



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Erlestoke

**For reporting year
1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026**

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Contents

Introductory sections 1 – 3	Page
1. Statutory role of the IMB	3
2. Description of the establishment	4
3. Key points	5
 Evidence sections 4 – 7	
4. Safety	13
5. Fair and humane treatment	17
6. Health and wellbeing	24
7. Progression and resettlement	30
 The work of the IMB	
Board statistics	38
Applications to the IMB	39
 Annex A	
Service providers	40
 Annex B	
Letter from Lord Timpson in response to the 2024-2025 annual report	41

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Introductory sections 1 – 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

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

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

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

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

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

2. Description of the establishment

HMP Erlestoke is a category C training and resettlement prison for adult and young adult male prisoners. It is the only prison in Wiltshire and is not far from Devizes.

The prison first opened in 1960, having been built in the grounds of the former Erlestoke Park House. There are nine residential wings, including a drug recovery wing (DRW), dedicated to reducing drug dependence in motivated individuals.

The operational capacity (the maximum number of prisoners that can be held without serious risk to safety, security, good order and the proper running of the planned regime) was 512¹ at the end of March 2026. The development of three new house blocks, providing an additional 180 spaces, is underway and is due for completion in early 2028.

Around 80% of the population are serving sentences of four years or more, including 37 IPP (Imprisonment for Public Protection) prisoners.

Younger prisoners in the 18 to 24 age group make up 14% of the prison population, while the over-50s make up a further 18% (this includes two prisoners over the age of 80 and three over 70). At the year end, there were 22 foreign national prisoners.

Part of the prison's remit is to provide a national resource for offending behaviour programmes. It is one of four prisons delivering the progression regime (PR), the aim of which is to help IPP prisoners and other indeterminate-sentenced prisoners provide information and evidence to the Parole Board to support release.

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

Induction: The quality of the induction programme and poor condition of the induction cells still need addressing to offer a better experience for newly arrived prisoners.

Self-Isolation: The number of prisoners self-isolating has increased due to fears of threat and being in debt.

Self-harm: While any self-harm is of concern, the number of self-harm incidents is the lowest it has been for the past six years.

Use of body worn cameras: The reduction in the use of body worn cameras is disappointing as usage provides evidence for both prisoners and staff to validate how incidents are handled.

Security: Gates and doors have been left unlocked on several occasions which is of concern to the Board.

Fair and humane treatment

Staff-prisoner relationships: Delays in vetting for all staff, including healthcare, is having a significant negative impact on both prisoners and those staff in post, who find themselves increasingly stretched.

Key working: The number of key working sessions for the main prison population and the priority cohort remains inadequate, although it is recognised that this is an inevitable consequence of inadequate staffing.

Segregation: The Board notes with concern the considerable increase in the number of prisoners admitted to the segregation unit on an open ACCT.

Property: Courtesy keys (which allow prisoners to secure their cells when not in them) are not sufficiently widely available, resulting in numerous stolen and lost items.

Equality and diversity: The education department has been awaiting the installation of a ramp to allow access to wheelchair users for over four years. This is a violation of the 2010 Equality Act.

Health and wellbeing

Healthcare: The Board was pleased to note the significant improvement in the presence of healthcare at initial ACCT reviews.

Medication: At times, supervision by officers during the collection of medication by prisoners has been ineffective, leading to prisoners secreting their medication for later sale and helping to compound the existing problem with drug supply within the prison.

Escorts to hospital: An insufficient allocation of escorts (10 per week) and an occasional lack of sufficient staff to enable this number, continues to have an impact on the ability of the prison to provide sufficient escorts for hospital appointments.

Social care: Profound issues remain in relation to social care, and the management of the population of elderly and frail prisoners. There has been a lack of importance afforded to this area by management (see Section 6.4.1) and a lack of buddies to support those with social care needs, including wheelchair training. Two HMP Erlestoke prisoners remain in a care home, exacerbating the low levels of staffing at the prison due to the need for bed watches. Furthermore, HMP Erlestoke remains unsuitable as a long-term solution for elderly/frail prisoners.

Regime: Lack of staff led to a direct impact on the regime and prisoners' time out of cell.

Progression and resettlement

Education: The Board has very great concern arising from the decimation of the education provision, which will result in many prisoners not receiving the support they need while in prison, that will enable them to lead useful and fulfilled lives on release.

Offender management: Pressure on the Offender Management Unit (OMU) remains, as continued changes to sentencing laws result in an increased workload and consequently less time to engage with individual prisoners.

Resettlement: The Board welcomes the development of vocational opportunities, such as the multi skills workshop, and the increased certification by awarding bodies. The Board would also like to commend the work of the orderlies, some of whom are unpaid, for the considerable benefits they bring across the estate.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- Staff shortages at HMP Erlestoke have had a significant negative impact on the efficient running of the prison throughout the reporting year. This is exacerbated by the excessive time (28-40 weeks) taken to vet applicants. What urgent action is proposed to reduce the time taken to process security clearance and enable staff to take up their roles?
- The significant cut to the education provision during the year directly conflicts with the aim of equipping prisoners with the life skills that will enable them to rebuild their lives positively and successfully on release. What is being planned to redress this incomprehensible decision?
- What specific action is being taken to address the need for suitable prison accommodation for the increasing numbers of elderly and frail prisoners, so that they may be provided with fair and humane treatment and so that prisons are not left to struggle to manage this cohort with ineffective systems and inappropriate facilities?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- Despite a ramp being delivered in December 2025, it has not been fitted and therefore the education block remains inaccessible to wheelchair users, which is in flagrant breach of the Equality Act 2010. What is being done to address this as a matter of urgency?

- The lack of courtesy keys (keys which prisoners use to lock their cells) results in lost property, numerous complaints, problems for staff and anxiety for prisoners. What is being done to resolve the issue?

TO THE GOVERNOR

- Activation of body worn video cameras has decreased significantly. What measures will be put in place to promote increased use?
- What action is being taken to ensure that key working sessions for the priority cohort are completed and what plans are in place to ensure that key working sessions for the remainder of the population are maximised, despite the current staffing difficulties?
- Over the year, the Board has noted the dedication and expertise of the numerous orderlies working in many areas of the prison. Is there scope for recruiting more paid orderlies, given the rehabilitative benefit to the orderlies and the unique type of support they are able to offer as a result of their lived experience?
- What robust and timely system is in place to select and train social care and wheelchair buddies, given the vulnerability of those in their charge and the inherent risk of injury if they are untrained?
- What urgent plans are there to ensure that motivated officers supervise medication collection, given that it is recognised some prisoners will secrete their medication for later sale?

TO THE GOVERNOR/OXLEAS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

- Given the ongoing issues with the supply of medication for prisoners, their increasing complexity, and the expansion of the prison by over a third in the near future, is consideration being given to an on-site pharmacy?

3.3 Response to the last report

Issue raised in 2025	Response given	Progress
To the Minister What long term solutions are being proposed to manage the increasing numbers of elderly and frail prisoners who cannot be managed fairly or humanely in the main prison estate?	Minister's response <i>Please see the letter from Lord Timpson dated 27 October 2025 at Annex B.</i>	Nearly one-fifth of the population at HMP Erlestoke is aged 55 or over, so this remains a major concern. Two prisoners continue to reside in a residential home, putting considerable pressure on staffing through the necessity for 24-hour bed watches. The Board looks forward to the publication of recommendations relating to older prisoners and hopes that this is being given priority status.
To the Minister What solutions are being sought to provide more suitable accommodation and support for those with the most	Minister's response <i>Please see the letter from Lord Timpson dated 27 October 2025 at Annex B.</i>	The need to access suitable provision and accommodation – whether in a prison or in a secure hospital – remains

complex needs? Last year, the Board asked about long term plans to establish more appropriate mental health provision within the secure estate. This issue remains despite local improvements.		paramount as the cohort of complex prisoners increases. The 28-day time limit is of little value if hospital spaces are not available.
To the Minister What tangible outcomes have been delivered for IPP prisoners since publication of the revised IPP Action Plan ² ? Once again, the Board highlights the plight of IPP prisoners, many of whom continue to languish in prison with little hope of achieving release.	Minister's response <i>Please see the letter from Lord Timpson dated 27 October 2025 at Annex B.</i>	While the Board is pleased to recognise the work behind the positive figures in the Minister's response, this will be of little reassurance to those IPP prisoners at Erlestoke who have never been released and who are now decades over their initial tariff.
To the Minister What plans are in place to increase the budget for food which continues to be woefully insufficient when basic food costs have risen significantly?	Minister's response <i>Please see the letter from Lord Timpson dated 27 October 2025 at Annex B.</i>	The new menu, introduced in January, has met with a mixed reception. Much of the negativity focused on small portion size. Farms & Gardens continues to supply produce of a high standard to the kitchens.
To the Prison Service What action can be taken to improve the quality and safety of the constant watch cell, given that the three proposed new house blocks are on hold?	HMPPS's response: <i>Please see the letter from Lord Timpson dated 27 October 2025 at Annex B.</i>	Funding was insufficient and work has not been carried out. The lack of visibility in the cell continues to be a major concern. Of the three new houseblocks due to open in Autumn 2027 two will include a dedicated constant watch cell.
To the Prison Service What plans are there to address the defective state of the healthcare building? It is increasingly not fit for purpose, both in terms of its crumbling structure and its ability to provide secure and confidential areas for managing the complex cohort of prisoners.	HMPPS's response <i>Please see the letter from Lord Timpson dated 27 October 202 at Annex B.</i>	The Board is pleased that the most immediate repairs have been executed but considers that the building overall remains cramped and unfit for purpose (for example, the "locker room" referred to in HMPPS's response was, in reality, a large cupboard). This situation will

		only worsen when the new houseblocks open.
To the Prison Service What guarantees can be given that there will be sufficient funding for escorts to take prisoners to hospital appointments, to avoid the numerous cancellations that have taken place over the last year?	HMPPS's response <i>Please see the letter from Lord Timpson dated 27 October 2025 at Annex B.</i>	The problems remain due to a series of internal issues in addition to, on occasions, insufficient escorts. The Board looks forward to having sight of the recommendations when published.
To the Governor What can be done to reduce the pressure on the Offender Management Unit (OMU), enabling offender managers to manage more consistently their caseload, particularly given the likelihood of further changes to sentence and release criteria?	Governor's response We have increased the Case Admin resource in the department by 0.5 fulltime equivalents (FTE). We have also uplifted the Band 4 (Prison Offender Managers) POM resource by an additional 0.5 FTE above the target staffing figure. Probation colleagues have supported the department with supernumerary PQUIP (Trainee Probation Officers), who will carry a small caseload once qualified. The department has also been supported by a remote probation officer resource from the HMP Dartmoor closure to offset gaps due to maternity leave. Caseload numbers are approx. 60 cases for prison POMs and approx. 50-55 for probation officers. We recognise that OMUs are managing high workloads and HMPPS is currently undergoing an OMiC Redesign Project, which will reset and redefine the workload of OMU's across custody and community settings.	The Board is pleased that staffing levels have improved compared to the previous reporting year, although concerns remain as the complex calculations around new sentencing structures continues to put pressure on staff, requiring increased paperwork and less face-to-face time with prisoners.

To the Governor What processes and checks will be put in place to ensure improvements are made to the poor state of the induction cells?	Governor's response Cell pre-occupation checks have been introduced but are not reliably embedded or taking place consistently, meaning that decency and first night cell provision does not always meet the required standard. We have recently agreed changes to the residential management structure at senior levels to boost management oversight.	While some improvement has been noted, the Board concurs with the Governor's view and looks forward to seeing tangible outcomes from changes to the management structure.
To the Governor What further actions are being considered to reduce the ingress of illicit substances? While the Board recognises enhanced security measures which have been put in place, drugs remain readily available throughout the prison.	Governor's response The deputy governor leads a fortnightly disruption meeting attended by multidisciplinary colleagues and partners, which assesses current intelligence and makes tactical plans to tackle drug ingress. A replacement window project is currently being planned for two Units to reduce the risk of conveyance from drones and throwovers. MDT positive rate has reduced over the reporting year, and we continue to boost our substance misuse offer across the prison to support engagement in recovery and reduce demand.	The Board recognises the efforts made to reduce ingress of illicit substances and acknowledges that more scrutiny has led to increased finds of illicit substances.
To the Governor What assurances can be given that the cell clearance process will be given a higher priority, in order that it is done effectively and securely with minimal loss of prisoner property?	Governor's response The two heads of residence have been asked to give this area priority attention, as we recognise the issues that arise from poor management and control of prisoner property following cell clearances.	The Board is pleased that this is an area of focus, and recognises that the issue is exacerbated by the reduced staffing numbers throughout the reporting year.
To the Governor What process will be implemented to ensure both the quality and quantity of key working improves?	Governor's response Quality Assurance has improved and the head of offender management delivery sends direct feedback to keyworkers. Managers now to provide assurance that they are giving QA feedback to staff. The establishment recently had a Keywork Audit,	The Board looks forward to seeing the Audit action plan when published. The Board is keen that sessions for the priority cohort of prisoners are increased, and that focus remains on delivering key work sessions to the whole prisoner

	and the report and action plan, when published, will inform further improvements.	population where staffing levels allow.
To the Governor What urgent action will be taken to establish the new format of the prison council, so that prisoners can have an appropriate outlet for their concerns?	Governor's response The prison council structure has been tweaked to improve the flow of feedback from the units, through to the council and departmental heads. The monthly cycle of the council structure is now advertised via the morning operational meeting to increase oversight. Reps have been recently reviewed and recruited. We recognise that the structure is not yet delivering to its full potential and buy-in from departmental managers requires further improvement to ensure the models credibility. There have been some positive examples of the model working well with food and consultation on the prisoner pay policy.	By the end of the reporting year, the Board had observed a steady improvement in the regularity and effectiveness of meetings. The effectiveness of the prison council will be monitored closely during 2026-2027.
To the Governor/Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust Is access to nicotine replacement therapy being considered, given the high incidence of issues relating to vapes (especially debt)?	Governor's/Oxleas Trust's response Nicotine replacement therapy is currently available for prisoners to purchase via the canteen list. The Minimum Service Offer for the Secure Settings is currently being consulted on, which should give clarity on what is offered through healthcare. Early discussions are underway with Wiltshire Council and UKHSA for what other support may be available for those in custody.	While nicotine replacement therapy is available through the canteen, it is an expensive option for prisoners and thus few take it up. The Board hopes that focus will remain on this issue which leads to multiple issues within the prison, including debt and bullying.
To the Governor/Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust What plans are being considered to ensure that prisoners arriving at HMP Erlestoke will have access to	Governor's/Oxleas Trust's response Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust has increased weekly pharmacy deliveries to reduce the period of time between prescription and issuing	Some improvement has been achieved as a result of increased pharmacy deliveries and a rearrangement of GPs' sessions in the prison. It is still

their essential medicines without a period of delay?	medication, and inter-prison working between heads of healthcare ensures that in the majority of cases, prisoners transfer with their essential medication. An out of hours provision is available for urgent medications.	the case that some prisoners arriving without medication face substantial delays in their receipt.
To the Governor/Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust While there has been considerable improvement in the attendance of healthcare at first ACCT reviews; just over one fifth still lack this essential input. How is this to be addressed, especially when reviews occur over weekends?	Governor's/Oxleas Trust's response Substantial effort has been made in this area and attendance at first case reviews is monitored via the monthly Local Delivery Quality Board. The annual average figure for April 2025 to March 2026 is 94% of first case reviews attended (those not attended were a result either of healthcare not being informed or because the reviews were held out of healthcare's working hours). Weekend duty governors are reminded every Friday to ensure any ACCTS opened at the weekend include healthcare colleagues at the first case review and primary care nurses access the duty manager's report at the weekend to identify any ACCT reviews scheduled that day.	The Board recognises the work put into this area, which has led to considerable improvement. It is hoped that an even more fail-safe system can be established so that Healthcare is always informed of first case reviews.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

4.1.1 Reception was very busy again this year with 551 prisoners arriving at the prison (584 in 2024-25), 321 released into the community and 213 transferred to other establishments. This can present challenges in dealing with prisoners' property, settling arrivals into a new environment and allocating activity places when available. Of the transfers and releases monitored, the Board was content that staff made sure procedures were properly carried out and prisoners were kept informed of what was happening at each stage of the process.

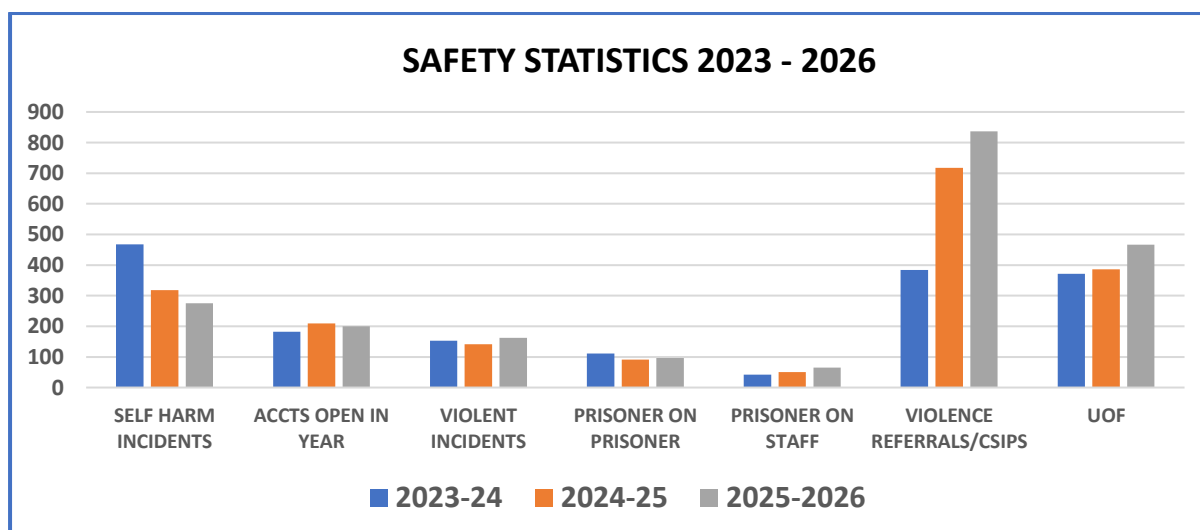
4.1.2 The induction programme continued to change in its format and delivery and has relied heavily on information being provided in digital form via prisoners' laptops. There was minimal face to face interaction in the initial few days; only one group induction session was held intermittently, led by the neurodiversity manager. The induction orderly spent time on an individual basis with new arrivals, talking through a comprehensive induction pack and signposting prisoners appropriately. This mentor service provided much needed support in the early days of arrival.

4.1.3 The condition of the first night cells marginally improved during the year. There were issues with some of the windows lacking glass behind the grilles with temporary fixes put in place. Residential compacts, which detail the condition of each cell and what the cell should contain, showed varying degrees of completeness; some were completely blank when monitored (see 5.1.5).

4.1.4 Property loss on transfer from other establishments was brought to the Board's attention throughout the year via 17 applications from new arrivals, a persistent complaint which has been a constant over many years.

4.1.5 Parcels can be sent in by family/friends. Before being released to the prisoner, the content has to be checked by two officers. Due to staff frequently being deployed elsewhere within the establishment, the time between a parcel arriving and being forwarded to the prisoner increased considerably.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody



4.2.1 Self-harm incidents decreased from 318 in 2024-2025 to 275 in 2025-2026, a reduction of 13.5%. While any self-harm is of concern, this figure was ranked second lowest recorded over the past six years and ranked fourth lowest within the comparator group of prisons over the past year.

4.2.2 The main method of self-harm was cutting, followed by ingestion. Often used as a coping mechanism, other reasons given for self-harm include reaction to prison processes, drug debt and a lack of vapes. The constant watch cell, which remains in the segregation unit, was used far less frequently than in previous years.

4.2.3 The number of calls to Listeners, a peer mentor scheme backed by the Samaritans, was lower than previous years but remains a form of support which is highly valued by prisoners. The Listeners offer a 24 hour, seven days a week service and visit those who have an assessment, care in custody and teamwork document opened (ACCT, used to support prisoners who are at risk of self-harm and suicide), have been involved in violent incidents or who are in debt.

4.2.4 Support for the neuro-diverse population is a vital function, as over half the prisoners in HMP Erlestoke have some form of neurodiversity. A team of prisoner reps, ably guided by the neurodiversity manager, act as mentors and provide invaluable help to both new arrivals and those who struggle to find their way in a prison environment. Support is also provided for children with neurodiverse issues when coming for prison visits.

4.2.5 A total of 200 ACCTs were recorded, which equates to a similar figure at the end of last year. Of this number, 44 related to prisoners transferring in from other establishments on open ACCTs, which evidences the continuing complexity and vulnerability of the population. ACCT documentation varied in quality, although some improvement was noted, particularly with regard to prisoner observations being carried out in a timely manner.

4.2.6 There were no deaths in custody during the year. However, there was a death in the community within fourteen days of release. Reports establishing the cause of deaths in previous years were received from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO); action plans are in place to address the recommendations.

4.2.7 Staff resource in the safety team increased and there was a change of senior leadership for this department. Located in the safety hub, the team has been working on improvements to embed processes and practices. Board members have observed a number of meetings at which extensive statistics are presented. Attendance by managers and key departments is of concern as it has not improved. This issue was identified by the independent review of progress by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons in April 2025. Without senior management presence, it was not always clear that statistics translated into strategic actions and tangible solutions.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

4.3.1 There were 162 violent incidents compared with 141 last year. The 162 incidents involved 208 individuals; 97 incidents were prisoner on prisoner assaults and 65 incidents were assaults on staff. A large proportion of the incidents occurred on Silbury B, the induction wing. The main triggers for prisoner assaults were linked to retaliatory reasons and bullying. Objection to processes was the main reason for assaults on staff.

4.3.2 The main contributors in these acts of violence came from the 30-39 year old age group. However, young adults continue to be disproportionately involved in incidents with 39% of the offences being committed by those aged between 18 and 25, yet this group accounts for only 14% of the prisoner population.

4.3.3 Referrals to challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs), used to support and manage prisoners who pose an increased risk of violence, increased to 837, which indicates staff are being more proactive in anticipating potential issues. Delays were noted in completing investigations and comprehensive plans were not always developed.

4.3.4 There were 138 prisoners who self-isolated in the year, a 13% increase from last year, with the average number of days in isolation being 25. The main and concerning reason for self-isolation continues to be debt and being under threat from others. The Board noted that the list of self-isolators in daily reports was not always up to date which is of concern. Apart from safety implications, this raises other issues such as healthcare not being able to treat prisoners as special cases for dispensing medication unless these prisoners are on this list. Reintegration plans for self-isolators remain somewhat limited. However, each individual is discussed at the weekly safety intervention meeting.

4.3.5 There were eight serious incidents which the Board monitored and considered to be well managed. The majority of these involved prisoners going at height, (this can come in many forms including prisoners climbing over railings, up trees or on to roofs). Notably some other occurrences which could have turned into serious incidents were avoided as these were competently de-escalated by staff.

4.4 Use of force

4.4.1 Use of force (UoF) incidents increased from 386 occasions last year to 467 in the current year, an increase of 21%. Some of this increase was due to the dynamics of the population but it can in part also be attributed to a change in the national policy of using rigid bar handcuffs when escorting prisoners. To ensure controlled use of force, incidents were reviewed by senior management on a weekly basis and action taken where appropriate. The safer custody orderly plays a part in talking with prisoners involved in incidents to capture relevant information from the prisoners' perspective.

4.4.2 Most use of force involved the 30-39 year old age group, which correlates with the same age group being involved in the largest number of violent incidents. The main reason recorded for deploying use of force was non-compliance when either relocating a prisoner to his cell or transferring prisoners from one part of the establishment to another.

4.4.3 Batons were drawn three times but not used. PAVA³, an incapacitant spray, was drawn eight times and used on three occasions, which virtually replicates last year's figures. Activation of body worn video cameras decreased from 70% to 56% which is of concern, as this facility provides evidence for both prisoners and staff to validate how incidents are handled.

³ PAVA, or pelargonic acid vanillylamide, is a synthetic pepper spray.

4.4.4 The Board attended the monthly UoF meeting as an independent observer, where CCTV and body worn video camera footage is routinely reviewed. Overall, use of force incidents appeared to be proportionate and controlled.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

4.5.1 Disruption meetings were held bi-weekly to pull all the strands of physical security together to minimise the flow of substances across the site. However, illicit items, in particular the ingress and availability of illicit drugs, remains a significant challenge.

4.5.2 Searches and scanning of personnel and items are carried out at the entrance to the prison. However, resourcing the enhanced gate security (EGS) proved difficult at times due to recruitment issues and sickness absence.

4.5.3 The main drugs of concern are Spice (a chemical compound that mimics the effects of the active ingredient in cannabis) and cannabis. The banning of all liquids unless they are factory sealed has gone some way to closing a possible ingress route, as have the changes to seating arrangements in the visits hall and photocopying of handwritten mail.

4.5.4 The Board has concerns about gates and doors being left unlocked on a regular basis. This issue was identified in the independent review of progress by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons in April 2025 and incidents continued to occur throughout the year.

4.5.5 Having an extensive perimeter fence surrounded by farmland and public footpaths makes it relatively easy for throw overs (where people from outside the prison throw parcels containing illicit items over the walls, which are then picked up by prisoners). The use of drones of increased sophistication, whilst reduced from previous years, still continues. Joint working with the police resulted in four arrests in the last twelve months.

4.5.6 To detect illicit items, targeted cell searches increased by 16% from last year, with an average of 22 per month taking place. All searches followed intelligence. During the year, the following were seized from prisoners:

- Mobile phones: 57 (51% decrease)
- Weapons: 115 (89% increase)
- Illegal drugs: 236 (61% increase)
- Illegally prison-brewed alcohol ("hooch"): 86 (16% increase)

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

5.1.1 Government Facilities Services Limited (GFSL) carries out the statutory compliance, required by law, to ensure that a rolling programme of maintenance is scheduled with weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual deadlines. Vandalism to cells which required immediate attention, insufficient staff and a backlog of work meant there were delays in completing many jobs during the reporting period.

5.1.2 The number of GFSL managers and workers fluctuated during the year, but with management staff changes at the beginning of 2026, it is hoped for a steady improvement. The working relationship between the prison management and GFSL has improved during the year. There were insufficient numbers of electricians and carpenters throughout the period and the slow vetting process due to national backlogs for all applicants added to the delays in meeting targets. In addition, six Clean, Rehabilitative, Enabling and Decent (CRED) prisoners carry out essential repairs and are managed by GFSL. Their work plays an important role and is highly valued.

5.1.3 There were 37 wing and serverly cleaners. They requested training, but Milton Keynes College dropped the course due to lack of a tutor. They are looking at producing a 'Cleaning Pack' that men can do in cell which should fulfil Health and Safety obligations.

5.1.4 There are 370 single cells and 71 doubles in the estate. The prison was not designed with older or disabled prisoners in mind and there are only six cells suitable for wheelchair users (none on the induction wing) and, with an increasingly elderly and frail population, this is of concern.

5.1.5 The first night cells continue to cause concern despite a marginal improvement during the year. Monitoring checks by the Board revealed an inconsistent standard of hygiene in most of the cells, inadequate furnishings and at times windows lacking glass behind the grilles, with temporary Perspex sheets usually in place. Many cells were in need of repainting and often windows were stuck permanently open or closed. Residential compacts which should list the contents of the cell plus its condition, as agreed by both officer and prisoner, were often partially complete or at times left blank and unsigned.

5.1.6 Many prisoners complain about cells which are too hot in summer and too cold in winter and for older prisoners this can be a particular concern. Heaters were provided during the cold weather and fans during the heatwave, but the poor quality of many of the window structures and mechanisms remains a problem. The standard of cleaning on the wings varied and complaints amongst wing cleaners continued regarding the lack of appropriate equipment and cleaning products available to them.

5.1.7 Prisoners continue to be grateful for the in-cell phones and laptops. The former provides essential access to family and friends, while being able to choose menus, arrange appointments and submit canteen requests via the laptops give prisoners a degree of control in their lives. Laptops also provide them with a substantial amount of information from within the prison.

5.1.8 The Board made weekly visits throughout the reporting period either to the kitchens or to observe the distribution of lunch on a wing. In May 2025 the allowance

of £3.01 per prisoner per day was increased to £3.12, but in real terms this was a decrease given the significant food inflation. The catering manager confirmed she was over budget and was spending £3.43 per prisoner. Bidfood supply all frozen, fresh and dry goods with produce from Farms and Gardens boosting the menus, principally with salad produce and vegetables for soup.

5.1.9 The Board was repeatedly told by prisoners that the portion sizes were too meagre. Prisoners receive two cold meals a day plus a hot meal, with additional soup at lunchtime from Monday to Thursday. The latter was introduced in April 2025, often using vegetables from Farms and Gardens. Take-up has improved during the reporting period.

5.1.10 Provision for special diets and religious/cultural occasions was generally observed to be good. Last year there were 12 vegans requiring food boxes to be made up daily by the catering manager and 17 prisoners requiring special meals. In February, a new national menu was implemented, based on a four-week cycle and providing 2,500 calories a day. Red meat, ultra-processed foods, sugar and salt have been reduced while increasing the provision of fruit, vegetables and plant-based options. Response to the new menus has been mixed, but the addition of freshly baked rolls has been greeted enthusiastically. Meals are suitable for all dietary requirements, and the only addition is the supply of soya milk and multi vitamins to vegans. Healthcare emails the catering manager with an up-to-date list of prisoners' allergies.

5.1.11 Kitchen equipment was reasonably reliable, but the supply of gas was lost three times, the worst occasion being for two days in February.

5.1.12 Prisoners can use their own funds to buy items from their canteen provided by DHL. Prisoners complain that canteen prices have increased and are not matched by the same increase in wages.

5.1.13 The clothing store continues to provide an excellent service, maintaining a reliable supply of clean clothing, overalls and bedding. HMP Leyhill took back indefinitely the weekly collection and return of laundry in April 2025. All bio-washing takes place on site and a system of salvaging discarded bedding and clothing from recycling has resulted in a saving of £12,049.02 during the reporting period. There are washing machines on the wings for prisoners' own clothes.

5. Segregation

5.2.1 The CSU has eight segregation cells, a constant watch cell and a special accommodation cell.

5.2.2 During the year, 196 prisoners were accommodated in the CSU, a significant increase from the previous year's figure of 104. This number includes some particularly challenging individuals, described by one of the governors as 'dramatically more unwell' than in previous years; transfer to a secure mental hospital would provide the best outcome for these prisoners, but the lack of spaces and the high threshold for admission results in few being allocated such places.

5.2.3 Sixty-nine prisoners arrived in the CSU with an open ACCT (a threefold increase on the previous year) and a further 19 had one opened while there. However, there was a pleasing reduction in self-harm; there were 38 incidents, affecting 21 different prisoners.

5.2.4 Well over a third (76) of these prisoners were transferred directly from the CSU to other prisons. An Independent Review of Progress in April 2025, carried out by HMIP (His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons), following a full inspection the previous year, stated 'prisoner perception was that poor behaviour would often be rewarded by gaining a transfer out of the prison'. The Board too is concerned that this may act as a driver for those seeking transfer out of HMP Erlestoke to behave in a way that will result in a move to the CSU and onwards to another prison. Gang related issues and non-associates for a range of reasons are genuine threats to individuals resulting in necessary transfers; others are transferred to avoid relocation by force (which may result in significant damage to and the loss of a cell) or because their accommodation in the CSU is reaching the 42 day limit, beyond which their continued segregation must be authorised at regional level. In all, 19 prisoners remained in the CSU for more than 42 days, nearly four times that of the previous year.

5.2.5 Prisoners were put on constant watch on 14 separate occasions, compared to 22 last year. The average stay was just over three days, with the longest duration being a week.

5.2.6 The constant watch cell remains a source of considerable alarm for the Board. It is inappropriately located in the CSU, has a hidden corner, is poorly lit and has a door that prevents good visibility unless the officer on watch is standing. While the Minister allocated funding to refurbish the cell during this financial year, the sum was inadequate and the work could not be commissioned. Two of the new houseblocks (due to open in early 2028) will have dedicated constant observation cells.

5.2.7 Each prisoner in the CSU is regularly reviewed by a governor to ensure this remains the appropriate location for them. These reviews are at an allocated time each week, which has greatly helped the Board's ability to attend (as it has for other key attendees such as healthcare and the chaplaincy). The Board considers that these reviews are carried out with thought and empathy, with the prisoner being given plenty of time to articulate their issues and concerns. The corresponding paperwork can be variable in quality; the Board has observed instances where passages are cut and pasted inaccurately from other reviews, and the targets set are frequently generic and lack focus.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

5.3.1 Throughout the reporting year, staffing has been problematic, impacting many areas of prison life. The target figure for Band 3 officers is 136 full time equivalents (FTEs). Those in post at the end of the year numbered 123 individual officers or 119.65 FTEs. The 'boots on the ground' figure (the number available due to the removal of temporary promotions, long term sickness, restricted duties etc.) was 97.1 FTEs. The situation is not expected to improve significantly in the near future; while new staff are being successfully recruited, vetting is taking up to 40 weeks, resulting in long delays and prospective staff seeking employment elsewhere.

5.3.2 Sickness absence continues to be high. The target for all directly employed staff is 9% but at HMP Erlestoke it ran at just over 17% for the reporting year. The Governor is putting continued and considerable energy into its reduction, including tightening up checking procedures as well as providing training for senior managers around 'difficult conversations' and holding absentees to account. By the year end, there were some signs that this was starting to pay dividends.

5.3.3 Staff-prisoner relationships are generally observed to be positive, despite a slight increase in the number of applications to the Board around concerns in this area. The healthcare survey (see 6.1.1) evidenced the real empathy that many officers have for those in their charge.

5.3.4 Key working is particularly affected by lack of staff. An overall completion rate of 57% for key working sessions (3,720 out of an expectation of 6,504) reflects the restricted regime running for eight months of the reporting year. In this situation, the focus is on running sessions for the priority cohort, a group of up to 40 prisoners, comprising those identified as complex, including those on ACCTs and CSIPs, self-isolators, red flagged IPP prisoners and referrals from the drug recovery wing.

5.3.5 An informal survey of 27 men across the estate towards the end of the reporting year resulted in 21 saying they had contact with their keyworkers and, in the majority of instances, valued the sessions. The remainder had had no contact, sometimes for a prolonged period.

5.3.6 Twelve isolators from the priority cohort were also checked; eight had been seen within the relevant timeframe. Overall, in the last six months of the reporting period there was a 64% completion rate for key working sessions for this important cohort; a further 15% had been transferred or released before a session could take place.

5.3.7 Following a significant change in approach towards the end of last year, the prison council process – a series of weekly meetings in which matters are escalated from wing to governor level - has continued to be a subject of debate.

5.3.8 There have been many hurdles to overcome, including lack of expertise in writing minutes at wing level, lack of engagement from both staff and prisoners, more experienced prison council members leaving the prison and a lack of momentum resulting in the same issues repeatedly coming back to the table. During the year however, positive changes have taken place, with an increase in accountability of senior managers; new council members volunteering, notably from the more recent and younger arrivals; council comments on draft pay and incentives policy framework policies have resulted in constructive feedback and communication has improved.

5.3.9 Boxes have now been installed on all wings for prisoners to raise concerns to prison council and the format of the meeting schedule has been adapted. This new approach is still bedding in and it is too early to identify whether this amended process will result in better outcomes.

5.4 Equality and diversity

5.4.1 Equality and diversity monitoring is led by an inspirational individual, well respected by prisoners and staff alike.

5.4.2 Mirroring the observations in last year's report there is an excellent system in place which captures statistical information, identifying departures from the expected across a whole range of activities and circumstances. This information is used to identify areas of potential inequality or discrimination. Statistics gathered in relation to complaints, adjudications, numbers of enhanced prisoners, numbers of orderlies and the like can show whether one particular group based on age, ethnicity or any of the protected characteristics is potentially the subject of discrimination. This

information is then discussed at monthly meetings. It is good to be able to observe that unlike in previous years there is now a greater attempt to follow up divergencies from the expected norm, with more in-depth analysis.

5.4.3 This year there were 69 Discrimination Incident Reporting Forms (DIRFs) lodged (last year's total was 70). Three complaints were upheld in favour of complaining prisoners, two relating to race and one relating to disability. Although hitherto all completed DIRF investigations were sent for independent assessment by the Zahid Mubarek Trust, this process has been paused due to contract changes with the deputy governor carrying out the quality assurance process. It is hoped that the previous arrangement can be restored so as to furnish the complaint process with a visibly independent element.

5.4.4 Virtually every month in the reporting year has seen a diversity-based event. These events have been thoughtfully prepared and well supported. The events have included a highly successful cultural awareness event delivered to staff in April 2025 during a staff training day with volunteers representing a range of cultures, religions and backgrounds with stalls covering a multitude of topics, a Black History month, Gypsy and Traveller events, young adults events including a popular and well attended young adult Olympics event in June and LGBTQ+ topics including an LGBTQ+ history month in February.

5.4.5 There is a team of prisoner diversity representatives. One such representative is a paid prison orderly dealing with adult prisoners and two are young adults paid as prison orderlies concentrating on the young adult prison population. In addition, there are a number of prisoners who volunteer their services unpaid. It is estimated that over half of the prisoners arriving at the prison have a disability of one sort or another. A diversity representative identifies these prisoners at reception and the details are passed on to the representative who will be charged with making themselves available should assistance be required. The Board wonders whether there is scope for recruiting more paid orderlies as opposed to relying on unpaid volunteers.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

5.5.1 The chaplaincy's role of providing support to prisoners and staff of all faiths and none, is a key part of prison life. New prisoners continue to be seen within 24 hours of arrival, those in the CSU are seen daily, prisoners on ACCTs and those isolating are seen at least once a week. Most importantly, the chapel continues to provide a quiet place of reflection and calmness for both staff and prisoners.

5.5.2 The chapel and multi-faith room are used for religious festivals and timetabled weekly sessions for bible and Islamic studies, morning worship, meditation, prayers and pastoral support. The chapel also hosts Changing Tunes sessions (a music rehabilitation programme) for both beginners and band members.

5.5.3 The chaplaincy team includes Muslim, Anglican, Roman Catholic, Quaker and Hindu members and they are able to draw on support from other prisons for other faith representatives to support Jewish or Pagan prisoners. In practice, members of the chaplaincy team provide cover for those prisoners who do not have a specific faith lead in the prison. A new Anglican chaplain starts in June 2026 and recruitment for a part time Free Church chaplain is underway.

5.5.4 The chaplaincy team has a significant role in providing support to all prisoners when experiencing personal or family issues, including family bereavement and terminal illness, where the chaplaincy team can arrange an escorted visit, for example, enabling a prisoner to visit a dying relative, or on-line attendance at a funeral.

5.5.5 During the year asbestos was identified in some loose tiles in the chapel floor. Any risk is being managed and a replacement floor will be installed in due course.

5.6 Incentives schemes

5.6.1 The incentives scheme in place was reviewed by senior management in the early part of the reporting year in order to focus more on acknowledging positive behaviours. After several iterations, a local incentives strategy was published in October 2025. However, in February 2026, certain elements of the strategy were changed again. At the time of writing, the revised strategy had not been published. With these many revisions, it has not been possible to evaluate the impact on prisoners. Therefore the Board plans to monitor implementation and subsequent outcomes over the following year.

5.7 Complaints

5.7.1 Over the reporting year, 994 complaints were received, a significant drop on the previous year (1,093 complaints). On average, there were 57 unique complainants each month (again a reduction), representing around 11% of the prison population. Just under a quarter of complaints were upheld each month.

5.7.2 Residential issues continue to generate frequent complaints and are those most often upheld. Sometimes these are specific to a period – such as multiple complaints about high in-cell temperatures and lack of fan provision during July – but poorly executed cell clearances, resulting in lost and stolen property, are a recurring theme throughout the year.

5.7.3 Complaints about reception, around the processing of parcels, problems with orders, restrictions on particular items and delays in being able to attend reception to collect property sent later by a previous prison, increased during the year. While efforts have been made by management to resolve these issues, the trend continued until the end of the reporting year.

5.7.4 Once again, the Board commends the efforts made by the complaints clerk to ensure timely and effective responses to complainants.

5.8 Property

5.8.1. As reported last year, cell clearances are still not being done effectively with the result that prisoners' property is lost or stolen when they move cell, especially when this involves quick transfer to the CSU. The complaints process highlights the problems created by reception not receiving copies of cell clearance documentation, which makes the picture confusing for both prisoners and staff alike when trying to resolve missing property issues

5.8.2 Significant issues have arisen during the year for prisoners awaiting property from reception, either from their arrival at HMP Erlestoke, or through parcels being sent in, for instance, for birthdays. Staff shortages across the estate have resulted in reception staff being deployed elsewhere, preventing them from processing property,

which requires the oversight of two officers. By the end of the reporting year, successful attempts had been made by the prison to address this (by, for example, detailing extra staff at weekends) and the backlog had significantly reduced.

5.8.3 Each prisoner is entitled to a courtesy key which allows him to lock his cell when he leaves it. However, there has been a longstanding issue of such keys being lost and not replaced, resulting in cells being left unsecured and property being stolen. The Governor has sought to address the issue with the Government National Distribution Centre at Branston, which supplies the keys, but due to national policy, progress has been slow and, for example, in February, one wing with 90 prisoners had just four keys available.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

6.1.1 Healthcare survey

- The Board had been aware for some time of dissatisfaction with healthcare expressed by some prisoners and uniformed staff. In an attempt to see where perceived problems lay, a survey was carried out involving 45 prisoners of varying ages and ethnicities randomly chosen across all units (except the CSU), 22 officers from all units including the CSU, again randomly chosen, and finally seven healthcare staff from a range of disciplines.
- The survey consisted of a series of set questions focusing on the perceptions of healthcare by prisoners and officers, both positive and negative. Seven healthcare staff were then interviewed and asked to comment on those areas where dissatisfaction had been expressed.
- Many prisoners reported positive experiences describing healthcare staff as helpful, very good, very professional, considerate, interested, polite and respectful and gave examples of excellent outcomes. Officers too had words of praise – ‘fantastic people doing difficult jobs, but not enough of them’, said one officer.
- However, negative attitudes outweighed positives, especially when it came to the officers. Complaints by prisoners focused on perceived difficulty in communication with alleged delays in response to applications of particular concern, albeit that current data suggests that all queries are answered within seven days. Difficulties and delays with regard to medication were reported and queues and delays when attending the healthcare building was another area of dissatisfaction. Officers complained of the alleged lack of flexibility from nurses, and healthcare staff complained of unreasonable demands from officers requiring immediate response to any and every healthcare related query without regard to competing demands on healthcare time.
- Healthcare agreed that the situation with regard to the dispensing of medication was unsatisfactory (see 6.1.2).
- With the small size of the survey sample, the results were not suitable for scientific analysis. Nevertheless, the exercise was valuable in revealing areas of discontent, some of which may be susceptible to change. Principal among these was the fact that much of the discord between officers and healthcare staff arose from the fact that on occasions neither appeared to recognise the operational imperatives of the other. Thus, officers might demand the provision of medication for a prisoner at a time when the pharmacy could not reasonably be opened, whilst healthcare might demand the presence of a prisoner at a time when a wing could not provide an escort. The head of healthcare made a presentation to officers during a study day and it is hoped that similar initiatives might take place in order to promote a greater level of understanding and cooperation between uniform staff and healthcare staff.

6.1.2 There are on occasions unacceptable delays in the dispensing of medication. The ‘pharmacy’ at the prison is in fact only a Medication Administration Point with the actual pharmacy based in Bristol. During the whole reporting year difficulties in recruitment has meant that the unit has been understaffed leading to an impact on efficiency. Delays occur in terms of the delivery of medication, and where legislation

requires an actual doctor's signature on a prescription as opposed to one electronically transmitted, it can take over a week for a newly prescribed drug to be dispensed. Further delays occur when a prisoner who is being transferred arrives at the prison without their medication. Although not a frequent occurrence it happens with sufficient regularity to cause concern. The problems with delays have been mitigated to an extent by increasing pharmacy collections from twice to three times each week.

6.1.3 After many years' delay the healthcare roof has been replaced and redecoration and new carpets have much improved the appearance of the building's interior, save for the waiting area which continues to suffer from acts of vandalism. However, the healthcare facility as a whole is still not fit for purpose with inadequate space for it to fully fulfil its function. For instance, a large cupboard was recently emptied of its contents in order to be used as a mental health consulting room (see 6.3.3). Inadequate as the building is at the present time, the problem will become considerably more acute when the planned expansion of the prison has been completed.

6.1.4 The problems with the external telephone lines in the healthcare building, which were raised in last year's report, continue, with engineers still unable to isolate the problem. The severity of the issue varies from day to day, with staff having to fall back on email as a more efficient means of communication.

6.1.5 Last year the Board reported a dramatic improvement in the attendance of healthcare at first ACCT reviews with a 79% attendance record as opposed to less than 40% the previous year. As a result of an outstanding commitment from the mental healthcare team attendance has risen to 94%. Intelligent cooperation between prison and healthcare staff has meant that first ACCT reviews wherever possible are scheduled for times when healthcare staff are available with only two reviews missed as a result of being scheduled for outside normal healthcare working hours.

6.2 Physical healthcare

6.2.1 Throughout the reporting year there have been times when healthcare staff have been stretched to unacceptable limits. This has been due to two problems, namely staff recruiting difficulties and the scourge of drug related medical emergencies.

6.2.2 During the year staff recruitment has been hampered by unacceptable delays (20 weeks or more in some cases) while prospective appointees go through the prison vetting process. This on occasions has led to successful applicants taking up posts elsewhere. It is fortunate that a reliable resource in the form of bank nurses has been available to take the strain and healthcare management is to be congratulated in avoiding the need to invoke emergency procedures with a well-functioning business continuity plan activated when necessary, so as to prioritise critical duties. At such times all teams provide support for the administration of medication in order to free primary care nurses to deal with emergencies.

6.2.3 Throughout the year nursing efficiency has been impeded due to an unacceptably high level of illicit drug-related medical emergencies. During the year nurses were required to attend 1,487 such emergencies, an average of 123 per month. However, behind the average, peaks are hidden including June when there

were 344 such emergencies, July when there were 230 and August when there were 165. The escalating drug problem in the prison threatens the health of not only the illicit drug users themselves but also the efficient administration of healthcare to the remaining prison population.

6.2.4 Although hospital outpatient appointments are allocated with a waiting time broadly equivalent to those experienced in the community, some prisoners suffer unacceptable further delays in being seen. This is due to the fact that healthcare is only allocated 10 escorts per week. Since emergency escorts are given priority, it is not unknown for a routine hospital appointment to be postponed on two or more occasions. Further, on 21 occasions during the reporting year, hospital appointments were cancelled due to a lack of officers to act as escorts and five due to officers arriving late.

6.2.5 There are three GPs at the prison delivering four sessions a week. The waiting time for appointments is generally five weeks and the target time of six weeks has not been breached during the year.

6.2.6 Officer support and supervision within healthcare has proved to be of variable quality dependent upon which officers are assigned on a particular day. Some officers fail to enforce discipline or properly supervise the dispensing of medication, a problem viewed so seriously that it currently features as an item on the healthcare risk register.

6.2.7 Official figures document 171 queries delivered to healthcare with only four complaints. The Board detect an element of sleight of hand here. What in the mind of a prisoner amounts to a complaint is treated in the first instance by healthcare as a query only achieving the status of a complaint if the prisoner continues to express dissatisfaction after the initial 'query' has been answered.

6.2.8 The out of hours service has worked well during the year. When healthcare staff contact the service, they are able to speak directly and promptly with a clinician which is highly valued.

6.2.9 There is a healthcare forum which is held monthly and is led by two members of the healthcare team. Each wing is represented. Further, there is a healthcare representative from the prison council who meets regularly with healthcare staff. Both initiatives designed to facilitate communication and feedback.

6.2.10 Dental care is provided by a universally admired dentist who delivers four sessions a week. An initial dental appointment is provided within eight weeks and the previous delays occasioned by failed equipment have been eliminated.

6.3 Mental health

6.3.1 During the year, for the first time, full recruitment was achieved within mental health, although the high level of mental ill health in the prison justifies greater provision over and above the level currently commissioned.

6.3.2 A psychiatrist continues to visit the prison once a week on a Tuesday.

6.3.3 Facilities for the mental health team are sadly lacking within the Healthcare building. As has been noted a storage cupboard within mental health has been repurposed for use as a consulting room and space for the team to carry out its function efficiently is at a premium.

6.3.4 The head of mental health care has taken on the role of deputy head of healthcare. Healthcare representatives on ACCT reviews are largely from the mental healthcare department. It is largely through the commitment of the head of mental healthcare that the attendance rate at reviews has been so radically improved.

6.4 Social care

6.4.1 The memorandum of understanding with Wiltshire County Council written with a view to the local authority fulfilling its social care obligations under the Care Act 2014, is well supported by the Council. The same cannot always be said for the prison. Each month there is a meeting held between representatives from the Council and the prison. In the reporting year prison management has cancelled meetings at very short notice and on occasions, when meetings are held, notably absent are members of the prison management and representatives from healthcare (mandatory attendees), albeit that the highly efficient member of staff responsible for administration is invariably present. Frustration has been expressed on behalf of the Council about the lack of communication with the prison in general and the lack of engagement with social care issues. At a recent meeting one attendee commented 'the establishment doesn't seem motivated'.

6.4.2 Currently there are no prisoners in receipt of a social care package but the Board is aware of difficulties in respect of security clearance which occurred in the previous reporting year when carers were required to carry out duties within the prison.

6.4.3 There is a shortage of 'buddies' to assist disabled prisoners with daily living (other than personal care). The buddy system identifies prisoners who are judged as suitable and who volunteer to carry out the role. Training for aspiring buddies has not been available for some time. Further, there is currently a shortage of wheelchair orderlies and again no training is being offered. The danger of having prisoners with no training pushing wheelchair users across what, in many places in the prison, is rough terrain is both present and obvious.

6.4.4 A ramp has been manufactured by prison industries, and was delivered to the prison in December 2025, to enable wheelchair users to access the education block. However, it is extremely large and there is no financial provision for its installation; therefore, alternatives are being explored. With no other means of access, at the present time these prisoners are still being prevented from attending the education block, which is in breach of the Equality Act 2010.

6.4.5 In the view of the Board, HMP Erlestoke remains an unsuitable location for long term elderly or frail prisoners, due to a lack of appropriate cells and facilities and no access to 24-hour healthcare on site.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

6.5.1 The term 'regime' describes the prison routine and structure of the day, which includes time in the open air, time out of cell, access to showers and social interaction as well as enabling prisoners to access services such as healthcare and legal visits, and activities including education, work, gym, and enrichment activities.

6.5.2 For much of the year, staffing shortages have resulted in a much reduced regime (designated 'amber/red'). While the prison has worked hard to ensure that

key elements of the day, such as education, work, healthcare and visits are unaffected, the time out of cell is significantly impacted, especially at weekends.

6.5.3 This 'flip-flop' weekend regime has been in place since August. Prisoners are either unlocked in the mornings (10.45am -12.30pm) on Saturday and Sunday, or in the afternoons (3.45pm-5.30pm) resulting in long periods locked in their cells. This leads to considerable dissatisfaction and regular unfavourable comparisons to the regime in category B prisons.

6.5.4 All prisoners have access to gym sessions totalling 3.25 hours per week, which include specific sessions for enhanced prisoners, young adults and those over 50. The physical education department is open seven days a week, 365 days a year, including Christmas Day.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

6.6.1 One wing (Silbury A) is dedicated to drug and alcohol recovery. Capacity has been slightly reduced to 64 places as two cells are currently used for disabled prisoners. All prisoners are undergoing or have undergone Smart Recovery courses facilitated by the Substance Misuse Officers who run and deliver the course weekly. Initiated in the previous reporting period, the selection of prisoners for this wing is based on those who are fully committed to the process and are not attending the Opiate Substitution Therapy (OST). Prisoners who become disincentivised can be and are removed from the wing within the constraints of cell availability elsewhere in the prison. This level of scrutiny is appreciated by those prisoners genuinely working to overcome their addictions.

6.6.2 To assist in this process, three dedicated substance misuse officers continue to provide an excellent series of programmes and activities that reduce the time and opportunity for relapse. In addition, there are a number of prisoner mentors who help those in need of additional help as a result of both external and internal pressures.

6.6.3 The Incentivised Substance Free Living (ISFL) wing continues in Avebury. 69% of the prisoners on this wing have been through the drug recovery process and so are better able to support each other to remain clean. They have their own allotment area to manage and also have a number of mentors to encourage and assist them.

6.7 Soft skills

6.7.1 In addition to a Creative Writing course, which was run by the prison's author in residence and once again funded by the Friends of Erlestoke Prison, a second course, entitled 'Writing for Wellbeing' and funded by Public Health, targeted a different group of prisoners. An anthology of writings from the Creative Writing course was launched in June, at an event that featured readings by some of the prisoners who had contributed. The literary festival, 'Penned Up', ran throughout May with 20 speakers addressing prisoner audiences.

6.7.2 The Friends of Erlestoke Prison continued to run weekly origami sessions and an art class, whilst also organising a textiles session on one morning a week, from January 2026, helping in part to replace the provision offered prior to the education cuts. They also funded the introduction of two bee hives to the estate in Farms and Gardens, which are overseen by a local beekeeping society working with the prisoners during the spring, summer and early autumn. The Changing Tunes charity offered music sessions. The Koestler Awards, for arts in the criminal justice system,

attracted 16 entries; three achieved an award. An art exhibition, funded by the Friends of Erlestoke Prison and featuring the work of some of the prisoners, was held at a local gallery in May.

6.7.3 Greener on the Outside of Prisons (GOOP) established itself on two mornings a week; it has seen positive improvements in the well-being of those prisoners taking part. Visits from Therapy Dogs Nationwide have been well received by the prisoners, with positive changes in behaviour detected in those who have participated. Launchpad, the platform on prisoners' laptops, continues to be used very effectively to provide in-cell videos on as wide a range of topics as possible. Events associated with Pride, Black History Month and Travellers' Days were highlighted and celebrated.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

7.1.1 It has been a challenging year since the change in contract in October 2025, due to an alteration in the budget formula which resulted in a 34% reduction of teaching hours, compared to the median reduction of 22% for the 94 other prisons provided as a comparison by HMPPS. The cuts resulted in the loss of three courses, in horticulture, IT and textiles, as well as the abandonment of plans to reintroduce a business studies course, and the reduction of staff hours available for Outreach in the prison. The change also came with a new version of the management system, which did not allow reports to be generated for nearly five months; a new computer system for the prisoners, which took time to configure, and a new online assessment process, which cannot be used by those prisoners who are unable to access the education building or who do not want to leave the wing.

7.1.2 The Board feels that the new contract is very prescriptive and restrictive with little flexibility. It can be difficult to catch up any teaching hours lost, which does not benefit the learners.

7.1.3 Whilst the Board feels that things are now settling down, it has been a very challenging six months. Only three weeks were available for discussions with Milton Keynes College over the new eighteen-month contract, and no conversations regarding redundancies could start before the commencement of the new contract at the start of October. This was very unsettling for all staff involved both before and after the change.

7.1.4 The department lost both an English and maths tutor during the year; the former was covered by two occasional workers sharing the role, which was not ideal. In addition, there have been delays to recruitment caused by the change of contract and lengthy pre-employment checks. The awarding body has also temporarily withdrawn direct claim status from Milton Keynes College in English until July which has led to a backlog of results. Overall results have thus been mixed over the last six months, but now that the situation has stabilised, it is hoped that they will start to improve.

7.1.5 The IRP in April 2025, concentrated on the main recommendations from the previous year's Ofsted report which had considered that the overall effectiveness of the education, skills and work provision was inadequate. The Board was pleased to note that improvements had been made in the quality of education, the allocation of 'prisoners based on their needs and aspirations', and the identification of suitable employment pathways at induction; all had improved to 'reasonable'. Whilst it was disappointing that no improvement had been made in 'Reading', there have been some steps taken during the year to rectify this situation. These have included the introduction of a 'Reading Ambassador', who visits fortnightly to work with the prisoners on different wings, and the establishment of an emergent readers' book club by members of the Shannon Trust. However, the Board considers that more still needs to be done.

7.1.6 The year ended with an internal Development Quality Review by Milton Keynes College. Whilst the results were encouraging overall, with a curriculum that 'broadly reflects the needs of the population', there are still areas that require improvement, particularly in terms of attendance and engagement.

7.1.7 There are seven clear pathways in catering and hospitality, construction, waste management and trades, horticulture, health, fitness and support, retail, logistics and warehousing, inclusion and support and retired and enrichment. These pathways have been updated and adapted in line with the relevant course changes over the past twelve months, and they are now embedded effectively as part of the allocations' process.

7.1.8 The library contract, which had been held for many years by Wiltshire Council, was terminated in May 2025. Whilst some continuity was achieved by it being taken on at that point by Milton Keynes College, there were a number of problems associated with the changeover, meaning that staff were required to revert to pen and paper during the period of two separate alterations to the library management system. The Board considers that the library staff have coped admirably with the changes. One of the real disappointments is that the termination of the contract with Wiltshire Council has meant that books can no longer be borrowed from other libraries in the county; instead they must be purchased from the allocated budget, and decisions need to be made regarding the value of each purchase, some of which might only be read once. All wings continue to have a dedicated time slot for the library, and Shannon Trust mentors are encouraged to take their mentees to the library. Regular quizzes and competitions are run by the library staff

7.1.9 Despite a strong management drive to improve the situation, attendance at classes and vocational opportunities remains just below the target of 72%. Whilst the Board hopes these figures will improve over the coming year, it has witnessed a definite focus across the prison to raise attendance. One specific area that still requires further work is associated with ensuring that prisoners reach education. This includes making sure that they leave the wings before a session and that those who have an appointment, typically at healthcare or OMU, are taken to education either before or after; neither of these are currently happening on a regular basis. In addition, the allocations team has been very stretched during the year, and this has meant that the process has not always been as successful, or efficient, as it might be in terms of allocating the right people to the right places. The attendance figure has also been affected by the fact that, under the new contract, prisoners are registered on the day before they are due to start a course, meaning that if there has been an error in the allocation system, the prisoner is recorded as absent and then subsequently as a withdrawal. Under the previous contract there was a three-day period, after the course had started and before registrations were formalised, in order to fix such problems.

7.1.10 The education department offered courses in English, maths, art, art enrichment and ceramics. Between April and October 2025 there was an overall success rate of 87% in English and 66% in maths, but these have fallen to 46% and 39% respectively under the new contract.

7.1.11 Twelve prisoners were enrolled on distance learning courses with the Open University and a further ten with courses offered by the Prison Education Trust. Seven prisoners participated in an Unlocking Criminology module, alongside students from Bath Spa University, with two combined sessions taking place at HMP Erlestoke. Whilst the prison maintained its subscription with Way2Learn, enabling prisoners to self-study in their cells, the Board is disappointed to note that this was terminated at the end of March 2026 owing to budget cuts.

7.1.12 The prison has continued to benefit from the work of a volunteer linked to the Friends of Erlestoke Prison, who has filmed 133 sessions for Storybook Dads during the year; the overall number will soon pass 500.

7.2 Vocational training work

7.2.1 Accredited vocational training courses were delivered by Milton Keynes College in forklift, hospitality and food safety, peer mentoring, carpentry and joinery and multi-skills. The multi-skills course has been particularly well received by the prisoners.

7.2.2 Vocational work opportunities were offered in bulk hardware, recycling, textiles, farms and gardens, health and wellbeing and bicycle maintenance (the last of which ran until December 2025). There were 110 places available in these roles, which is roughly the same as the previous year. Attendance has improved this year, typically running at about 85%; this appears to be due to improved communication with allocations, more focused discussions at the weekly allocations' meeting and therefore an overall increase in the retention of workers.

7.2.3 The Board has been particularly pleased to note that qualifications have been introduced in health and wellbeing during the year and are ready to be extended to textiles. It is also great to see that Clink Gardens was introduced during the year, offering qualifications in horticulture. In addition, all designated industrial workshops have reading nooks, with books associated with that particular industry as well as ones that can be read for pleasure.

7.2.4 In addition to vocational employment, prisoners continue to be engaged as orderlies (trusted prisoners who provide services that contribute to the running of the prison), kitchen workers, wing workers, peer mentors, cleaners, serverly workers, laundry workers, wing painters, recycling champions, garden guardians and neurodiversity representatives. During the year these roles have been increased with the addition of positions with GFSL, and activity orderlies. At the end of the year there were 58 prisoners who had not been allocated to any purposeful activity; 49 were full-time unemployed, one is unable to work, and eight are retired. This represents a slight increase overall on last year.

7.3 Offender management, progression

7.3.1 The Offender Management Unit (OMU) has been almost fully staffed this year with a further Prison Offender Manager (POM) due to be in place shortly.

7.3.2 Further changes to the sentencing criteria have been introduced especially relating to FTR 48 and 56 (fixed term recalls). Each of these entails a review of most prisoners to identify all potentially affected by these alterations. The Temporary Presumptive Recategorization Scheme (TPRS) has also changed, the main effect being for those who can now qualify for category D (open conditions) in a shorter time. All these amendments, often as a result of the search for reductions in overcrowding across the whole prison estate, take up considerable time and the increased paperwork means that POMs have less time available to spend face to face with their allocated prisoners.

7.3.3 Other challenges were as follows:

- Transport delays and cancellations have continued to cause unnecessary frustration for those hoping to move to a prison closer to family connections or because of recategorisation. Fourteen prisoners are currently awaiting transfer to category D prisons. Formal queries (applications) by prisoners relating to transfers have almost doubled in the reporting year.
- Applications generated on prisoners' laptops, while a massive help, have increased exponentially, frequently requiring staff to respond to previously answered queries. The OMU received a total of 15,047 applications during the reporting year.
- Parole hearings are longer, including those conducted online, due to increasingly complex cases.
- The case load is currently running at nearly 60 prisoners to each member of staff.

7.3.4 There has been significant change in the accredited offending behaviour programmes available for prisoners during the reporting year. A new national programme, Building Choices, has replaced the three programmes previously run at the prison. The focus during the first half of the year was the run-off of the legacy programmes, with the final cohorts completing Becoming New Me (BNM+), Kaizen IPV and Thinking Skills Programme (TSP). The Board is informed that start and completion targets were met for all three legacy programmes. None were run concurrently with the new Building Choices programme, which commenced in October 2025.

7.3.5 Programme facilitators and treatment managers completed the five-day residential training course for Building Choices, with some also training for Building Choices+, which is for prisoners with learning difficulties. There are Moderate and High intensity strands for both programmes. The Board was informed that having staff trained to deliver all four strands should improve flexibility within the team, enabling members to support each other should the need arise.

7.3.6 At the end of the reporting year the prison was running three strands of the programme: Moderate, High and High+. Moderate+ did not run as planned during the year due to staff recruitment delays, with two staff members awaiting training, two new recruits to be vetted and then trained, one facilitator on maternity leave and one unable to deliver the programme.

7.3.7 Building Choices is designed to help people develop skills for change and future-focused goals, using cognitive behavioural techniques and combining group sessions with one-to-ones. The programme develops awareness and skills in areas such as emotion management, healthy thinking, healthy relationships and sense of purpose. The High intensity pathways include an additional 15 module course, 'Getting Ready'.

7.3.8 The Board understands from both staff and prisoners that Building Choices has been going well generally. Prisoners spoken to by the Board praised the 'hands-on' approach of the facilitators and were largely positive about the outcomes. One prisoner described the course as 'life changing', saying he uses the skills learned to moderate his decisions and behaviour on a daily basis.

7.3.9 As the High intensity strands take 17-25 weeks to complete, at the end of the reporting year only one cohort had completed, with another three cohorts still running. A full cohort of eight participants doing the Moderate strand (10-13 weeks) had also completed.

7.3.10 During the year there were 554 referrals to the prison for accredited programmes. Transfers in were only agreed when a person had been deemed 'eligible', which means they had met the risk scores to access a programmes space. In previous years the Board has reported frustration among prisoners who have been transferred but who had still not been given places on programmes many months after arrival, so it was pleasing to learn that although eligibility for programmes is still assessed through an online selection process, the communication with eligible prisoners has improved.

7.3.11 A motivational chat takes place prior to transfer to ensure the prisoner can make an informed choice. They are also advised that a transfer does not mean immediate access to a programme space, that prioritisation guidelines still apply (ie men with parole or release dates before theirs) and that when they arrive, they will be offered a 'suitability' assessment. Suitability at the point of assessment includes being stable, motivated and ready to engage with an offending behaviour programme.

7.3.12 As one of four prisons offering a Progression Regime (PR), prisoners can be transferred to HMP Erlestoke with the objective of joining PR as part of their sentence plan. Kennet and Imber units, collectively called The View, are designated PR wings. Prisoners on Kennet unit have more association time in the evening where they can access a kitchen to cook. During the year the long awaited 'click and collect' Tesco shop was successfully rolled out for those on the highest tier of PR. This is designed to improve independent living skills and build confidence for life in the community as prisoners budget, meal plan and cook. The wing has reported improved morale with the men coming together to cook and share meals.

7.3.13 The number of prisoners on the PR has fluctuated due to release, transfers, de-selection and resignation. At the end of March 2026 there were almost 80 prisoners involved in the PR, close to maximum capacity. All external referrals are fully screened and accepted prior to transfer to HMP Erlestoke, including a videocall. Healthcare and Security checks are also completed as part of this review. On arrival, they will complete their induction on Silbury B before moving to Imber unit. Outcomes resulted in 14 prisoners being released (six were IPPs) and ten being transferred to open conditions.

7.3.14 About 50% of those on PR are intended to be IPP prisoners; at the year end, there were 19, 25% of the cohort. It has proved challenging to identify IPP prisoners who are suitable candidates for the rigours of the progression regime, which requires self-examination of the risks that their behaviours present in the community and an honest assessment of what needs to change.

7.3.15 The routine of regular meetings involving the prisoners has continued, with external speakers such as Parole Board members bringing useful insight for those on the regime.

7.4 Family contact

7.4.1 Social visits and family days continue to be run by a small team of dedicated staff and volunteers from the Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT). The number of social visits remains at four afternoon sessions per week and each session has a maximum of 24 prisoners. A total of 204 social visit days took place during the reporting year, attended by 6,098 adults and 1,960 children.

7.4.2 There were eight dedicated family days, which bring the prisoners and their families together in a more informal setting, including two for adult only visitors. These were all well attended and received by both prisoners and families. The Board was pleased to observe several family days at which the atmosphere was lively and happy, with various activities and events organised to encourage positive family engagement. A family drama day included the performance of a play written by the men, aided by an external drama facilitator, which elicited a very positive and enthusiastic response from both the participants and their families.

7.4.3 The addition of a volunteer forensic psychology student on a part-time basis to PACT's team has allowed a greater number of one-to-one sessions with prisoners requiring support in various areas such as parenting or relationship skills.

7.4.4 During the reporting year PACT introduced special 'non-social' mornings for men who have no visits or social contact, hoping to reduce any resulting sense of isolation. Food was served and participants played board games, had a quiz and were able to benefit from one-to-one sessions with PACT staff.

7.4.5 A further three family days were organised and funded by the Progression Regime team exclusively for those on the regime.

7.4.6 Secure social video calls are available on four evenings a week. During the reporting period a total of 1,427 social video calls were booked, with 1,251 completed. The Board was informed that staff shortages and technical issues during the reporting year impacted the number of completed video visits due to cancellations at short notice. Prisoners are entitled to two social video calls per month, with those undertaking Listener duties being granted a third as a gesture of thanks for their work. Provision is also made for foreign nationals to have social video calls in morning slots to facilitate contact with family in other time zones.

7.4.7 The Storybook Dads programme, which records men reading stories for their children and is supported by the Friends of Erlestoke Prison charity, remains a popular and positive initiative, providing another valuable strand of family contact.

7.4.8 The prison has appointed a children and families champion whose role covers a wide ambit of responsibilities aimed at supporting, developing and promoting healthy relationships between prisoners and their families. This includes working with families and external agencies, delivering training and staff briefings about the prison's children and families action plan, and monitoring the effectiveness of the provision.

7.5 Resettlement planning

7.5.1 Prisoners due for release continue to receive sound support and assistance to prepare for their release through a well-structured multi-disciplinary approach led by the prison employment lead and the employment hub. There were 321 releases

during the year, and accommodation outcomes on release were good, with just under 96% of prisoners being housed on the first night of release, mainly into approved premises. Employment outcomes are measured at six weeks and six months post-release against targets set annually by HMPPS. The prison's performance data shows this year 19.66% of released prisoners were in employment at six weeks post-release (exceeding the delivery target of 19.48%), with the figure for employment at six months post-release being 33.33%, falling just short of the 34.81% delivery target.

7.5.2 There was no head of reducing reoffending in post for much of the reporting year, which resulted in a lack of strategic leadership and cohesion in this area. Although members of the prison's senior management team covered some key oversight elements of the role, the absence of this position meant a light touch was applied rather than the level of detail required. This included the fact that the prison's multidisciplinary reducing reoffending group, established to provide a regular forum for internal and external stakeholders to monitor, drive forward and critically analyse the prison's provision and outcomes in reducing reoffending, hardly met, resulting in what the Board perceived to be a lack of co-ordination across the resettlement provision generally. The Board was pleased to learn that, going forward into the new reporting year, an appointment has been made into the senior management post.

7.5.3 Some innovative digital services designed to support and map prisoners' skills and work journeys throughout their time in custody were introduced during the reporting year. The launch of HMPPS's Digital Prison Services (DPS) in April last year created an initial challenge for the Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) team as it was found that, across the prison estate, it did not automatically capture all the prisoners' progression data stored on the old system. This meant that prisoners' progression goals and targets during imprisonment had to be re-done individually and, at the date the DPS went live, HMP Erlestoke's IAG had 254 prisoners outstanding. By the end of the reporting year, the IAG team had completed this work and was focusing on updating the progression data for the 140 prisoners listed as exemptions – i.e. those who refused to engage, were isolating, were in the CSU or who didn't want to engage as they already had jobs.

7.5.4 The new digital Learning Work Programmes (LWPs), which replace the previous Personal Learning Plans (PLPs), are tailored to individual prisoners' needs, record all their education and work history in one place, and follow them throughout their prison journey. A significant advantage for the prisoners is that on transfer the need for repeat assessments is eliminated and there are likely to be fewer gaps in their prison history. The prison's IAG reports that LWPs have made it easier to track existing skills and achievements, as well as tailor pathways which build on those skills and lean towards an individual's interests and strengths. They capture a wider number of progression and development areas for each prisoner: overview, history, updates to goals, additional needs, education and training, work and interests, and employability skills (giving ratings for each prisoner in relation to a number of employment-related categories such as communications, problem solving, initiative, teamwork, time-keeping).

7.5.5 The Digital Jobs Board (DJB) was also launched during the year, allowing real-time searching and matching job vacancies for prisoners by vocation and location ahead of their release. However, as at the end of the reporting year, the DJB was not yet directly accessible by prisoners at HMP Erlestoke, but employment searches were conducted on their behalf using a job matching tool to find suitable jobs based on their interests, skills and release dates.

7.5.6 There were seven vocational pathways offered at the prison during the reporting year (see 7.1.7). These pathways are structured to facilitate prisoners to achieve practical and technical skills and knowledge to support potential employment in their areas of interest, but the Board has not seen any data which measures outcomes across these resettlement pathways.

7.5.7 The employment hub organised a number of resettlement fairs during the year, each one offering 60 places for prisoners nearing the end of their sentences to engage with representatives from several 'through the gate' support agencies covering housing, trauma and drug rehabilitation support, employment and general mentoring, as well as potential employment opportunities. Potential employers who attended events at the prison included Kier Transport, Iceland, O'Neill & Brennan, National Trust, Wates Construction, Soilfix, Suez, Stepnell Construction and Greene King. Recent employment successes have included jobs with Milestone Infrastructure, Iceland and Greene King.

7.5.8 The Employment Advisory Board (EAB) met quarterly throughout the reporting year, providing advice, support and constructive challenge to the prison on its training and sustainable employment provision for prison leavers. The Board has observed that the contributions from EAB members are clearly valued by the prison governors and staff working across education, resettlement and employment. Initiatives introduced by the EAB – such as the entrepreneurs' forum and a 'Dragons Den' type event at which prisoners pitched their ideas and received feedback from local business leaders– have been very well received by prisoners and staff alike.

7.5.9 Barriers to employment discussed during EAB meetings have included the reluctance of older prisoners to engage with employment searches whilst in custody and the fact that many of the offered employment pathways involve manual labour and physical work, which can be challenging for the older prison leavers. Also, at the end of the reporting year, a number of potential employment and/or reducing reoffending partnerships/networks were awaiting outcomes, including support from HMPPS' Creating Future Opportunities (CFO) with regard to high-risk offenders and those with neurodiversity/learning needs seeking employment on release. CFO works with those prisoners who are furthest from employment and the Board understands that, going forward into the next reporting year, HMP Erlestoke has secured resource for a CFO worker to be based at the prison.

8. The work of the IMB

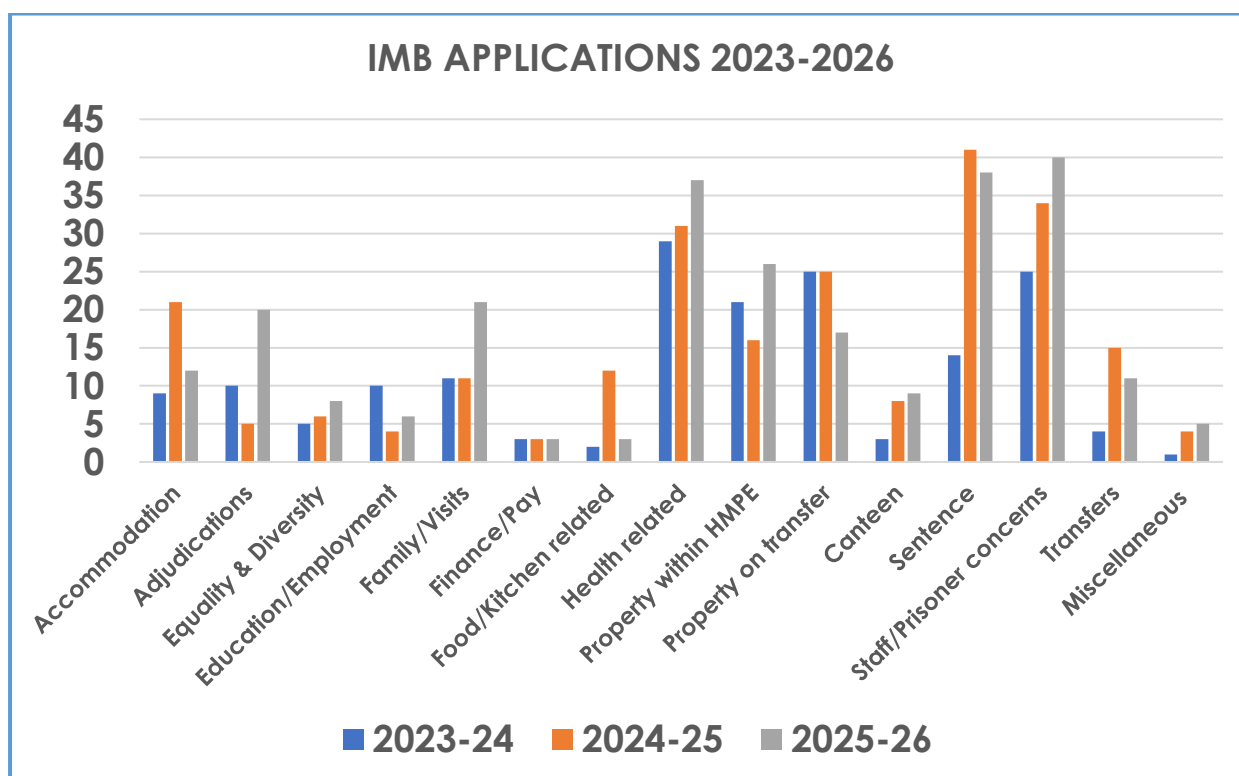
During the year, members of the Board visited the prison on at least three different occasions each week, carrying out monitoring visits to all areas, responding to applications and observing a range of prison meetings (such as health boards, education, security and safety meetings and the prison council).

Regular meetings with the Governor and her deputy provide useful updates on the prison status, and the Governor reports, in person, to board meetings each month. A total of 333 visits were carried out during the year compared to 363 visits last year.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	13
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	12
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	9
Total number of visits to the establishment	333

Applications to the IMB



Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	21	12
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	5	20
C	Equality	6	8
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	4	6
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	11	21
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	3	3
F	Food and kitchens	12	3
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	31	37
H1	Property within this establishment	16	26
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	25	17
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	8	9
I	Sentence management, including home detention curfew (HDC), release on temporary licence (ROTL), parole, release dates, re-categorisation	41	38
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	34	40
K	Transfers	15	11
L	Miscellaneous	4	5
	Total number of applications	236	256

Annex A

Service providers

- Maintenance: Gov Facility Services Limited (GFSL)
- Education: Milton Keynes College
- Library: Milton Keynes College
- Escort contractor: Serco
- Primary healthcare and mental Health: Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust (with support from other providers for the substance misuse programme (Change, Grow, Live), GP services (Dr PA), dentistry (Time for Teeth), podiatry and other services
- Social Care: Wiltshire County Council
- Visitors' centre: Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT)
- Resettlement support: Catch 22; Reconnect

Annex B



Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Laura Bell
Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Erlestoke
Erlestoke
Devizes
SN10 5TU

MoJ ref: SUB128499

27 October 2025

Dear Laura,

HMP ERLESTOKE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 APRIL 2024 – 31 MARCH 2025

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Erlestoke and for your continued oversight, dedication and scrutiny throughout the reporting year. Your observations provide valuable insight and are appreciated as part of our collective efforts to support improvement and maintain standards across the prison estate.

I was most saddened to learn during the reporting year, three men died. I offer my sincere condolences to their families and friends. The recommendations of the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) are taken seriously. We remain committed to learning from such tragic events, and we will respond as required following receipt of the PPO reports into these deaths.

I fully recognise the Board's concern around the growing number of older and more vulnerable individuals in custody and the challenges this presents. I would like to reassure the Board of the extensive collaborative work between Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust, His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) and Wiltshire Council to meet the complex needs of this cohort. Social care referrals are managed by the Safety Team and the monthly Social Care Meeting ensures timely oversight. The Memorandum of Understanding with Wiltshire Council has been reviewed and the Governor or Deputy Governor personally attends multi-disciplinary meetings for complex cases to minimise delays and ensure adequate provision. Nationally, strategic work is being approached to address the needs of older prisoners, following recommendations from the Independent Sentencing Review. This will be published in due course and will set out long-term solutions to ensure humane and fair treatment for this growing population.

I understand the Board's continued concern around mental health provision and complex needs. To address this, Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust has embedded an Integrated Mental Health Model at HMP Erlestoke, ensuring access to care through a specialist, multi-disciplinary approach. The service is responsive to emerging needs and when a patient shows signs of relapse, support is increased through regular reviews. The Mental Health Bill, currently progressing through Parliament, introduces a statutory 28-day time limit for transfers from prison to hospital. This places NHS England's best practice guidance on a legal footing and alongside operational improvements, aims to reduce delays and deliver swifter access to treatment. The Mental Health and Justice Strategic Advisory Group, chaired by NHS England's National Medical Director for Mental Health and Neurodiversity, will oversee implementation, agree a joint work plan and hold partners to account. The Bill also includes reforms to prevent courts from detaining people with severe mental illness in prison as a place of safety, end the use of 'remand for own protection'

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under the Bail Act and improve access to treatment under the Mental Health Act. The Chief Medical Officer's forthcoming report will provide further recommendations to strengthen mental health care in custody.

I remain deeply concerned about the plight of those serving Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentences. The refreshed IPP Action Plan, published in July 2025, places renewed emphasis on effective frontline delivery and includes measurable targets for transparency and accountability. Our latest IPP Annual Report outlines the specific outcomes delivered. At HMP Erlestoke, IPP prisoner representatives and an IPP forum have been introduced to support this cohort. Progression Panels, attended by the Senior Probation Officer, assess referrals to the Progression Regime. Suitability is determined by the Head of Progression Regime and a Forensic Psychologist with spaces offered based according to sentence plan objectives and readiness to engage. Where insufficient IPP prisoners meet the criteria, Life Sentence and Detention for Public Protection prisoners may access the regime to maintain its ethos and culture. Regionally, a robust governance structure monitors the Area approach to IPP progression. A monthly IPP Progression Board coordinates multidisciplinary work and oversees the local iteration of the national Action Plan. It monitors performance against national targets and initiates staff training to embed policy into practice. Nationally, the number of unreleased IPP prisoners fell by 14% and the number of recalled IPP prisoners fell by 6% in the year to June 2025. The re-release of 602 recalled IPP prisoners in 2024, the highest ever, reflects the impact of these reforms.

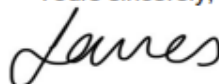
I acknowledge the Board's concern regarding the food budget. Budgets for prisoner food have increased incrementally, rising from £2.18 per prisoner per day in 2022–2023 to £3.01 in 2024–2025. Budgets for 2025–2026 have been increased in line with inflation funding received by HMPPS. Governors retain the flexibility to manage their overall budget and may supplement food provision if needed. At HMP Erlestoke, the Farms & Gardens team has developed a growing plan with the Catering Manager to supply fresh produce to the kitchen. Soup has been introduced at lunchtimes to increase portion sizes and reduce waste. A self-service breakfast offer allows prisoners to determine their own portion size of cereal. These initiatives improve nutrition, reduce waste and support prisoner wellbeing. I am committed to ensuring that collaborative work continues between catering managers and public health partners to promote healthy eating and share good practice across the estate.

I am encouraged by the progress the Board has recognised. I am pleased that you have noted the increase in direct releases and moves to open conditions for IPP prisoners who have participated in the Progression Regime. I am proud that you have acknowledged the work of the dedicated substance misuse officers on the Drug Recovery Wing and the rich programme of activities they have developed. I am also heartened by the significant decrease in unemployed prisoners and the improvements made in allocating individuals to purposeful activity spaces. These are important steps forward.

HMPPS comments in response to other issues raised in your report are set out in the attached annex and the Governor will continue to keep you updated, as work progresses, in regard to the local issues of concern which have been raised.

The Deputy Prime Minister and I appreciate the valuable role undertaken by members of Independent Monitoring Boards throughout the estate. We extend our gratitude to you for your ongoing dedication on behalf of HMP Erlestoke.

Yours sincerely,



Lord Timpson
Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending

HMP ERLESTOKE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 APRIL 2024 – 31 MARCH 2025

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Constant Watch Cell

Although the new houseblocks are currently on hold, each has been designed to include a dedicated observation cell with improved sightlines, enhanced privacy and safer environments for individuals at risk. Funding has been secured to refurbish the existing constant watch cell at Erlestoke with works scheduled for completion this financial year. MOJ Property Services has commissioned alterations to the Constant Watch Cell in the Care and Separation Unit, including changes to furniture to eliminate blind spots and improve staff visibility. These works are being delivered in collaboration with the establishment and project colleagues and are expected to be completed within this financial year.

Healthcare Building

While there are currently no bids with Estates for a full replacement, a series of improvements have been planned and funded to address the most pressing issues. Funding has been granted for roof repairs in the 2025/2026 financial year with internal decoration to follow. Safety rails and fencing have been installed to support roof access and repairs. MOJ Property Services have removed redundant equipment from the roof to prevent water ingress and will undertake further sealing and repairs to the internal guttering system. Additional works will include ceiling and wall repairs in staff areas and redecoration of damaged zones. To maximise available space, the establishment has converted a former officer locker room into a confidential consultation room and is utilising additional clinic space in the Silbury Hub. Further space will be repurposed once racking works are completed in the main store room. Although a new healthcare building was not included in the Small Secure Houseblocks project, each new unit will include a treatment room and dispensary. Pharmacy storage capacity has also been enhanced following a joint assessment with the Governor.

Environmental risks associated with the healthcare environment are captured on both the prison and Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust risk registers and are discussed regularly with NHS England and HMPPS at Local Delivery & Quality Board meetings. Oxleas NHS foundation trust continues to conduct regular Infection Prevention Control audits with findings shared with operational partners.

Hospital Escorts

A joint HMPPS and NHS England review of escort, bed watch and constant supervision is underway with recommendations due by March 2026. This will inform future resource models and improve access to care. HMPPS is actively engaging with the NHSE Specialist Care Pathway group to improve access to specialist services and drawing on learning from the Airedale telemedicine pilot to reduce the need for hospital escorts. Dialogue with local NHS Trusts, including University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust is ongoing to explore joint working opportunities. At HMP Erlestoke, the Resourcing Team works collaboratively with healthcare colleagues to plan hospital appointments in line with the agreed profile of 10 escorts per week. Emergency appointments are facilitated according to clinical priority. Cancelled escort data is monitored via the Local Delivery & Quality Board and action is taken to address contributing factors.

Nicotine Replacement Therapy

Nicotine Replacement Therapy is currently available for prisoners to purchase via the canteen list, although it is not automatically provided on arrival. There is no current one-to-one provision for those wishing to stop vaping. Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust will explore, with NHS England and Public Health colleagues, the feasibility of offering structured support to individuals who wish to cease vaping. This is an important area for development, particularly given the link between vaping and debt.

Access to Essential Medicines on Arrival

3

At HMP Erlestoke, systems are now in place to administer prescribed medication during the first seven days of arrival, provided the sending prison has supplied signed evidence of the current prescription. Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust works closely with transferring establishments to obtain up-to-date medication information prior to transfer. The establishment continues to experience high levels of arrivals outside of commissioned service hours. In these cases, the priority remains to assess and restart essential medicines as quickly as possible. Handover processes are being strengthened to prevent delays and HMPPS will continue to support improvements in this area.

Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT)

HMPPS welcomes the improvements made in healthcare attendance at first ACCT reviews at HMP Erlestoke. A Local Operational Protocol is in place to support reviews on both weekdays and weekends. When the mental health team is not on site, a registered nurse from the Primary Care Team attends the review. Audits have identified that non-attendance typically occurs when healthcare is not notified of the review. To address this, ACCT timings are now allocated during the daily 07:40 prison handover meeting, which is attended by the Primary Care Team. This information is relayed to the mental health team and confirmed in the 09:00 Duty Governor brief. Healthcare attendance is monitored daily at the Operational Briefing and via the Local Delivery & Quality Board. Duty Governors are required to ensure that all scheduled weekend ACCT reviews are communicated to healthcare colleagues to support attendance.

HMPPS remains committed to ensuring that healthcare input is consistently available during ACCT reviews and will continue to monitor and support improvements in this area.



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