



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP High Down

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

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Introductory sections 1 – 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

The Prison Act 1952 requires every prison to be monitored by an independent board appointed by the Secretary of State from members of the community in which the prison is situated.

Under the National Monitoring Framework agreed with ministers, the Board is required to:

- satisfy itself as to the humane and just treatment of those held in custody within its prison and the range and adequacy of the programmes preparing them for release.
- inform promptly the Secretary of State, or any official to whom authority has been delegated as it judges appropriate, any concern it has.
- report annually to the Secretary of State on how well the prison has met the standards and requirements placed on it and what impact these have on those in its custody.

To enable the Board to carry out these duties effectively, its members have right of access to every prisoner and every part of the prison and also to the prison's records.

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

2. Description of the establishment

HMP High Down is an adult male category C training and resettlement prison (holding men whose escape risk is considered low but who cannot be trusted in an open prison) in Surrey. Before April 2022, it was a category B local prison (accommodating those considered a risk to public safety but not categorised as a maximum security threat). The operational capacity, or OpCap (the maximum number of prisoners that can be held without serious risk to safety, security, good order and the proper running of the planned regime) at the start of 2025 was 1,203¹. This decreased on 6 January to 1,113, then increased in May to 1133, where it remained until the end of 2025.

The certified normal accommodation, or CNA (which reflects the number of prisoners a prison can hold without being crowded) is 998. Even with the reduction in OpCap, operating at 1133 still meant the prison was 135 places above CNA, with those 135 prisoners held in overcrowded accommodation, typically through the sharing of cells designed for single occupancy.

A specialist psychologically informed planned environments (Pipe) unit (to support the progression of prisoners with complex needs) opened in April 2024, providing an additional 23 beds. The unit was almost at full capacity by the end of 2025.

There are six residential houseblocks, two of which are occupied exclusively by prisoners convicted of sexual offences (PCoSO). One of the houseblocks continues to house the community living unit (CLU), which supports prisoners serving an imprisonment for public protection (IPP) sentence and long determinate sentenced prisoners. As well as the residential houseblocks, there continues to be a care, separation and reintegration unit (CSRU), with 22 cells and two special accommodation cells (where furniture, bedding and sanitation has been removed in the interests of safety).

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

3. Key points

3.1 Main findings

Safety

- From our conversations with prisoners, a significant number still perceive the induction process as inadequate.
- As noted in our previous report, there continues to be a disproportionate number of self-harm incidents among imprisonment for public protection (IPP) prisoners and recall prisoners.
- The prison reports there has been a reduction in drones, with visitors and 'throwovers' being some of the routes of ingress for contraband.
- Lack of funding continues to appear to restrict initiatives/courses to help reduce violence.
- The number of recorded incidents of prisoners being under the influence (UTI) increased significantly in 2025.

Fair and humane treatment

- The care, separation and reintegration unit (CSRU) has dealt with a number of prisoners transferred into HMP High Down from other establishments who presented with complex behavioural challenges.
- Whilst prisoner property appears to be better managed than in previous years, when prisoners are transferred to the CSRU, property appears to regularly go missing and the relevant paperwork does not always seem to be completed.
- From our observations, there has been a significant improvement in the level of key work being provided.
- The chaplaincy provision is praised by prisoners and received a 98% score in a recent quality inspection.

Health and wellbeing

- In our view, the level of social care provided by Surrey County Council (SCC) continues to be inadequate and leaves vulnerable prisoners at risk during evenings and weekends. There appears to be too much reliance on social care peers.
- In the absence of any alternative location, prisoners with acute mental health issues continue to be held in the CSRU, despite failing the medical algorithm to say that they are suitable for segregated conditions.
- There has been improvement in the provision of Tier 2 enrichment activities (extra-curricular activities aimed at personal development, skill-building and wellbeing to support rehabilitation), with more planned for 2026. However, the number of places remains low compared with the prison population.
- In the Board's view, the creation of a recovery unit (RU), for prisoners with prolific drug-use histories, has been a significant development in the drug strategy within the prison.

Progression and resettlement

- There is a lack of prison probation staff, which increases pressure on those in-post and exacerbates issues of prisoner access to staff in the offender management unit (OMU).
- Education attendance appears to have improved since 2024.

- As noted in our previous report, family contact continues to be a highlight at HMP High Down, with social visitors often giving us positive feedback of their experience.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- For several years, we have raised concerns relating to very unwell prisoners being held in the CSRU. What specific actions are being taken to improve outcomes for mentally unwell prisoners in detention, and how will their impact be monitored and reported?
- Community probation continues to take priority over prison probation services, thereby increasing pressure on in-post staff. What steps will the Minister take to address probation workforce shortages and ensure sustainable staffing levels in the prison?
- Reiterating an issue raised last year, the Board continues to have significant ongoing concerns about the treatment of older prisoners and those with social care needs. What provision is the Minister making to ensure that these prisoners receive an appropriate level of care across the prison estate?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- What is being done to minimise the number of late arriving prisoner vans?
- Why are prisoners unable to conform to a category C regime being sent to prisons like High Down?

TO THE NHS

- What is being done to reduce the average time for transfers to a secure mental hospital once an assessment has been made?
- What is being done to improve the speed of responses to complaints about healthcare provision in High Down?

TO THE GOVERNOR

- What is being done to ensure that prisoners are unlocked and escorted on time for all healthcare appointments?
- Despite raising the issue in previous reports, full-time workers continue to be denied access to the regime when they return to the houseblocks. What can be done to resolve this issue?
- What can be done to ensure that property does not go missing when prisoners are brought to the CSRU?

3.3 Response to the previous report

Issue raised in 2024 annual report	Response given	Progress
To the Minister: What is the Government going to do to improve outcomes for mentally unwell prisoners in detention?	See the Minister's response to the 2024 annual report ² .	The Board remains concerned about this issue (see section 6.3).
To the Minister: What is going to be done to address the physical needs of the ageing prison population, including social care provision, accessibility, purposeful activity for retired prisoners and end of life care?	See the Ministerial response to the 2024 annual report.	The Board remains concerned about this issue (see section 6.4).
To the Minister: The implementation of Government initiatives to manage the prison population creates additional pressure on under resourced OMUs. How can probation staff within prisons be better supported?	See the Ministerial response to the 2024 annual report.	The Board remains concerned about this issue (see section 7.3).
To the Minister: What does the Minister intend to do to tackle the increase in drone activity as a means of ingress of illicit items into prisons?	See the Ministerial response to the 2024 annual report.	There has been improvement in this area.
To HMPPS: There is an increasing number of prisoners in HMP High Down with mobility issues. What can be done to ensure that these prisoners have full access to services and regimes, given a lack of access ramps and working lifts	See the Ministerial response to the 2024 annual report.	The Board remains concerned about this issue (see section 6.4).
To HMPPS: A lack of funding has meant that valuable violence-reduction programmes, such as Changing the Game, have been unable to run in 2024. How does the Prison Service intend to tackle ongoing issues of violence within prisons.	See the Ministerial response to the 2024 annual report.	The Board remains concerned about this issue (see section 4.3).
To HMPPS: HMP High Down has the lowest wages of any category C prison in the country. What does the Prison Service intend to do in order to bring prisoner wages into line with other category C establishments?	See the Ministerial response to the 2024 annual report.	The Board remains concerned about this issue (see section 7.2).
To HMPPS: Many prisoners express frustration at a lack of sentence progression due to being unable to access offender behaviour courses until the last 12 months of their sentence. What can the Prison Service do to enable those with long sentences to make progress with their sentence plans before that time?	See the Ministerial response to the 2024 annual report.	The Board remains concerned about this issue (see section 7.3).

² The Minister's response to the IMB High Down 2024 annual report.

To the Governor: How can the prison improve communication with prisoners, particularly with regard to regime changes?	Our concerns have been discussed with the Governor.	The Board remains concerned about this issue (see section 5.3).
To the Governor: What can be done to ensure that full-time workers get access to regime when they get back to the houseblocks after work?	Our concerns have been discussed with the Governor.	The Board remains concerned about this issue (see section 6.5).
To the Governor: The houseblock serveries continue to be left in an unacceptably dirty state. What can be done to improve hygiene standards?	This issue has been addressed throughout the year.	There has been improvement in this area (see section 7.2).
To the Governor: What can the prison do to ensure that property does not go missing when prisoners move cells within the prison?	Our concerns have been discussed with the Governor.	The Board remains concerned about this issue (see section 5.2).

Evidence sections 4 – 7

As part of its evidence-gathering, the Board developed an anonymous paper survey, which was distributed to every houseblock in December 2025. A total of 166 responses (14.65% of population) were received and have been used to provide examples and insight into each of the four evidence sections. While the survey provides helpful context and understanding of individual experiences, it may not on its own fully reflect the views of the wider prison population.

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

There were 597 transfers into High Down during 2025 (down from 695 in 2024) and 1,533 hospital escorts. Reception is manned until 1730 Monday to Thursday and until 1700 on Fridays. Processing arrivals after this requires cross-deployment of staff. As in 2024, the late arrival of prison transport caused disruption to evening regime. This was minimised, as the prison has become accustomed to the issue.

New arrivals are processed in reception, then taken to the induction wing, where they normally remain for three to seven days to complete their induction. This year, we were made aware that some prisoners were remaining on the wing for over 21 days and, in some cases, more than 30 days, with no access to the gym.

In the IMB survey, 75% of prisoners who responded felt that they did not find induction helpful. This is a slight improvement on the previous year, when 80% said that they did not find induction helpful. The comments, below, from prisoners show mainly a negative experience of induction, although some were more positive.

- *‘Cell was a mess. Induction wasn’t available as such.’*
- *‘My cell was not ready, but the induction was helpful.’*
- *‘The cell was clean and all needs were met at the time. The induction was rushed.’*

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

Deaths in custody: The Board expresses its condolences for the seven deaths in custody during 2025, and the death of an individual within 24 hours of transfer to another prison. Three of these deaths sadly occurred within the same week in January and we are mindful of the significant impact on staff and prisoners of this.

Self-harm incidents: A total of 165 prisoners were reported as having self-harmed during 2025 (163 in 2024). The number of incidents of self-harm reduced significantly from 651 in 2024 to 575 in the reporting year. Ten near misses (defined in this context as incidents that could have resulted in a prisoner’s death) were recorded during 2025 compared with four in 2024. A wide range of reasons were given by the prison for self-harming, including stress, being under threat, debt wanting a single cell and healthcare issues.

High Down has the highest number of IPP prisoners of any London prison, with IPP and recall prisoners heavily over-represented in self-harm figures compared with the rest of the prison population.

Assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) plans: Prisoners who self-harm, are at risk of harming themselves or have suicidal thoughts are supported through the

ACCT system. In 2025, 541 ACCT documents were opened (533 in 2024). A total of 14 of those opened in 2024 remained open into 2025. During the year, ACCT documents remained open for an average of 23 days.

The safer custody team conducts monthly ACCT quality assurance checks, which highlight examples of good practice and areas for development. In December 2025, this indicated that only 41% (11 prisoners) of those on open ACCTs had received a social visit in the previous three months. In addition, 37% (10 prisoners) were 'care-experienced', of whom only four had received a social visit during that period. The Board is pleased to note that those with limited community support are highlighted to the family services team, which can be contacted by prisoners on the kiosk (a self-service computer terminal that allows prisoners to manage their daily affairs).

Board members periodically observe ACCT reviews and are encouraged by the quality of the conversations and pathways discussed. Where a prisoner refuses to engage, this is noted for follow-up. The Board's sampling of written ACCT documents showed some good-quality records and care plans. We have, however, also observed bad practice, such as missing paperwork and lack of meaningful observations.

Cell bells: In 2024, the Board reviewed a sample of cell-bell response times, which showed that 27% took over five minutes to be answered, including 13% that exceeded ten minutes. This was raised with the Governor, and it is encouraging to see significant improvements during 2025. A comparable sample this year showed that only 10% of cell bells took over five minutes to be answered, with 4% exceeding ten minutes.

Listeners and Samaritans: There were 3351 calls to the Samaritans in 2025, a decrease from 7830 calls in 2024. Free phone credit is made available, and calls can be made from in-cell phones. There has been a decrease in requests to speak to a Listener (prisoners trained by the Samaritans to offer confidential emotional support to other prisoners), with 443 requests recorded in 2025 (January to December) compared with 577 in 2024 (January to November). Prisoners in the CSRU raised issues about access to Listeners on two occasions, which were escalated to the Safety Governor.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

Violent incidents: Our 2025 IMB survey indicated that 49% of prisoners have felt unsafe whilst at High Down (up from 48% in 2024).

- *'I have been assaulted by staff and threatened by prisoners.'*
- *'Fights and drugs.'*
- *'Gang culture always looking to exert influence.'*

Reported assault incidents year on year are shown in Annex C. It is encouraging to see a continuation of the downward trend of reported assaults both prisoner-on-prisoner (162 from 202) and prisoner-on-staff (82 from 91). However, we remain concerned about the level of violence at High Down.

Violence reduction (VR) initiatives: Violence reduction (VR) peers across the establishment provide support in relation to gang conflict and violence, as well as encouraging the reporting of concerns to the safety team. Mediation sessions aimed at reducing non-association conflicts and promoting community living are facilitated by the VR team as required. For the second year running, there was no funding for the Changing the Game course, which explores the history of gang violence and addresses trauma.

Self-isolators/prisoners on separate regimes: If a prisoner feels under threat from other prisoners, they can be designated as a self-isolator. Self-isolators, along with those on separate regime, are managed under a safety intervention meeting (SIM) and allocated welfare case manager. During 2025, the typical number of self-isolators on any given day was 12³. Throughout the year, we spoke to 15 self-isolating prisoners to assess how they were coping; they raised issues regarding access to food and the kiosk, which we passed on to the Governor.

4.4 Use of force

The number of unplanned UoF incidents during 2025 was considerably higher than in 2024 (673 compared with 625). The prison cited regime issues, requests for single cells, relocations and assaults as the main reasons for the use of restraint. Key aspects included:

- 62 recorded incidents at height⁴ in 2025 compared with 111 in 2024.
- Nine incidents resulted in the command suite (a designated room or set of rooms used by senior staff to manage incidents and operations) being opened in 2025, and the national tactical response group (a team trained to intervene in dangerous, high-risk situations) attended on two occasions.
- Batons were used once and drawn, but not used twice.
- Pava, an incapacitant spray, was drawn and used four times (no uses in 2024).

All prisoners involved in a UoF incident are seen by a nurse and a post-restraint conversation is held between the VR team and the prisoner(s) before a return is completed. A total of 619 were completed in 2025. It is encouraging to see such a big increase from 296 in 2024. Approximately 40% of debriefs were deemed to have been 'positive', i.e. the prisoner felt staff acted reasonably and attempted de-escalation.

Body worn video cameras (BWVCs) are mandatory for all operational staff. Video footage was available for 94% (81% in 2024) of incidents involving restraint. CCTV/BWVC footage should be reviewed weekly by senior management, with examples of good practice and areas in need of improvement highlighted and discussed with staff accordingly. Board members have observed these meetings periodically and been impressed by the inclusion of new officers, which has increased their understanding.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

Information indicates that there continued to be a high level of illicit items within the establishment throughout the year. Means of ingress include drones, throwovers, visitors, prisoners transferring in or returning from hospital, inward mail and potential internal facilitation. This is reflected in the following data relating to drone incursions and recovery activity in 2025:

- The number of reported drone incursions decreased in 2025, with 37 possible incursions recorded, compared with 147 in 2024.
- Three drones and 23 packages were recovered.
- High Down is supported by the national drone taskforce, which provides up-to-date information on drone capability and advice on processes to manage drone incursions.

³ This figure was generated by sampling the number of prisoners self-isolating on the first Tuesday of each month during 2025.

⁴ In HMP High Down, this is generally when a prisoner gets on the netting between houseblock levels.

- There were eight reported throwovers during the year.
- A notable increase in throwovers occurred during November and December, with four taking place in these months.

Information suggest that both drones and throwover-related activity may be underestimated in reported figures for 2025.

Although further work is still required to fully address perimeter CCTV coverage, additional cameras have been installed since 2024.

Illicit items can be brought in when prisoners arrive from other establishments or return from hospital.

- 2,096 (1,932 in 2024) X-ray body scans were conducted during the year.
- 134 (121 in 2024) positive indications.
- positive results are similar to last year - 6% of body scans completed.

All staff, volunteers and visitors pass through a metal detector and are subject to hand-held scanning wand and physical searches. All bags are scanned. As a means of helping to combat potential staff corruption, the security team arranges extra searching of staff on occasion.

Social visitors are checked by the passive drug detection dogs and the visits hall is monitored by CCTV. Work has been completed to improve the CCTV coverage during visits. During the year, 39 (23 in 2024) attempts by visitors to pass items were intercepted. By the end of the year, it is likely that the Some conveyance routes into the prison included via visits and throwovers, with three reports each in December.

All social mail is tested using a trace-detection machine, and any positive indications are sent to the central laboratory for confirmation. The majority of laboratory results have shown no drugs detected. All Rule 39 mail is tested locally. High Down also uses the 'Check Rule 39 Mail' system to support the detection of contraband in Rule 39 mail. Senders are required to verify their identity using the system, which generates a one-use barcode. For a period during 2025, the Rule 39 system was changed, and the Board received complaints about delays to mail; the system was subsequently reverted. Prisoners have also told us that Rule 39 mail is sometimes delivered to them fully opened.

In our survey, 49% of prisoners stated that it is easy to get hold of drugs (56% in 2024). A total of 60% said they see people getting bullied/into debt because of drugs (62% in 2024).

- *'There is a mixture of cannabis, hash, spice and fentanyl available on the houseblocks.'*
- *'I've been clean for 18 months and plan to keep it that way.'*
- *'I see people given spice and then being bullied for their meals once addicted so they lose a lot of weight.'*

The table in Annex C shows details of the illicit items recovered from the establishment in 2025. This includes phones, alcohol, individual drug finds, weapons, USBs, tobacco, cigarette papers, chargers and SIM cards. Cell searches are predominantly intelligence driven. There were 1015 cell searches last year; this was an increase of 175 from the previous year. There was a noticeable decline in finds compared to 2024.

The number of recorded incidents of prisoners being 'under the influence' (UTI) in 2025 was 1136, which is a significant increase on the 781 UTI incidents recorded in 2024.

A staff member suggested that the figure represents an increased level of MDT rather than higher levels of drug use.

A local policy around the frequent drug testing programme (FTP) has been implemented at High Down. Prisoners are selected for this programme because of their previous history of drug misuse. Whilst on the FTP, prisoners are considered for location on the recovery unit (explained in more detail in section 6.6) to work alongside the Forward Trust charity. Prisoners are required to produce three negative mandatory drug test (MDTs) results before being removed from FTP. This is a change from the previous requirement of two negative MDT results. A total of 255 prisoners refused to be tested in 2025.

- On average, 120 prisoners were tested per month, and the prison, therefore, met the required number of tests in this category.
- 18% of the mandatory tests proved positive (30% in 2024).
- 358 suspicion tests conducted

During 2025, 'tamper-proof vapes' were rolled out at High Down, which are designed to be impossible to adapt for NPS use.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

Accommodation: There was a small decrease in the number of accommodation-related applications (prisoners' written representations to the Board) in 2025, accounting for 5.8% of total applications received by the IMB during the year. Despite this, accommodation issues were frequently observed by Board members throughout the year, several of which are pictured below:

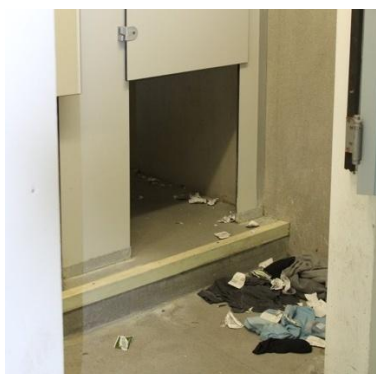


Fig 1. Houseblock showers

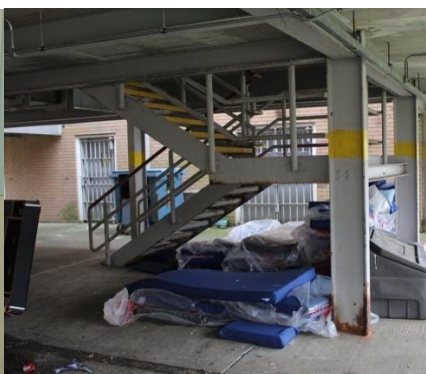


Fig 2. Mattresses left outside



Fig 3. Pigeon nesting on walkway



Fig 4. Guano build-up

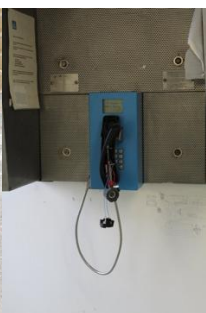


Fig 5. Broken phone



Fig 6. Clothes drying due to broken dryers

External spaces: the houseblock garden in the community living unit was a summer highlight, with abundant fruit, vegetables, herbs and flowers grown by the prisoners. Other external areas were well maintained, with the gardening team active. However, throughout the year, extensive grass areas were occupied with building materials relating to the fire-improvement works.



Fig 7. Building materials

Cells: A total of 72% of prisoners we surveyed told us that their cells were not ready when they arrived at HMP High Down (a 4% decrease from 2024).

- *'The cell stank of urine and had no pillow for three days and was given no opportunity to clean cell -disgusting.'*
- *'When I arrived, I had no pillow or sheets for at least two weeks, even after asking every day.'*
- *'I had to buy my own pillow after weeks of asking.'*

Lifts/accessibility: The IMB has been reporting issues with the lifts in prisoner areas since 2021. Whilst there have been improvements, there continued to be issues throughout 2025. The two PCoSO houseblocks continue to have a higher proportion of prisoners with accessibility needs. Neither of these houseblocks has a lift, and there are limited access ramps in place, including no ramp access to the servery in one. Whilst there are social care peers on these houseblocks, as set out in section 6.4, we remain concerned about the challenges these prisoners face in accessing healthcare, showers, exercise and purposeful activity.

Washing machines: Issues with the domestic laundry machines across the prison continued during the year. The Board raised safety concerns throughout 2025, including machines being used while the prison was in a patrol state (a restricted regime in which prisoners are locked in their cells) and fire doors within laundry areas being forced open. In August, there was an incident involving a broken tumble dryer that overheated.

Fire improvement works: These have been ongoing at HMP High Down, with significant disruption to external prison areas and ease of movement around the prison. The board also notes numerous incidents throughout the year when external contractors have failed to follow prison safety and security protocols.

Food: In our IMB survey, we asked prisoners how many stars they would give the food. The responses were as follows:

0 stars	1 star	2 stars	3 stars	4 stars	5 stars
34	27	50	31	11	7

Our survey included many comments on the food, including :

- *'There is a lack of lunch options. The diet is completely carbs and lacks vitamin C. Food is often cold and undercooked and stale.'*
- *'Not fit to eat.'*
- *'It always runs out and is cold.'*

Food safety: We are pleased to report that, on our visits to the main kitchen, we have seen good practice and standards. Generally, standards appear to have improved in serveries, although the Board observed some instances where servery staff were not wearing whites and hair nets. Vaping by servery workers was also observed.

Portion size: The Board has observed inconsistency in the level of supervision by officers during meal service. We are often told by prisoners that there is inequality in portion sizes and that some items have run out by the time they reach the servery. This is particularly an issue for full-time workers, who have told the Board that, on some occasions, there is no food left when they return from work. In the survey, 70% of prisoners said that they do not receive enough to eat, compared with 78% in 2024.

5.2 Segregation

The number of prisoners held in the care, separation and reintegration unit (CSRU) for over 42 days (the limit allowed without external authorisation) at one time has increased. Data for the first half of 2025 was unavailable but in the second half of the year 17 prisoners were held for more than 42 days compared with 16 in the whole of 2024. We

have observed 168 prisoner reviews in the CSRU, and been pleased to see more representation from different departments in the prison at these.

As a Board, we have been concerned about the number of highly disruptive prisoners held in the CSRU, many of whom seem unable to comply with a category C regime. The CSRU has frequently been full, or very close to full, with several prisoners requiring multiple officers to facilitate their regime safely.

The use of special accommodation cells must be authorised by the Duty Governor and are they must be used for the shortest possible time to prevent harm to themselves or others. This happened on three occasions in 2025, compared with 11 times in 2023.

Prisoners held in the CSRU often tell the Board that most staff in the unit treat them well and we have observed some good staff interaction with the residents when we are on monitoring visits.

Segregated conditions are not suitable for prisoners who are mentally unwell; however, a number are held for extended periods in the CSRU while awaiting transfer. This can cause distress for both prisoners and staff. This issue is explored in more detail in section 6.3. The Board also notes that there are frequently prisoners subject to open ACCTs held within the CSRU.

One of the main issues raised with the Board by prisoners held in the CSRU relates to concerns about their property. When prisoners are relocated, their cell in the main prison is cleared and they report that items of property regularly go missing. On several occasions, we have noted that the associated cell-clearance paperwork was incomplete. This can lead to unnecessary frustration for both prisoners and CSRU staff.

Earlier in the reporting year, a change to the rules governing canteen (a facility where prisoners can buy snacks, toiletries, stationery and other essentials using their allocated funds) was introduced. Prisoners may continue to place canteen orders while in the CSRU, but items are no longer allowed to be issued to them until they leave the unit. Many prisoners have raised concerns about this change, which they perceive as unfair.

Adjudications

A 38% decrease in the total number of adjudications (disciplinary hearings held when a prisoner is alleged to have broken prison rules) this year has been recorded. Prison staff suggest that this may be due to fewer finds of illicit substances or staff using more effective de-escalation techniques to manage challenging behaviour.

There was a significant reduction in the number of adjudications not proceeded with during the year, falling from 1336 in 2024 to 276 in 2025. However, the Board has seen a 26% increase in the number of applications received in relation to adjudications, with prisoners frequently citing delays and a lack of paperwork. Prisoners have also raised concerns that where an adjudication is not proceeded with, they are unable to demonstrate their innocence and that the matter may still be recorded on their prison record. Some prisoners have expressed concern that this could have implications for future parole consideration.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

In the survey, prisoners were asked whether most staff treated them with respect. Of those who responded, 67% answered yes, an increase from 60% in 2024. Prisoners' survey responses included the following comments:

- *'Some officers don't even communicate with prisoners.'*
- *'They treat us like dirt, like animals.'*
- *'Some show respect and care but they are few.'*

Just 40% of prisoners surveyed told us that a member of staff had asked them how they were doing in the last week, which is down from 42% in 2024.

We have seen positive engagement between prisoners and officers in some areas, particularly on the enhanced spurs (these are for prisoners on the top level of the incentives scheme) within the prison. Initiatives such as IPP coffee mornings and community meetings in the Pipe unit help provide supportive environments.

Communication: In the survey, 56% of prisoners described communication at HMP High Down as very poor, with a further 20% describing it as poor. Prisoners were also asked what they considered to be the worst aspect to be of High Down, with poor communications cited in response. Prisoners described their experiences as follows:

- *'No communication at all, anywhere.'*
- *'Officers tend to only open and close cells and focus on going home. When asked basic questions about familiarities on how to get things and information, they tend to say: ask other prisoners.'*

Prisoners report a lack of information about the regime, both through our survey and in conversations with the Board throughout the year. Only one houseblock appears to update information regularly on a large noticeboard in a location visible to all prisoners. Elsewhere, prisoners have told the Board that they are locked behind their doors without explanation, which can cause unnecessary stress.

Key work: During 2025, we were pleased to see an increased focus on key work, with 13,674 sessions held (up from 6569 in 2024). Our survey showed 77% knew who their key worker was (up from 65% in 2024). Prison data showed 95.23% of prisoners had an allocated key worker, with 172 active key workers. In our previous reporting year, we reported an average 66-day wait for a first session with a key worker, which had fallen to 39 days by the end of 2025. Many prisoners had positive things to say about key work, including:

- *'He is good and has compassion and a lot of knowledge around the system.'*
- *'She is an excellent key worker for me and helps with my needs.'*

5.4 Equality and diversity

The equality and diversity team has continued to try to provide a planned monthly meeting (seven took place in 2025), which the Board has observed and is usually well supported by Governors, custody managers (CMs) and other staff. They present statistics to show whether prisoners have been disproportionately treated according to their age, ethnicity or disability. The prison is challenged about how it will correct disproportionality and ensure it does not reoccur.

Prisoners with disabilities: We conduct periodic checks on personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs) for prisoners with disabilities. These provide assistance for those who cannot get themselves out of the prison unaided in an emergency. When doing so, we found some missing documents or that paperwork had not followed prisoners to new locations. This was raised with staff. As detailed in section 6.4, we remain concerned about the lack of facilities for those with disabilities.

Hidden disabilities: The diversity team arranged for analysis to explore whether hidden disabilities contribute to behaviour that leads to the use of force. This report has been completed and is due to be reviewed by the team, with the findings expected to be presented in early in 2026. It is anticipated that the outcomes will inform appropriate training for officers to raise awareness of potential triggers for prisoners with hidden disabilities. The neurodiversity support manager left High Down in 2025 and has not yet been replaced.

Awareness events: This year, two Pride events have been held to which staff and prisoners were able to attend; one for mains prisoners and one for PCoSOs. Events also took place for South Asian heritage month, including a popular cricket competition.

Diversity peers: A total of 12 prisoners were selected and trained by the Zahid Mubarak Trust charity in 2025 to act as equality advocates.

Discrimination reporting: In 2025, 121 discrimination incident reporting form (DIRFs) applications were received (down from 149 in 2024). Of these, 44 passed the initial screening stage and were progressed for full consideration as DIRFs. It was noted that some prisoners subject to restrictions on the number of complaints they could submit each month were using the DIRF system to try and circumvent this restriction. Of the cases progressed, ten were upheld, including two that were partially upheld.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The results from an inspection of the chaplaincy department undertaken in 2024 were received in 2025. The quality, assurance and development assessment scored the department 98 out of 100. Unfortunately, the Pagan chaplain went on sick leave last year and it is hoped that they will return in May 2026. The managing chaplain has facilitated the ongoing weekly Pagan group. The Humanist chaplain retired on medical grounds during the year. A replacement has not yet been appointed.

From our observations, the team continues to be a visible presence on all the houseblocks and endeavours to ensure all recently received prisoners meet a chaplain early in their time in High Down. They also continue to arrange compassionate visits and offer bereavement counselling to prisoners and staff.

All major religious festivals appeared to be celebrated throughout the year. In December, the annual carol service was well attended and included several dignitaries, such as the Mayor of Sutton and the Lord High Sheriff of Surrey. The Bishop of Guildford gave the address.

Ramadan is well observed at High Down, with special arrangements made for those fasting.

In December, the chaplaincy music band performed a successful concert for prisoners and staff.

- *'Superb, committed chaplaincy.'*
- *'All the staff in education and chaplaincy is (sic) good.'*

When asked what they considered to be the best aspect of High Down, one prisoner wrote:

- *'The chapel/chaplaincy staff.'*

5.6 Incentives schemes

Various incentive schemes are in place to address negative behaviour and reward and encourage good behaviour:

- Enhanced prisoners have more time out of their cells, social visits and the ability to transfer more of their private cash to spends to spend on things like phone credit and canteen.
- Prisoners on the basic (bottom) level of the incentives scheme are usually only on it for a few days. They then attend a review of their behaviour before being moved back to the standard (middle) level or kept on basic status.

Some prisoners have raised concerns that the incentives system can be unclear and that its application is inconsistent. They have also reported occasions where paperwork has not been received.

During 2025, minority ethnic and black prisoners were over-represented on the basic level and were under-represented on enhanced status when compared with their proportions in the prison population. Minority ethnic prisoners accounted for 66% on basic, while representing 45% of population, and black prisoners accounted for 39% of those on basic, compared with 26% of population. By contrast, minority ethnic prisoners comprised 42% of those on enhanced (45% of population), and black prisoner 22% (26% of population).

Independent substance free living (ISFL): This unit houses enhanced prisoners who are free from drug and alcohol dependency and wish to live in an environment without the temptation to return to dependency. High Down's Drug Strategy Report, published in December 2025, stated:

- *'The residents we have on there now really do reflect and promote each other's wellbeing and recovery progress.'*
- *'The general atmosphere on the ISFL is the best it has ever been, with a really strong sense of community.'*

Community living unit (CLU): In 2025, there were significant staffing changes on the CLU, which supports long-term determinate and IPP prisoners. As a result, a number of activities and tailored programmes were unable to continue during the year. By the end of 2025, there was no additional personalised support for these long-term prisoners. We are pleased to see that the team is being built back up, and we look forward to seeing the unit improve.

5.7 Complaints

The 2023 inspection report highlighted that the number of complaints was 'much higher than at similar prisons and had steadily increased'. The Board notes that the number of complaints made to the prison continues to rise, reaching 3905 this year.

Applications to the IMB about the complaints system have seen a significant rise and now account for 11% of the total received, compared with 6% the previous year.

Prison complaints data showed the three highest areas for complaints were residential issues (500 of the complaints/12.8%), the offender management unit (OMU), and property.

Prisoners report to the Board that they have limited confidence in the complaints system and are often unclear about how to submit a complaint. The Board has been told that only minimal information about the complaints process is provided at induction, often limited to where the complaints box is located.

It is assumed that they already understand the system as they have come from another establishment. Some newly arrived prisoners did not know, for instance, that they can only put one complaint on each form and that the form will otherwise be returned, creating frustrating delays.

Applications to the IMB are posted in a clearly marked blue box on each houseblock. However, one of the boxes was missing for seven months and, when replaced, the new box was installed without a lock. Prisoners have told the Board that this has discouraged them from submitting applications, due to concerns that their correspondence could be read.

5.8 Property

Complaints to the prison about property accounted for nearly 9% of all complaints, which is slightly lower than in previous years. Applications to the IMB relating to property accounted for 12% of the total, also a decrease from 15% in 2024.

Prisoners have told us that, towards the end of the year, the system for collecting property at a designated time each week appeared to be working.

Many complaints regarding property relate to cell clearances when prisoners move location within High Down, particularly when transferring to the CSRU. We regularly hear reports of property going as a result.

Newly arrived prisoners have also reported some confusion regarding the 28-day period in which property must be handed in following arrival at High Down.

During 2025, the rules on volumetric control were tightened, and prisoners were given advance notice of the changes. Prisoners are now permitted to keep two large boxes and one smaller canteen box in their cells. Arrangements can be made for excess property to be sent to central storage or collected by family members. As there is no volumetric limit on weekly canteen purchases, prisoners have reported that it can be challenging to store these items within the smaller box.

Prisoners arriving from establishments with more flexible volumetric controls are required to choose which items to retain and which to send out.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

In the reporting year, we saw a 26% increase in the number of health-related applications received by the IMB. Despite this, responses to our survey showed a slight improvement on last year when respondents were asked: ‘Do you have any issues accessing healthcare?’

	2025	2024
Yes	72%	74%
No	28%	26%

Comments about healthcare services in our end of year survey were mixed, with examples shown here:

- *‘Takes ages to get an appointment.’*
- *‘I’ve handed in a number of healthcare apps without getting a response or an appointment.’*
- *‘Healthcare is a joke in here unless you smoke spice.’*
- *‘The healthcare staff are good to me.’*

Due to patient confidentiality, the IMB is limited in its involvement with health-related issues. Healthcare complaints are dealt with by Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust (CNWL), although prisoner feedback to the Board is that responses to these complaints can take a very long time to come through.

6.2 Physical healthcare

A comprehensive range of primary healthcare services are available within the prison, with more specialised services offered by external agencies visiting the prison. The average waiting times for appointments to access the key healthcare services in 2025 were:

Waiting times (weeks)	2025	2024
GP	1	1
Dentist (routine)	10	9
Dentist (follow up)	9	9
Optician	2	3
Physiotherapy	5	3
Podiatry	16	14

The Board is pleased that reported figures show a fairly steady picture in terms of waiting times across all healthcare services, although there have been small increases in waiting times for routine dental appointments, physiotherapy and podiatry. However, we continue to be concerned about the number of missed appointments, often due to prisoners not being unlocked or escorted to the appointment on time, an issue that is often raised with us by prisoners. We sampled two weeks in 2025 and found that 44% (14-18 April 2025) and 38% (20-24 October 2025) of appointments were missed.

6.3 Mental health

Compared with 2024, the reporting year saw a significant increase in the average time for transfers to a secure mental hospital once an assessment has been made. It remains wholly unacceptable to the Board that some people wait for extended periods before transfer.

	2025	2024	2023
Identified for external assessment	15	16	18
Actual transfers	7	9	12
Average time between assessment and transfer (days)	51.5	39.5	31.5
Longest wait time (days)	95	132	93

Prisoners with acute mental health issues are assessed as not medically fit to be held in segregated conditions under the healthcare algorithm; however, they continue to be held in the CSRU because there is no other suitable location within HMP High Down for their care. We remain very concerned about this, as we do not believe that the CSRU in HMP High Down is an appropriate location for their care to be facilitated. It is harmful for the individual being held, and unfair to expect prison staff to support people in acute mental health crisis without the right facilities, training or support.

We would emphasise that the availability of suitable bed spaces is beyond the control of prison staff. This is a systemic issue that requires an urgent solution.

During the course of the year, a number of acutely unwell prisoners have been transferred into HMP High Down from other prisons, without there being any chance of them being able to adhere to a category C regime. We believe this practice is unacceptable, as it places additional pressure on the CSRU and fails the prisoners in question, as they are unable to access the necessary support.

It is clear from our observations that the mental health in-reach team is doing everything it can at a local level to support prisoners. A range of therapies are offered, including therapy dogs, who continue to provide support to a number of prisoners and are very well received.

6.4 Social care

Surrey County Council (SCC), alongside CNWL, is responsible for determining which prisoners require social care. Care is then provided by SCC, with the support of social care peers who are employed on an ad hoc basis, depending on the needs of the prison population.

Despite highlighting issues around access to social care in our 2024 report, the Board continues to have serious concerns about the level of social care provided by SCC. Throughout the reporting year, we have observed how important the regular care and support provided by social care peers is to those who are assisted by them; however, there is a lack of care and support from qualified practitioners, which should be provided by SCC, in our view. No social care is delivered at weekends or overnight, which, in the Board's view, means that frail prisoners - who would ordinarily require residential or overnight care in the community - are left in inhumane and unsafe conditions when there is no support available.

We recognise that this is not only a local issue but one that affects the prison estate as a whole. A lack of suitable residential spaces for prisoners with social care needs puts

people at risk, which is exacerbated at High Down by a lack of resource provisions by SCC, the local provider.

Older prisoners

In our 2024 report, we asked the Minister: 'What is going to be done to address the physical needs of the ageing prison population, including social care provision, accessibility, purposeful activity for retired prisoners and end of life care?'⁵ The Minister stated that an increase in NHS staffing and a review of care delivery would take place and that additional measures would be put in place for this population. He also stated that funding options to improve the physical environment for prisoners with mobility issues would also be explored⁶.

In addition to the ongoing social care concerns detailed above, the Board is disappointed to report that there has been no discernible improvement in the physical environment within High Down for this population. This is illustrated by the following reported example from our survey:

- *'Six appointments missed due to not being able to walk there.'*

At a local level, HMP High Down has created a retired prisoners' room on one of the residential houseblocks, which encourages older prisoners to meet for association and regular coffee mornings. The Board welcomes this initiative.

There are a small number of prisoners receiving palliative care at High Down. The Dignity in Dying Charter is followed by the healthcare department, which liaises with external agencies to create a care plan based on the prisoner's wishes. We commend the healthcare team for their management of these distressing situations, ensuring that affected prisoners are supported with as much care and dignity as possible.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

A new regime profile was introduced at the beginning of March, aimed at making time out of cell fairer across all houseblocks. Rather than following a set pattern of either a morning or an afternoon purposeful activity session, the new 'spiky' profile varies this to allow for a more balanced distribution. Under the new profile, Fridays were allocated as a day for Tier 2 enrichment activities (see section 6.7).

Gym

There is a large, well-equipped gym within the prison. While it is profiled for ten full-time physical education staff, staffing levels during 2025 averaged seven and a half, supported by a full-time custodial manager (CM). Compared with previous years, we received fewer reports of sessions being cancelled, and prisoners frequently told us how important access to the gym is to their wellbeing. In our survey, many prisoners described the gym as the best aspect of HMP High Down.

⁵ [High Down IMB 2024 annual report.pdf](#)

⁶ [The Minister's response to the IMB High Down 2024 annual report.](#)

Core day regime

In our survey, many prisoners said that they felt the regime was one of the worst aspects of High Down, often stating that it is run like a category B, rather than a category C, prison. (Category B prisons typically operate more restricted regimes, whereas category C prisons tend to engage in a more rehabilitative, activity-based regime with greater access to work, education and time out of cell; operating a category C prison in a category B manner can therefore undermine its intended purpose and prisoners' progression).

Despite raising the issue in our two previous reports, it is disappointing that full-time workers still frequently report that they are not given adequate time to access basic regime, such as showers and kiosk, when they return from work before being locked up for the afternoon. Efforts by staff to take prisoners back to the houseblocks earlier to allow for this have been stopped. The issue has been escalated by the Board throughout the year but remains a concern.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

In March 2025, a prolific users' unit, later renamed as the recovery unit (RU), was established to house prisoners with a history of high incidence of new psychoactive substances use, defined as failing a mandatory drug test (MDT) or being under the influence (UTI) at least three times in a week. This was in response to high numbers of incidents across the prison and a number of near misses (see section 4.5).

In October, the Board raised a number of significant concerns, particularly about the limited availability of purposeful activity on the unit and the extent to which the regime for prisoners held there was restricted. Other concerns included the ease of access to drugs, the cleanliness of the room used to serve food and the limited availability of therapeutic support for those on the unit.

A review of the unit was undertaken, and the Board is pleased to note that a number of improvements have since been made. These include the proposed introduction of employment for prisoners on the RU, which should provide a constructive distraction as well as some financial benefit. In addition, a range of activities has been introduced, including meditation groups, Forward Trust (FT) drop-in sessions, a recovery café, education and gym sessions, and football. Many prisoners on the unit have spoken positively to us about the officers working there, and we commend them for their efforts in what can, at times, be very challenging circumstances.

The FT provides clinical and social support services for prisoners on the RU and across the prison as a whole. In December, 386 prisoners accessed FT support. The feedback we receive concerning this support is generally very positive.

6.7 Soft skills

As part of the new regime profile, Fridays were designated as a day for Tier 2, or enrichment, activities: extra-curricular sessions aimed at supporting rehabilitation through personal development, skill-building and wellbeing. These activities include a fortnightly creative writing group run by the library, as well as monthly running, dominoes, chess and film clubs organised by the prison.

Places in the main enrichment clubs are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis and are open to prisoners across all houseblocks. Around 34 places are available at each session, and while the Board welcomes the introduction of enrichment activities, we

remain concerned that the number of spaces available is low in relation to the overall prison population.

We are encouraged, however, by the creation of an enrichment hub, due to open in 2026, which will provide a dedicated space for prisoners to take part in enrichment activities and come together for association. It will also provide further enrichment opportunity, such as a games café, dedicated coffee mornings for prisoner groups such as IPP, retirees, young offenders and LGBTQ+ prisoners, as well as facilities for cooking clubs. We are also pleased to note a number of houseblock-based enrichment activities have been started, such as a drama group and pool competitions.

There are enrichment peers on most houseblocks, who assist in organising and facilitating the activities. They have spoken to us very positively about the work that they do and about initiatives they have introduced, such as creating care packages for prisoners who have limited access to canteen or spends, using unwanted items from the DHL warehouse.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

Education

Around 150 prisoners attend education each day. We are pleased to see that, in 2025, attendance rate increased to 75%, from 60% in 2024, and exceeding the 2025 target of 65%. A total of 73 prisoners are studying for Open University degrees, funded by the Prison Education Trust. Maths and English are given priority and the pay rate for attending courses is the highest in the prison, higher than all other purposeful activities.

A new education contract started with PeoplePlus on 1 October, which does not appear to have impacted learners.

The Board is pleased to note that, due to step-free access and a working lift, prisoners with mobility issues have full access to all areas of the education wing, unlike other areas of the prison. However, prisoners have told us that the external walkways can feel unsafe when wet, which has affected their attendance.

For a three-week period, heating faults affected prisoners' access to education and the library.

Library

An average of over 800 prisoners a month attend the library, and prisoners convicted of sexual offences (PCoSO) have had equal access, although they were not able to attend evening sessions, which remain available to those on other houseblocks.

In January 2025, the library carried out a prisoner survey, the findings of which helped inform future books' orders and the range of activities offered.

The Storybook Dads programme (in which prisoners are recorded reading stories that h are then sent to their children) continued in 2025, with three to four prisoners a month taking part. Other activities included fortnightly creative writing group, with initiatives such as creative writing workshops supported by the National Literacy Trust.

7.2 Vocational training, work

Vocational Training

Vocational courses such as barista, dumper and roller (operating construction plant machinery), industrial cleaning and Railtrack continue to be popular and a dry-lining workshop opened this year. However, many of these opportunities have very strict eligibility criteria, such as having only 12 weeks to serve until release and Lifer prisoners post-tariff approaching their parole, resulting in only a few prisoners being able to apply. Professional qualifications in recycling, textiles and laundry are also available.



Fig 8. Redemption Roasters training room

Redemption Roasters operates in three prisons and a secure training centre and offers two courses at High Down: barista training and a coffee technician course. Of those now employed in their shops, 29% took part in these courses, with a 0% known reoffending rate⁷. The Board

⁷ [Redemption Roasters Impact Report 2025](#).

hopes that the programme will continue to flourish at High Down.

Following a period of underuse of workshop space over the past couple of years, the Board was pleased to see a bike repair workshop established by XO Bikes and looks forward to it becoming fully operational in 2026.



Fig 9. XO Bikes workshop

The Clink opened its first restaurant at High Down, but this closed in the spring, resulting in a loss of training places. Funding is currently being sought for a new enterprise to make use of the now unused catering facility.

An immersive suite was opened in October, the first of its kind in a UK prison. This is a specialised, multi-sensory environment that uses advanced 360-degree projection, surround sound and interactive technology to simulate real-world or virtual scenarios.

Work

At the end of 2025, a total of 827 prisoners were either in work or on a pathway (down from 878 in 2024). Details of numbers on each pathway are in Annex B. We were disappointed to see reductions in the numbers on each pathway compared to 2024, this may be down to the change in OpCap and/or a significant increase in the number of prisoners retired or unable to work from 46 in 2024 to 108 in 2025.

This year, we were pleased to see more work made available for PCOSO prisoners who account for a third of the population but previously had limited employment options. However, employment prospects on release are very limited for these men, as few organisations are prepared to hire them. At the start of the year the laundry was staffed by PCOSO prisoners and was doing the washing of several other prisons. However, the workforce was replaced by mains prisoners and is no longer as efficient, so cannot now accommodate other prisons.

Wages continue to be low at High Down (the lowest of any Cat C in the country) and are not compatible with the rising costs of canteen. Those on basic may receive only 80p a session.

7.3 Offender management, progression

The offender management unit (OMU) faced considerable recalculation work associated with new early release schemes (such as SDS40, which allows eligible prisoners to be released after serving 40% of their sentence instead of 50%). This work is still paper-based and is very specialist and resource intensive. Additionally, the OMU staff carry very high caseloads of between 70 and 90 prisoners. Prisoners have raised a number of concerns with us about the OMU, including poor communication, which results in much anxiety in the pre-release period or run up to parole. High levels of sickness in the unit exacerbate these issues. There are OMU peer-run 'surgeries' on the houseblocks, but these are unable to address all prisoners' issues. One prisoner described their experience of accessing the OMU as follows:

- *'OMU presence is like mythical creatures, you hear about them but don't ever see them, I doubt I will get reformed at this rate.'*

In 2025, prisoners continued to arrive at High Down without an up-to-date OASys assessment (which assesses a prisoner's risk of harm and reoffending), contributing to a backlog of 56 cases by December.

High Down started the year with only 5.5 of the 10.5 probation staff required and, by December, staffing had increased only marginally to 5.7. Where probation staff are appointed, the vetting process has taken up to six months, further adding to workload pressures. In the IMB survey, only 18% of respondents said they felt well prepared for progression to category D (open) prison or for release.

Prisoners with disabilities, such as, for example, wheelchair users, have reported that they are sometimes unable to access the courses required for progression.

Prisoners serving IPP sentences are entitled to monthly contact with probation, an initiative which the Board welcomes.

Programmes

The Horizon Programme, which aims to help prisoners manage their behaviour and support sentence progression, began in July. The Building Choices Programme, a newer course for men convicted of violence designed to help them understand their behaviour, develop self-control and make safer choices, started in November, with priority given to those within a year of release or parole. The IMB continues to receive a number of complaints about delays in accessing work or education opportunities that could support progression. Prisoners described their experiences as follows:

- *'It is extremely hard to progress here due to long wait times for courses.'*
- *'Nothing gets done until last year of sentence.'*

7.4 Family contact

Visitors have told us that staff are friendly and treat visitors with kindness and respect. Special arrangements are made when needed, e.g. when a father meets his new baby or for children with additional needs. In 2025, there were 11 family days, including extended visits for those serving life sentences and for PCoSOs. The London Borough of Sutton is running various parenting courses and support groups and continue to be well attended. Overall, maintaining family ties continues to be a particular strength of the prison, as reflected in the feedback we received from visitors:

- *Best thing about High Down: 'The visits staff, the way they treat visitors.'*

7.5 Resettlement planning

In our annual survey, we asked prisoners if they felt well prepared for the next stage in their sentence progression. The responses were as follows:

Yes	18%
No	64%
Don't know	18%

Prisoners should have an initial appointment with the resettlement team 12 weeks prior to release, followed by appointments every two weeks until release. However, throughout the year prisoners have told us that they were only given appointments two to three weeks before release.

The Board is extremely concerned about the number of prisoners being released from High Down without secured accommodation, including prisoners with disabilities, those

on open ACCTs, and those being released directly from the High Down CSRU. An average of 12% of prisoners were released without accommodation.

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	16
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	11
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	12
Total number of visits to the establishment	372
Total number of CSRU reviews observed	168

Applications to the IMB

Code	Category	2025			2024	% +/-
		Paper	Verbal	Total	Total	
A	Accommodation	40	4	44	48	-8%
B	Adjudications	19	5	24	19	26%
C	Equality and Diversity (inc. religion)	8	1	9	15	-40%
D	Education/Employment/Training inc. IEP	28	7	35	46	-24%
E1	Family/visits inc. mail & phone	22	6	28	52	-46%
E2	Finance/pay	20	6	26	26	0%
F	Food/Kitchen related	16	0	16	26	-38%
G	Health related	71	12	83	66	26%
H1	Property (within current establishment)	33	11	44	71	-38%
H2	Property during transfer /in another establishment)	40	5	45	60	-25%
H3	Canteen, facilities, Catalogue shopping, Argos	11	4	15	26	-42%
I	Sentence related (inc. HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-cat etc.	108	23	131	137	-4%
J	Staff/prisoner/detainee concerns inc. bullying	80	8	88	87	1%
K	Transfers	12	3	15	19	-21%
L	Miscellaneous	35	8	43	53	-19%
L1	Complaints System	70	14	84	52	62%
L2	Regime related	15	3	18	39	-54%
	Total	628	120	748	842	-11%

Annex A

Service providers

Provider	Services
Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust (CNWL)	Healthcare: inpatients and outpatients, medical care for residential areas, pharmacy and dental care
CNWL: In-reach	Mental healthcare
Doctor PA	GP
The Forward Trust	Substance misuse
Surrey County Council	Social care
PeoplePlus	Education and training
Gov Facility Services Ltd (GFSL)	Maintenance and repair

Annex B

Pathways

Pathway	Number of prisoners
Biodiversity, sustainability and warehousing	107
Construction/engineering	236
Wellbeing, hospitality and catering	220
Media and creative	77
Peers or other incentivised roles	88
Unable to work/retired	108

Annex C

Assault data

Reported assaults	2025	2024	2023
Total prisoner-on-prisoner assaults	162	202	247
Serious assaults on prisoners	29	30	36
Total prisoner-on-staff assaults	82	91	98
Serious assaults on staff	10	15	6

Use of force incidents

Use of force	2025	2024	2023
Unplanned	673	625	545
Planned	110	127	142
Total	783	752	687

Finds data

	2025	2024	2023	2022
Drugs (individual finds)	2062	2227	1641	195
Mobiles	131	310	537	133
Weapons	136	215	183	122
Fermenting liquid	124 finds; 578 litres	271 finds; 2,503 litres	161 finds; 1,180 litres	128 finds; 705 litres
Cell searches and finds	1015 searches; 462 finds	976 searches; 473 finds	354 searches; 591 finds	161 searches; 452 finds

Adjudications

Adjudications	2025	2024
Total	2950	4757
Dismissed	241	674
Proven	1046	1314
Not proceeded with	276	1336



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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at imb@justice.gov.uk