



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Leicester

**For reporting year
1 February 2025 to 31 January 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 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 establishment¹

HMP Leicester is a local prison for adult men, with reception and resettlement functions, and serves the courts of Leicester and Leicestershire. The majority of prisoners are on remand (awaiting trial) or are convicted and awaiting sentence, while a minority are recently sentenced or held on recall for breach of a prison release licence. Of the prison population, about 90% are local to the county of Leicestershire.

HMP Leicester is a Victorian prison built in 1874, behind a gatehouse dating from 1825, occupying a three-acre site close to Leicester city centre. A visits hall and administration accommodation were added in 1990. The main residential unit is a long, rectangular cell block with four galleried landings. Usually, two prisoners share a cell.

The recently increased operational capacity (the maximum number of prisoners that can be held without serious risk to safety, security, good order and the proper running of the planned regime) is 334 prisoners. There are separate areas on the main wing for the care and separation unit (CSU), which houses segregated prisoners and, until December 2025, the My Recovery Unit (MRU), which aims to deliver substance misuse recovery services. There is one main outdoor exercise area.

About 26 vulnerable prisoners continue to be housed in the Welford unit, which is in a separate building with a dedicated small exercise area. When the Welford unit is full, other vulnerable prisoners are held on the induction unit and are offered their regime (the structured daily schedule of activities, routines and time out of cell for prisoners) on the Welford unit. The healthcare facility occupies the ground floor.

Other buildings on site include those housing reception, the offender management unit (OMU), resettlement services, learning and skills, three workshops, a gym, a multi-faith room, chaplaincy, the IMB office and legal visits facilities.

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

As many aspects of the establishment have remained largely unchanged during the reporting period, parts of this report draw on the previous year's wording, with updates made to reflect the latest data and any significant changes.

The prison continues to be well led by an energetic new Governor and a senior management team who strive to deliver a good service. However, they continue to face significant challenges due to ageing and unsuitable buildings, which will require substantial investment to maintain acceptable living conditions. The number of prisoners received into Leicester prison has increased by 34% over the past two years (4.1). This very high rate of 'churn' (frequent turnover of prisoners) of those on remand (individuals held in prison until the time of their trial or subsequent sentence hearing), sentenced, or on recall (when a prisoner released on licence or parole is returned to prison because they have broken the conditions of their supervision) has continued to add to the pressure on staff to ensure a safe and decent regime for all those passing through this very busy local prison.

Safety

There has been a welcome 17% reduction in the number of incidents of self-harm during the year (see 4.2), following a 33% reduction the previous year. Prison staff were alert to the risks to individual prisoners, with a rise in the use of assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) processes, which support individuals who are at risk of self-harm and suicide. Fortunately, once again, there have been no deaths in custody this year; and the number of men on constant supervision has fallen. As noted in our previous report, the high turnover of prisoners continues to make it more difficult to recruit, train and retain Listeners (prisoners trained by the Samaritans to provide confidential emotional support). At one point, the service had to be suspended due to an insufficient number of trained Listeners.

There has been a 22% reduction in the number of violent incidents in 2025 compared with 2024, both assaults on staff and other prisoners (see 4.3); however, they still remain high compared with similar prisons. Consequentially, the use of force by staff (see 4.4) is high compared with other reception prisons. However, much of this consists of low-level interventions, and incidents reviewed by IMB members have generally been appropriate and proportionate. The Board is concerned, though, about the number of occasions when body worn video camera (BVWC) footage is not available when force has been used, either because cameras were not worn or activated.

There continues to be good use of intelligence to intercept weapons, drugs and mobile phones (4.5). The rate of positive mandatory drug tests (25%) demonstrates the need to tackle both the demand for, and supply of, illegal drugs, although the number of men seen to be under the influence has decreased. There have been improvements to the processes for receiving and inducting new prisoners (see 4.1). However, as noted in our previous report, there remains a need for a dedicated confidential space to interview prisoners on reception.

Fair and humane treatment

There has been some welcome investment in showers, although the condition of the ageing prison cells continues to deteriorate (see 5.1.1). As noted in our previous report, the windows and grills need to be replaced to help improve security and decency. Again, there were occasions when basic clothing and kit were insufficient, due to the high

throughput of new prisoners. Food is of a reasonable standard (see 5.1.2) and generally appreciated by prisoners, although the allocated budget remains insufficient.

The care and separation unit (CSU), where prisoners are kept apart from other men, was under considerable pressure in the earlier part of the year (see 5.2.1), with prisoners often located in less suitable cells nearby. Too many men continue to remain there for extended periods, again usually due to delays in transferring those with severe mental illness to secure hospital settings. By the end of the year, the pressure had lessened, and the CSU was no longer consistently full. The level of care demonstrated by the CSU staff observed by the IMB has continued to be good, despite the physically and emotionally taxing work involved. The number of adjudications (5.2.2) - disciplinary hearings held when a prisoner is suspected of breaking prison rules - fell in line with the reduced number of violent incidents.

The Board observed many positive interactions between staff and prisoners (5.3.1) and there were regular prisoner council meetings and many forums for those with protected characteristics (5.4). The prison was fully staffed for much of the year with an increasingly experienced staff group. Despite the good staffing levels, the number of key working sessions fell, and was only 32% of the target. (5.3.3).

Monitoring of equality (ensuring fairness across different groups of prisoners) is good, with detailed analysis of any disproportionate outcomes (5.4). Neurodivergent prisoners often fare worse (5.4.1). Surveys of foreign national prisoners identified that those who were not proficient in English felt more isolated, and there was insufficient use of professional interpreting and translation facilities in communicating with them. The showers are not accessible for wheelchair users, and delays in fixing the Welford unit lift means that such prisoners could not access all the available facilities.

The number of complaints remained high but steady (5.7). Responses to complaints reviewed by the IMB were generally of a good standard. Prisoners' complaints about their incentives scheme status more than doubled in 2025, to 105 (5.6), which requires further investigation.

Health and wellbeing

Healthcare provision was generally appropriate within the constraints of an unhealthy and ageing prison environment. The healthcare provider, Practice Plus Group (PPG), has filled most posts, although there has recently been a significant turnover of healthcare managers, with some permanent replacements awaited (see 6.1). There has been a significant increase in the number of applications (prisoners' written representations) to the IMB about missed appointments, delays in prescribing or disagreements over medication prescribed.

From our observations, mental health services were good (6.3), but delays in transferring individuals to secure settings continued to be excessive, and access to see a psychiatrist was not always timely. NHS Inclusion, which provides psychosocial support for substance misusers, has been understaffed throughout the year (see 6.6). The dedicated substance misuse unit has been disbanded, and the prison is now seeking to develop a 'whole-prison' approach to supporting those with substance misuse problems.

Time out of cell was comparable with similar prisons (6.5) and was, again, limited by the facilities available; 40% of prisoners at any time were without education or activities placements. Some staff were confused about the weekend regime, which is quite restricted, with the result that, at times, prisoners were let out of their cells for less time that was programmed. Holding large numbers of vulnerable prisoners on the induction

wing is problematic and limits their regime. Exercise in the open air was generally available for an hour a day, and the gym remained a popular and well-used resource (6.5.2).

Progression and resettlement

Education funding to the prison was cut by 50% in October, limiting the number of placements and the options available (see 7.1). Attendance was close to target throughout, although difficulties with the new IT system caused problems with the data. The success rate of men achieving both accredited and unaccredited qualifications was close to target. The library (7.1.2) was popular, providing a range of events and activities. The reduction in funding reduced the range of vocational courses on offer, although there were increases in the number of qualifications achieved on some remaining courses (7.2). Workshop provision improved, with a new workshop producing children's toys and another restoring furniture (7.2.2).

The offender management unit (OMU) was, again, very busy implementing new legislation and early release arrangements and was further stretched by staff shortages. Their workload has continued to increase due to the faster churn of prisoners, including many men serving repeated 14-day and 28-day recalls from their licence supervision. (As part of their sentence, prisoners may be released 'on licence', meaning that they can be recalled to prison for 14 days or 28 days if they break the terms of their licence agreement) (7.3). Support for families and opportunities for family visits appear good, and family days for prisoners and their children happen monthly (7.4).

Resettlement planning has continued to be a real strength of the prison (7.5.1), with the resettlement hub, new departure lounge and excellent links with employers (7.5.3). However, the resettlement team has faced staff shortages, which has meant that resettlement planning for many men released from Leicester has been adversely impacted. With most short-sentenced men transferred elsewhere, the challenge is to enable the work commenced in Leicester, particularly the links with employers, to follow individuals as they move. The proportion of men in accommodation on release fell: 38% of prisoners did not have accommodation arranged for their first night, and many of those who were housed were not released into settled accommodation (7.5.2).

3.2 Main areas for development

Some questions have been repeated from the previous report where the underlying issues remain unresolved, to highlight areas where further progress is still needed.

TO THE MINISTER

Prisoner released without accommodation

Over the past year, 38% of men released from HMP Leicester had no accommodation to go to.

What further action will the Minister take, working with other government departments, to address this issue and improve outcomes on release? In particular, given that CAS 3 supported accommodation in this region is consistently at full capacity, what plans does the Minister have to expand this provision to better meet demand?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

Access for prisoners with disabilities

Prisoners with mobility issues, including those who use wheelchairs, struggle to access showers on the main wing, while vulnerable prisoners on the Welford unit cannot access all facilities, as the lift has been out of action for many months.

What immediate steps will HMPPS take to ensure accessible shower facilities are provided for wheelchair users, and when exactly will the Welford unit lift be repaired so that full access for vulnerable prisoners is restored?

Workshop activity spaces

The education budget was cut by 50% in October 2025, thereby reducing the number of activity spaces. This means that more men are now locked up for 22 hours per day, impacting their mental and physical health.

What will HMPPS do to increase the number of workshop places and reduce the time men are locked up, and when will this happen?

TO THE GOVERNOR

Confidential interview facilities in reception

The Board notes that there has been no progress in identifying space specifically dedicated for confidential interviews with new prisoners in reception, with the current area also used for staff facilities.

Given how important it is for new prisoners to feel able to share sensitive information, what action will the Governor take to provide a suitable confidential space, and when will this be in place?

Increasing the availability of key work sessions

The Board notes the significant reduction in the number of key work sessions delivered in 2025-2026 compared with the previous year, which averages about a third of the reduced target.

What immediate steps will the Governor take to increase the number of key work sessions and when will delivery return to acceptable levels?

Support for foreign national prisoners

Surveys of foreign nationals, who do not speak English as their first language, show they were more likely to feel isolated and experience incentives scheme warnings, often because they do not always fully understand what is expected of them.

What action will the Governor take to ensure interpreting and translation services are used consistently, and to prioritise this group for key work sessions so they can better understand expectations, feel less isolated and be treated fairly?

3.3 Response to the previous report

Issue raised	Progress
<p>To the Minister Provision for mentally unwell prisoners.</p>	<p>The Mental Health Act 2025, which aims to reduce unnecessary delays and ensure timely access to specialist care, has been passed and implementation of its provisions is awaited. Following a period in the spring, when the prison was dealing with several severely ill men awaiting transfer to secure settings, the number of such men has reduced. The reasons for this are unclear.</p>
<p>Prisoners released without accommodation.</p>	<p>The proportion of men released from prison without accommodation has increased from 33% in 2024-2025 to 38% in 2025-2026.</p>
<p>Prisoners with severe dementia.</p>	<p>There have been no similar prisoners located at HMP Leicester this year.</p>
<p>Resettlement of prisoners on short-term recalls.</p>	<p>New recall arrangements, due in June following the Sentencing Act 2026, will increase the amount of time prisoners spend on recall to 56 days. This will, hopefully, allow more time for effective resettlement arrangements to be put in place for those who have been recalled to prison.</p>
<p>To the Prison Service Reducing availability of drugs in prisons.</p>	<p>A business case for the replacement of all cell windows to make deliveries of drugs via drones more difficult, has been approved. It is anticipated that, following detailed design work, this work will start in 2026.</p>
<p>To the Governor Confidential interview facilities in reception.</p>	<p>There remains no dedicated confidential interview room on reception for inducting new prisoners.</p>
<p>Increasing the availability of key work sessions.</p>	<p>The number of key work sessions remains low, averaging 32.2% of target sessions completed per week, down from 54% in the previous year.</p>

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

4.1.1 Reception

The reception area is a small, confined corridor space; four cells adjoin it, where, on arrival, prisoners are held together. Within the reception building there is a property store, staff room and offices for mandatory drug testing (MDT) and healthcare. A body scanner is centrally located on the corridor. Healthcare, including medical prescribers, are on duty in reception and see new arrivals and those being released.

In recent years, the initial induction process - including meals, canteen distribution, and first-stage interviews - has shifted to the reception area, which lacks adequate space and affects safety management, in the Board's view. The reception team commented: 'We are overrun by induction.'

A total of 2,561 prisoners were processed by the reception team in the reporting period, a 27% increase on 2024 (2,015) - and a significant increase of 34.3% compared with 2023 (1,907).

'Out of area' receptions are estimated at 23% of total receptions, a 68% increase on 2024. These prisoners frequently arrive late in the day, with officers remaining on duty beyond their shift.

Movements out, in 2025, show a 22% increase over 2024 (2,385 compared with 1,957) and a 32% increase on 2023 (1,809).

Of particular concern to the Board is that fixed reception staffing levels have remained the same over these periods. Therefore, the reception process is taking considerably longer, increasing pressure on both the induction process and movements out of the prison. We believe this situation is exacerbated by the lack of investment in technology, with several critical procedures relying on convoluted paper processes, which are prone to errors.

A positive highlight is the depth of experience and knowledge within the reception team, together with the strong relationships they have with many of the prisoners.

4.1.2 Induction

As highlighted in last year's report, we remain highly dissatisfied and seriously concerned about initial induction interviews continuing to take place in the cramped staff room in the reception area. Interviews are frequently interrupted by staff and orderlies (trusted prisoners who take on work to provide services that contribute to the running of the prison) entering the room to collect food and other items, disrupting what should be a critical fact-finding exercise. These initial induction interviews are essential for assessing risk among prisoners; carrying them out in such an unsuitable environment falls short of expected professional standards and shows insufficient consideration for prisoner wellbeing.

The key risk profiling in the initial interview process has been improved by the addition of several risk profile questions. The compact document (a type of contract) that new arrivals are asked to sign now extends to 21 pages, but the Board questions how much of this content is absorbed by the person signing it.

The induction wing is well kept, clean and tidy. Kit levels are good and show an improvement on last year. New arrivals receive a hot meal and are offered the opportunity for a shower on their first night.

Wing capacity (27 cells/a maximum of 53 individuals) remains problematic due to the high intake. A significant proportion of the wing's population, 30% to 50%, are vulnerable prisoners, who are at risk from other prisoners. This requires extra officer time for arranging separate exercise, healthcare, meals and daily routines, thereby disrupting both vulnerable individuals and other prisoners on the wing.

Comprehensive induction presentations take place on weekdays following reception. The use of orderlies in the induction process appears effective, with many demonstrating a good understanding of key issues and providing clear information to new arrivals.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

4.2.1 Self-harm and constant watch

Year	2022	2023	2024	2025
Number of incidents of prisoners self-harming	226	563	379	314

Incidents of self-harm have continued to reduce further this year compared with the large numbers reported in 2023, and they now average about 26 per month. In particular, the Board has noted the effective work done by prison officers to engage with two prolific self-harmers to help reduce their tendency to self-harm.

Constant supervision data: year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Number of episodes of constant supervision	40	24	18	23	20
Number of individuals involved	28	16	18	21	17
Number lasting all year	N/A	N/A	1	0	0
Number of episodes lasting more than 30 days	N/A	N/A	6	5	2
Number of episodes lasting 15-30 days	N/A	N/A	2	2	1
Number of episodes lasting 1-14 days	N/A	N/A	8	16	17

The number of prisoners requiring constant supervision has fallen this year, with the large majority of such individuals requiring this level of support for only a few days. This has freed up officer time for other tasks.

An Internal Audit on Safety took place in January 2026 and received an overall Amber/Green rating, which in the Board's view is a fair reflection of the work the staff are doing. There were no issues identified that the Safety Governor and staff were not already aware of, with actions in place to improve outcomes.

The Board considers that prisoner safety is well managed, supported by a professional and committed safety team who are clearly focused on achieving the best possible outcomes for each individual in their care.

4.2.2 The assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) process

ACCTs	2022	2023	2024	2025
Number documents opened	195	290	265	309
% initially closed, then reopened	N/A	38%	55%	32%
Number opened per week	3-4	5-6	5	6
Number opened per month	16-17	24	22	26
% of prison population placed on an ACCT per month	N/A	7%	7.24%	8.1%

The number of ACCT documents opened this year has increased; however, the number and proportion that have needed to be reopened has fallen. The Board has observed that reviews are undertaken on time, with the necessary staff present, but consider that the input to these documents could improve.

4.2.3 Deaths in custody

There have been no deaths in custody in the reporting year, which has remained the case for several years. In our view, this appears to reflect the care taken by prison staff to respond to and engage effectively with prisoners who are in distress.

4.2.4 Listeners

Listeners are a group of volunteer prisoners, selected, trained and supported by the Samaritans and by safer custody staff. They offer confidential support to prisoners in emotional distress and crisis, and are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The number of trained Listeners has fluctuated during the year. At times, there were too few available and the service had to be temporarily suspended, with retention affected by transfers to other prisons. The Samaritans trained two new groups of Listeners during the year, and at times they were available in reception as well as on the wings.

When possible, Listeners made themselves available on the landings and subject to requests from individual prisoners. They should usually see prisoners in the dedicated Listener suite and not speak to them through cell doors, as this breaches confidentiality. An assessment should be conducted as to whether it is safe before it is agreed for a prisoner in the CSU to meet with a Listener. Prisoners can also contact the Samaritans and other advice agencies through their in-cell phones.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

	2022	2023	2024	2025
Number of violent incidents	119	186	270	210

There was a 22% decrease in the number of violent incidents this year compared with 2024. However, they continue to be too high and above the long-term trend from earlier years. Incidents peaked in May and have fallen since. Many of the incidents were due to two prisoners who had significant behavioural and mental health issues. In August, three prisoners accounted for 40% of violent incidents.

Of the 210 incidents recorded this year, 134 were prisoner-on-prisoner assaults - a reduction of 35 compared with the previous year. Of these, 11 were classified as serious, and 39 were recorded as fights. Prison officers try to keep prisoners apart from other prisoners where there are disputes, either in the prison or because of external issues.

However, this is challenging given that the prison has only one main wing, and population pressures mean that most men are required to share cramped cells, where tensions can build and sometimes lead to aggression.

Staff assaults fell from 101 last year to 76 this year and most resulted from staff challenging prisoner behaviour in order to maintain the regime. A new spreadsheet is being used to help identify if these incidents involved non-operational staff, i.e. those from healthcare, a visitor, a member of the chaplaincy team, or other roles, to better understand the issues that may have instigated the violence. There was a reduction of serious assaults on staff from 15 last year to six this year; most of these staff required medical attention and the incidents were referred to the police.

Looking at the individual prisoners involved in assaults over the reporting period, there was no disparity in relation to ethnicity, race or religion.

4.4 Use of force (UoF)

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Use of force incidents	395	365	315	549	639	548

Use of force has decreased compared with the previous year, in line with the downward trend in violent incidents across the prison. Use of force training is regularly undertaken by staff, and the instructors appear to be very experienced and knowledgeable in teaching de-escalation techniques, especially for new prison officer staff.

The Board is concerned that body worn video cameras (BWVCs) are not consistently worn by all relevant members of staff and are not always activated when incidents occur. When they are activated, they record incidents, with the footage reviewed at weekly meetings to identify whether force is used appropriately and whether there is learning to be gained. This is an ongoing action for the UoF meeting and individual prison officers are spoken to by line managers to give them feedback following incidents.

For example, in January 2026, 63% of staff were carrying body-worn video cameras (BWVCs); however, only 53% of cameras were activated during incidents, and just 23% were switched on before the use of force began.

Analysis of the data suggests that there were no evident disparities in the use of force involving black and minority ethnic prisoners during the reporting year; however, those who are neurodivergent or have learning disabilities have been over-represented in these incidents (see 5.4.1).

The Board is invited to observe both the UoF and BWVC footage meetings. We have observed that there has been an issue of necessary staff not attending the UoF meetings for actions to be allocated at times, although improved later in the reporting year.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

The number of intelligence reports raised during the reporting year (6,431) saw a 14.2% decrease compared with the previous year. For all individuals entering the prison, there was enhanced searching and scanning, with an X-ray baggage scanner in place.

Finds	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Weapons	32	38	54	60	53
Mobile phones	19	56	55	69	42

Intelligence-led searches continue to have a good success rate. Finds of weapons have decreased slightly and the number of mobile phones that have entered the prison has reduced significantly. There were just two packages found to have been thrown over the very high prison wall.

There has been some evidence of drones making deliveries of unauthorised items such as drugs and mobile phones to prisoners through their cell windows. It is difficult to detect during hours of darkness and is made easier by the continuing deterioration of the cell windows and their grills. Improved CCTV, with night-vision capability, has been installed to try and identify drone deliveries.

There were 3,470 body scans completed on prisoners in reception this year, either when they entered the prison or when there was suspicion that they were concealing items internally. This is a 51% increase in the number of scans compared with the previous year, reflecting the considerably higher number of admissions to the prison. With more prisoners entering the prison, the opportunity to smuggle in drugs by one route or other increases. Of these scans, 7.7% (266) were positive, invariably for organic matter such as drugs. There is evidence from body scans that some men returning to prison on recall are being pressured to bring in illegal drugs by this route.

The number of intelligence reports of prisoners seen to be under the influence of drugs has reduced significantly to 298, reflecting reduced availability of illicit substances over the course of the year. However, more recent reports in early 2026 indicate a rise in the discovery of illegally brewed alcohol. There were 35 instances of in-possession drug finds, a 61% decrease compared with the previous year. Many relate to new forms of spice (a synthetic cannabinoid), available in paste or liquid form, which is more difficult to detect. The removal of disposable vape capsules has made it more difficult for prisoners to be able to smoke illicit substances.

A total of 376 random drug tests were completed on prisoners in 2025 (10% of the average monthly prison population). The percentage of these tests that proved positive has decreased from 27.5% in 2024 to 25% in 2025. This continues to demonstrate a significant amount of illegal drug use by prisoners, particularly in the earlier part of the year.

Drugs	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
In-possession drug finds	39	62	76	89	35
Prisoners reported under the influence of drugs	28	74	44	486	298

The trace-detection equipment identified 12 mailed-in items of drug-impregnated paper, usually psychoactive substances, compared with 19 items in 2024. There were just two detected attempts by visitors to pass unauthorised items to prisoners in the visits room.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

5.1.1 Accommodation and clothing

The prison has had an average occupancy during the year of about 325 prisoners and has reached 2025 operational capacity of 332 several times in response to national population pressures. A consequence of this has resulted in pressure to utilise all cells, which has restricted a planned programme of refurbishment. However, some cells have been repainted as the opportunity has arisen.

Not all cell furniture is in good condition but, where necessary, repair or replacement is arranged. Decency checks have been made monthly, and arrangements made for the replacement of missing or damaged items.

The Board has observed a varying standard but overall improvement in cleanliness and improved monitoring of common areas in the prison. A programme of pest control has assisted in limiting the presence of cockroaches, but they are still occasionally seen.

Approximately 75% of prisoners share cells that were designed for one person. Since July, an increasing number of privacy curtains have needed to be replaced and, as at the end of the reporting year, 50 cells had no such curtains, which does not provide an acceptable level of decency.

Cell windows require replacement to make cells more decent and to minimise the possibility of ingress of prohibited items by drones; this has been requested and is awaiting final detailed approval as part of a plan to fully refurbish all the cells on the main wing. In the meantime, approximately 25% of cells have Perspex window coverings, which was an interim measure intended to prevent prohibited items, but these are not in good condition. The holes in them result in cold drafts which is not decent.

Most shower areas have been satisfactorily refurbished in recent years, with the exception of those on the Welford unit. However, two areas, each comprising approximately 30 cells, as of Spring 2026 have been without dedicated shower facilities due to the presence of bacteria associated with Legionella. Fortunately, this was identified during routine inspections, and no cases of illness were reported. It is anticipated that the affected shower fittings and associated boilers will be replaced imminently. Alternative shower facilities have been provided nearby, although this has required careful management to ensure that prisoners do not come into contact with those from whom they are segregated.

The Board has been aware of several instances when there has been insufficient kit to issue to new prisoners. Although there is a system to ensure timely procurement of items, there are many instances of loss, damage and inappropriate disposal, with salvageable items found in waste. Where there has been such disposal, it has been recycled wherever possible, resulting in an average financial saving of over £1750 per month.

5.1.2 Food

The catering department carries out surveys twice a year into prisoners' satisfaction with food. Prisoners' responses are consistent with the Board's observations that the food provided is good. The surveys also invite suggestions for menu preferences, and the responses are considered, as far as possible, including requests for more healthy food options. Special diets are catered for and special meals are provided for religious and seasonal festivals.

Prisoners collect their food from a servery at lunchtime and in early evening and eat in their cells. The practice of issuing breakfast packs with the lunch meal is not ideal, as prisoners reportedly often eat them on the same day, resulting in a potentially long wait until their next meal at lunchtime the following day.

The kitchen has always been seen to be clean when observed by the Board and has had adequate staff and prisoner resource. The equipment is ageing but, with some exceptions, appears to have been satisfactorily maintained. There is an ongoing challenge to provide food, within the prison food budget amount of £3.12 per day per prisoner, which is invariably exceeded.

5.2 Segregation

5.2.1 The care and separation unit

In the reporting year, the care and separation unit (CSU) had 208 admissions of prisoners and there was unprecedented pressure placed on staff, predominantly from prisoners with acute mental health needs. Between January 2025 and March 2025 there was a 'quasi' CSU operating in the adjourning unit (Parsons), holding several CSU segregated prisoners, with no additional CSU staff available.

Some of these prisoners were going through the gatekeeping process for consideration for secure psychiatric placements, which was frequently delayed for various reasons such as psychiatrists not being available. Some assessments were invalid, as no mental health beds were available in the facilities for which they were being considered, so new assessments had to be commissioned elsewhere while prisoners' mental health deteriorated further. Three prisoners were in the CSU for more than 100 days and 16 went beyond 42 days (compared with 13 individuals in 2024), where extensions to segregation required authorisation from the Prisons Group Director.

It is of note that the HMP Leicester IMB has a policy of only agreeing with further detention beyond 42 days in exceptional circumstances; although these prisoners were best to be located in the CSU for their safety, this was not an exceptional circumstance, as the process for them accessing psychiatric treatment was inadequate.

By July 2025, the number of men in the CSU who were acutely unwell had fallen, as had the average length of stay. It is unclear why there was a reduction in the number of severely mentally unwell men entering HMP Leicester and requiring segregation in the CSU. This may reflect the court liaison and diversion service directing such men away from prison, or a cohort presenting with less acute mental ill health. This will be a priority for future monitoring.

During the reporting year, there were 68 defensible decisions made to hold prisoners in the CSU on open ACCTs (assessment, care in custody and teamwork) plans, which are used to support prisoners who are at risk of self-harm and suicide. This compares with 63 prisoners being located on the CSU with an open ACCT in 2024, and 39 in 2023. While Board members observed how caring CSU staff were, it was of concern that so many men at risk of self-harm were subject to segregation, although it was acknowledged that a number posed a risk to staff and other prisoners.

During the year, the CSU supported two vulnerable transgender individuals. One was later transferred to a specialist unit following an extended assessment period. During this time, they were held separately from others for their own safety. It was noted that this complex and lengthy process has occurred on more than one occasion and may warrant review. The second individual spent extended periods on the unit and was involved in multiple incidents of violence towards staff during that time.

The management and staff team on the CSU remained unchanged during the reporting period, which, in the Board's view, helped them to provide consistent and effective support to prisoners on the unit. They have all received reflective practice on at least a quarterly basis from the prison psychologist to give them a chance to talk about any trauma they have witnessed or suffered either physically and/or mentally.

From the Board's observations, the paperwork on prisoners held in the CSU continues to improve through coaching and training of staff. The segregation management and review group (SMARG) meeting is held every three months and is observed by a member of the Board. This meeting is well attended by and is well served by all necessary disciplines across the prison.

5.2.2 Adjudications

In 2025, 1,546 adjudication charges (disciplinary hearings where a prisoner is suspected of breaking prison rules) were laid, a 9% reduction compared with 2024. The proportion of charges proven in 2025 was 41%, similar to the previous year. During the reporting period, 18% of charges were dismissed and a further 24% were not progressed. This was partly due to cases being out of time, staff errors, insufficient evidence, or prisoners being transferred to other establishments before their cases were heard.

In December 2025, the rules for adjudications were updated and are now based on trends in charges. They are reviewed every three months and reflect how Governors decide on outcomes. Training is planned next year to help officers report incidents more accurately, as this is currently only a small part of their initial training.

The Independent Adjudicator (IA) was not used during the reporting period, largely due to the average stay at HMP Leicester being around 40 days and the IA only sitting once a month. This position may be reviewed following the introduction of the new recall system this year, which includes a single 56-day period in custody for recall prisoners and may result in longer stays at Leicester.

Board members observe adjudications regularly and have found them to be carried out professionally, with respect and fairness.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

5.3.1 Staff and prisoner relationships

The constructive and supportive interactions between staff and prisoners, consistently highlighted in IMB Leicester annual reports, remain a key strength of the establishment. The Board observed many examples of positive engagement and good humour. The regular weekly prisoner newsletter has now been replaced by electronic screens displaying information on most main wing landings.

The prisoner council meetings are chaired by the Deputy Governor and attended by prisoners and managers from a range of functions. During the reporting year, there were eight meetings for prisoners on the main wing and seven for prisoners on the Welford unit for vulnerable prisoners. These are now scheduled regularly and are a valuable opportunity for exchange of information and for taking up prisoners' suggestions. For example, they have resulted in revising the process to speed up registering PIN phone numbers so prisoners can make calls sooner after arrival, and amendments to meal choices to include more protein items.

5.3.2 Availability of prison officer and operational support grades

The staffing situation has remained reasonably settled, with a nearly full complement of prison officer grades for most of the year. As of the 31 January 2025, there were 106.6 band three prison officers, against a target of 108. There were eight band four supervising officers (four of whom were temporarily promoted) against a target of eight, and 12 custodial managers (four of whom were temporarily promoted) against an agreed profile of 12. This meant there was little disruption to delivery of the prison regime.

At the end of the year, most band three officers had been in post for at least 12 months and the average length of experience of this group continued to increase. During the reporting year, the turnover rate of prison officers was approximately 13% (14 out of 108), and for operational support grades was 18% (5 out of 28), although some of these individuals were promoted.

5.3.3 Key working

Prisoners should have regular meetings with an allocated key worker to address their immediate needs and future plans; this is an important part of their rehabilitation. All prisoners are allocated a key worker (a member of prison staff who supports a prisoner throughout the custodial period), who, ideally, should meet with them every week. The policy prioritises new arrivals at HMP Leicester, care leavers and those who present a high risk for initial key work sessions, recognising that many would soon be moved on to other prisons. The expectation is that prisoners will have a key work session once a fortnight. However, the Board has been concerned that, during the reporting year, the number of key working sessions delivered averaged just 48 per week (compared with 81 in 2024), against a target of 150 sessions to be delivered each week. The reason given for this was staff shortages and the need to move staff between different priorities.

All key work sessions are given a quality score, produced by artificial intelligence reading the records. The average score for the year to date is 2.27, described as 'case note provides evidence of a reasonable quality key work session' against a target score of 2.5, which would be 'good quality'. Line managers also do their own quality assurance of key work sessions and feed back to the key workers to recognise good work and to encourage improvements.

Given that foreign national prisoners who are not fluent in the English language are more likely to be isolated in the prison setting and less likely to understand what is happening. The Board, therefore, considers that they should also be a priority group for key work, especially as the use of interpretation services requires longer sessions for the key working to be effective.

5.4 Equality and diversity

Protected characteristics (including, among others, race, religion, sex and sexual orientation) are stated in the Equality Act 2010. Prisoners self-declare their protected characteristics, which are then recorded on the prison computer system and used to analyse any disparities. HMP Leicester focuses on gathering meaningful data to identify trends, unmet needs, staff training and any disproportionalities that impact prisoners. The prison interrogates equality data on a monthly basis against a range of processes and procedures that prisoners are subject to, including violent incident reporting, use of force, self-harm, segregation, complaints, searches, job allocation and adjudications, amongst others. The data is reviewed in the heads of functions meeting and in the quarterly equality meeting. The equality officer identifies any disproportionate impact for prisoners with protected characteristics, analysing trends where the impact lasts for three months or

more. For example, in 2025, prisoners aged 25-29 were, for several months, found to be more likely to be subject to use of force and more likely to be charged and have proven adjudications. Where such disproportionality is identified, further analysis is required to discover the reasons for this, although this can prove difficult.

HMP Leicester continues to hold a diverse population. When comparing ethnicity, as of 31 January 2026, 69% of the population identified as white, 10% as Asian, 9% as black or black British, 8% as mixed heritage and 3% as 'other'. As of the same date, 18.9% of prisoners were foreign nationals, the largest group being Albanian (11).

The prison seconded a member of staff to the role of foreign national prisoner specialist, supported by central funding. A foreign national prisoner forum identified that those whose first language is not English were more likely to feel isolated and to receive incentives scheme warnings, as they did not always understand what was expected of them. The use of interpreting and translation services was not always consistent or appropriate, partly due to gaps in staff training and available facilities. Informal translation tools were sometimes used inappropriately, leading to a revision of local policy to clarify when such tools should not be used.

The breakdown of the prison population by age has remained almost static over the past two years, with the most common age group being those 30-39 years of age, averaging 39% of the prison population. There were just five prisoners over the age of 60.

Individuals who identified with a gender identity different from that recorded at birth were supported in line with their individual needs and preferences. One such individual was temporarily accommodated on more than one occasion and held separately for their own safety while arrangements were made for transfer to a more suitable setting. The Board considers that the initial placement did not fully reflect the individual's needs and that the process for arranging an appropriate transfer was complex and resource-intensive.

There were 11 applications to the Board concerning equality issues in the reporting year, most relating to the provision of appropriate facilities and products for individuals with specific needs. Where concerns were raised, these were dealt with sympathetically by prison management.

There were 20 prisoner forums in 2025 to consult with groups of prisoners with different protected characteristics about their particular needs and satisfaction. Cultural and religious events were promoted through the prison newsletter, when this was running earlier in the year. These included celebrations of religious events, a neurodiversity week of workshops and a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller event.

Products are available to meet a range of cultural and individual needs. These have included items related to religious observance and other specific requirements. The Board is satisfied that special requests have been taken seriously, ensuring both the welfare and safety of all, while meeting the needs of specific groups of prisoners according to their race, gender re-assignment and religion.

Access for wheelchair users is very problematic in an ageing prison such as Leicester. There are no accessible showers despite recent refurbishments, and shower chairs are not in use. The Welford unit for vulnerable prisoners, originally designed as a hospital wing, is easier to access; however, the lift has been broken for several months, and staff have not been trained in use of the evac chair. As a result, one individual prisoner was located on normal location, which was quite unsuitable to their needs, where he had to be kept isolated from other prisoners.

5.4.1 Neurodivergent prisoners

At HMP Leicester, the proportion of prisoners who are neurodivergent or have learning disabilities has varied between 20% and 34% over the past year. From our observations, the prison has steadily increased its awareness and identification of neurodivergent prisoners.

The nurse role supporting neurodivergent prisoners ended when Practice Plus Group took over responsibility for healthcare, as this was not in their clinical model. For the past two years, there has not been a diagnostic pathway for autism or ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) in adults at HMP Leicester. However, the prison has a neurodiversity support manager (NSM) whose role is to develop a whole-prison approach to neurodiversity, including improving processes to identify and support prisoners with neurodivergence. There is a plan to achieve desired outcomes for prisoners in 2025-2026. The plan includes workforce training, attendance at ACCT, segregation and incentives scheme reviews, and adjudications involving neurodivergent prisoners and those with learning disabilities. There is evidence of adjustments being made for prisoners and a dedicated space for therapeutic mindfulness.

Diversity monitoring shows that, for much of 2025, neurodivergent prisoners and those with learning disabilities were disproportionately subject to use of force. They were also more likely to have adjudication charges laid and proven against them, more likely to be placed on the basic level of the incentives scheme, less likely to achieve enhanced status and more likely to submit complaints. The reasons for this disproportionality are being investigated. In particular, future use-of-force training will include a greater focus on appropriate engagement with neurodivergent prisoners to support effective de-escalation.

5.4.2 Discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs)

The monitoring of DIRFs is a complicated task. In 2025, 60 DIRFs were submitted, compared with 76 in 2024, 65 in 2023, 60 in 2022, and 41 in 2021. Of those forms submitted in this reporting year, 23 concerned issues of racial discrimination (including issues of nationality); 12 related to disability discrimination; 11 were for religious discrimination; and 14 related to gender-reassignment discrimination. Of these complaints of discrimination, five were upheld and six were partially upheld, which is an increase in the proportion and the numbers upheld when compared to 2024. Where complaints were upheld, improvements were made, including to training of staff, alterations to menu choices, allocation of a bottom bunk to a prisoner with disabilities, and the challenging of discriminatory language. The anticipated external scrutiny of DIRFs by the Mubarak Trust charity has not happened and quality assurance is undertaken internally. However, at the end of the reporting year, there was a considerable backlog of DIRFs to be quality assured.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

The prison chaplaincy includes representatives from nine different faith groups. The team includes representation from the following faiths and denominations: Anglican, Baptist, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Hindu, Jehovah's Witness, Jewish, Muslim, Roman Catholic, and Sikh. During the year, the Buddhist and Pagan chaplains left, and although there is a national shortage of Buddhist chaplains, recruitment for replacements is ongoing.

At the end of the reporting year, 74% of prisoners identified as having a religious belief, including 48% as Christian and 18% as Muslim, with smaller proportions from other faith groups. Weekly corporate worship is offered to Sikh, Hindu, Muslim, Roman Catholic,

Anglican, and Free Church registered prisoners. Access to corporate worship for Jewish, Eastern Orthodox and Church of Jesus Christ Latter Day Saints prisoners is available on request.

Smaller study groups, such as Bible studies and Islamic studies, also operate on a weekly basis, supported by volunteers.

Prisoners have been supported to observe recognised religious festivals pertaining to their faith or belief. Where a festival has to be marked with food, arrangements are agreed with the catering department. Notices to staff and prisoners are drafted to publicise most events. There have been occasions where faith communities have donated appropriate food items to help prisoners mark religious festivals and events, including Ramadan, Eid, Diwali, Christmas and Easter.

The official prison visitor (OPV) scheme provides an invaluable contribution by befriending prisoners who may not receive social visits. In 2025, nine prisoners received at least one OPV visit during their stay at HMP Leicester. This represents a 50% decrease compared with 2024, when 18 prisoners received at least one OPV visit. This decline appears to be mainly due to high population churn and the limited availability of OPVs to commit to regular visiting.

In early 2025, a review of the Sycamore Tree programme under the National Framework for Interventions (NFI) policy framework was conducted. The review concluded that Sycamore Tree delivered by chaplaincies did not meet the minimum standards for HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) endorsement and further recommended that the programme be rolled down in prisons. The programme helped prisoners become aware of the impact of their crime on victims. Learners would understand their individual responsibility for their actions and what they could do to repair the damage they have caused. The Board is disappointed that this programme is no longer available with no replacement in place.

The Facing Up to Conflict (FUTC) course, a six week in-cell learning programme provided by Alternatives to Violence Project Britain (AVPB), helps people learn how to handle conflict better, reduce violence, and get on better with others. It is coordinated by chaplaincy volunteers. In 2025, 42 prisoners completed the course, of whom 32 were successful. This represents a 56% increase in completions and a 52% increase in successful completions compared with 2024, when 27 prisoners completed the course and 21 were successful.

Bereavement counselling services were made available to prisoners in 2025. This provision ceased in June 2025, following the departure of the counsellor. A new counsellor was recruited in October 2025 and is undergoing the vetting process.

5.6 Incentives schemes

Over the course of 2025 at HMP Leicester, an average of 23 prisoners (around 7% of the population) were on the basic (lowest) level of the incentives scheme, compared with 10% in 2024. An average of 66 prisoners (approximately 21%) were on the enhanced (highest) level, up from 18% in 2024. The remaining prisoners were on the standard (middle) level.

Prisoners who behave well can achieve enhanced status and earn extra privileges, such as additional gym sessions at the weekend and more evening social visits, and can have a games console that plays DVDs. Prisoners whose behaviour deteriorates are downgraded from standard to basic and lose their access to in-cell television. The removal of the television was, for most prisoners, the most significant result of being downgraded to the basic level. One reason a prisoner may be placed on the basic level is refusal to share a

cell. Many prisoners find this stressful, although it is often unavoidable due to population pressures.

There has been a significant increase in the number of prisoners complaining about their incentives scheme status, which has risen from 47 in 2024 to 105 in 2025. The reasons for this need further investigation.

5.7 Complaints

The number of complaints in 2025 was 9% higher than in the previous year and was high compared with similar prisons. However, it should be noted that the numbers are skewed at times, due to one or two prisoners submitting a large volume of complaints. There was a slight reduction in the proportion of complainants who were not satisfied with the outcome of their original complaints and submitted an appeal (Comp 1A). In addition, there were 30 confidential complaints (Comp 2s): 25 were submitted to the regional Prison Group Director (PGD) and five were dealt with by Governors at Leicester.

The complaints team was proactive, and 98% of Comp 1 and Comp 1A responses were returned within the allowed timescale. A total of 100% of Comp 2s were dealt with on time. Prisoners were encouraged to speak to wing staff or to use the general landing application process first, so that issues could be resolved promptly. The most frequent areas of complaints are categorised in this table:

Complaint	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Comp 1 (ordinary complaint)	478	624	637	625	689
Comp 1A (appeal)	47	70	85	69	70
Property	81	155	174	110	105
Residential	98	155	214	184	197
Finance	48	75	54	40	75
Staff	61	57	75	111	90
Incentives scheme	-	-	-	-	105

A full breakdown of the subjects of complaint can be found in Annex B.

A total of 243 of Comp 1s (35%) were upheld in full or in part. Where prisoners went on to appeal the outcome of a complaint, 20 (29%) were also upheld in full or in part. The Board had occasion to inspect complaints paperwork when applications (written representations prisoners make to the Board) were being investigated and can confirm that the standard of replies from the establishment was generally good.

During the reporting year, the Board took part in a monthly audit of complaints. A random sample of 79 cases was reviewed. The majority of responses (77%) were considered good or excellent, providing a clear explanation of the investigation undertaken, the outcome, and an apology where appropriate. However, 18 responses could have been improved, and feedback was provided to the business manager to share with the relevant staff.

In some cases, the investigation of the concern was not sufficiently thorough or did not fully address the underlying issues raised. In a small number of cases, it would also have been helpful to explain how to appeal the decision if the complainant was dissatisfied with the response. There is much to learn from the strongest responses, particularly where prisoners were spoken to directly about their concerns and treated with respect and empathy.

The complaints department conducted two surveys of prisoner experience of the complaints process in 2025. Each prisoner received a form and was encouraged to complete it through a £1 PIN phone credit incentive. A total of 64 completed forms were returned in May and 56 in November. The vast majority of those who had submitted a complaint said they had tried to resolve the matter with staff before doing so. There was an increasing trend of prisoner satisfaction with the responses to complaints, rising from 35% of respondents in May to 45% in November. Together with the information from the audit of complaints, this suggests that there is scope both for more matters to be dealt with by staff at an earlier stage.

5.8 Property

A total of 199 property complaints were submitted during the reporting period, representing 15.6% of total complaints, a 0.4% decrease compared with the last reporting period.

A total of 113 (57%) of property complaints concerned problems with clothing being brought into the establishment on visits or in clothing parcels, and property going missing during cell moves. This represented a significant 31% increase on the last reporting period.

A total of 54 (27%) of complaints related to prisoners at HMP Leicester chasing their property from other prisons, a 15% decrease on the last period. Around 32 complaints (16%) were from prisoners who had been transferred to other prisons and were asking about the whereabouts of their property, representing a 16% decrease compared with the previous reporting period.

Of the total property complaints, 64% were not upheld; 14% were partially upheld; and 21% were upheld, with 1% currently awaiting a response.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

The healthcare contract is delivered by Practice Plus Group. Substance misuse prescribing services are fully integrated, while psychosocial treatment is subcontracted to NHS Inclusion: Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust (MPFT). At the beginning of the year, most posts had been recruited to; however, vacancies arose during the year, with up to 18% of unfilled at one point. In early 2026, there have been significant changes in leadership and management, with the head and deputy head of healthcare leaving, along with the practice manager. This was due to internal promotions and changes in management portfolios. Delays in obtaining clearances have resulted in delays in some permanent staff coming into post. At the end of the reporting period, there was an experienced temporary head of healthcare and a new permanent deputy, but the practice manager post was still awaiting clearance, a postholder having been recruited some four months previously. Despite requesting information for two months for this report from healthcare, none has been forthcoming.

Most healthcare applications relate to mental health concerns or skin conditions, which may be exacerbated by living in an environment that is often stressful and, at times, poorly maintained. The Board received a worrying 67% increase in the number of applications (35) relating to healthcare in 2025-2026. In 2024-2025, there were 21 applications and in 2023-2024 there were 14. Several were disagreements with decisions by clinicians regarding medication, and some related to delays in accessing appointments, either in the prison or in outside hospitals. Some related to delays in receiving responses to healthcare complaints that are dealt with by the healthcare provider; it was noted that, at times, there were no healthcare complaint forms available.

6.2 Physical healthcare

Subcontracted services include dental care, the optician, physiotherapy and podiatry. A GP is available three sessions per week and a nurse prescriber is available each day. Healthcare work on the wings included providing reception screening interviews, attendance at ACCT reviews, same-day reviews following the use of force, and attending prisoners who self-harmed, as well as those who developed acute medical problems.

6.3 Mental health

Mental health provision in HMP Leicester remains good, in the Board's view, with a dedicated team providing interventions and care for those with low-level mental illness, right through to individuals with secondary care needs. This is made up of health care support workers, nurses, a psychological wellbeing practitioner and a psychiatrist.

Waiting times to see the psychiatrist have averaged four weeks. However, some severely unwell men need to be seen sooner, and there have been delays in some prisoners receiving prescriptions for their mental health conditions. This has caused distress and, in some cases, made some more vulnerable to self-harm.

From the Board's observations, healthcare staff were alert to men who were at risk of self-harming, opening 100 ACCT documents during the reporting year. Data identifies a significant reason for men self-harming was mental illness and delays in receiving medication. The large majority of men who were transferred to secure psychiatric facilities waited more than the 28-day guideline before they were transferred.

6.4 Social care

A healthcare assistant takes the lead on social care and liaises with the social care team from Leicester City Council.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

6.5.1 Regime

While remand prisoners do not have to take part in work or activities, those who do engage in them typically get three hours a day out of their cells, Monday to Thursday, to attend these sessions. They are also offered a 90-minute domestic period for showers and other activities, and a further hour for exercise or to go the gym if they wish.

About 40% of prisoners do not have either work or activities, so they have approximately two hours out of their cells on weekdays to complete their domestic activities and exercise. Kitchen workers could be out of their cells for seven hours a day, including early evening association. Those on the induction wing have two hours per day out of their cells for their domestic session, unless they are also involved in education activities. On occasion, the general regime is more restrictive, such as when staff training takes place.

Population pressures mean that, for most of the time, there are insufficient cells on the Welford unit to accommodate all the vulnerable prisoners. The overflow of vulnerable prisoners is accommodated on the induction unit, and they are offered their domestic session on the Welford unit, where they have very little to do. This is an unsatisfactory situation, and some vulnerable prisoners choose to stay in their induction unit cell rather than attend the Welford unit.

At weekends, there is less activity, and prisoners should get three-and-a-half hours out of their cells each day for showers, gym and exercise. However, for much of the year, there was confusion amongst staff as to how the regime should work, with prisoners telling HMIP inspectors that they usually got less than two hours out of their cells. The correct regime has now been clarified with staff, so time out of cell at weekends should now be more in line with that published. For most prisoners, being locked, two to a cell made for one person for the large majority of the time, results in boredom and tension due to the lack of privacy. Some prisoners have tended to use substances to try and escape the reality of their situation.

6.5.2 Exercise and gym

All prisoners should be able to have an hour's exercise in the open air each day, if they wish to take it. This may take place either in the main exercise yard or, for vulnerable prisoners and those in the care and separation unit, in the Welford unit exercise yard. However, Welford unit prisoners have, on occasion, not been offered exercise or it has been cut short due to the officer detailed this task not facilitating it, such as when the regime is running late, for example. The Governor has addressed this issue to ensure it does not continue and the IMB will continue to monitor the situation.

Some weights and gym equipment are provided on the exercise yard, supervised by a member of gym staff. The surface of the main exercise yard has deteriorated: it is no longer safe for playing team games and requires replacement. The High Sheriff of Leicestershire found money to resurface the main exercise yard so that football could be played there; however, the Board understands that the Prison Service found it too difficult to contract for this work so, sadly, this project has been abandoned.

There are five physical education instructors (PEIs) covering the gym and activities on the main exercise yard. The gym is very popular and heavily used. Groups of up to 20 men

can be allocated to each session, but these numbers are often exceeded. Main wing prisoners can attend up to seven sessions per week, and vulnerable prisoners four. Those in the care and separation unit can attend for an hour on Friday mornings.

The Board is pleased to see that some of the ageing gym equipment has been replaced during the year and new equipment added. The gym staff are very motivational and arrange various physical challenges for prisoners. They also deliver certificated first-aid training and courses in weightlifting. The gym is an important area for prisoners to find some physical relief. It is believed that the ongoing problem with the leaking roof has now been addressed. As a result, the upper gym hall has been repainted and is now fully operational.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

From our observations, support for prisoners with addiction problems on reception into HMP Leicester is good. There is a substance misuse prescriber available every day for new receptions, and any patients requiring detoxification medication receive it on arrival. There appears to be an established process to ensure patients who are detoxing are assessed regularly.

Practice Plus Group is responsible for the substitute prescribing for prisoners who have an addiction to class A drugs; however, the clinical lead post was vacant for much of the year. Between 60 and 80 prisoners at any one time were receiving substitute prescribing during the year, mainly methadone. There are good links with community substance misuse provision in Leicestershire for those who are released to the local area. About 55% of men on substitute prescriptions are issued with naloxone on release, which is an antidote in case for any reason they overdose on class A drugs.

The separate, 29-bed My Recovery Unit (MRU), which reopened in September 2022, has, in early 2026, been decommissioned and reverted to a standard location. It was considered that, given the short period many men stay at HMP Leicester, there is insufficient time for them to complete a recovery journey. The prison is now considering how it can deliver a whole prison approach to addressing substance misuse.

NHS Inclusion Healthcare has the contract for psychosocial interventions; however, they have not been fully staffed throughout the year. Most of their work has involved individual support, with the occasional structured group session. There is scope to further develop their interventions. Since October, Narcotics Anonymous (NA) has been delivering alternate week group support sessions, which have proved popular, as has the return of the 'Dear Albert' for the first time since before the pandemic. This is a local support organisation for substance misusers, which is based in Leicester. There remains a need to make links for prisoners who will be released further afield.

6.7 Soft skills

With the establishment of the new resettlement hub, a variety of short courses have been delivered, including employability courses delivered by Samworths, and communication and confidence building with Severn Trent Water. Maverick Sounds delivered a music workshop, assisting prisoners with writing and music production skills. Ingeus assisted with a lived experience event - Hopeful Stories - encouraging men to develop skills as support workers and peer mentors.

In the spring there was a charity fundraiser, with prisoners making and selling cookies for the Comic Relief charity.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

7.1.1 Education

People Plus delivers educational services to prisoners, focusing on the advancement of maths, English, and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) skills. The information, advice and guidance (IAG) provider assists individuals in developing and completing personalised learning plans.

The education department appeared to face significant challenges in the reporting year. The November HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) inspection report highlighted the concerns about education quality and prisoner attendance identified by Ofsted. The prison has implemented action plans to address these, which the IMB will monitor throughout the next reporting year.

The new education contract, introduced in October, brought a 50% budget cut, reportedly due to low attendance rates and shifting funds to the new education IT system. Art, creative programmes and accredited courses, including ESOL, food hygiene, and cleaning are no longer available, leaving prisoners with less meaningful time outside of their cells. As a result, this limits positive outcomes for prisoners.

Under the previous contract, between January and September 2025, a total of 4,282 hours of education provision were allocated, with 4,355 hours delivered. Course attendance was 65.98%, against the target of 68.46%. Out of the 366 personal learning plans completed by IAG, just 24% underwent a review process.

The new education IT system, also introduced in October, experienced significant technical problems that disrupted department operations, including monitoring prisoner attendance. Local recording for the first quarter of the new contract (October to December 2025) shows course attendance at 65.8% against a target of 68.46%, with 732.5 education hours delivered against a target of 853.5 hours. A total of 37 combined achievements were made for maths and English (83% of target).

In the same period (October to December 2025), 72 prisoners were withdrawn from maths and English courses, with 42 due to transfer or release. In unaccredited programmes of study (ESOL and cleaning), there were 39 achievements (97% of target), with 36 withdrawals, 26 of which were due to transfer or release.

The prison's high population of remand prisoners, who are allowed to choose not to participate in education, makes meeting attendance targets challenging. The plan to address this issue involves implementing positive messaging and supporting operational staff with methods to challenge non-attendance.

The new online self-assessment, 'Do It profiles', help to identify prisoner needs early, enabling education providers to address them in the classroom and share essential information about learning requirements throughout their custody. Between October and December, only 193 Do It profiles were completed, from 534 eligible prisoners. Issues within the first two months of the new screening and assessment suite led to drastically reduced numbers of prisoners accessing these programmes.

A 'local highlight' this has been the introduction of an unaccredited ESOL curriculum tailored to prisoners' daily needs, focusing on speaking, listening, reading and writing. It supports English improvement and understanding of prison life, including input from the

foreign national prisoner specialist. A dedicated ESOL reading group also teaches phonics to entry-level learners to offer additional support.

7.1.2 Library

The Board was seriously concerned about the library at the start of the reporting year, due to its temporary closure due to lack of staff. Since reopening in April, it is now staffed by an enthusiastic, proactive and dedicated team.

A lead librarian is contracted for 22 hours per week and is supported by two assistants providing 12 hours each per week. Budgets have been set for the next three years, with the expectation that there will be no additional disruptions to this essential resource for prisoners.

Accordingly, the library operates at full capacity in the mornings and afternoons, Monday to Thursday, fostering a welcoming and constructive atmosphere for prisoners. Key highlights include:

- Average estimated footfall of 60 persons per session.
- Book reading club introduced.
- Board games for enhanced prisoners - with chess an extremely popular choice.
- DVDs have been retained and stock grown - 40% of prisoners hire DVDs.
- Reading specialist in regular attendance.
- Good book stock availability, covering multiple areas of interest.
- Christmas card making sessions.

Additional activities are also being planned, which include the reintroduction of Storybooks Dads and the development of a project with the Writer in Residence, with support from Arts Council England.

7.2 Vocational training, work

7.2.1 Vocational training

The changes to vocational course provision following the new contract have presented some challenges. However, these have largely been addressed successfully, as illustrated by the following examples:

- Change in provider of Barista courses but, overall, resulting in 18 men gaining a qualification compared with 13 last year.
- 127 men gained a first-aid qualification, compared with 100 last year.
- Ongoing provision of (non-accredited) gym courses, with 118 completions
- 32 men gained an award in construction health and safety, and a CSCS (construction skills certification scheme) course resumed later in the year, which was successfully completed by eight prisoners.
- Food and basic cookery skills had 17 positive outcomes; subsequently, food hygiene related courses have been provided on a digital platform.
- The art academy, which provided popular courses of therapeutic value, had 26 positive outcomes prior to its disappointing closure in September.

7.2.2 Work

The opportunities for purposeful work are restricted by the limited space available for workshops, but two new workshops have been established:

- The Bearing Gifts workshop was developed over many months, having been proposed and largely designed by a prisoner with support from the prison, charities and businesses. The initiative makes use of textile waste to produce and sell teddy bears and is a very positive development. However, it is disappointing that it has taken a considerable time to become fully operational; final toy safety approval was only secured at the end of the year. It is expected that prisoners working in this workshop will gain valuable experience and, potentially, qualifications to support future employment in the textiles sector.
- A furniture restoration workshop was established at the end of the year, to repair and restore furniture, provided by Salvation Army, which would otherwise have been wasted, enabling the restored products to be returned for subsequent sale. This workshop is also anticipated to provide experience that could assist subsequent employment.
- Another ongoing workshop recycles otherwise wasted materials, and a smaller workshop utilises empty crisp packets to make insulated items such as blankets, which have been provided to a project for the homeless.

Encouragingly, the overall opportunities for full-time work roles have increased during the year to 51 positions. However, the small size of the workshops limits the numbers that can be deployed there, meaning that most men work part-time.

The average workshop attendance during the year was 40% of target, slightly lower than last year (43%). An influencing factor is the high proportion of men on remand, who are not required to work. At any one time, about 40 % of prisoners are not engaged in purposeful activity and are, therefore, locked in the cells for this time.

7.3 Offender management, progression

There have been significant staff shortages in the offender management unit (OMU) throughout the year. Only 65% of case administrator posts and 74% of prison offender managers posts were filled, and the senior probation officer has been vacant since October. Despite these pressures, OMU staff have successfully managed the significant casework demands.

The casework pressure on HMP Leicester is illustrated by the high churn of prisoners. With an average population of about 325 men, there were 2561 receptions in the year to January 2026, and 2381 transfers out. About 37% of new receptions were men recalled to prison, of which 17% were 14-day recalls and 10% were 28-day recalls. Many of these men had typically returned four or five times during the year, with one prisoner returning nine times. Just seven prisoners were released on home detention curfew (HDC).

At the end of the year, the highest proportion of prisoners were on remand or awaiting sentence (65%), and 16% were recalls. Only 18% were sentenced, and if their sentence exceeded 28 days, they would ordinarily be required to transfer to other prisons, typically within eight or nine days. Consequently, there was little need to complete full offender assessment system (OASys) assessments for prisoners (only four were completed during the year). Three men were held on indeterminate IPP (imprisonment for public protection) sentences at the end of January 2026, some of whom had been recalled to prison, along with two men serving life sentences.

7.4 Family contact

Towards the end of the year, a revised family strategy was developed to enhance family support, which was already good. Routine support to families and their children is provided by PACT (Prison Advice and Care Trust) staff. Well-attended family days have been held

monthly, with each having a specific craft, activity or seasonal theme, which have been much appreciated by both prisoners and families.

Family forums have been held monthly and have provided a valued opportunity for visitors to raise issues and for their visiting experience to be improved. Issues and responses are shown on a 'You said, we did' noticeboard in the visits hall.

Examples of resulting positive improvements include:

- The recent provision of hot food on family days.
- Clarification of ID requirements for children.
- Provision of sanitary products.

However, an example of visitors' concerns includes comments about the cleanliness of the visits hall and the waiting area toilets, which had some justification, in our view. But, as at the end of the year, improvements were being made. The Board also notes that the condition of some of the seating is in poor condition and in urgent need of repair or replacement.

Sufficient social visits and social video calls are provided to meet demand. Social visits are available on five afternoons, both mornings at weekends and on three evenings each week. The evening sessions prove most popular. Refreshments are limited mainly to cold drinks and snacks, which can be ordered and paid for by visitors on arrival. There have been recent additional provision of sandwiches and porridge as healthier options. Visitors have asked for the opportunity to pay by card instead of cash, but so far this has not been possible.

7.5 Resettlement planning

7.5.1 Resettlement overview

From the Board's observations, resettlement activity is very good, but all aspects are impacted by the high churn and short stays of prisoners at HMP Leicester.

The number of prisoners released has risen in the last four years, and in the last year was more than double the number released in the previous three years. However, resources to cope have not increased accordingly. The PRT (pre-release team) commences resettlement planning on arrival, identifying issues affecting prisoners' resettlement. They have been 50% under-staffed for several months and, as a result, have responded by arranging completion of questionnaires by prisoners, with assistance by orderlies. Previously, every prisoner would have been interviewed by a team member to complete the BCST2 (basic custody screening tool). All identified issues are directed to relevant pathway leads, but the PRT has mainly focused on addressing accommodation issues.

The increased number of prisoners released from HMP Leicester is a consequence of the number of fixed-term recalls and those serving short sentences, which does not allow sufficient time to plan for release. About 41% of recalled prisoners are released homeless.

The Board has observed regular reducing reoffending meetings, which are well attended and demonstrate strong engagement from those leading on the reducing reoffending pathways.

Examples of developments this year have included:

- A training day promoting understanding of the reducing reoffending pathways to help staff respond to prisoner's questions about resettlement.

- Launch of a 'departure lounge', where prisoners on release can be provided with food parcels and items of clothing, where needed, and can be signposted to support services. These include the nearby CFO (creating future opportunities) evolution hub, provided by Ingeus.
- Claims for universal credit are finalised in the departure lounge immediately prior to release, avoiding the need for prisoners to go to a job centre on release.

7.5.2 Addressing homelessness on release

This year, 38% of prisoners were released homeless compared with 33% last year. Leicester has been identified as one of the most significant areas of housing need. A ministerial initiative, Roof on Release project, which commenced towards the end of the year, has started to consider, with relevant partners, how to reduce the number of prisoners released homeless. Lack of available accommodation is a significant limiting factor, as is the high number of fixed-term recalls and their frequent returns to prison (see 7.3). The Board will monitor if the implementation of 56-day fixed-term recalls increases the proportion who are accommodated on release next year.

In the last year, HMP Leicester has received more prisoners from outside the Leicester area. This has necessitated engagement between strategic housing specialists in other areas to ensure appropriate pre-release arrangements are made for those who might be released homeless.

As in the previous year, 16% of prisoners were released to CAS3 (community accommodation service tier 3) accommodation, who would otherwise have been homeless. Men who failed to attend, or where their behaviour has been such that they have been asked to leave, have not been approved for such accommodation on subsequent release. Overall, 6% of prisoners failed to attend accommodation that had been arranged, mainly CAS3 accommodation, or approved premises (which provide intensive supervision for those assessed as presenting a high or very high level of risk).

Only about 18% of those accommodated on release could be considered to be in settled accommodation. All others, including those who had the maximum 84 days in CAS3 accommodation, could potentially subsequently face long delays finding settled accommodation, or become homeless again.

The strategic housing specialist is working with Leicester City Council's dedicated housing prevention officers to review Duty to Refer (DtR) submissions and support release planning for those returning to the Leicester area. In addition, local authority pre-release panels meet every two weeks to identify and address potential no fixed abode cases.

Remand and unsentenced prisoners who may be released homeless can be assisted through the NACRO (national association for the care and resettlement of offenders) contract. About 20 referrals have been made each month to NACRO. Although advice is provided to prisoners about where they can seek emergency accommodation, the Board is concerned that, in some cases where prisoners have been released from court at short notice, there is insufficient time for accommodation arrangements to be made.

7.5.3 Addressing finance and employment

The prison employment lead engages very well with potential employers, seeking to increase employment opportunities for prisoners following release. This has not yet resulted in significant increases in positive recorded employment outcomes, due, in part, we believe, to limited reliable data. However, there is an increase of about 2% more prisoners in employment after six weeks than last year, and a 6% increase after six months.

The EAB (employment advisory board) continued to meet during the year and has facilitated the introduction of relevant training for accessing employment opportunities. There has been effective cooperation with the EAB at HMP Fosse Way, where many prisoners from Leicester are transferred. This has the potential benefit of achieving subsequent employment outcomes for prisoners.

The DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) work coach has continued to encourage and refer all work-eligible prison leavers (about 28% of releases) to SWAPs (Sector-based work academy programmes).

Employment orderlies play an active role in promoting available opportunities and supporting other prisoners with CV preparation. A full-time ID (identification) and banking officer arranges the issue each month of approximately 30 birth certificates and facilitates the opening of around five bank accounts. They also provide assistance with urgent banking issues, including contacting banks on prisoners' behalf.

The introduction of purposeful activities on 'feel good Fridays' and 'wellbeing Wednesdays' has the aim of motivating and inspiring prisoners to develop a positive attitude to work. A session delivered by a prisoner to a group of 22 men, featuring the significant work he has done to establish a successful workshop, was well received (see 7.2.2).

The prison's approach to employment on release involves engaging employers who are willing to both support work within the prison and potentially offer employment on release (see 7.2.2 for two examples). The Board is aware of plans to provide more such work opportunities within the prison, and we will monitor their progress.

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	12
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	9
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	7
Total number of visits to the establishment	215

Applications to the IMB

Application boxes are located in the Welford unit, induction unit, the CSU, Parsons unit, the MRU and beside the servery on the main wing. During the reporting year, these boxes were opened weekly by an attending IMB member.

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	10	26
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	7	1
C	Equality	9	11
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	9	10
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	9	14
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	3	5
F	Food and kitchens	0	7
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	21	35
H1	Property within the establishment	9	12
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	5	15
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	2	0
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence), parole, release dates, recategorisation	3	7
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	12	27
K	Transfers	0	14
L	Miscellaneous	11	19
	Total number of applications	110	203

Annex A

Service providers

- Healthcare: Practice Plus Group.
- Dental care: Time for Teeth, commissioned by NHS England.
- Integrated drug and alcohol treatment services (IDTS): Practice Plus Group.
- Psychosocial substance misuse: NHS Inclusion: Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust.
- Education and skills: People Plus.
- Library services: Leicestershire County Council (LCC).
- Probation services: National Probation Service East Midlands Region.
- Escort contractor: GeoAmey.
- Catering suppliers: Bidfood.
- Maintenance: Amey.
- Family engagement: PACT (Prison Advice and Care Trust).

Annex B

Self-harm data

Incidents of self-harm per annum	314
Average number of incidents per month	26
Average percentage of overall prison population self-harming per month	4.83%
Primary reasons for self-harming	Number
Mental health and medication	68
Other	54
Regime	21
Vapes	22
Taxing/bullying and debt	6
Transfer to another establishment	37
Offence	2
Family contact and relationships	18
Primary methods of self-harming	Number
Cutting, scratching and wound aggravation	139
Hanging and self-strangulation, using bedding, clothing, towels, belts or shoelaces	92
Self-poisoning, using own or others' medication, illegal drugs or cleaning materials	39
Head banging and wall punching	12
Swallowing and inserting objects	2
Burning	1
<i>Source: locally collected data</i>	

Annex C

Assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documents

ACCT documents opened	309
ACCT documents re-opened	99
Percentage of overall prison population on ACCTs per month	8.19%
Average number of ACCTs opened per month	26%
Person opening ACCTs	Number
Officers	169
Healthcare	100
Custodial managers/supervising officer	8
Chaplaincy/education	9
Public protection	8
Primary reasons for opening ACCT documents	Number
Mental health and medication	43
Other	10
Sentence related	15
Transfer to another establishment	8
Family contact and relationships	12
Taxing and bullying/debt/finance	2
Offence/regime	4
<i>Source: locally collected data</i>	

All Incidents

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Total violent incidents	119	124	119	186	270	210
Serious assaults on prisoners by prisoners				8	9	11
Assaults on prisoner by prisoners	53	49	49	60	111	84
Fights	14	12	29	43	49	39
Serious assaults on staff by prisoners				6	15	6
Assaults on staff by prisoners	54	63	38	60	86	70
Damage to prison property and environment	205	147	172	153	208	199
Threatening/abusive behaviour	132	132	86	62	120	238
Dirty protests	-	-	-	17	17	21
<i>Source: locally collected data</i>						

Annex D

Complaints statistics

TITLE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Adjudications	1	0.13%
Bullying	5	0.66%
Canteen	16	2.11%
Education	2	0.26%
Finance	75	9.88%
Food	10	1.32%
Incentives schemes	105	13.83%
Letters/censors	40	5.27%
OASys/offender management	21	2.77%
Other	2	0.26%
Pre-release/release	13	1.71%
Property at HMP Leicester	105	13.83%
Residential	197	25.96%
Security	15	1.98%
Segregation	1	0.13%
Staff	90	11.86%
Transfer	13	1.71%
Violence	4	0.53%
Visits	19	2.50%
Work	25	3.30%
Total	759	100%



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