



**Annual Report of the  
Independent Monitoring Board  
at HMP Springhill**

**For reporting year  
1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025**

**Published May 2026**



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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 to the prison's records.

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

## 2. Description of the establishment

HMP Springhill is an open establishment (category D) that focuses on the rehabilitation and resettlement of prisoners. It receives both prisoners coming to the end of long sentences and those serving shorter sentences who are considered trustworthy in open conditions. Springhill has no segregation unit. Prisoners are encouraged to take up courses in education, vocational training, and full-time work in the community. The establishment was opened in 1953 and is the oldest of the open prisons. The camp is characterised by freestanding, prefabricated huts, built in the 1960s as well as more modern huts and Rapid Deployment Cells for single occupancy. It has an operational capacity of 335<sup>1</sup> adult prisoners. The prison is jointly managed with HMP Grendon (located next door) and a single IMB monitors both prisons. Although the two prisons share many services and staff, Springhill and Grendon operate as separate units and exist for quite different purposes.

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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**

#### **Background**

This has been the second year where the Board has operated without a Chair or vice Chair. Membership of the Board remains well below capacity and this in turn limits the number of new members that can be recruited and onboarded. The Board visited the prison once every two weeks (with the alternate week allocated to monitoring HMP Grendon). This has necessarily meant that the depth of the Board's monitoring and reporting has been reduced. The Board has focused its attention on areas that most affect outcomes for prisoners.

#### **3.1 Main findings**

##### **Safety**

- Instances of self-harm, violence, assaults, and the use of force remain at low levels (4.1, 4.2, 4.3).
- The number of assessment care in custody teamwork (ACCT) cases opened increased significantly (4.1) and is one of several indications of how the cohort of prisoners has changed over 12 months.
- The prevalence of illicit items increased markedly over the previous year. Finds of drugs and phones increased by 144% and 52% respectively (4.4).
- There was a 57% increase in the number of adjudications charged and a 59% increase in the number of prisoners transferred to closed conditions (4.4).
- Staffing levels, especially on night duty, mean that response to suspicious or unusual activity is often limited to observing and reporting.
- There were two life threatening incidents. Night staff administered life-saving action to one man (6.1).
- There were 12 absconds and four prisoners failed to return from release on temporary licence (ROTL) compared with seven and four respectively in 2024. In addition, two prisoners were classed as temporary release failures (4.2).

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

- There were poor conditions for nearly half the population living in dilapidated huts (5.1).
- Frequent power outages affected all areas of the prison (5.1).
- Property issues accounted for over a third of complaints, and men have complained more this year about residential issues (5.6).
- Staffing shortages in the chaplaincy has affected some faith provision (5.5).

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

- There were generally good outcomes across most health-related services (6.1).
- Men failing to keep healthcare appointments remains a problem (6.1).

- Mental health staff reported an increase in the complexity of cases of men arriving earlier than previous years in their sentence (6.2).
- There was positive feedback from prisoners engaging with DART (drug and alcohol recovery team) and a pilot brain injury clinic supporting men with related trauma (6.4).

### **Progression and resettlement**

- Numbers of prisoners accessing work in the community and maintaining family ties have increased from a low base due to the churn of releases at the end of 2024 (7.3).
- More men inside the prison have put pressure on opportunities for purposeful activity.
- Cuts to education in real terms from October have resulted in a significant shift in what the prison can offer to prisoners (7.1).
- New initiatives were introduced in November to support progression into ROTL (release on temporary licence), together with outreach to more employers (7.3).
- There were good outcomes for men finding suitable accommodation immediately on release, but too many men are not in employment six weeks after their release (7.6).

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

#### **TO THE MINISTER**

- 1) Can the minister offer reassurance that sufficient funding will be available to address the necessary requirements to offer much improved accommodation and associated services at HMP Springhill?
- 2) Why has there been a 30% reduction in real terms to the education provision across Springhill as this support is a key part of prisoners' rehabilitation and preparation for employment when released?

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

- 1) Property related issues experienced at Springhill create unnecessary anxiety and generate numerous complaints from prisoners. What priority is the Prison Service giving to finding effective solutions for the continued issues with prisoners' personal property and adherence to the National Policy Framework?
- 2) What initiatives are HMPPS making to improve the chances of men still being engaged in work six weeks after release?

## TO THE GOVERNOR

- 1) What efforts are being made for more Springhill staff to be naloxone trained (an opioid antagonist used to reverse or reduce the effects of opioids, particularly in cases of overdose)?
- 2) What steps are being taken to improve the shortages in chaplaincy resources?
- 3) The provisions for purposeful activity at Springhill have seen improvement, but what is being done to monitor and address non-attendance?

The Board looks forward to seeing positive outcomes from the recent changes to the ROTL arrangements, which it is anticipated will result in more prisoners accessing meaningful work and maintaining family ties. For men awaiting ROTL, the Board looks forward to seeing evidence of them engaging with the new training syllabus.

### 3.3 Response to last report

Issue raised	Response given	Progress
<p><b>Minister:</b> The UK government continues to under-invest in the provision of the rehabilitation services needed to reduce recidivism. How will the Minister make the case for long-term investment in its open prisons, specifically in offender management and educational/vocational services?</p>	<p>Active steps are being taken to strengthen these areas at HMP Springhill. The establishment is working to align existing work parties with purposeful qualifications that support future employment opportunities, and discussions are underway with several employers to introduce new, skill focused workshops.</p> <p>Plans are also in place to reintroduce community work placements for men serving longer sentences in open conditions. The current prisoner needs analysis is being refreshed to ensure the establishment is well prepared for the delivery of the new education contract from October. It is also working with external funders to expand vocational training opportunities in areas such as rail infrastructure,</p>	<p>The Board has focused its monitoring on the change in the education contract in October, which changed from the Prison Education Framework to Prisoner Education Services. The core education contracted hours provision across HMP Springhill and neighbouring HMP Grendon has been reduced by 33% since 1/10/25. While staff feel that the changes are better structured to provide flexibility, the Board will need to continue monitoring the impact given this recent change.</p>

	<p>demolition, and HGV operations.</p> <p>The funding model for education in the open estate reflects the fact that many prisoners are approaching release and may already have undertaken substantial educational programmes earlier in their sentence. However, prisoners in open conditions continue to have access to education delivery in the community as part of their resettlement journey.</p>	
<p><b>HMPPS:</b> The Board continues to report issues with securing the necessary information and engagement from outside probation and other agencies, which significantly delay men’s access to release on temporary licence (ROTL). This is an issue which is exacerbated by the introduction of new early release schemes. What more does the Prison Service intend to do to improve the capacity of outside probation and the effectiveness of interfaces with all relevant agencies?</p> <p>Implementing new early release schemes, such as SDS40, results in spikes in new admissions, as the Prison Service manages</p>	<p>HMPPS said that delays to ROTLs are often due to the time required for external agencies to respond to information requests and contribute to risk assessments. The average wait time for a prisoner to access ROTL from reception is said to be three months. The OMU has boosted overtime and enhanced payment schemes for OASYs completion. South Central Probation Region have also recruited a Probation Service officer dedicated to pre-release at HMP Springhill. National strategies are also being implemented for recruitment and retention of probation officers.</p> <p>Whilst HMP Springhill’s mental health service met its performance targets for 2024–25, the increasing demand has</p>	<p>ROTLs have increased by 47% this year which the Board is pleased to see.</p> <p>Efforts have been made to clear the backlog of OASYs assessments and the prison is making efforts to set realistic expectations for incoming prisoners on ROTL times.</p> <p>Mental health referrals remain unchanged, but healthcare report that the current cohort has more complexities. A survey</p>

<p>capacity across the prison estate. These spikes resulted in a period of higher demand for mental health services. How will the Prison Service ensure that mental health and all other on-site services have the capacity to meet this type of fluctuation in demand?</p>	<p>been recognised at both local and national levels. NHS England has commissioned an updated health and social care needs assessment (HSCNA), which is expected to conclude in July 2025. This assessment, alongside an internal provider review, will guide future commissioning and ensure that emerging needs are met. Feedback from a peer review by the Prison Quality Network for Mental Health Services in June 2025 was positive, with patients reporting feeling supported, involved, and well represented. Staffing levels were identified as an area for further improvement to meet changing levels of demand.</p> <p>More broadly, NHS England is working with partners to refresh the national specification for integrated mental health care in prisons and strengthen contractual oversight. These efforts aim to align service delivery with sentence length and site complexity to ensure appropriate access to treatment. The Mental Health Bill, currently before Parliament, introduces a statutory 28-day time limit for transfers to hospital under the Mental Health Act. An operational implementation plan is in</p>	<p>reported that satisfaction with access to mental health support had declined by 18% compared to last year.</p>
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<p>The poor state of Springhill's infrastructure seriously impacts its ability to deliver a safe and enabling environment. What is the Prison Service's plan, over the immediate and longer term, to improve the failing estate?</p>	<p>development to underpin this reform.</p> <p>Several capital improvements have been secured. Funding has been approved for the replacement of the main kitchen roof, and quotations are being obtained for a new fire and general alarm system. A planning application for the provision of 120 new Category D places is under consideration as part of the wider review of the 14k prison places portfolio. That review is assessing how best to meet estate-wide demand while ensuring value for money for the taxpayer. Any reshaping of the current programme, including expansion of the open estate, will be confirmed once decisions are made by Ministers. HMP Springhill has undertaken local improvements, including the implementation of a land management plan and the deployment of a prisoner work party supported by the facilities management contractor to address smaller maintenance issues. Bids for additional works include the imminent refurbishment of showers and toilets in L-Hut and the removal of W-Huts due to decency concerns. Funding has been requested for upgrades to</p>	<p>Some improvements to the fabric of the older huts was made at the end of the year, but for a significant period there were serious electrical supply problems and ongoing issues of servicing the dilapidated estate, all of which impacted on living conditions for both prisoners and staff.</p>
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	<p>T-Hut facilities, a modular kitchen building, CCTV systems, and workshop renovations. These local and national efforts reflect an ongoing commitment to improving safety and decency across the estate.</p>	
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## Evidence sections 4 – 7

### 4. Safety

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

There were no deaths in custody.

18 ACCTs were opened during the reporting year (three in 2024). Some of this increase could be as a result of the growing number of prisoners arriving earlier in their sentences. One man arrived on an ACCT which had been opened shortly before his transfer, and he was assessed as being highly unstable. This was not safe given that there is no healthcare support after 7pm. Two men on ACCTs were transferred to HMP Grendon for safer care. Also, healthcare reported an increase in the complexity of mental health referrals over the reporting year (6.2).

Instances of self-harm remained low, at four. The history of self-harm across all prisoners is recorded. In August 2024, 6.3% of men at Springhill had a record of self-harm. In October 2025, the figure had risen to 10%. The above data suggests that there were more vulnerable men than the previous year.

At the end of the year there were six Listeners (prisoners trained by the Samaritans to provide confidential emotional support to fellow prisoners), although this number fluctuates depending on the individual's availability in the prison (they could be working off the prison site all day) and the number of new arrivals with previous Listener training. Listeners attend new receptions and induction sessions. The Listener suite is to be reopened and refurbished in early January 2026.

#### 4.2 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

Assaults on prisoners and on staff were relatively low (12 prisoners and one staff). Of the 26 challenge support intervention plans (CSIP, used to support and manage men who pose an increased risk of violence) that were opened, 10 were progressed to full, structured intervention plans requiring ongoing multi-disciplinary management, indicating a higher level or persistent risk of violence (none in 2024).

The number of men transferred to closed conditions for a variety of security considerations increased by 59% from 113 in 2024 to 180 in the 2025 reporting year and coincides with a marked increase in illicit items brought into the prison (see 4.5). The prison was concerned that prisoners who formed part of the Temporary Presumptive Recategorisation Scheme (which allows eligible prisoners to be presumptively re-categorised from category C to category D, open conditions, earlier than would normally be permitted, in order to ease capacity issues in closed prisons) might have been disproportionately represented in these transfers. However, for 11 months of the year, these prisoners made up 25% of the roll at Springhill but only 22% of the transfers out of the prison.

The number of men identified as having connections to serious and organised crime in 2025 remained at approximately 24% of the prison population, which is a similar to figures available in 2024.

The measuring quality of prison life (MQPL) report in July found that *'most prisoners tended to agree that staff were vigilant at supervising prisoners and maintaining control, the establishment was free from conflict between different groups of prisoners, and they felt safe from being bullied, injured or threatened'*. The 35 recorded instances of bullying appear to support this, although the increase in illicit items (4.5) suggests that instances of bullying connected to debt might be under reported.

There were 12 absconds from the prison and four men failed to return from ROTL (seven and four in 2024). In addition, two men were classed as temporary release failures.

### **4.3 Use of force**

There were 10 instances of use of force (four in 2024) which is low. There were references in prison reports to 'limited (staff) resources' especially during night state when use of force was applied.

### **4.4 Preventing illicit items**

The location of the prison and its lower security status as an open prison, means that contraband ingress is a constant security threat. Staff resources (especially at night) are often limited to observation and reporting.

There were 698 intelligence reports (IR) for drugs compared with 308, 255, 215 in the three preceding years, an increase of over 100% compared to 2024. Cannabis was the most prevalent drug reported and there were several reports which described the smell of cannabis being present across the whole site. Other drugs reported included synthetic cannabinoids ('spice'), cocaine, crack cocaine, and steroids. At the end of the year there were reports of nitrous oxide on site. Drug finds increased significantly by 144% on the previous year. The level of IRs and drug finds is considered only to be indicative of the actual levels of illicit items brought into Springhill.

There were 507 adjudication charges for the year compared to 322 in 2024, the majority of which were for possession of unauthorised articles, drugs, or alcohol.

Prevention focused on intelligence-led searches (134 finds for drug and drug paraphernalia) and risk, suspicion, and mandatory drug testing. The number of monthly suspicion and risk tests remained at similar levels through the year despite a significant increase in reports. However, there are plans to reintroduce a compact based drug testing system. There were 1417 alcohol tests with 11 positives, suggesting that the testing regime could be more effective.

Phone and the associated paraphernalia finds represented a constant risk, with an increase over the year of 52% in phone finds and a 62% increase in related IRs.

Police cooperation and support increased together with ad-hoc patrols of the local area.

Men with proven adjudications for illicit substances had access to ROTL suspended for a minimum of 35 days, although one man was suspended for 90 days following a positive mandatory drug test for cannabis. With access to ROTL planned to be increased in 2026 (see 7.3) this should be an added incentive for men not to engage in unlawful activities.

## 5. Fair and humane treatment

### 5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

The Board has reported for consecutive years on the very poor living and working conditions for both prisoners and staff in this prison. Conditions in the older nine huts (for about 162 men, or nearly half the population) continue to be particularly poor. For most of the year, showers, toilets, flooring, and kitchen areas in these huts have been well below normal standards of decency and good repair.

In addition, a combination of electrical and heating issues plagued all areas of the prison throughout the year. The effects of an electrical surge in August had a significant impact across the whole prison with street lighting, internet, fire panels, boilers, plug points all affected. Problems persisted for several weeks beyond the initial outage with the kitchen, gym and PERS (pathways enhanced resettlement service) affected. In November, men collected food from the kitchen to reheat in microwaves, not all of which were in serviceable condition. Electrical issues meant that the laundry was closed from mid-November for several days and men washed clothes by hand.

The whole prison has been run on generators until mains power is reconnected in March 2026. Hot water for most huts is supplied by domestic boilers which have no storage capacity. Breakdowns and fuel issues have been a problem. Temporary showers and toilets were installed outside T hut and the whole hut is due to be replaced early in the new year. GFSL (Gov Facilities Services Limited) reported that their 'reactive' caseload increased by 23% on the previous year.

A 'bus to bed' exercise conducted by staff in October found that the holding cell *'was dirty, the flooring was stained, things had been spilt on the walls, graffiti in the door, damage to the walls and windowsill. The staff stated the room had been cleaned that day, it did not look clean.'* The Board heard men at induction sessions complain about *'inhumane conditions.'* The MQPL report in July included comments from men such as, *'D cat should be a privilege, but here you don't know if the shower is going to work, or the electric could go and you could have not tv, no microwave for days.'* A lack of effective communication about resolution of issues created understandable frustration for staff and prisoners.

In the last quarter of the year, a decency programme started to upgrade some of the older huts' kitchen areas and to put plastic cladding in the toilets and showers as well as improving some access issues to toilets: encouragingly, the work parties included prisoners. These repairs are welcome but do little to address the underlying dilapidation of the accommodation and fragility of services. The Board believes that poor living standards are at odds with developing a positive rehabilitative culture which should be at the core a resettlement prison.

Rats have been an ongoing problem, exacerbated perhaps by their habitat being disturbed by the ground works for the new neighbouring prison. Remedial action has involved increased Rentokil visits and baiting.

Food: a new food in prisons policy is due to be delivered next year with an emphasis on healthier eating. The Board will monitor any outcomes from this. Healthcare reviewed all men who were on a special diet. Men in full-time work who were previously on special diets provided by the kitchen managed their needs in the community. The prison has submitted a bid to a social enterprise called 'Food Behind Bars' which aims to improve the lives of those eating prison food, with the potential to support a new training catering facility offering NVQ courses as well growing fresh produce on camp – in addition to the salads and vegetables currently grown in poly tunnels.

## **5.2 Segregation, special accommodation**

There is no segregation unit at Springhill.

## **5.3 Staff-prisoner/detainee relationships**

Of the 30 uniformed operational staff (level band three), 47% of these had two years or less service. These staff have the most contact with men for roll call, patrols, drug testing and as personal officers. In the section covering 'relational dimensions' of the MQPL report, responses to questions around harmony with staff *'tended to be somewhat positive'*. Some elements of 'meeting individual needs' section of the report were quite negative including responses to the question *'do staff in this prison have enough experience and expertise to deal with the issues that matter to me.'*

There is no key working at Springhill (i.e. allocated time for officers to speak to men 1-2-1), but each prisoner is allocated a personal officer for two interactions a month which are recorded and quality assured. There were no sessions in November and December 2025. This was a national decision during negotiations with the Prison Officer Association. Sessions are to be resumed in January 2026, which the Board will monitor.

## **5.4 Equality and diversity**

There were 16 discrimination incident report forms (DIRF) submitted for the year (four in 2024). Most of the DIRFs were either not upheld or were referred to prison or healthcare complaints. A race forum discussed the DIRF process and a more effective way of communicating outcomes that would improve trust. Although there is an internal quality assurance process in place, DIRFs are not checked by an independent and external process. The prison plans to implement this change next year.

A disability forum discussed gym sessions for over 50-year-olds, which has since been adopted into the timetable. Courses to help men with technology (e.g. phones) are planned. The prison is looking at options to allow men with mobility issues to access mobility scooters. A buddy/carer system as a paid job role to help men who need a small amount of support has yet to be developed.

The MQPL report in July found that 'on average, ethnic minority prisoners held more negative perceptions than white prisoners regarding 'meeting individual needs' and 'legitimate bureaucracy'.

The ‘bus to bed’ report in October, focused on the experiences of new arrivals for elderly or disabled men. The report recommended or noted:

- at reception, there should be easier to read notices and how to support prisoners with possible reading issues and alterations to the equalities survey
- on the hut inspected, there was a lack of shower chairs and grab rails
- around the camp ‘a lot of the surfaces were uneven and presented trip hazards’

For neurodiverse men (44% of the population in August self-identified) there were plans for their conditions to be made available to the Governor in advance of an adjudication. The Board was not aware that this was routinely done, although some men did meet with the neurodiversity manager before their adjudications.

Neurodiversity gym sessions were started for 33 men over seven months. Sessions had no music, limited lighting, and small numbers attended. Nine of the men had not attended the gym before.

## 5.5 Faith and pastoral

Staffing levels in the chaplaincy have been under pressure. At the end of the year there were vacancies for one Imam, a Roman Catholic, Free Church, Church of England, and Roman Catholic chaplains. Although Church of England services have been covered, mass has not been available for Roman Catholics. The Hindu priest took annual leave for several months. The Buddhist chaplain is looking to reduce his hours in 2026. Other faiths were all covered and the bereavement counsellor was available throughout the year, and cover will be maintained into 2026. Critically, there was no managing chaplain present from July – December. The Board has not had any applications from men on faith issues, but the lack of provision suggests that some areas of pastoral support are not being met.

The quality assurance development (QuAD) chaplaincy inspection reported that improvements in procedures and policy and more effective collaboration between team members were required.

## 5.6 Complaints

Major categories	2025	2024	2023
Property	140	66	136
Canteen	41	38	56
Food	2	0	1
Residential	24	3	3
Confidential access	35	22	19
OMU/ROTL	46	71	41
Staff	1	17	8
<b>Total all complaints</b>	<b>404</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>412</b>

As noted in previous annual reports, issues about property account for far too many (35%) of the complaints for the year. 45 complaints were passed to other prisons and 90 were received from other prisons, with property and canteen and pin phone

credits accounting for many of these. Operation control of canteen from HMP Bullingdon to Coldingley caused considerable frustration for men on one chaotic delivery in December. A notice to prisoners was published apologising for the disruption.

The MQPL report included comments from men: 'frustrations were expressed regarding delays in *'getting things done'* via the paper-based applications and complaints systems'.

## 6. Health and wellbeing

### 6.1 Physical healthcare

Targets for first reception screenings to be seen within 24 hours of arrival and then at seven days were met but late arrivals at the prison had an impact on the delivery of some evening drop-in clinics. The bus to bed survey by staff found that the interview room at reception was 'clean and functional, with privacy screening'.

Dental provision was temporarily provided with a mobile bus in Springhill while the surgery in Grendon was closed as part of the fire safety project. This improved access for men (i.e. they did not have to be escorted to Grendon) with the only downside that the unit's X ray facility was not as sophisticated, which impacted on more complex care such as root canal work.

There were some issues in the first six months with podiatry for new patients where the wait for appointments breached six weeks, but this improved in the second half of the year.

The level of did not attend (DNA) for appointments across all care provision exceeded the 10% target and, in some areas, significantly, suggesting that for some men their requirements are not being met or that some prisoners are not prioritising their health.

Healthcare reported a rise in opioid substitution therapy (OST) with 8-10 patients in December compared with 1-2 the previous year, which is another indication in the change of the Springhill population.

Where identified prior to release, men are given training and packs of naloxone (a fast-acting medication used to temporarily reverse the effects of opioid overdoses). The take-up by uniformed staff trained to administer a nasal naloxone spray remains low, and is potentially a risk, especially given the increase in OST.

There were two life threatening emergencies during 2025: one involved a drug overdose which was dealt with by healthcare staff on the day. This was followed up with partnership planning and safeguarding until the man's discharge. The second incident was an unexplained cardiac arrest at night. Fortunately, staff happened to be nearby when alerted by another prisoner and were able to provide life-saving CPR.

Healthcare does not operate a 24 hour service at Springhill. A survey in December by EPIC (Empowering People Inspiring Change) based on 48 responses found that 38% of patients *'felt that in a medical emergency their healthcare needs would be met, {when there was no healthcare on site} compared to 36% who disagreed and 26% who were unsure. This is an overall decrease of 17% in positive responses from survey results in 2024.'* EPIC recommended *'the development of personal management plans for those with long term conditions.'*

Following assessments, 44 men were able to access a pilot brain injury link worker service, working closely with the neurodiversity manager and praised by men:

*‘There should be more individuals like the link worker supporting prisoners with injury’s that would help them to have a positive impact in their lives. She has helped me to have the confidence to not hide my injury and taught me the tools to face it every day. By making me understand how to manage or face difficulties’* (Brain Injury Link worker Service Pilot – Southeast Interim report June 2025). Regrettably, this service has not been continued.

Mature aged men attended a drop-in forum, which proved popular.

Healthcare reported an ongoing hesitancy in vaccine acceptance (e.g. in May, 57 out of 71 declined the MMR vaccine), although healthcare has not conducted checks to spot patterns that might help with any mitigation.

Three trained healthcare champions have made a positive contribution with blood pressure and weight testing, as well as signposting men to other health services. They also provide a ‘meet and greet’ service for new receptions. Healthcare also publish a monthly newsletter.

The EPIC report found that ‘42% of patients felt that healthcare listens to them and takes their healthcare concerns seriously, which is a 21% decrease compared to 2024 results’. EPIC recommended that healthcare should *‘promote services more widely to improve communication.’* In December, Healthcare organised an open evening in gym to promote healthcare services.

## **6.2 Mental health**

All urgent mental health referrals were seen within 48 hours, and all routine referrals seen within five days. The number of mental health referrals and appointments remained largely unchanged; however, healthcare reported that more men with more complex needs were arriving earlier in their journey to the prison that might in previous years have been treated only in closed conditions. Previously, some men would have been subject to a ‘medical hold’ (i.e. not transferred) but the criteria for medical holds has since been changed.

The EPIC survey found that 26% of prisoners self-declared with a mental health condition and 33% said they were living with a neurodiverse condition. When asked about access to mental health support, ‘33% of patients felt they can access emotional support from the mental health team when needed, whilst 38% disagreed and 29% were unsure. This is a decline of 18% compared to last year.’

## **6.3 Social care**

Referrals to Buckinghamshire County Council worked well for the 14 cases referred during this reporting year, but there was a supply issue for remedial equipment such as shower chairs and toilet seats following the collapse of a supplier: one man had to wait four months for a shower chair. Millbrook Healthcare has since been appointed as national supplier.

## **6.4 Drug rehabilitation**

The drug and alcohol recovery team (DART) managed a caseload of about 65 men a month, of whom about 40 were actively engaged. There were on average 20 referrals each month. Treatments include ISFP (inclusion step forward programme for prisons), anxiety management and acupuncture. Alcohol remains the most prevalent addiction and there were regular sessions of Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous. T Hut is dedicated as a recovery hut providing weekly meetings, which were well attended and provide a supportive environment. DART peer support workers promote services around the prison. The DART team reported positive feedback from men, e.g. *'having worked with at best mediocre services elsewhere, it was such a breath of fresh air to work with DARTS at Springhill.'*

In addition to the existing drug testing regime (4.5), the prison plans to reintroduce a compact based drug testing scheme (CBDT) which is a voluntary compact. Men on T Hut, drivers, together with those going out on ROTL will be expected to sign up for testing.

## **6.5 Soft skills**

The Board noted several positive activities, including:

- A play was written and performed by men and supported by the Kestrel Theatre company.
- Music studio with a resident musician.
- Artist in residence: the studio is open two evenings a week with eight men involved.
- The Springhill Parkrun was restarted in December with four men and six marshals on a new route round the prison as the playing field is unserviceable due to the new prison activity.

## 7. Progression and resettlement

### 7.1 Education

The Board has focused its monitoring on the change in the education contract in October which changed from the Prison Education Framework to Prisoner Education Services. The core education contracted hours provision across HMP Springhill and neighbouring HMP Grendon has been reduced by 33% since 1/10/25.

The table below illustrates the changes in education provision from MKC from 2024/25 to 2025/26.

Qualification/Training 2024/25	Level	Qualification/Training 25/26	Level
English	Entry – L2	English functional skills	Entry L1-3, and L1 and L2
		English functional skills – Stepping Stones	Entry L1-3, L1-2
Maths	Entry – L2	Maths functional skills	Entry L1-3, L1-2
		Maths functional skills Stepping Stones	Entry L1-3, L1-2
Essential Digital Skills Qualifications	Entry	Digital skills	L2 award & certificate
Cooking	Non accredited	N/A	
Customer Services*	L2	N/A	
Leadership and Management*	L3	N/A	
Plumbing	L2 L3	N/A	
Carpentry	L2 L3	Carpentry skills (till Dec 2025)	Unaccredited
Employability		Till Dec 2025	L2
Health and Safety*	L1	N/A	
Asbestos	L2	N/A	
Manual handling	L2	N/A	
Aim awards	Entry – L2	N/A	
Mentoring	L1 L2	N/A	
Business and Marketing	L2	N/A	
		Barbering from (2026)	Unaccredited
		Award in Education & Teaching (2026)	L3
		Progression awards (including some qualifications for * above)	L2
		Award in understanding assessment practice	L3

Prison management state that the new curriculum is better designed to offer a more flexible set of educational pathways, with shorter courses with bite-sized qualifications geared towards filling gaps in skills and knowledge of men.

Additional qualifications are offered by prison employed tutors (see 7.2) including three six-week courses of 'Boats Not Bars' for 24 men. This rowing course incorporated weekly rowing on the Thames at Marlow. Gym staff also ran two Level 3 first aid courses. There were plans to deliver non-accredited cooking for life skills course in the kitchen, but due to staffing issues this did not happen.

The Board does not know what the outcomes will be for prisoner's education due to the new curriculum. The Board remains surprised that vocational courses such as plumbing and carpentry have been cut, although accepts that the low volume of men completing courses (e.g. plumbing: 32 over a year) is minimal. It is also argued that men interested in these vocational areas could potentially access training through ROTL, provided local colleges offer suitable programmes.

At the end of the reporting year, 15 men were enrolled on Open University courses. The changes to the contract with MKC (who facilitate the work) caused some disruption but all men were able to complete their exams. The long-term relationship with Oxford Brookes University was affected by the early release scheme but should recover in the new year.

Access to the library was very restricted for five months following the librarian's resignation, although prison orderlies opened the library in the evenings for men to borrow books only. By November, the library was able to help host the Reading Festival with an inspirational talk from the author Anthony Horowitz and the reading ahead challenge (formerly called the six-book challenge) was relaunched.

At the end of the year, 36 (11%) men were assessed at Entry Level 3 or below for maths and 17 (5%) for English. The Shannon Trust (a peer delivered reading and maths scheme) was operating with two mentors and four learners.

## 7.2 Vocational training, work

A snap-shot comparison over two years:

Purposeful activity	Mid November 2024	Mid December 2025
External full-time work	35	70
External education	2	5
Education on camp	69	45
Work on camp	156	197
Long term sick	1	2
Total	263	312*

(\* includes two unemployed, two retired)

More men have been in full-time work in 2025, but this is an improvement from a low starting point following the large population movements as a result of SDS40. There

have also been more men working on the prison site this year, which has created pressure to provide purposeful activity for all. Inevitably, this has meant that some work has been over allocated (e.g. in the winter months there is less work around the prison for farms and gardens). The difference in education figures above reflects the contract changes with MKC.

On several visits the Board talked to men in their huts when they should have been at work or in education: one man said he thought he ‘deserved a day off’. For men transferred in with little time left on their sentence, there is less incentive to work or attend education.

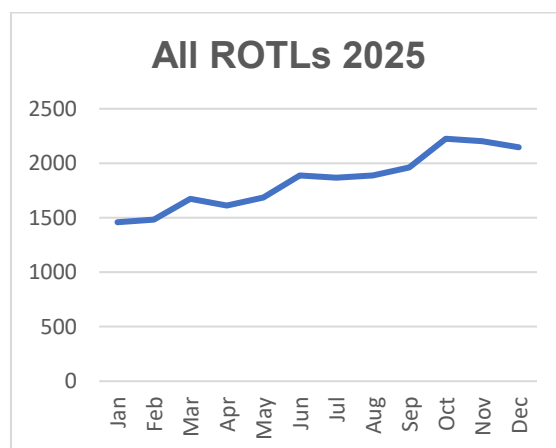
The prison has improved opportunities and qualifications on camp including:

- WAMITAB (waste management industry training and advisory board) Level 1.
- PTS (personal track safety) including mini qualifications on health and safety and Construction Skills Certification Scheme.
- CCDO (Certificate of Competence of Demolition Operatives) includes tickets for banksmen, traffic marshal, and asbestos awareness.
- Planning to deliver Horticulture Level 1.

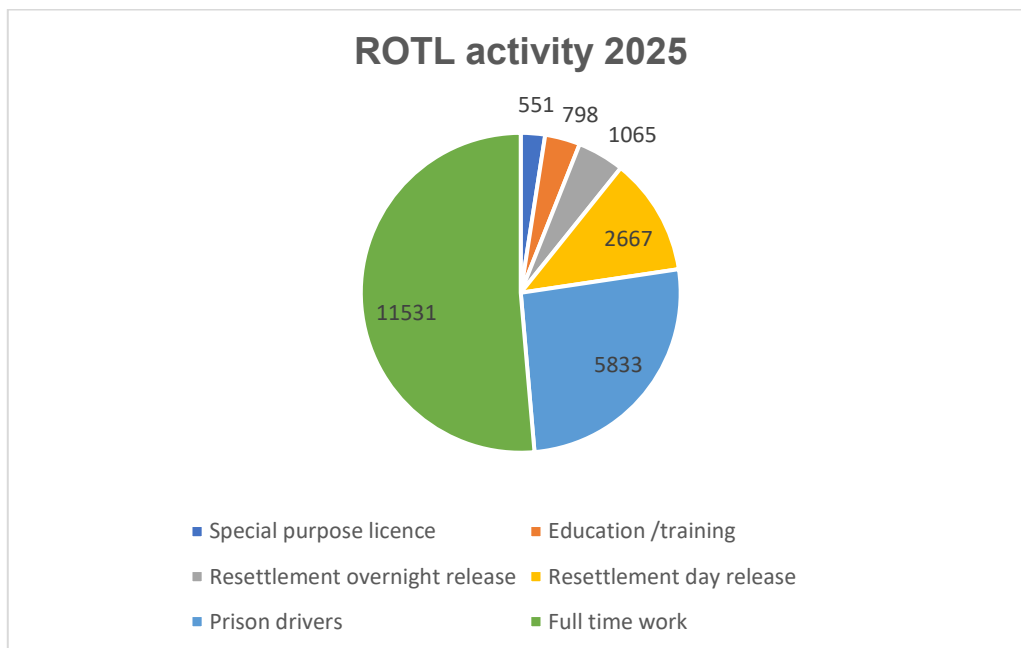
Board members were particularly impressed with the work in the walled garden and poly tunnels with considerable effort put in to develop the area. Men spoke about the positive impact the opportunity to work autonomously had on their well-being. Board members also spoke with one of the beekeepers, who enjoyed his role and thought it was good for his mental health and intends to have his own hive on release.

### 7.3 ROTL

ROTL numbers for the year were 22,445 which is an increase of 47% over the year following the churn of men leaving at the end of 2024 and the camp filling up in the early part of the year. ROTL numbers in both charts below represent the number of licences issued and can include the same men being issued multiple licences.



Licences cover both work, external education, medical appointments (special purpose licence), and family ties which break down as per the chart below.



Adjustments and incentives were made in November to make access to ROTL easier and included:

- An extended geographical zone for ROTL to allow men to apply for jobs in an enlarged area.
- The new zone will allow men to access activities within this area without having to be reboarded.
- Men will be boarded for all ROTL activities including driving, work, and family ties.
- Option to purchase a smart phone for use outside the prison.
- Access to single room and greater access to self-cook facilities.

All men in full-time work make a contribution from their earnings with a levy to support victims of crime. From November, the application of the levy was simplified, with the first month free for men starting work.

One effect of the change in the prisoner population has been that some men have much longer sentences left to complete at Springhill than in the past. This has caused some 'job blocking' from the available pool of work opportunities and there continues to be more men looking for work than there are available jobs. The employment hub organised an employment fair in the spring, which was well attended by men and employers and resulted in interviews and job offers (e.g. M&S interviewed 20 men with seven job offers and John Lewis had 16 interviews and nine men hired for warehousing jobs). In November, employment fairs attracted new and existing employers including Waitrose, DHL, Jesus College, Timpson and two recycling companies with the potential for 30 jobs.

Springhill's relatively remote location with limited access to bus or rail links means that many jobs require men to have their own transport or to rely on the prison's minibus service. The latter suffered a lack of available drivers in the first quarter but the situation improved for the rest of the year and three new vans have been recently added.

The Employment Advisory Board (EAB) has been able to attract some local companies to offer both ROTL employment and employment post release (e.g. Greenplant employs five men on ROTL and two men post release).

At the end of the year, around 70 men were accessing full time work on ROTL (20% of the roll). The prison aims to have 40% of men out on ROTL within 12 months and then increase the target to 50%.

The Board welcomes all these initiatives and looks forward to seeing more men out in full time education, or in full time work or in jobs that have more chance of leading to employment on release. This should result in fewer men on camp and for these men to be more engaged in full time and purposeful activity on site while they are being assessed for ROTL.

#### **7.4 Offender management, progression**

The SDS40 releases (to tackle the ongoing overcrowding crisis in prisons, certain prisoners serving 'standard determinate sentences' became eligible to be released after serving 40% of their sentence instead of 50%) at the end of 2024 and the subsequent in-flux of new arrivals created a backlog of offender assessment system (OASys, used to assess the risks and needs of prisoners) completions. The problem was made worse because many men arrived without a current OASys assessment, which raises concerns about the safety and accuracy of their recategorisation to open conditions. The backlog was cleared with a probation officer working remotely to support the completion of OASys.

The Board frequently heard from men about the delays in accessing ROTL. The prison has created a video for prisoners to view before their arrival at Springhill, and this might go some way to manage and better communicate expectations for new arrivals.

HDC12 (a policy change to allow men to be on home detention curfew for 12 months instead of six months) resulted in about 50 men being released in one week in June. The Board observed three releases and the special process set up to manage their release efficiently and safely. It was good to see men shaking hands with staff.

At the year end, there were six men with an imprisonment for public protection (IPP) sentence at Springhill. Each case is RAG rated and all but one was 'green' i.e. the man is engaging with their sentence plan and has no current barriers to progression. The one prisoner with an 'orange' rating is to be reviewed in January 2026.

## **7.5 Family contact**

The uptake of visits has been high throughout the year for both social and remote virtual visits. In December, there were 30 men who had no contact (including social or video visits) but this figure can alter monthly as men access ROTL and family ties.

The children's day in June was taken up by only five families and the family lunch in December was taken up by eight men and 18 children which are low numbers, but there were 255 ROTLs for family ties in December. The outside children's play area was out of action and unsightly for six months while it is redesigned with plans to reopen early in 2026.

From April, the cost of calls to all UK landlines and UK mobile numbers was reduced by 20%. This is welcome news for men whose wages have not kept up with the rising costs on their canteen.

## **7.6 Resettlement planning**

The Board is pleased to report for the year that only two men were released with no fixed accommodation in place. There are records on how many men are in employment six weeks and then six months post release. The figures in November for six weeks were 31% of men in employment (against a delivery requirement of 40.8%), and for six months 50% (against a delivery requirement of 50%). Men appear more likely to be in employment some months after release, which may reflect the prison's role as a national resource with more limited local opportunities for full-time work during custody. For example, between April and July, 122 men were released but only seven managed to find work in companies that they had previously been working at while on ROTL. The new ROTL policy (7.3) is designed to improve this.

The Board finds both the actual and the delivery requirement figures disappointing in terms of measuring outcomes from one of the key resettlement pathways. The Board also appreciates that the figures which are supplied via a national database are frequently challenged by the prison.

Men are supported prior to their release with access to Universal Credit, banking, and ID. One of the few managed programmes to support men manage their behaviours is PERS which offers one to one keyworker meetings every two weeks, supporting 15 men (in November) and also a drop-in service for another 14. Their bespoke hut was out of action for several months following power issues.

Regrettably, the prison service cancelled the well-regarded restorative justice course the Sycamore Tree which Springhill had planned to run earlier in the year.

## 8. The work of the IMB

### Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	14
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	5 (including 2 in training)
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	6 (including 2 in training, 1 dual boarding)
Total number of visits to the Establishment	58

### Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Current year	Previous year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	2	0
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	1	2
C	Equality		0
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	1	1
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	0	0
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	0	0
F	Food & kitchens	0	0
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	1	0
H1	Property within the establishment	0	1
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	2	3
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	0	0
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence), parole, release dates, re-categorisation	2	5
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	0	0
K	Transfers	0	0
L	Miscellaneous	0	0
	<b>Total number of applications</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>

## Annex A

### Service providers

- Healthcare:
  - Primary healthcare: Practice Plus Group (PPG)
  - Pharmacy: Practice Plus Group (PPG)
  - Social Care: Buckinghamshire Council
  - Drug and alcohol recovery team (DART): Midlands Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust
  - Podiatry and physiotherapy: Practice Plus Group MSK, Buckinghamshire
  - Mental health services: Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust
  - Dental: Time for Teeth
  - Audiology: Specsavers
  - Optician: The Prison Optician Trust
- Education: Milton Keynes College
- Library: Buckinghamshire Council
- Maintenance: Gov Facility Services Limited (GFSL)
- Food: HMPPS
- Escort contractor: Serco



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