



# **Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Onley**

**For reporting year  
1 March 2025 – 28 February 2026**

**Published July 2026**



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All IMB annual reports are published on [www.imb.org.uk](http://www.imb.org.uk)

## Introductory sections 1 - 3

### 1. Statutory role of the IMB

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

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

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

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

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

## **2. Description of the establishment<sup>1</sup>**

HMP Onley is an adult male category C training and resettlement prison on the border of Northamptonshire and Warwickshire, between Daventry and Rugby. The prison is part of the East Midlands group. The population is predominantly from the London area (64%) (Annex D).

The certified normal accommodation (the number of people a prison can hold without being overcrowded) is 742. During most of the reporting year the prison was near capacity due to the ongoing population pressures throughout the prison estate. Prisoners are housed in 12 wings, A - L, of which F wing is the care and separation unit (CSU). The wings radiate from a single corridor along the main block which also includes the kitchen, gym, education unit, chaplaincy and the healthcare unit. In a separate block, J and K wings are located. Another separate block, which is the newest, houses L wing.

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

### **3. Key points**

#### **3.1 Main findings**

##### **Safety**

- The high availability of illicit substances has driven debt, self-harm, bullying and violence despite the remedial work of prison staff
- Despite interceptions, there continued to be a significant level of drone activity. According to the prison, this was likely because of organised criminal gangs
- There continued to be high numbers of inexperienced prison officers on the wings who lacked the skills to de-escalate challenging situations.

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

- Frequently prisoners felt frustrated that their complaint and/or the complaint process had failed to address the issue or issues they had raised
- The poor condition of most cell windows enabled access for vermin and illicit items via drones
- Cell doors on some wings enabled prisoners to barricade
- Despite some redecoration, the cells and shower facilities on the older wings remain in a poor condition and require attention
- There were ongoing issues with repairs and/or replacements of kitchen machinery, wing washing machines and tumble dryers
- Improvements to the condition of some of the outside exercise yards were made but these lacked consistency
- Food choice, quality and quantity was considered poor by many prisoners.

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

- There were long wait times for non-emergency dental appointments
- Healthcare are still waiting for a response to their business case requesting permanent instalment of additional dental sessions
- There were ongoing difficulties with recruiting and retaining drug and alcohol rehabilitation staff
- Despite the mental health team being fully staffed by the end of the reporting year, they had no capacity to provide additional mental health interventions.

##### **Progression and resettlement**

- There were ongoing challenges to improve prisoner engagement in education and employment
- Approximately 200 prisoners were on the waitlist for the Building Choices programme at the end of the reporting year due to staff shortages.

## **3.2 Main areas for development**

### ***TO THE MINISTER***

- Urgent attention needs to be given to the vetting of prison officers and staff recruited by partner agencies because the length of time it is taking is having a negative impact on the daily operation of the prison. How does the Minister plan to address this?
- The length of time it is taking to replace laundry and catering machinery parts and/or broken equipment is having a negative impact on the daily lives of prisoners. What does the Minister plan to do about the failure of these maintenance contracts?

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

- When will a start date be given for the window and door replacement programme?
- The recruitment and retention of prison officers remain an ongoing concern. If continued shortages impact on the scheduled opening of the new house blocks at the end of 2026 how will this be addressed?
- What further investment can be provided to help tackle the constant drone incursions at HMP Onley?
- Can the Prison Service explain why the site wide upgrade of the closed-circuit television (CCTV) system is not happening despite assuring the Board in the response to last year's annual report that funding had been secured?
- What further investment can be made to enable unused workshops to be brought back into operation so activity space capacity can be increased?

### ***TO THE GOVERNOR***

- Can the Governor provide assurance that work to improve the standard of the outside exercise yards will commence and that improved standards will be maintained?

### 3.3 Response to last report

| Issue raised                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Response given                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Progress                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
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| <p><b>To the Minister</b></p> <p>1. As the Board has stated in its previous annual reports missing, mislaid and delayed prisoner property continues to be a problem, particularly on transfer between prisons.</p> <p>2. The windows and window frames across the establishment are in a poor condition and an entry point for drone packages and rats.</p> <p>3. Delays in the vetting process are impacting on non-operational appointees taking up employment.</p> | <p>1. This issue has received further focused attention across His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). In response to both the Independent Monitoring Board's national thematic report and a separate review by the Independent Prisoner Complaint Investigations team, Governors and senior leaders have been re-engaged on the key responsibilities involved in managing property effectively.</p> <p>2. I can confirm that the major capital project commissioned to replace the windows and doors in A, B, C, D, E and G and H wings is progressing and will be considered for funding to begin delivery in the 2026/27 financial year. As referred to in my response to last year's report, the provision of local funding has enabled progress to begin sooner on specific elements of this work. This includes the manufacturing and fitting of some new window grills on I Wing.</p> <p>3. Regarding the delays in recruitment due to security vetting, I understand the operational pressures this can cause. However, I must stress that vetting is a critical safeguard for our institutions. Current data indicates that most pre-employment checks are completed in a timely manner with most cases concluded within a matter of days once all required applicant information is provided. I appreciate that the local vetting process at HMP Onley does not permit for prioritisation, but I am reassured that the team monitors applications closely and engages regularly with vetting services to reduce avoidable delay.</p> | <p>1. Property distribution within the prison showed good improvement. However, the Board still received a high number of applications relating to property lost or delayed for prisoners who transferred into HMP Onley.</p> <p>2. Window grills were fitted on I wing towards the end of the reporting year. The Board has been advised by the prison that the remainder of the wings due for replacement doors and windows are outlined for 2027.</p> <p>3. The Board recognised the importance of vetting. The establishment has advised the Board that the vetting process was taking 40 weeks at the end of the reporting year. This delay impacted essential recruitment across all areas of the prison.</p> |

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| <p><b>To the Prison Service</b></p> <p>1. What additional support can be provided to reduce drone activity at HMP Onley?</p> <p>2. The increase in prisoners with severe mental health issues puts considerable strain on the staff. What additional support can be provided for such prisoners or what alternative, more suitable accommodation can be found for them?</p> <p>3. The state of the floors, showers and cells on some wings and areas of the establishment is poor. What can be done to ensure that prisoners are living in a dignified environment?</p> | <p>1. Drone incursions remain a complex and evolving threat, which are increasingly linked to organised criminal activity. At HMP Onley, targeted upgrades are underway to address this risk. Funding has been secured for a site-wide upgrade of the Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) system, which is expected to be complete by March 2026. In tandem, a project to replace all the windows across the older wings is progressing and will be considered for funding to allow delivery to begin in the 2026/27 financial year.</p> <p>2. The challenges of managing prisoners with severe mental illness are acknowledged and recognised at every level. The National Health Service (NHS) England leads regular multi-agency meetings to review patient cases and to manage the prioritisation for secure hospital transfers. National work is also progressing to evaluate demand for mental health inpatient beds across the estate. Legislative change is being pursued to address delays in transfers. The Mental Health Bill, currently progressing through Parliament, includes a statutory 28-day transfer deadline for individuals requiring treatment under the Mental Health Act. This will bring best practice onto a legal footing and help drive operational reform. Alongside this, the Mental Health and Justice Strategic Advisory Group has been convened to oversee delivery, monitor timeliness and address persistent obstacles in the system.</p> <p>3. To uphold standards of decency, funding has been secured to deliver new flooring on L Wing with works due to begin in August 2025. These will be delivered outside of core hours over a 12-week period to reduce disruption. Elsewhere, a Clean, Rehabilitative, Enabling and Decent (CRED) painting programme will be improving the conditions on residential wings, supported by newly recruited decorators. Whilst shower facilities on A to</p> | <p>1. The Board has been advised by the Governor that no funding has been secured for the CCTV upgrade.</p> <p>2. HMP Onley continued to experience prisoners with challenging mental health issues. The Board was advised of two transfers to secure hospital units during the reporting year.</p> <p>3. The replacement flooring on L wing was completed and the Board noted that some wings and cells were decorated.</p> |
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| <p>4. The Board's view is that one washing machine for wings housing 60 -100 prisoners is inadequate. The Board is also of the view that the choice of domestic washing machines over commercial washing machines is adding to the problem of frequent washing machine breakdowns.</p> <p>5. What additional support can be provided to reduce drone activity at HMP Onley?</p>                                 | <p>E wings have already been modernised in recent years, J and K wings have been redecorated, and additional improvements will continue through the rolling maintenance schedule and reactive repair system until a full refurbishment can take place.</p> <p>4. The Board's concerns about the adequacy of the laundry equipment are noted. If industrial machines were not viable due to infrastructure constraints domestic machines were introduced. Some machines have also had to be replaced which the prison has funded by installing domestic machines. While there are no current plans to replace these with industrial machines, a national project bid has been submitted for future consideration. In the meantime, HMP Onley will continue to replace machines as needed and has reviewed its Clothing Exchange Stores processes to increase the frequency and reliability of the kit that is provided to the wings.</p> <p>5. See response from Minister on <a href="http://imb.org.uk">imb.org.uk</a></p> | <p>4. The Board observed some replacements and repairs but continued to see wings without working washing machines and/or tumble dryers for extended periods of time. Improvement in availability of kit was seen.</p> <p>5. The establishment continued to heighten its vigilance when drones were sighted by searching yards and perimeters. Sightings were reported to police.</p> |
| <p><b>To the Governor</b></p> <p>1. What more can be done to ensure the clothing exchange store (CES) is supported to receive and consistently maintain adequate stocks of issued clothing and personal protective equipment.</p> <p>2. What more can be done to improve the condition of the external exercise yards so that they provide a safe, dignified and fit for purpose environment for prisoners.</p> | <p>1. New processes were introduced throughout the reporting year. This included increasing appropriate stocks, attention to departing prisoners returning clothing and the issue of multiple sets of serving clothes.</p> <p>2. Work parties were engaged to improve the condition; some maintenance was evidenced.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <p>1. Improvements were evidenced towards the end of the reporting year with reduced applications to the Board.</p> <p>2. The Board observed improvement to some exercise yards.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

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| <p>3. What more can be done to enhance prisoner engagement with activities? What more can be done to increase the availability of meaningful activities?</p>          | <p>3. As a result of the 40% reduction in the education budget the working week was reduced to four days. Friday morning was introduced as a 'Feel Good Friday' which encouraged men to take part in non-vocational activities.</p>                                                  | <p>3. Attendance rates for meaningful activities remained a challenge with no improvement seen other than the increased attendance in education. High engagement in the weekly 'Feel Good Friday' initiative.</p>                            |
| <p>4. The Board welcomed the Governor's attention to staff wellbeing and morale across the establishment by holding successful staff and family wellbeing events.</p> | <p>4. No response required.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <p>4. The prison delivered a range of staff well-being activities and brought teams together to celebrate achievements.</p>                                                                                                                  |
| <p>5. What support can be provided to reduce the long waiting times for general practitioner and dental appointments?</p>                                             | <p>5. Staffing levels in healthcare affected wait times and a high level of 'no shows' to appointments was evidenced. Some changes to the regime to improve attendance were put in place. Where possible, prisoners were collected from work to attend a healthcare appointment.</p> | <p>5. The Board saw an improvement in wait times towards the end of the reporting year. Missed doctor/dentist appointments by the prisoners continued.</p>                                                                                   |
| <p>6. Essential kitchen equipment is frequently out of order. What can be done to ensure that repairs are carried out speedily?</p>                                   | <p>6. Every effort was made to repair equipment where possible, but delays were unavoidable, because of AMEY's subcontracting arrangements. Furthermore, there was difficulty in obtaining replacement parts for old equipment.</p>                                                  | <p>6. The Board saw some new equipment in the kitchen but some of it did not fit the space allocated and was therefore not being used. Some equipment was not appropriate for the requirements. Delays to repairing equipment continued.</p> |

## **Evidence sections 4 – 7**

### **4. Safety**

#### **4.1 Reception and induction**

During the reporting year, 1076 prisoners arrived at HMP Onley and 1102 were released or transferred. In total, 2178 movements were processed via reception. The Board observed prisoners arriving at HMP Onley being treated with professionalism and care.

Relevant processes, checks and assessments were seen to be completed. Property items were stored correctly where appropriate. Assessments that were unable to be completed on arrival, for example, when a prisoner or many prisoners arrived late, were conducted on the induction wing, where possible, the following day. Prisoners found to have secreted illicit items when body scanned were initially transferred to the care and separation unit (CSU).

One third of prisoners arrived on a Friday which meant that they had to wait until Monday for their induction. Induction sessions, the responsibility of officers on the induction (hotel) wing, were observed to be thorough and sensitive to individual needs.

#### **4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody**

There was a high number of reported incidents of self-harm (416) in the reporting year, compared to 398 in the previous reporting year. The number of individuals involved, however, fell from 120 (reporting year 2024/2025) to 110 (Annex B). Frustration reportedly accounted for over 32% of all incidents and this included issues relating to vapes, property, medication, television availability, time out of cell, access to showers and food choices.

The number of assessment care in custody and teamwork (ACCT – the process used to support prisoners at risk of self-harm or suicide) cases opened increased from 265 in 2024/2025 to 371. They were opened on statement of 'intent' to prevent self-harm. Many prisoners, however, arrived at the prison already on an open ACCT. A prison survey in November 2025 asked prisoners how they felt they were treated when on an ACCT. Support from staff and staff interventions received negative responses. Two safety officers and a safety hub manager were appointed to provide additional support in response.

Quality checks on the completion of ACCT documents, and on closed circuit television (CCTV) observation of reviews, continued. All new officers undertook safety training which included the ACCT and challenge, support and intervention plan (CSIP – used to manage those who pose an increased risk of being violent) processes. The Board observed improvements in the completion of ACCT documentation.

The number of available Listeners (prisoners trained by the Samaritans to provide confidential and emotional support to fellow prisoners) varied but ten were in place at the end of the reporting year. When Listeners were called out it was to support distressed prisoners experiencing poor mental health often because of problems with

staff, prisoners, bullying or debt. Listeners made a request to be allowed to follow up on call outs. By the end of the reporting year this was implemented.

There were two deaths in custody in the reporting year. One death is scheduled for an inquest and the other remains under investigation by the Prisons & Probation Ombudsman (PPO). The Board was informed that the prison provided compassionate support for the families of the deceased and for the prisoners and staff involved.

#### **4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation**

There were 207 recorded incidents of violence, compared to 192 in reporting year 2024/2025. Of the 207 incidents, 154 were prisoner on prisoner and 53 were prisoner on staff. Prisoner on prisoner assaults increased by 22 and prisoner on staff assaults decreased by seven (Annex B). General disagreement reportedly accounted for 25% of incidents and bullying and debt accounted for 22% of incidents. Flash points of violence included at unlock, at the servery, during association and movements, and when attending healthcare. Known gang members and co-defendants were separated when identified.

The Board believes the level of violence was in part due to the demographic make up of prisoners in HMP Onley as there were high numbers of gang members, drug users, neurodivergent prisoners and prisoners with mental health issues. The lack of meaningful activities also played a part, as well as frustration because of being far away from family and friends. A further factor was inexperienced officers lacking the skills to de-escalate situations

Instances of unexplained injuries to prisoners were believed to be linked to criminal gangs operating within the establishment. The dropping of illicit items via drones continued to threaten the safety of all at HMP Onley.

The number of prisoners self-isolating averaged approximately eight at any one time. The wing management of self-isolating prisoners appeared appropriate and caring, as evidenced by the Board through observations and speaking to these men during wing monitoring. The introduction of safety officers played a role in supporting self-isolators.

Safety representatives were present on all wings. Regular meetings were held between safety representatives and safety officers to discuss any issues and areas of concern.

#### **4.4 Use of force**

The Board was concerned about the continued increase of use of force (UoF) within the establishment. There were 632 reported incidents compared to 537 in the previous reporting year, an increase of 95 (18%) (Annex B). Of the 632 incidents, approximately 50% were reportedly due to non-compliance. Other issues related to assault, fighting, escorts to other wings and cells, hospital visits, threatening behaviour and preventing or intervening with staff assaults. Unplanned UoF incidents that were captured on body worn video cameras (BWVCs) totalled 82.1% compared to 74.7% the previous year.

The main methods of UoF used were rigid bar handcuffs, guiding holds and control and restraint. There were four instances of a baton being used. Pelargonic Acid Vanillylamide (PAVA) incapacitant spray was drawn twice and used once.

The Board did not find any disproportionality regarding protected characteristics and use of force incidents.

Footage from the BWVCs was reviewed by the safety team and any learning identified. Prisoners involved in a UoF incident were offered healthcare support.

The establishment reported that use of force debriefing and documentation completion improved during the reporting year.

The Board believes the high number of inexperienced officers (less than two years' experience) in the establishment meant they lacked the 'jail craft' skills to de-escalate situations prior to deploying UoF methods to protect themselves and their colleagues. The more experienced officers were able to de-escalate tense situations without the use of force.

The Board was pleased to see the introduction of two safety officers and more senior officers on the wings to provide support and guidance to staff.

#### **4.5 Preventing illicit items**

The Board continued to be concerned about the significant number of illicit items that entered the establishment, but improved prison vigilance led to an increased rate of finds from drone drops. The yard lockdown and search process, introduced in the previous year, was implemented if a drone was seen over the exercise yards. This was in addition to a good working relationship with local police and improved staff awareness training. As a result, there were arrests and prosecutions.

There were 73 reported drone incidents in the reporting year with 40 drone packages and two throwovers detected. This compared to 17 packages and two throwover finds in the previous year.

The poor condition of cell windows, reported in previous annual reports, continued to enable access to drone contents. However, prevention grilles were fitted to some windows in a wing housing 100 prisoners.

Intelligence-led searches resulted in 1425 bags of evidence containing illicit items being booked into security. This compared to 1170 the previous year. Total significant finds were 209 phones and 472 related accessories, 442 drug finds, 114 samples of hooch (a homemade alcoholic drink) and 105 improvised weapons.

The HMP Onley dog team supported 525 searches with 214 searches resulting in finds.

The enhanced security gate (ESG) was fully operational throughout the reporting year. The Board observed staff and visitors having their identification (ID) checked, being body-scanned, being rubbed down where security protocols required and X ray checks being made on property items.

## **5. Fair and humane treatment**

### **5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food**

Wings were monitored regularly by the Board and were generally observed to be clean and tidy. Older cells and shower facilities were in poor condition, however, and lacked certain fixtures, as identified by the residential governors. Challenges existed in procuring replacement furniture and electrical equipment in a timely manner.

Wing equipment was reviewed and funded within budget constraints on a rolling basis. Toasters and microwaves were in varying states of functionality throughout the year. However, an upgrade programme of pool and table tennis tables was observed as a positive enhancement.

The condition of cell windows in the older blocks remained problematic as a means of entry for rats and for illicit items via drones. It was also possible for some prisoners to barricade their cell doors.

An incentive scheme was introduced based on wing cleanliness and the number of prisoners in work.

Laundry equipment issues were prevalent. Washing machines and tumble dryers were frequently broken and out of order for months. The Board believes there were too few washing machines for the number of prisoners on the wings.

Temperature fluctuations on the wings were noted by the Board. On occasion the central heating was switched on during hot weather. The poor condition of windows led to cold temperatures within the prison in the winter months.

The Board observed some improvement in the maintenance of several exercise yards. However, the poor condition of paving slabs, rubbish and overflowing sewage from blocked drains remained problematic.

Although the Board commends the kitchen manager for accommodating multiple and varied dietary requirements, prisoners consistently complained about the quality, quantity and choice of food to Board members during wing visits. Of particular concern were the meat pastry slices which were often not fully defrosted.

The Board frequently observed wing servery workers during meals not wearing issued white servery clothing. A variety of excuses were provided. Completion of the servery logbooks was very ad hoc.

Inexperienced officers on wings were often unaware of protocols. This continues to be monitored by the Board.

### **5.2 Segregation**

The Board observed the care provided to prisoners residing in the CSU, who often had challenging, complex mental health and behavioural issues, to be appropriate and supportive. Reasons for segregation were often related to threat from the general population resulting from debt or gang issues.

The office communication whiteboard and prisoner records were observed to be maintained to a high standard.

The Board had confirmation that each prisoner receives a daily visit from healthcare, chaplaincy and the Governor, a daily shower and an hour a day outside in one of the two exercise yards. Appropriate prisoner support information was displayed on the corridor walls. Books, jigsaws and education resource packs were available. Two orderlies were responsible for cleaning the wing, doing the laundry and serving meals.

Good order or discipline (GOoD) reviews observed by the Board were conducted fairly and professionally. Due care was shown when prisoners presented with poor mental health. The Board noted that where an adjudication had a "not guilty" outcome there was no formal feedback loop in place post adjudication to the reporting officer.

Six prisoners stayed in the CSU beyond the maximum 42-day period following authorisation from the prison group director.

### **5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers**

Approximately 46% of prison officers during the reporting year had less than two years' experience. The Board was pleased therefore that a programme of peer mentoring was introduced to support and develop new officer recruits.

The prison's system of key working, introduced in the previous year, with one officer from each wing allocated daily to focus on key work duties, continued. Each key worker was assigned several prisoners who they met individually for 45 minutes either on their wing or in their area of activity. By the end of the reporting year over 11,575, or 94.6% of planned key work sessions were completed.

Officers were supported in their key worker role with ongoing developmental training. Quality checks and performance tracking systems were in place. Key work sessions observed by the Board were conducted in a sensitive manner.

### **5.4 Equality and diversity**

An equalities manager was appointed in May 2025 to ensure HMP Onley remained compliant with His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) policies and procedures. Eight prisoner equality representatives were also appointed. They supported any prisoner on the wing who wanted to complete and submit a discrimination incident reporting form (DIRF). In the reporting period, 78 DIRFs were submitted. This was a significant reduction from the 130 DIRFs submitted in the previous year (Annex C).

The equality representatives also attended forums, such as for young adults, foreign nationals and veterans. Each forum was led by a governor and minutes and actions were recorded.

The quarterly equalities and action team (EAT) meetings continued. They ensured detailed data, collated from all departments concerning the nine protected

characteristics, was discussed. Any disproportionality noted was investigated and actions were followed up at the next meeting. The Board did not observe any persistent or significant trends of disproportionality relating to any of the protected characteristics.

At the end of the reporting year 25 prisoners had a personal emergency evacuation plan (PEEP) in place. Hard and digital copies of prisoners' PEEPs were kept on each wing. Cell doors indicated if a prisoner was on a PEEP in case there was need for an emergency evacuation.

Events were scheduled throughout the year to mark and raise awareness of a wide variety of anniversaries, celebrations and issues, for example, black history month, Gypsy and Roma Traveller history month and Eid.

The small neuro-diversity team provided reading support on the wings rather than in classrooms for prisoners with a disability or reluctance to engage in education.

## **5.5 Faith and pastoral support**

The multifaith chaplaincy team continued to provide pastoral support and care to prisoners and staff. Weekly worship generally took place for the numerically larger faiths. At the end of the reporting year, the team consisted of eight, or 5.06 full time equivalent, chaplains. In addition, there were three sessional chaplains (Buddhist, Hindu and Jewish) and five volunteer chaplains of the Jehovah's Witness, Quaker, Christian Free Church and Christian Anglican faiths. A continued vacancy existed for a Pagan chaplain whilst a Rastafarian chaplain and a Latter-Day Saints chaplain were going through security vetting.

Information regarding Ramadan and Lent accompanied by a small snack pack were sent to all prisoners. For the fourth consecutive year electric hot boxes were made available for those prisoners observing the Ramadan Fast. This facility was not available to prisoners of other faiths or no faith.

The Alpha Course, Bible studies, Islamic classes and a film series on the Islamic faith all ran during the reporting year. Staff and prisoner information notices were published each month advertising forthcoming religious festivals.

## **5.6 Incentives schemes**

HMP Onley continued to operate a structured incentives policy aligned with the national Incentives Policy Framework. At the end of the reporting year, 37% of prisoners were on enhanced, 52% were on standard and 11% were on basic. This compared to 37%, 57% and 5% respectively at the end of the reporting period 2024/2025.

The Board reviewed the incentives data for the reporting period and no disproportionality was identified. Adjudications monitored by the Board were observed to be facilitated in a timely, fair, consistent and appropriate manner.

During the year there was significant investment in positive reinforcement schemes, aligned with a rehabilitative culture, to motivate consistent engagement. For

example, learner/worker of the week/month, work area/education class of the month, monthly wing cleaning competitions and recreational incentives such as bingo.

## **5.7 Complaints**

The number of complaints submitted by the end of the reporting period had increased by 20% from 2130 in 2024/2025 to 2561.

The highest number of complaints were about staff. They comprised 13% (337) of all complaints compared to 9.5% (204) in 2024/2025. According to December 2025 data the most common complaints relating to staff concerned behaviour, bullying, incentive decisions and regime issues.

The second highest number of complaints were about property. Although they comprised 12% (306) of all complaints this was a decrease compared 2024/2025 when property made up 16% of all complaints. A consistent theme was property not following the prisoner on transfer to HMP Onley from another establishment (see 5.8).

Ethnicity data identified that 41% of complaints (1037) were from prisoners who identified as white British. This was slightly lower than in 2024/2025 when it was 43%. The second highest number of complaints (30% or 779) were from black prisoners. This was an increase compared to 26% (511) in 2024/2025.

Complaints from black and Muslim prisoners, presented at the EAT meeting in June 2025, showed that both cohorts frequently raised concerns about staff, property, disputes around their sentence planning, categorisation and incentives. The Board are not aware of any analysis of complaint trends among white British prisoners.

The complaints process was observed to be managed efficiently time wise, with 98% of complaints responded to within five working days or seven working days for staff or externally related issues. However, as seen from applications to the Board, prisoners frequently felt frustrated that their complaint and/or the complaint process had failed to address the issue or issues they had raised.

## **5.8 Property**

The Board continued to receive complaints from prisoners regarding their property on transfer from other establishments. The main theme was that follow on property was taking weeks to be forwarded. This caused much frustration as evidenced in prisoner applications to the Board.

Significant improvements were made, following intervention by the Governor, in the time taken to distribute prisoner property once it had been received at HMP Onley from other prisons.

The Board believes that despite the introduction of the Prisoners' Property Policy Framework there needs to be a national standardisation and tracking system for all prisoner property on transfer to ensure delays are minimised.

## **6. Health and wellbeing**

### **6.1 Healthcare general**

The Care and Quality Commission (CQC), along with HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP), made an unannounced inspection of healthcare in May 2025 followed by a progress review inspection in January 2026. According to healthcare, the inspection reports contained several inaccuracies (see 6.3). Healthcare informed the Board they had submitted a written challenge to CQC regarding these inaccuracies.

The appointment non-attendance rate was high. Between July and November 2025, it was 26%. Regime changes affecting education and employment (see 6.4), according to healthcare, were a significant factor. Increased collaboration between the senior management team (SMT) and healthcare resulted in some improvement but non-attendance rates remained high (17% in December 2025 and 20% January 2026).

Emergency escorts on occasion were declined by the prison due to staffing issues. Healthcare was advised instead to call for an ambulance which risked delaying treatment. The situation was monitored carefully by the Board and slowly improved following better collaboration between healthcare and the SMT.

The number of complaints submitted to healthcare between 1 April 2025 and 31 January 2026 was 58. The main complaints were miscellaneous (14), medication (11) and treatment/procedures (10). The number of concerns (informally resolved) submitted was 157 (medication (50), treatment/procedure (34), miscellaneous (23)).

The third largest number of applications to the Board related to healthcare (59) (see section 8). Medication management and appointments were a main source of concern to prisoners. Issues concerning the opening of the medication hatches, receiving medications on time, changes to medication and their frequency of issue were a source of frustration. The Board welcomed healthcare's efforts to improve communication with prisoners and to manage their expectations. There were also difficulties with officers not supporting the medication hatch on L wing. The Board was informed changes to medication management are to be implemented in the new reporting year.

The Board is of the opinion that it would be more useful if the Practice Plus Group (PPG) system used to capture prisoner healthcare complaints was aligned to the system used by HMPPS.

The Local Delivery Board meetings resumed in October 2025 and continued bimonthly. Healthcare forums, led by the patient engagement lead (PEL), were held monthly but prisoner attendance was low.

Daily multidisciplinary meetings were implemented to review and assess the health needs of new arrivals to plan their care accordingly.

### **6.2 Physical healthcare**

Eight peer mentors were trained to provide information about hepatitis C to encourage testing. A system for monitoring and recording prisoners purchasing paracetamol from the canteen was implemented.

Regular drop-in sessions to monitor weight and blood pressure and to offer health and nutrition guidance was started in July 2025.

Vitamin D supplements were made available without charge from the prisoner canteen every three months.

The new dental chair was installed in November 2025.

The Board remained concerned throughout the year that dental wait times continued to be long, often over six months except for emergencies. This suggests the need for additional clinics. A new business case was submitted to Time for Teeth for the permanent instalment of the additional Wednesday clinic sessions in January 2026. At the end of the reporting year healthcare were still waiting for a response.

### **6.3 Mental health**

The HMIP and CQC inspections (see 6.1) reported that the mental health service did not meet the needs of the population. The lack of mental health interventions and 'psychology staff' was identified as a priority concern. However, the mental health team advised that a mental health intervention, '*Making sense of my worries*', started in November 2025. A psychologist and an assistant psychologist were also appointed around this time offering low level interventions as well as medium and high intensity work.

The mental health team were fully staffed at the end of the reporting year, but reported they had no further capacity to provide additional mental health interventions.

### **6.4 Time out of cell, regime**

All prisoners had a minimum of two hours out of cell daily, including a minimum of 60 minutes of outdoor exercise. In practice, this meant about 22 hours in cell for those without access to education or work. Basic exercise equipment was installed in the exercise yards, but most yards had uneven paving slabs and overgrown weeds. On some wings prisoners had access to indoor exercise equipment which they were positive about.

A Friday morning regime initiative, named 'Feel Good Friday', was introduced because of the cuts to education provision (see 7.1). Activities such as painting, yoga, music and carpentry were set up and facilitated by officers, instructors and other willing prison staff. The new regime, initially trialled over a three-month period, was well received by prisoners and officers and therefore continued. The Board welcomed plans to innovatively increase the range of activities with the aim of many of them being peer led.

A staff training day held once a month on a Monday meant prisoners were locked up during the day until 5.30pm.

### **6.5 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation**

Forward Trust had worked with 43% of the prison population by the end of the reporting year. Staff retention and recruitment was, however, problematic. By the end of February 2026 there were three staff vacancies with four new appointments undergoing vetting. One staff member remained on long term sick leave.

Psychosocial groups ran regularly in addition to two weekly alcoholics anonymous (AA) groups and a weekly peer group led AA session. Mindfulness art sessions alternated with other unstructured interventions, such as a coffee morning to promote the uptake of Buvidal (a long-acting drug to treat opioid dependence).

Four members of staff had completed an acupuncture training course and three had been trained on how to teach prison staff to administer Naloxone (a drug that reverses opioid overdose).

Workbooks were offered to prisoners who had attended a drug or alcohol programme, but who still needed to demonstrate they were managing their drug or alcohol use. On return of the completed workbook, they were offered a one-to-one session to assess their further support needs.

Throughout the reporting year 66 workbooks were given out. The completion rate was 64%. This compared to 40 workbooks given out and a 47% completion rate in the previous reporting year.

Six health and wellbeing champions (HAWCs) were appointed as peer supporters. They helped deliver sessions on harm minimisation, ran wellbeing checks and inductions, and contributed to raising awareness about hepatitis C and Naloxone. They also ran weekly wing support groups and, on the incentivised substance free living (ISFL) wing, a peer-led meditation group.

PPG and Forward Trust together ran a weekly detoxification or substance misuse clinic. This enabled them to discuss any identified issues or concerns such as noncompliance with medication.

Prisoners due for release were invited to a harm minimisation and substance awareness workshop and a Naloxone coffee morning group session.

## **6.6 Soft skills**

A prison information document worker (PID) was available on each wing. Planned development of the PID role and the PID rooms across all wings, however, remained in the early stages.

Leaflets and posters about health and wellbeing and prison wide support and services were visibly displayed on the wings.

## **7. Progression and resettlement**

### **7.1 Education, library**

The Ofsted inspection in May 2025 found the overall quality of education required improvement in several areas including leadership and management, learners learning at the appropriate level and reading skills support. The follow up inspection in January 2026 was satisfied that reasonable progress in the overall quality of education had been made.

Increasing education attendance remained a challenge. The average number of learners who attended education and accredited courses between October and the end of February 2026 as a percentage against planned allocations was 68%.

A 40% reduction in education provision resulted in the closure of all Friday classes (see 6.4) and the loss of the information technology (IT) and career kick start courses.

Outreach and in cell learning workbooks covering areas such as maths, creative writing, mental health, health and safety, food hygiene, starting a business and neurodiversity awareness were popular. Each prisoner completing a Way2Learn workbook received a certificate. Accredited courses in entry level maths and English, level one and two maths and English, construction skills, painting and decorating, barbering and barista, and hospitality (Greene King Academy) continued.

To counter the withdrawal of the Shannon Trust, a reading specialist was employed, and a revised reading strategy implemented. Residential staff and reading champions on each wing were encouraged to support the development of prisoners' reading skills.

Lesson visits (teacher observations) for all tutors took place every six months. They were not graded, but the assessor's comments fed into the tutor's personal development plan.

Learners spoke positively to Board members about their educational learning experiences and valued the opportunity to improve their work ready skills. Board members, when visiting education classes, observed tutors to be approachable, constructive, supportive and enthusiastic.

The library was a popular facility at HMP Onley. By the end of the reporting year 70% of the prison population were members. Library initiatives included a weekly reading group, history, debating and chess clubs and a playwriting skills workshop. There was a monthly themed competition, for example, poetry. A weekly opportunity to visit the library was allocated to each wing and education class.

### **7.2 Vocational training, work**

There was a total of 611 full and part time spaces available for a prison population capacity of 742. Attendance on average was between 50% and 60%. Whilst prisoners were actively encouraged to attend work, many chose, or refused, to attend which meant over 300 men were not engaged in purposeful activities.

The intention to collect men from their place of work to attend appointments and return to work afterwards had some success but staffing levels required to enable multiple movements of this kind were often prohibitive (see 6.1).

Stronger penalties for not attending work, such as change in incentive level, were in place by the end of the reporting year.

Despite high activity in recruiting new industries, no new industrial workspaces were achieved. Greene King continued to provide job opportunities on release (see 7.5).

Workshops included carpentry, waste management, the cycle academy, barbering, rail track, industrial cleaning, painting and decorating, dry lining, concrete and three contract workshops. They were observed by the Board to be well managed and organised.

National vocational skills (NVQ) awards were available in food preparation and cooking, food and beverages service, food safety and catering, barista skills, barbering, contact dermatitis prevention, multi skills, painting and decorating and construction skills. Prisoners were also able to achieve an award in health and safety in a construction environment (CSCS) and in digital skills. New sports leadership courses and physical instructor level 4 commenced towards the end of the reporting year.

Instructor staff levels improved with some operational support grades (OSGs) transferring to instructors. There were 16 instructors with five vacancies by the end of year.

Specific trusted positions, or red band roles, continued to operate throughout the establishment including education, skills and work, reading, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, library, healthcare and neurodiversity. Champions and buddies were also in place to provide peer support.

### **7.3 Offender management, progression**

There was a shortfall of prison offender managers (POM) and probation offender managers during the reporting year, but this was partially alleviated by the creation, from January 2026, of a two-year secondment to HMP Onley. Prison offender manager vacancies were filled by a part-time prison offender manager becoming full-time and three recruits in training. The Board commends the Offender Management Unit's (OMU) management of the high number of transfers in and out of the prison resulting from the government's sentencing and release scheme changes.

Only 25% of prisoners arriving at HMP Onley in the reporting year had a completed sentence plan on the offender assessment system (OASys) (used to assess the risks and needs of prisoners). A remote agency worker helped to complete OASys assessments within a newly introduced six-week deadline.

The OMU made progress towards implementing a more tailored, collaborative approach to addressing the needs of imprisonment for public protection (IPP) prisoners, who were supported by New Connections, their key worker and wing officers. They were also able to raise any concerns via the prison council.

The home detention curfew (HDC) caseload significantly decreased due to eligible prisoners being transferred to a category D open prison following the introduction of the temporary presumptive re-categorisation scheme (TPRS).

Monthly drop-in wing surgeries improved the OMU's accessibility for prisoners. Each POM was assigned a wing surgery. Notices informing prisoners of the dates and times of the surgeries were clearly displayed on each wing.

Building Choices, a cognitive behavioural programme helping prisoners develop the skills needed to live a crime free life, replaced The Thinking Skills Programme (TSP) at HMP Onley in August 2025. Between 1 March 2025 to the end of July 2025 ten prisoners had started the TSP and 19 had completed it.

The interventions team could only run one group of the Building Choices programme at a time, rather than two, due to staff shortages. At the end of the reporting year approximately 200 prisoners were on the waiting list.

#### **7.4 Family contact**

There were 3050 family visitor video calls booked between February 2025 and February 2026. Of this number, 1908 calls were completed. The remainder were either missed (638), failed (52) or cancelled (428). In a further 24 cases no monitor was available in the prison.

The Board was advised that cancelled calls were either made by the prisoner or the family member. Missed or failed calls resulted when the family member was unable to connect to the call due to a poor internet connection or if they had forgotten to make the call.

Towards the end of 2025 six wings did not have regular access to a working laptop. Some wings were borrowing laptops from other wings. By the end of the reporting year the issue was resolved.

Family visits were held on the last Wednesday of each month and were supported by the library staff (see 7.1). Making Positive Connections organised visit sessions for those prisoners who had not received a social visit in the previous three months.

#### **7.5 Resettlement planning**

The employment advisory board (EAB) met quarterly. It was reported to have worked effectively in supporting and advising HMP Onley on its training and employment provision to help prison leavers feel work ready. Representation on the board included KIER Group plc, the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce, Switchback, a third sector organisation and a human resource (HR) director.

The Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce produced a short video on prison life at HMP Onley. This was said to have created much interest among employers on the opportunities they could provide for prisoners on release and within the prison via, for example, workshops.

The Greene King Academy, a pub retailer and brewer, saw the completion of its sixth cohort following its launch in 2024. Between January 2024 and December 2025, eight of the 54 prisoners who graduated from the 12-week course were offered employment by Greene King.

Employability workshops were run by several companies including Iceland, Starbucks, First Rail, Maverick Sounds, Morro Partnerships, Microsoft, LinkedIn, and KIER Group plc.

Staff shortages continued to impact on the opening of the departure lounge. It opened again daily, however, in February 2026 as a peer led initiative run by the reducing reoffending red band.

The percentage of prisoners from HMP Onley who were released to the London area between the beginning of March 2025 and the end of February 2026 was 50.9%. The percentage of prisoners successfully housed on release from custody at HMP Onley on their first night (beginning of March 2025 to the end of February 2026) was 92.28%.

## 8. The work of the IMB

### Board statistics

|                                                              |     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Recommended complement of Board members                      | 13  |
| Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period | 6   |
| Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period   | 7   |
| Total number of visits to the establishment                  | 414 |

### Applications to the IMB

| Code | Subject                                                                                                                                   | Previous reporting year | Current reporting year |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| A    | Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions                                                                                     | 7                       | 21                     |
| B    | Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions                                                                         | 3                       | 5                      |
| C    | Equality                                                                                                                                  | 1                       | 1                      |
| D    | Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell                                                                | 18                      | 17                     |
| E1   | Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions                                                                              | 6                       | 8                      |
| E2   | Finance, including pay, private monies, spends                                                                                            | 12                      | 15                     |
| F    | Food and kitchens                                                                                                                         | 12                      | 7                      |
| G    | Health, including physical, mental, social care                                                                                           | 35                      | 59                     |
| H1   | Property within the establishment                                                                                                         | 22                      | 15                     |
| H2   | Property during transfer or in another facility                                                                                           | 53                      | 40                     |
| H3   | Canteen, facility list, catalogues                                                                                                        | 4                       | 9                      |
| I    | Sentence management, including home detention curfew (HDC), release on temporary licence (ROTL), parole, release dates, re-categorisation | 46                      | 60                     |
| J    | Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying                                                                                               | 44                      | 33                     |
| K    | Transfers                                                                                                                                 | 30                      | 10                     |
| L    | Miscellaneous                                                                                                                             | 65                      | 85                     |
|      | Total number of applications                                                                                                              | 358                     | 385                    |

## **Annex A**

### **Service providers**

Dentistry: Time for Teeth

Education: People Plus

Escort contractor: Amey

Healthcare and pharmacy: Practice Plus Group

Library: People Plus

Maintenance: Amey Estates

Opticians: Prison Optical Trust

Substance misuse programme: Forward Trust

Resettlement support: East of England

Visitors' centre: Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT)

## Annex B

### Recorded violence

|                               | <b>Mar 2024 -<br/>Feb 2025</b> | <b>Mar 2025 –<br/>Feb 2026</b> | <b>Change</b> |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|
| Prisoner-on-prisoner assaults | 132                            | 154                            | +22           |
| Prisoner-on-staff assaults    | 60                             | 53                             | -7            |
| Total                         | 192                            | 207                            | +15           |

### Self-harm

|             | <b>Mar 2024 –<br/>Feb 2025</b> | <b>Mar 2025 –<br/>Feb 2026</b> | <b>Change</b> |
|-------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|
| Incidents   | 398                            | 416                            | +18           |
| Individuals | 120                            | 110                            | -10           |

### Use of force

|                                        | <b>Mar 2024 –<br/>Feb 2025</b> | <b>Mar 2025 –<br/>Feb 2026</b> | <b>Change</b> |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|
| Incidents                              | 537                            | 632                            | +95           |
| Body worn video cameras (BWVC)         | 401                            | 519                            | +118          |
| Percentage of incidents caught on BWVC | 74.7%                          | 82.1%                          | +7.4%         |

## Annex C

### Discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs)

| Category of DIRF                | Submitted in<br>2024 | Submitted in<br>2025 |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Ethnicity                       | 65                   | 58                   |
| Religion                        | 23                   | 5                    |
| Disability                      | 27                   | 10                   |
| Age                             | 1                    | 0                    |
| Sexual orientation              | 4                    | 2                    |
| Gender re-assignment            | 4                    | 2                    |
| Other                           | 6                    | 1                    |
| Total number of DIRFs submitted | 130                  | 78                   |
| Upheld/partially upheld         | 5 (3.85%)            | 6 (7.69%)            |

## Annex D

**Prison population geographical origin (percentage figures have been rounded)**

| <b>Home Area</b>  | <b>Count</b> | <b>%</b> |
|-------------------|--------------|----------|
| Northeast         | 4            | 1%       |
| Northwest         | 11           | 2%       |
| Yorkshire/Humber  | 8            | 1%       |
| Wales             | 5            | 1%       |
| West Midlands     | 69           | 10%      |
| East Midlands     | 42           | 6%       |
| Southwest         | 11           | 2%       |
| South Central     | 29           | 4%       |
| East England      | 32           | 4%       |
| London            | 467          | 64%      |
| Kent/Surrey/Essex | 30           | 4%       |
| Manchester        | 13           | 2%       |



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