting OT assessments performed, as insufficient staff from the provider had the appropriate security clearance to enter the prison. This resulted in delays for some prisoners getting the adaptations and equipment that they needed.

Two social care training sessions were held in 2025 by local authority occupational therapists for prisoners employed as carers. At the end of 2025 there were 11 prisoners trained to be social carers; however, because of the level of prisoner churn, the need to continually train prisoners for this role has heightened.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

Throughout the year the prison has operated the mandated regime, which means all prisoners except those in the segregation unit have been out of their cells far more than the two-hour minimum. Great emphasis is placed on access to the gym, with it being open throughout the Christmas/new year period, whilst both education and industries were closed. The Board notes that in focussing on delivering a full regime, other activities (e.g. key worker sessions) have been curtailed.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

The prison continues to have problems with the use of drugs despite significant efforts and processes in place to prevent illicit items from getting onto the site. The increase in churn within the prison has impacted on both the numbers of recalls (individuals returned to custody for breaching their licence conditions) entering the prison with secreted substances, and the ability to assist positive rehabilitation. Prison management have reported that there can be pressure applied to men to deliberately be recalled and so bring drugs into the prison.

At any one time there continues to be approximately one half of the prisoners using the services of non-clinical DART (drug and alcohol recovery treatment programme), with around a quarter of prisoners being prescribed drug substitutes in the form of methadone or buprenorphine. Mandatory random drug testing is carried out, with approximately 55 tests each month. Positive tests vary significantly throughout the year with the average being just over the target of 21% at 24%.

Houseblock 6 continues to operate as a therapeutic community with one wing being substance free and another wing containing an incentivised substance free living area (ISFL). During the year the level of skilled staff available to deliver the service has reduced. The ISFL was the most unsettled in the month of December, with more incidents and issues. The Board understands that in December, the DART team ran just one weekly SMART group on the ISFL. Alongside this, anyone engaging with DART service would also have been receiving structured psychosocial interventions from their allocated Recovery Coordinator.

The frequency of those one-to-one sessions would be person-centred and based on the individual's needs and treatment plan

There have also been prisoners on the ISFL who do not fit the criteria but have been moved on the ISFL for operational reasons and have not been assessed to be on the ISFL.

The prison has trained a number of staff in the use of naloxone (an opioid antagonist used to reverse or reduce the effects of opioids, particularly in cases of overdose), with kits being given out to prisoners at risk when they leave the prison.

6.7 Soft skills

A range of activities across the prison enrich the lives of prisoners by providing extra-curricular activities. These include:

- The Shannon Trust, which is operated by volunteers, delivers English and maths tuition to prisoners who are below entry level 3 in English and maths. Achievements are celebrated. Unfortunately, the use of this service has fallen because of the churn within the prison population and remand prisoners are less likely to be interested in improving their skills.
- Monthly book groups are held for interested prisoners, with copies of the chosen books being provided by Stockton Council library service.

- The Reading Agency assist with the Reading Ahead project, which involves a prisoner choosing six things to read and keeping a diary of their progress.
- Board games events, including dungeons and dragons, are delivered by the library service.
- Regular weekly yoga sessions are held in the gym for prisoners.
- Over 50's sessions are run in the gym, including evenings, to encourage older prisoners to do games such as boules and boardgames, as well as socialise.
- Junction 42 have continued to provide services to support prisoners who are isolating.

The Board particularly notes the continuing value and achievements of the arts and crafts classes. During the year the section achieved 31 awards in the Koestler arts awards competition, ranging from 1 Platinum award to 13 Commended. In addition, the prisoners made 24 pieces of work (quilting, rug making, embroidery and applique) which are exhibited in all the Stockton Borough Council Libraries.

7. Progression and resettlement

Remand prisoners are not required to attend classes or work. The Board notes the efforts made by staff to encourage remand prisoners to engage in these activities. The Board also notes the continued efforts and focus throughout the year on ensuring a consistent approach in penalising prisoners (through the incentives scheme system typically) who should be attending classes or work and refuse to do so.

7.1 Education and library

Novus is contracted to deliver education services in the prison. Qualifications up to Level 2 in English and maths are available to prisoners.

During 2025 attendance at education has fluctuated by a few percentage points around a 68% attendance rate, against a target of 68%. This figure measures the number of prisoners attending class against those scheduled to attend.

The Board continues to remain concerned about the lack, in both the number and the level, of educational qualifications achieved.

During the year there were almost 1,300 visits to the library. The vulnerable prisoner houseblock sent the most prisoners throughout the year. Throughout the year the library staff have had to continually focus on encouraging prisoners to attend. The Board has noted that on some occasions prisoner moves to the library have appeared to be low priority and that houseblock staff are sometimes otherwise engaged so do not prioritise facilitating prisoner to leave the houseblock to attend the library.

7.2 Vocational training, work

The 2025 attendance at vocational training and work results are at 70% against a 68% target. However, this hides a steady decline during the period from April to September from 70+% until in late autumn it fell steeply to 50%, with a significant improvement back to the target in December. The result is affected because of refusals to attend, legal visits, social visits and healthcare appointments. Towards the end of 2025 significant work has been carried out to ensure prisoners are not scheduled to attend work when they are scheduled to be at other appointments. The Board notes that there have been changes to the IT systems that support these activities, which has impacted how data can be collected.

Vocational training

The prison continues to offer vocational training opportunities; these are centred on various workshops, including woodworking and furniture refurbishment.

Work

Work opportunities included the laundry, DHL and bins and stores, in addition to employment activities on the houseblocks (such as server workers and cleaners). The laundry ceased external commercial contracts in 2024 because the condition of

the roof meant that continuity of work could not be guaranteed. The laundry is a very large workshop, which could provide considerable employment and commercial opportunities were it able to work to capacity. The loss of this training and work facility primarily due to the lack of investment in the roof is very disappointing.

As in previous years, prisoners on house block 7 and 8 (which hold vulnerable men) have a restricted range of work activities available to them, including gardening, waste management and the manufacture of 'boxer shorts' for the Prison Service. Prisoners on his houseblock also work for DHL, pick-packing the canteen (a catalogue of approved items, such as snacks, food, toiletries, stationery and other essentials, which prisoners can purchase) for Holme House and other prisons. During the year the 'churn' of prisoners has led to short periods where the DHL operation has been unable to fulfil all contracts with other prisons, as not enough prisoners are available to work within it (a direct impact of the level of remand prisoners now being held in the prison who do not have to engage in work).

The need to physically separate prisoners who are considered vulnerable from other prisoners makes it difficult to broaden the range of available activities and educational opportunities for this cohort.

The IMB notes that the wage paid to prisoners in prison employment and training are not keeping up with the rising costs of items available for prisoners to purchase through the canteen system.

7.3 Offender management, progression

Re-categorisation and changes in national and release and recall policy has placed pressure on offender management unit (OMU).

In 2025 there were:

- 314 OASys reports completed (offender assessment system, used to assess the risks and needs of prisoners) (534 in 2024)
- 58 category D transfers (129 category D transfers in 2024)
- 34 home detention curfew (HDC) releases (202 in 2024)
- 530 immediate releases from court
- 46 releases under the FTR48 scheme (a temporary government measure under which eligible individuals recalled to custody from sentences of under four years were subject to a 28-day fixed-term recall, rather than a standard recall, to ease prison capacity pressures)
- 1998 'standard' releases
- 908 recalls

The reduction in OASys reports is likely due to the recategorisation of the prison. The Board notes that any backlog of OASys reports is captured daily and there has been minimal backlog during the year.

The number of imprisonment for public protection (IPP) prisoners at the end of 2025 was 33, a reduction from 50 at the end of 2024. Whilst the Board has received a high number of applications from this group, it has been reassured by the comments from the Governor regarding the arrangements in place for this group, particularly in light of the increased churn within Holme House. These arrangements include monitoring

by OMU, structured reviews and clear lines of communication with residential staff. Representatives from the prison have also been attending regional strategic IPP meetings. The Board is pleased to see IPP progression panels implemented late in 2025, allowing IPP prisoners to have a meeting with key staff from various functions to discuss pathways towards release.

Whilst specific programmes, for example Kaizen, have been withdrawn, they have been replaced by 'Building Choices', a scheme which is run at either high or moderate intensity depending on a needs analysis of individuals. These courses are flexible dependent on whatever is deemed to be necessary at the time. They deal with issues such as domestic violence.

7.4 Family contact

The prison published an updated 'families and significant other strategy' in December 2025. The prison works with several partners and agencies to ensure relationships with close people on the outside remain in place whilst someone is in prison.

The library staff encourage contact with children by delivering reading projects. The annual capacity of up to 75 sessions a year for 'Storybook Dads' is popular; however, the delivery of this project did dip in use during the year and was only resurrected in December.

Another book project, 'ready readers', is delivered where two copies of a book are made available, one for the child another for the dad. The book is sent to the home, and dad and child can read it together during visits.

A number of family days have been held during the year, which have been well attended.

Prisoners are encouraged to write letters and to use the email a prisoner service. The video visits service has developed and has been enabled across the wings to maximise prisoner uptake.

Accumulated visits can also be arranged at the discretion of the Governor.

NEPACS (a charity) continues to deliver services to families of people in custody. During the year, funding for the 'departure lounge' ceased, meaning there is no longer a support location just outside the site for men as they leave custody.

7.5 Resettlement planning

The recategorisation of Holme House has the increased challenge for the pre-release team in ensuring first night accommodation was available, particularly for 14- and 28-day fixed term recalls and 'immediate' releases. This has resulted in a reduction of those having accommodation upon release, simply because there is limited time to make the necessary arrangements.

In 2024 the proportion of prisoners released with first night accommodation was just over 91%. In 2025 that figure was reduced to just over 79%. Less than a third of prisoners were released to 'sustainable accommodation'. The Board remains highly concerned about the provision of appropriate accommodation on prisoners' release. The Board is also mindful of the increase in the number of deaths of prisoners within the first 14 days of release.

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	15
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	9
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	7
Total number of visits to the establishment	268

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	24	22
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	4	4
C	Equality	0	10
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	10	8
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	5	10
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	6	5
F	Food and kitchens	10	1
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	19	22
H1	Property within the establishment	15	13
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	14	7
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	6	0
I	Sentence management, including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	38	9
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	12	28
K	Transfers	8	6
L	Miscellaneous	6	10
	Total number of applications	177	155

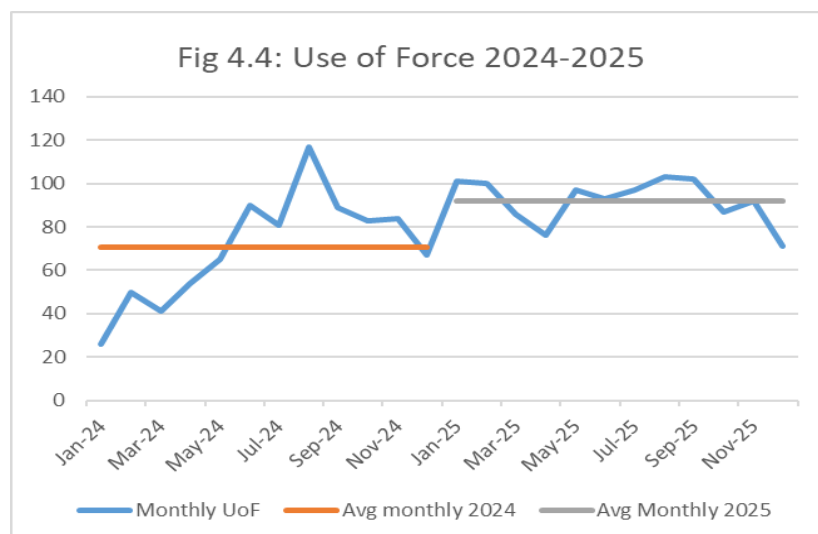
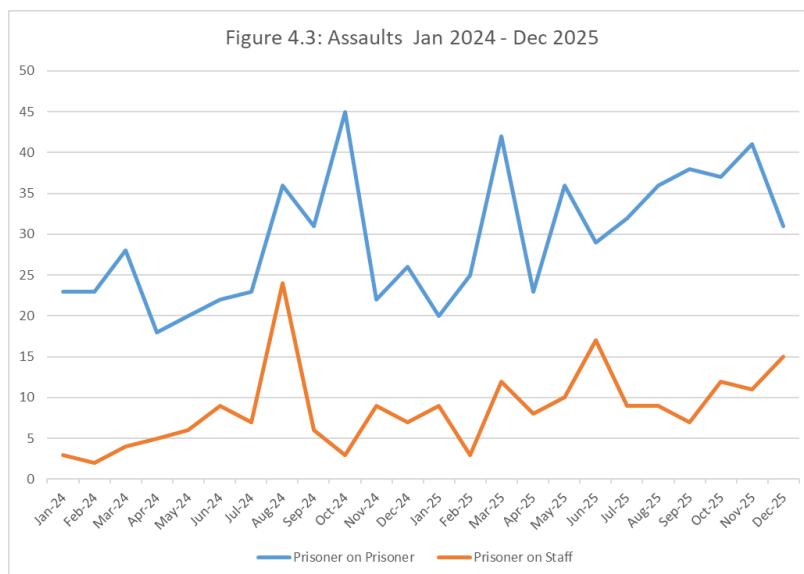
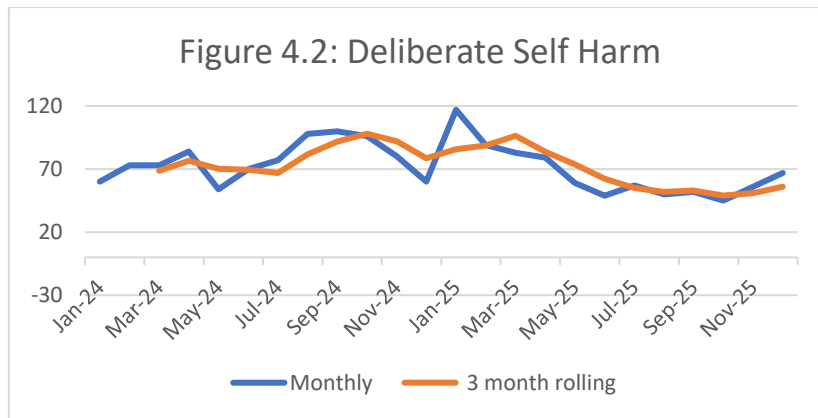
Annex A

Main service providers

- Spectrum Community Health CIC: healthcare
- Novus: education, learning and skills
- Bidfood: food and catering suppliers
- DHL: prisoner canteen
- GeoAmey: prisoner transport
- Amey: works and stores
- Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV): mental health services
- Stockton Borough Council: library services; social care support
- Samaritans: Listeners
- NEPACS: family support
- Waythrough (Humankind): rehabilitation; non-clinical DART services

Annex B

Graphs and tables



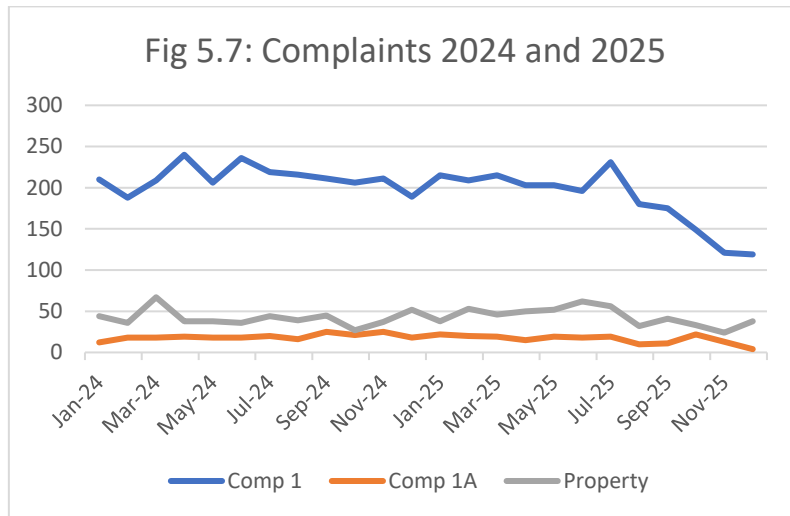


Table 6.1 Healthcare complaints and concerns

CATEGORY	NUMBER 2024	NUMBER 2025
TOTAL	307	292
Access to medication/treatment	230	252
Appointments	13	5
Equipment	12	0
Privacy, dignity and wellbeing	10	6
Communications	9	7
Waiting times	8	1
Patient care	6	6
Administration	6	0
Access to medical records	4	0
Diagnosis problems	3	0
Values and behaviours	3	4
Facilities	2	3
Medication errors	1	8
Other		



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