

Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Manchester

**For reporting year
1 March 2025 – 28 February 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.

During the reporting period, the Board was comprised of a number of volunteers drawn from other IMBs, including the interim Chair. Sadly, he passed away unexpectedly during the reporting period; this had a profound impact on the progress of re-establishing the Board, and on those volunteers who knew him personally and professionally. Consequently, it was not possible to monitor HMP Manchester with the level of depth that would normally be expected. Certain areas have been prioritised, and coverage in other areas is more limited, which is reflected in this report.

Recruitment is ongoing, as is the training of new members.

The IMB members who have continued to monitor the establishment would like to thank the staff and leaders of the prison who have been open to our approaches and responded to our observations.

This is the first annual report written by the new Board in place for the reporting period 2025-26.

2. Description of the establishment

HMP Manchester is a men's long term high security estate (LTHSE) facility located in the Strangeways district of Manchester, England. Previously known as Strangeways until 1994, the prison houses approximately 600 prisoners¹. Most prisoners are held under category B conditions in single-cell accommodation, which is distributed across nine wings in two separate house blocks.

The 'bottom jail' consists of five wings: A, B, C, and D wings, which accommodate general population prisoners, and E wing, which houses category A remand prisoners (both inner and outer). The 'top jail' includes wings G, H, and K for general population prisoners, along with wing I, designated for those in drug and alcohol recovery programs.

In addition, there is a separate healthcare building, M wing, that caters to prisoners requiring in-patient care. The Croft, which is accessible via a secure corridor from the main prison, contains the laundry, workshops, a sports hall, and a gymnasium that offers a variety of activities. However, at the time of this writing (May 2026), the artificial sports pitch is not in use as it is being utilised to store construction materials.

HMP Manchester is a public sector prison, operated by His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service. The following providers of specialist services under separate contract are:

- physical health: Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust
- mental health: Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust
- substance misuse treatment: Delphi Medical
- GP provider: Caredox Limited
- dental care: The Vallance Dental Centre
- prison education: Milton Keynes College (to October 2025), Novus LTE (from October 2025)
- escort contractor: GeoAmey (category B prisoners), HMPPS (category A prisoners)

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

3. Key points

3.1 Main findings

Safety

- The Board believes that it is the presence of drones, and other methods of conveyance of illicit items, that is fundamentally undermining the safety of the prison.
- The availability of electronic communication devices in HMP Manchester is concerning to the Board, when one considers the high-security function aspects of the prison.
- Violence in the prison, in all forms, is unacceptably high and requires immediate remedy.
- The Board notes the largely positive response to the introduction of body-worn protective equipment for staff working in the segregation unit and the close supervision centre; however, staff remain vulnerable in other areas of the prison and we encourage HMPPS take further steps to ensure that the prison provides a safe workplace for all, so far as is reasonably practicable.
- The Board has identified issues with the proximity of recent residential developments in the Strangeways district, including a high-rise development which affords expansive views into the secure perimeter. We are concerned by Manchester City Council's decision to allow such developments to take place close to a high security prison.
- Furthermore, we are concerned that local planning procedures in relation to aspects of the prison's listed building status may be inhibiting attempts to complete remedial work in a timely fashion.

Fair and humane treatment

- The physical condition of the prison is very poor. This is, to some extent a consequence of the age of the buildings (the main prison was opened in 1868) and the legacy of the 1990 disturbance, including aspects of the roof structure that still require attention. Nevertheless, evidence of decay is omnipresent throughout the prison, and the residential wings in particular. These physical conditions present significant challenges to the maintenance of security and enabling humane living conditions.
- We have observed issues including the presence of vermin, rubbish, damaged cell fabric requiring extended repair times, disruption to the main hot water and heating system requiring the provision of additional blankets to prisoners, the loss of water supply to the 'top jail', among other concerns. These conditions are likely to be a source of frustration for staff working within the prison environment.

Health and wellbeing

- Within the healthcare setting, HMP Manchester is charged with the responsibility of managing the care of highly vulnerable prisoners with significant health needs and complex behaviours.
- Staff shortages and high sickness levels frequently curtail the regime, with some people spending up to 23 hours a day in their cells and reduced access to education, work, gym, and outdoor exercise (including long-term closure of

the football field). Older prisoners requiring care interventions are supported through a range of accommodation and care arrangements although they, like so many others at Manchester, struggle to access a regime that is likely to improve their wellbeing.

Progression and resettlement

- The progression of prisoners, whether to category C or D conditions, or on release to the community, is significantly impaired by the availability of an appropriate regime. Manchester housed 17 imprisonment for public protection (IPP) prisoners who are regularly seen by key workers.
- Changes in education provision and significant staff reductions have led to a narrower, classroom-based offer, with the loss of vocational courses.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- Will the Minister outline the further steps he intends to take to address the concerns of prisoners and staff in relation to the conveyance of illicit items into HMP Manchester?
- In January 2025, His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons stated that 'drones dropping drugs and weapons into high security prisons are a threat to national security' and that the situation at HMP Manchester was 'so bad that Mr Taylor (HMCIP) issued an urgent notification for improvement to the Secretary of State'. Will the Minister consider designating HMP Manchester as 'critical national infrastructure' in order to address this?
- Will the Minister outline how he intends to address the problem of expedient transfers of mentally unwell prisoners to appropriate accommodation within the NHS secure forensic estate?
- How is the Minister planning to address the long-term underinvestment in prison infrastructure? HMP Manchester is experiencing multiple issues regarding heating, hot water, access to drinking water and showers. The Board is aware that the issues around infrastructure are a nationwide concern. Does the Minister have plans to boost investment in maintaining the estate?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- Will HMPPS set out the steps that it intends to take in relation to the ongoing challenges associated with maintenance backlogs at HMP Manchester?
- At a time of capacity shortages across the prison estate, when will HMPPS deal with the boarded off G wing, in the top jail? Why did it take so long to get an alternative supplier to fix the window frames when the first provider went bankrupt?
- What lessons have been learnt in terms of tendering for substantial remedial work around a site which has many structural challenges?
- Will HMPPS set out the additional measures that it intends to take to ensure the appropriate training and ongoing education and support of staff in order to retain staff?
- Being in possession of an electronic device in prison is an offence under the Prison Act 1952 and the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994. What

further steps will HMPPS take to tackle the conveyance of communication devices into HMP Manchester?

- How does HMPPS plan to improve the recruitment and retention of staff? For much of the reporting period HMP Manchester has operated at around 60% capacity of the staff they should employ in order to operate the prison safely and humanely. The prison currently recruits staff from overseas or benefits from the external support of staff from other establishments. This provides no long-term sustainability given manpower shortages due to illness and other absences. How does HMPPS intend to address this?

TO THE GOVERNOR

- Will the Governor outline the steps that he intends to take to establish a more predictable regime that is able to offer opportunities to engage prisoners in meaningful activities?
- Will the Governor outline his plans to tackle the continued presence of rubbish, particularly in the external areas of E wing, but elsewhere, including the external areas surrounding residential units and the healthcare centre?
- What steps will be taken to make sure that a cleaning culture is embedded in the prison? Too often cleaning is left to a handful of individuals, and many staff do not feel responsibility to contribute. Is the Governor planning to address this attitude?
- Given staff shortages, will the Governor give special attention to the staff retention policy operating in the prison?
- The Board has concerns over the changes to education programmes that have led to the closure of skills-based work such as the bakery. Does the Governor have any scope to improve the offering of skills-based education for men, particularly those nearing release?
- The Board has noted a slight reduction in violence and self-harm, as evidenced in figures 1, 2, 3 and 4. What are the Governor's plans to maintain this trajectory?

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

- The reception at HMP Manchester is busy and receives a regular number of new admissions and individuals returning from court hearings. Board members have observed reception procedures on several occasions and found staff to be courteous and professional. Property issues are dealt with quickly where they are within the scope of reception to resolve.
- Board members have observed ‘enhanced’ prisoners (with the highest level of earned privileges on the incentives scheme) providing induction support in the library; it is clear that these prisoners take pride in their work and recognise the important role that they play in contributing to the overall safety of the prison.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

- Recorded incidents of self-harm for the period under review ending February 2026 have reached 760. The Board recognises that a small number of individuals who self-harmed frequently have significantly impacted these statistics.
- The Board has observed that safety intervention (SIM) meetings are well-attended by support staff and appear thorough.
- Between 2023 and 2025, HMP Manchester recorded the highest number of self-harm incidents each year across all LTHSE North establishments. In 2020, there were 406 recorded incidents, with subsequent years reporting 357, 555, 925, 1,016, and 820 incidents, respectively.

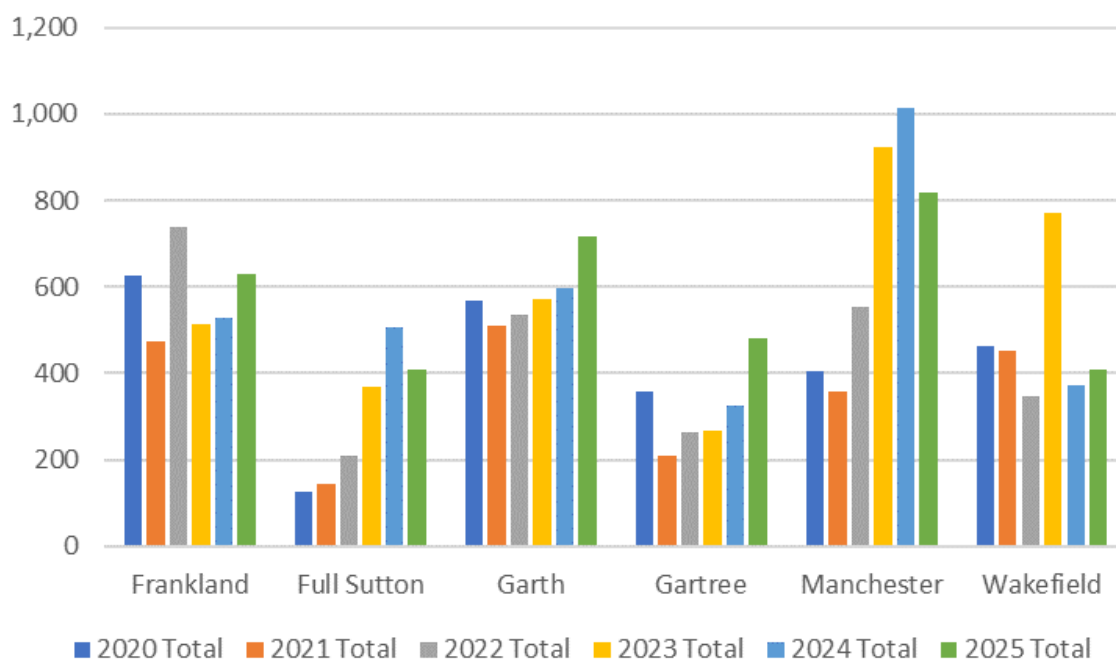


Fig. 1: Self-harm incidents by year 2004 – 2025, LTHSE North Group

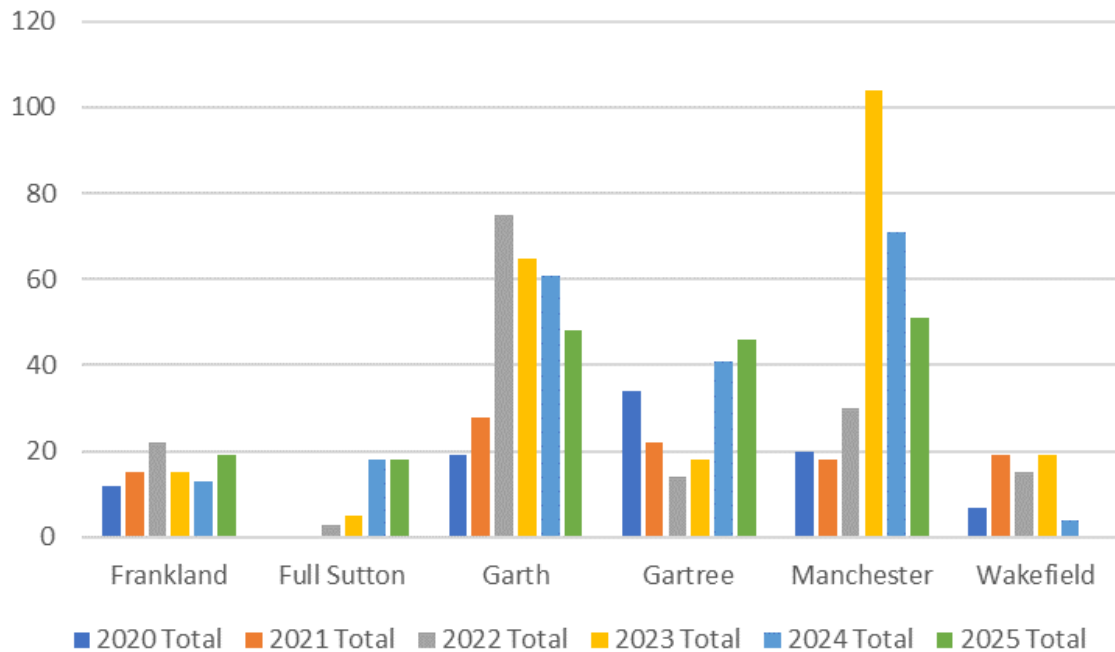


Fig. 2: Self-harm incidents requiring hospital treatment by year 2004 – 2025, LTHSE North Group

- During the reporting period there were six deaths in custody, with four apparently self-inflicted.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

- The levels of violence in all its forms indicate an urgent need for measures to address the safety concerns of both prisoners and staff at HMP Manchester.
- In the past reporting year, there were 172 prisoner-on-prisoner assaults and 107 assaults on staff.
- Staff members have reported an increase in instances of spitting, considered a serious form of disrespectful behaviour.
- The number of self-isolating prisoners has varied between nine and 15 during the reporting period. To support these individuals, a group session has been established, providing a forum for self-isolators to exchange views and provide mutual support.
- Serious assaults on staff at HMP Manchester are the highest within the LTHSE North prison group and sit among the highest three across England and Wales (see fig. 1). In 2025, there were 26 serious assaults on staff.

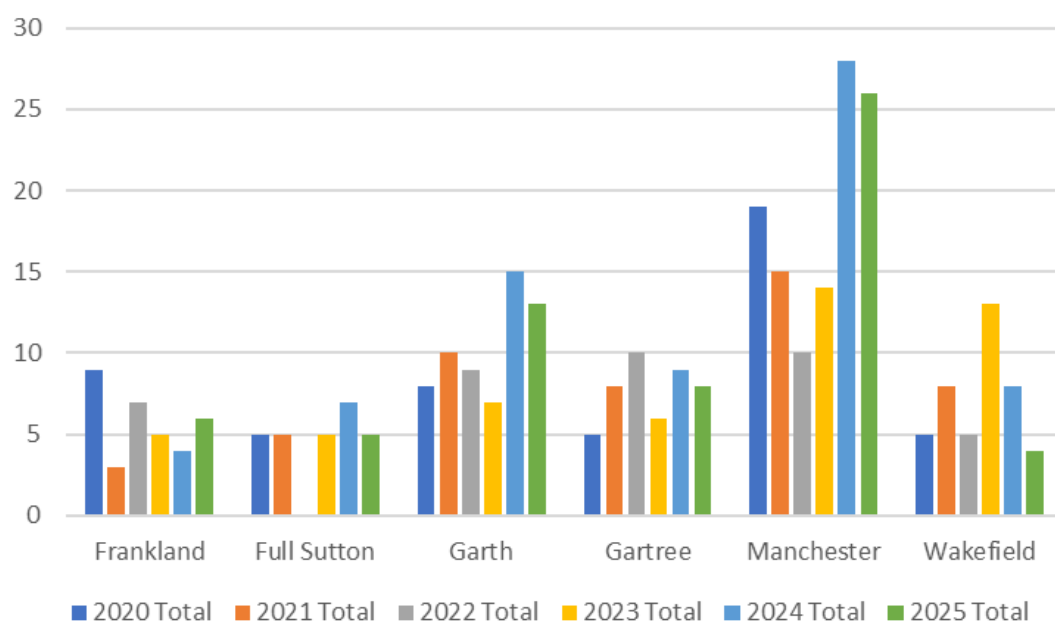


Fig 3: Recorded serious assaults against staff in all LTHSE North establishments between 2020 and 2025

- Historic data from 2020-2025 shows that serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults were the highest at HMP Manchester each year, when compared to other LTHSE North group establishments.
- In 2025, there were serious prisoner on prisoner assaults recorded in each month, except for February and March, where we are unable to identify the correct number of recorded incidents from the Ministry of Justice's data sets. We recognise the steps taken to reduce violence, which are demonstrated by the reduction in 2025 compared to 2024, but the absolute number of prisoner on prisoner assaults remains worryingly high.

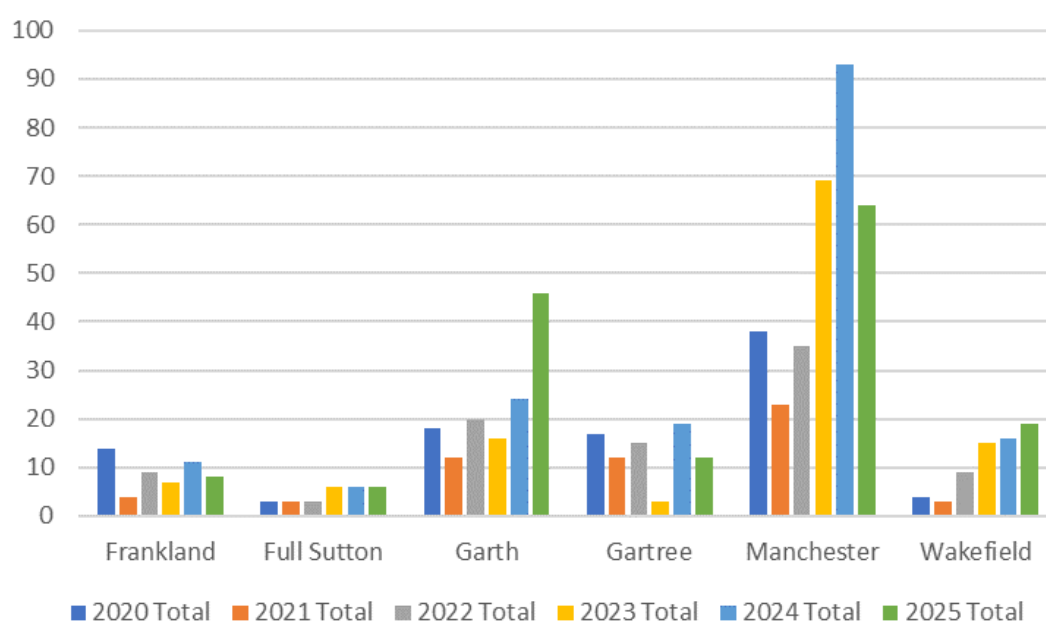


Fig 4: Recorded serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults by establishment, LTHSE North Group

4.4 Use of force

- During the reporting year, the use of force has been a mixed picture. In the Board's view, the overall high levels reflect several other indicators within the prison, such as violence and self-harm. The primary reasons for the use of force are documented as 'preventing harm or assault,' followed by 'escorting,' where cuffs are used as part of the escorting process.
- The planned use of force in HMP Manchester during 2025 relatively limited. In Q1, (January to March) 4% of use of force incidents were planned; in Q2 (April to June), this rose to 13%; in Q3 (July to September), it was 12%; and in Q4 (October to December), it decreased to 8%.
- Training for the potential use of CEDs (conducted energy devices, commonly referred to as tasers) began on 30 January 2026; these devices will be in the possession of trained members of the operational response and resilience unit. None were deployed in the period under review.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

- HMP Manchester is protected by a 400 metre 'drone restricted fly zone,' which is implemented at all HMPs and YOIs in England and Wales, making it an offence to operate a drone in these areas without authorisation. However there is little evidence to suggest that the restricted fly zone has had an impact in deterring drone conveyance.
- The Board acknowledges the efforts made during 2024 to install new drone-proof windows. However, we have been informed that prisoners already discovered a method to burn through these windows using kettles, which may render their installation ineffective. Newer window frames with more secure grills are now being installed.
- There are also other methods of transmission, such as staff corruption and through visits. The Board is aware of ongoing efforts both within HMP Manchester and in HMPPS to tackle the supply of illicit items and will continue to monitor the success of these initiatives during the next reporting year.
- We urge the prison to maintain a focus on continuous training and support for staff, especially for younger and less experienced employees who may be more susceptible to conditioning or coercive behaviour from some prisoners.
- Board members are subject to the same gate entry procedures as all staff and visitors. Based on our experiences, we find that these procedures are robust, efficient, and courteous.
- From the beginning of 2024 until mid-2025, a joint enforcement activity between HMPPS and Greater Manchester led to the seizure of a large quantity of mobile phones, electronic devices, and SIM cards. The activity focussed on disrupting criminal activity in prisons across the Greater Manchester Police force region.
- During the calendar year 2025, 409 mobile phones were recovered during targeted searches.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

- There is evidence of decay and dilapidation throughout the establishment, particularly in the residential wings. Board members have observed cells with missing window panes and broken or absent observation panels on cell doors.
- When the Board has reported these issues, it has taken an excessive amount of time for them to be addressed. For example, there was no drinking water for approximately one week in the top jail; showers were in poor repair across multiple wings (although some incidents were resolved quickly); sinkholes appeared around the site; there were frequent breakdowns of washing machines on some wings; kitchen equipment on various wings was limited relative to usage levels; and heating issues resulted in freezing conditions in multiple areas. Additionally, there were some incidents in which extra blankets were not provided for prisoners who needed them during cold periods on certain wings.
- The most pressing concern for the Board is the overall state of cleanliness at HMP Manchester. The Board would like to commend the leaders of 'operation sparkle', for their outstanding efforts in tackling this significant challenge as part of the 'clean and decent team.' However, the Board believes it is critical not to place the responsibility for the cleanliness of the entire prison solely on a small group of staff. The amount of rubbish and debris around the prison is overwhelming and contributes to rodent issues. The Board has witnessed prisoners throwing rubbish out of windows and has reported this behaviour to staff, yet there have been no consequences for those responsible for these actions. The Board feels that while there are some excellent team members who support prison hygiene, many staff appear apathetic. The Board encourages the prison to promote a shared culture of cleanliness among staff and prisoners, which may encourage prisoners to take greater care of their surroundings.
- The Board has received no complaints regarding clothing and has observed no related issues. Additionally, the Board noted only a few complaints about food over the past year. The general consensus from prisoners seems to be that the food is adequate, and there are no observable trends indicating significant concerns based on rota observations and applications. While there have been some comments from prisoners regarding portion sizes, the Board does not view this as a major issue at HMP Manchester.

5.2 Segregation

- The segregation unit is well managed and operates in a challenging environment, housing many prisoners with complex needs. The staff have demonstrated professionalism and adhere to established protocols effectively. Notably, the orderlies have maintained a calm demeanour even under pressure. Additionally, the cleanliness of the internal segregation unit is commendable but the exercise yard is often closed to use due to the level of waste and general debris.

- Overall, the Board believes that the segregation unit is being utilised appropriately, accommodating the types of prisoners that need to be detained there. However, it should be noted that for a period, many adjudications were postponed due to a lack of escorts. This issue was resolved toward the end of 2025, with adjudications now taking place on the wings, which has largely alleviated the delays.
- Due to limited capacity, Board members have attended only a small number of adjudications and rule 45 reviews (where a prisoner has been kept apart - segregated - from other prisoners due to disruptive behaviour). However, from those observed, all proceedings have been conducted professionally, allowing prisoners to express their views and concerns effectively.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

- The Board's overall observation at HMP Manchester indicates that relationships between staff and prisoners are generally good, particularly among the more experienced staff. However, there are concerns regarding the relationships with newer, less experienced staff members.
- The Board has received complaints from prisoners about their treatment by inexperienced staff, specifically citing a lack of communication skills. While the Board has not directly observed any incidents of poor interactions, reports of such issues have been received from various areas within the prison.
- In terms of key working, this is monitored weekly on each wing, and there is an internal league table that tracks performance across the prison. This focus on key working has, in the Board's opinion, improved overall levels of engagement with the prisoners.
- Additionally, the Board welcomes the reopening of the staff canteen at the Croft.

5.4 Equality and diversity

- The Board has observed Halal food being delivered well through religious observances such as Ramadan, where provision is made for meals after sunset.
- 75 discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs) were received during the period under review, 36 were upheld.
- The number of DIRFs is very low compared to comparative prisons.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

- The chaplaincy service provides a welcoming and inclusive service, based in a multi-faith space located in the 'bottom jail'.
- Our observations of the work of the chaplaincy service, and conversations with staff and prisoners, indicate a high level of regard and respect for their work.
- The Board is particularly grateful to the chaplaincy leadership team, who without exception affords a warm welcome to Board members when visiting the centre.

5.6 Incentives schemes

- The Board has not had the time or resources to monitor the implementation of the incentives scheme.

- The Board has not received any applications regarding incentives schemes. Overall, this is not an area of any concern at HMP Manchester currently.

5.7 Complaints

- The Board is not aware of current issues/concerns regarding the prison's complaints process although we do, on occasion, take oral applications from prisoners who are seeking updates on complaints.

5.8 Property

- The Board is aware that property is an issue across the whole of the prison estate, HMP Manchester is no different, but the staff do their best with the resources they have.
- The Board does note a change in internal policy that resulted in inconsistency in what prisoners were permitted to bring into the prison on arrival:
- Some prisoners arriving before October 2025 were permitted to bring in gaming devices with certain functions, whereas those arriving after were not, which led to some complaints from newly arrived prisoners.
- The Board believes that inconsistencies across the prison estate can lead to frustration amongst staff and prisoners in relation to which items a prisoner is permitted to keep with them in their cell or on their person. There is evidence that 'Governor's discretion' is applied at some LTHSE establishments; however, when prisoners transfer to HMP Manchester, where these arrangements do not apply, this can result in items being removed, leading to negative outcomes for the prisoner.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

- Primary care, mental health care and pharmacy services are 'commissioned healthcare services' delivered by Greater Manchester Mental Health Foundation Trust. The healthcare inpatients unit, a relatively modern facility located centrally within the main prison complex, offers 21 beds for patients with a wide range of physical and mental health issues. Patients are assessed for admission based on their clinical needs.
- However, there are instances where admission is preferable to managing certain risk factors that cannot be adequately addressed on the residential wings, such as self-harm, which Board members have observed first-hand. In extreme cases where constant supervision is necessary, suitable accommodations are made. The Board has noted that these constant supervision arrangements are carried out with empathy.
- In line with other LTHSE prisons, healthcare is provided by a multidisciplinary team comprising registered nurses, general practitioners (GPs), forensic psychiatrists, healthcare assistants, and pharmacy staff. The prison also has a healthy prison coordinator. Alongside the core healthcare team, various services are offered on a sessional basis, including physiotherapy, optometry, and podiatry.

6.2 Physical healthcare

- The primary care centre is responsible for providing most healthcare services at HMP Manchester. Medications can be dispensed at designated locations on each residential unit, in addition to the main healthcare centre. Typically, medications are dispensed twice a day, but this delivery model can be adjusted based on the needs of the prisoners in each wing. For instance, prisoners on I wing may require more frequent medication dispensing due to their specific health needs.
- Upon admission or return to the prison, prisoners should receive a comprehensive health screening, followed by a secondary health screening 72 hours later.
- The nursing team offer a range of clinics in specialist areas such as:
 - Chronic disease management such as asthma, diabetes and epilepsy.
 - Blood borne virus and sexual health screening.
 - Venepuncture
 - Wound care, including leg ulcers.
 - Non-medical prescribing
 - Hypertension
 - Weight management
 - Ear care
 - TB screening
 - Flu and hepatitis B vaccinations are available through the specialist clinics.
- Primary care services provide assessment, treatment and ongoing management for a range of physical and mental health conditions, working closely with specialist mental health services where additional clinical expertise is required. Secondary mental health care addresses the needs of

prisoners diagnosed with serious mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder. Patients in secondary health care are usually assigned a nurse to oversee their care.

- Two prisoners requiring palliative care have been housed under the care of the healthcare unit during the year under review.

6.3 Mental health

- Mental health care at HMP Manchester is provided through a contract with Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust, the local NHS provider.
- HMP Manchester has a mental health in-reach team (MHIT) that functions similarly to a community mental health service. All prisoners receive an initial healthcare screening on reception, with referral to mental health services where indicated following assessment. General practitioners (GPs) can make referrals as needed, and feedback from conversations with prisoners indicates a growing demand for MHIT services.
- The MHIT also manages a day care centre where prisoners can participate in various group activities.
- The psychiatrist and mental health nurses responsible for inpatient care and the MHIT coordinate all external transfers of patients to hospitals under the Mental Health Act (1983). We share the concerns of other Boards regarding the timely transfer of prisoners who exhibit behaviours consistent with serious mental health issues or who are diagnosed as such and require secure hospital placement under section 47 of the mental health act.

6.4 Social care

- HMP Manchester provides dedicated social care to prisoners in H wing (H1). This accommodation has been repurposed from a former segregation unit, creating an accessible environment that allows prisoners with various care needs to enjoy a degree of independence. The wing offers easy access to an exercise yard, which prisoners use regularly.
- One advantage of repurposing the segregation unit is the presence of an 'entrance porch' for each cell, allowing sufficient space for safely storing mobility aids. Given the nature of the prisoners housed in H1, the environment is generally calm and orderly.
- On two occasions, the Board raised concerns about staff not being present on the wing during visits. However, we are satisfied with the actions taken in response to this issue. Care staff on H1 are enthusiastic and hardworking but often feel frustrated by the challenges of preparing prisoners for release, especially those with complex care needs.
- Currently, there are 22 prisoners with a personal emergency evacuation plan (PEEP) notice. The IMB has not confirmed whether drills have been conducted to ensure the safe extraction of these prisoners in the event of a fire or similar emergency.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

- The regime at HMP Manchester urgently needs reform. The lack of access to meaningful activities in workplaces and education has become a source of frustration for both prisoners and staff.

- The Board is concerned about the regular curtailing of the regime, which is primarily due to insufficient staffing resources. There have been instances where prisoners remain in their cells for 23 hours a day, simply because there are not enough staff to deliver a regime of substance. The prison is facing a high level of staff sickness, which the Board understands cannot be anticipated, forcing leadership to work with the resources currently available.
- When staffing is limited, essential provisions such as access to the library, education (especially skills-based workshops, which were previously available), and gym facilities are often the first to be cut. However, gym staff have occasionally made efforts to assist by escorting prisoners from the wings to ensure more consistent access to these activities.
- The Board would like to highlight the ongoing closure of the football field, which has been unavailable for over 18 months due to storing materials for the window replacement project on G wing.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

- Services are provided by a partnership between Delphi Medical and Acorn Recovery Projects through what is described as a 'recovery wing'. The service includes the reduction and motivation programme (RAMP), which is designed to provide a psychologically safe environment for prisoners who are committed to tackling addiction.

6.7 Soft skills

- The Board would like to note the re-introduction of a prison chess tournament between staff and prisoners, which men are excited to have back.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

- During the reporting period, education services were initially provided by Milton Keynes College. However, the Ministry of Justice completed a procurement process in July 2025 and awarded a new contract for education provision under the newly established prisoner education services (PES). PES has replaced the previous prison education framework (PEF) contracts following announcements from the former government. The PES awards contracts to education providers on a geographical basis, with HMP Manchester designated for the Greater Manchester, Merseyside, and Cheshire region. Consequently, there was a change in the education provider at HMP Manchester, with Novus LTE winning the contract effective 1 October.
- In January 2026, HMPPS Education, Work and Skills leads in collaboration with Novus LTE, Manchester City Council Libraries, launched a new prison-wide reading strategy as part of the 'national year of reading.' This initiative aims to support individuals who struggle with reading and to enhance access to reading materials throughout the prison.
- The Board would also like to highlight the introduction of a new 'skills academy,' that aims to allow prisoners to carry their educational training achievements with them when they transfer within the prison system. Previously, the movement of prisoners often necessitated multiple educational assessments for individuals upon transfer. Now, educational accomplishments will follow prisoners across different facilities. However, there are initial IT system issues that currently prevent this objective from being fully realised.
- The library service is provided by Manchester City Council. The library is well-stocked, clean and tidy, benefiting from an active community of volunteers and enhanced prisoners who assist fellow prisoners.
- Since Novus took over the provision of education, staff numbers have been dramatically reduced in line with a budget cut of over 50%. While there were previously 17 staff members, there are now only seven. The courses offered are classroom-based and focus on maths, English, and ESOL (English for speakers of other languages). Unfortunately, all courses that prepared prisoners for reintegration into the community with vocational qualifications are no longer available, which is a concerning setback.

7.2 Vocational training, work

- The Croft, which was once seen as a model for prisoner employment opportunities in the 2010s, currently has few areas that are functional, including the kitchens, laundry and Waste management; however, all other workspaces are regularly closed due to lack of band 3 staff. Other activity areas such as the gymnasium and sports hall, are also affected by changes in the prison regime.
- Overall, the physical environment is deteriorating, and we have observed clear evidence of this during our visits. The overall condition is deeply concerning, and urgent action is necessary. We are pleased to report some progress, notably the reopening of 'Crofters' (a 'restaurant' providing opportunities for training and education in hospitality) in late 2025. However,

much more work is required to establish the vision for the Manchester Model that was initially proposed in 2011.

- Frustration among both staff and prisoners is evident, stemming from a lack of opportunities for meaningful engagement and time outside of their cells. In the Board's opinion, this situation likely contributes to the demand for illicit items within the prison.

7.3 Offender management, progression

- There are 18 imprisonment for public protection (IPP) prisoners currently at HMP Manchester. They receive regular attention and are managed effectively, with staff demonstrating a strong understanding of the psychological need to maintain open communication with these prisoners. The early release scheme has had little to no impact at HMP Manchester. On average, three to four men are released from the prison each month, which keeps the workload for the offender management unit (OMU) staff manageable. The staff members are friendly and approachable.

7.4 Family contact

- The visitors centre, located outside the secure perimeter, is operated by Partners of Prisoners (POPS). The facility offers a variety of amenities, including an information desk staffed by HMPPS personnel, lockers, restrooms, and seating. The main visits hall is spacious, well-ventilated, and has natural light, creating a welcoming atmosphere. During our visits to the centre, the staff and volunteers consistently demonstrated excellent interpersonal skills, which are essential for ensuring that family and friends are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve.
- HMP Manchester provides a separate visiting area for category A prisoners (who are held in the highest security conditions), which is smaller in size, reflecting the smaller number of prisoners in this category.
- Prisoners have access to in-cell telephones; however, they cannot receive incoming calls. They are allowed to make outgoing calls to numbers that are registered on an approved list.

7.5 Resettlement planning

- Resettlement planning at HMP Manchester is minimal, with only a few releases occurring each month, which reduces the demand for these schemes. The Board would like to see improved programmes focused on life skills and practical learning for men nearing the end of their sentences. While some courses are available upon release, there is limited support within the prison during the final weeks of a prisoner's stay.
- There is a resettlement hub on-site at HMP Manchester, located near the Croft workspaces. The Board has had little engagement with this department due to the low number of men being released from the facility. However, based on observations, the services offered appear to be adequate.

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	16
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	2
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	6*
Total number of visits to the establishment	130

*of which three members dual-board with other IMBs, and three are new members who are subject to induction year conditions.

Despite Manchester being a large, busy prison, the number of applications to the Board is relatively low for prisons of comparable size. The Board does display posters and provide forms on every wing, but overall applications to the Board are low.

Applications to the IMB: March 2025 to January 2026

Code	Subject	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	10
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	5
C	Equality	2
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	4
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	5
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	7
F	Food and kitchens	3
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	10
H1	Property within the establishment	15
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	9
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	4
I	Sentence management, including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	10
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	10
K	Transfers	0
L	Miscellaneous	10
	Total number of applications	104



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