



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Leyhill

**For reporting year
1 February 2025 to 31 January 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	6
 Evidence sections 4 – 7	
4. Safety	11
5. Fair and humane treatment	13
6. Health and wellbeing	22
7. Progression and resettlement	25
 The work of the IMB	
Board statistics	34
Applications to the IMB	35

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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 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

2.1 HMP Leyhill is a category D open prison for men, located a short distance from junction 14 of the M5 between Bristol and Gloucester. It is set in spacious, well-maintained grounds, with many attractive features. It has an operational capacity of 474 prisoners¹, housed in four residential units. Two of its facilities were purpose built in the late 20th century. The addition of a 40-bed temporary unit, installed during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown for isolation purposes, is now used for accommodation and is known as Cedar 4. The unit Cedar 1 upgrade to comply with fire regulations has been completed and provides 28 additional rooms.

2.2 At the end of the reporting period, there were 112 prisoners serving life sentences, 69 of whom were on an IPP (an indeterminate sentence, known as imprisonment for public protection). There were 361 prisoners serving a determinate sentence (a fixed length of time).

2.3 The population is largely middle-aged with over 65% of prisoners between the ages of 30 and 59 years old. Those aged 60 and above represent 28%, emphasising the need for tailored work. Approximately 39% of all prisoners have declared some form of disability, with some having two or three disabilities.

2.4 The prison holds a highly complex population. It is one of only four establishments in the open estate to accept prisoners convicted of sexual offences (PCOSOs), irrespective of sentence length. The number of prisoners who have been convicted of sexual offences varies. At the end of the reporting year the proportion had increased to 72% of the prison's population.

Prisoners needing to show, prior to parole, that they have made progress in their offending behaviour are required to be tested in the community. When this is appropriate and places are available, they are provided with work experience in placements within reasonable travelling distance of the prison.

2.5 In addition to the significant number of members of the public contributing to the life of the prison in a wide range of voluntary roles, support was also offered to prisoners by the following organisations:

- Age UK
- Avon and Wiltshire Partnership Integrated Mental Health and Substance Misuse Team
- Care after Combat (CAC)
- Changing Tunes
- Department for Work and Pensions
- Gay west
- GeoAmey
- Hardman Trust
- Intervention Alliance
- Lobster Pot
- Nationwide Bank
- New Futures Network - industries and employment support

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

- Open University
- OTHO
- Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust
- The Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT)
- PIPP
- Prisoner Education Trust
- Prodigal Arts
- REES Foundation
- RBL
- Rehabilitation Culture Community Interest Company
- RISE
- SARI
- SSAFA, the armed forces charity
- Stepway
- The Homeless Prevention Team (HPT) • Walking with the Wounded (WWTW)
- Wayout TV/Way2learn
- Weston College
- Zahid Mubarek Trust (ZMT)

3. Key points

Background to the report

Leyhill continues to be in a transitional phase, having demolished old residential units and awaits new buildings to be constructed. The Cedar 1 unit refurbishment to comply with fire regulations has been completed and provides accommodation for prisoners on the enhanced (highest) level of the incentive scheme (a system of earned privileges to encourage positive prisoner behaviours).

The reduction in operational capacity means that a higher percentage of the 474 prisoners has been required to fulfil the demands of internal work and keep the establishment running. The current prison strategy is to encourage and facilitate prisoners to gain work experience externally. This situation will be closely monitored in the forthcoming months.

In the last year, a noticeable focus has been placed on meeting the needs of the over 60s and disabled prisoners, who make up over 65% of the Leyhill population.

Due to the pressure on the closed estate and associated early release schemes, Leyhill's occupancy rate was above 99% towards the end of the reporting year. The increasing prison population and limited number of spaces in the open estate has resulted in Leyhill being required to accept prisoners who would usually be placed in other establishments.

Work to increase the operational capacity has commenced. Rapid deployment cells (RDCs), with accommodation and facilities for 97 prisoners, will be completed in the forthcoming year and are expected to be occupied in a phased approach commencing November 2026. The budget allocated for the construction of the two 120 bed units has been withdrawn. Planning permission for the two units is progressing and may be utilised in the future. The predicted operational capacity on completion and occupation of the RDCs is 585.

The IMB and prison staff have had concerns about the predominantly older, sex-offending population compared to one that is younger, on shorter sentences and with far fewer sentenced for sex offences. The change in demographics regularly provides challenges in all areas.

The number of drugs finds has reduced significantly over the year. Anabolic steroids and syringe finds peaked in July and had reduced to zero by the end of the reporting year.

Towards the end of the reporting year the prison was populated by an increased number of prisoners who have longer remaining sentences. The population has subsequently stabilised, which is demonstrated by security and safer custody data indicating a significant reduction in negative behaviours and actions.

The number of known organised crime group (OCG) members decreased in the reporting period. Instances of bullying, assault and anti-social behaviour have declined, along with positive mandatory drug test (MDT) rates and the number of finds such as tobacco, drugs and mobile phones.

3.1 Main findings

Safety

- The safety of prisoners, in a wide range of areas, is discussed and monitored by a group made up of staff and prisoners who meet on a regular basis. The care shown for vulnerable prisoners has been evident in meetings observed by the IMB (see 4.0).
- There were five self-harm incidents during the year, which was slightly fewer than the year before and are well monitored by staff (4.2). There was one death in custody (in hospital). The coroner determined that the prisoner died from natural causes. There were no serious incidents in the reporting period.

Fair and humane treatment

- As we reported last year, fair and humane treatment of the prisoners is evident in the extensive use made of the Samaritans trained Listener scheme (7.4); in the provision of both children and adult family days for prisoners (7.4); and by the community interest company (CIC) manager, who has been taking vulnerable prisoners out on day release (7.3).
- The chaplaincy team has done much to contribute to the life of a caring community, with its provision of spiritual and pastoral support to those of all faiths and none, for those in difficult circumstances (5.4).
- The low availability of spaces in approved premises (supervised accommodation) can result in a delay in progression to release on parole for a small number of prisoners, which the Board believes is unjust (7.3).
- Nearly all the 69 prisoners on indeterminate IPP (imprisonment for public protection) sentences in the prison remain in prison beyond their indicative tariff (the minimum time a prisoner must serve in prison before becoming eligible for parole). The IMB regards this as deeply unfair, particularly as Parliament has recognised that the sentence was unjust in the first place (7.3).

Health and wellbeing

- Prisoners have been encouraged to take responsibility for their own healthcare by holding most prescribed medications in their possession and by their enthusiastic involvement in the health improvement group (6.2).
- Waiting times for healthcare services are satisfactory and it is noted that prisoner feedback provides more compliments than complaints.
- The health and wellbeing of older and disabled prisoners has been enhanced by the provision of table tennis, indoor carpet bowls and numerous other activities (6.5), as well as the special sessions for older and self-isolating prisoners (some of whom are disabled) in a quieter room on their own in the over-50s centre (6.7).

Progression and resettlement

- The strategy for coordinating education, skills and work, to reduce re-offending and enhance prisoners' employability, is to be commended by the Board. Courses provided equip prisoners with transferrable skills to help improve their future employment prospects. For some courses, completion results in interviews for external employment whilst serving their sentence and on occasion when released (7.1).
- Market gardens, which supply the prison with vegetables for part of the year, and an ambitious scheme of recycling, are among the many areas of work in which prisoners are purposefully employed in the prison (7.2).

- CFO3 is a voluntary scheme to help prisoners prepare for when they leave custody and re-enter the community, with a particular focus on removing barriers to employment for those on imprisonment for public protection sentences (IPP) (7.2).
- The process of risk-assessing prisoners applying for release on temporary licence (ROTL) has been streamlined and has enabled more prisoners to take up external work placements and visit their homes and families for short periods. However, prisoners' progress towards parole has often been slowed by delays caused by the external probation service (7.3).
- The Board reported in its March 2025 weekly monitoring report that the various early release schemes, which were again implemented during the reporting year in an attempt to increase the availability of prison spaces, have placed additional pressure on approved premises (AP) capacity. Although parole cases are prioritised for AP referrals under policy, the Board observed that shortages in AP accommodation continued to affect prisoners progressing towards parole. This remains a source of understandable frustration for prisoners and can contribute to delays in their progression through the parole process.
- The community accommodation service 3 (CAS3) has been introduced, which provides up to 84 days of emergency accommodation for someone leaving prison or APs. The community homelessness prevention team (HPT) manages the service for the Probation Service and co-ordinates the placement on behalf of the provider and the probation practitioner.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- What action will the Minister take to remedy the lack of spaces in approved premises, which leads to some prisoners facing incarceration beyond their release dates and many experiencing delays in progression towards their eligibility for parole?
- Will the Minister seek to increase the catering budget in proportion to future rises in food prices?
- Will the Minister ensure that following a successful trial, controlled mobile phones with limited access will be made available to all prisoners at HMP Leyhill?
- Will the Minister seek to encourage local and national businesses to provide work experience to prisoners that will lead to employment opportunities on release?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- What further action will be taken to speed up the release and resettlement of prisoners serving IPP sentences, many of whom have spent far longer in custody than their indicative tariffs?
- What steps will be taken to improve the efficiency of community offender managers (COMs) in the external Probation Service, whose workload continues to increase significantly under the early release schemes?
- Will the Prison Service seek to expand national opportunities for prisoners to gain work experience and qualifications before release?
- What steps will the Prison Service take to improve access to transport for prisoners working externally to gain valuable experience before release?

- Will the Prison Service apply the volumetric limits in the prisoners' property policy framework at all establishments to ease problems with prisoner property during transfers?
- Will the Prison Service ensure that the contractor providing educational services fulfils the requirements of the contract?

TO THE GOVERNOR

- The Board encourages the Governor to build on the continued improvements made in the ROTL process.
- The Board urges the Governor to maintain the current standards at Leyhill in the forthcoming refurbishment and upgrade of facilities, occupation of the rapid deployment cells and challenges imposed on the prison by the implementation of the Sentencing Act 2026.
- The Board encourages the Governor to continue prioritising the increase in number of prisoners gaining external work experience in order to secure employment on release.

3.3 Progress since the last report

- The prison continues to develop software for data analysis to improve attendance at education and identify prisoners eligible for specific work experience opportunities.
- A prison shop, staffed and accessible by prisoners and the general public, is scheduled to open in 2026.
- The Lounge at Leyhill café, staffed and managed by prisoners under the supervision of a Governor for public use, opened in 2025. Prisoners have been allowed to develop the menu and manage stock. The business continues to grow in popularity and is used by many local people.
- The Railtrack maintenance course provided by Restart Ready funded through charitable funding enables prisoners to gain work experience.
- As reported previously, there has again been a focus on providing external employment to develop skills in preparation for release.
- The work of the offender management unit (OMU) continues to improve the processing of ROTL (release on temporary licence) paperwork, especially in the risk assessment of prisoners, so that more of them have become available for work in the wider community.
- The Board recognises that the continued increased workload imposed on the prison by the various early release schemes has been demanding and that OMU staff have responded to the challenge.
- The refurbishment of the Cedar 1 unit, to provide accommodation for prisoners on the enhanced level of the prisoner's incentives scheme was completed in the reporting year.
- The ramps for disabled access in Ash unit have all been completed.
- Phone booths have been installed on Units Cedar 1 and 4.
- There has been a continued focus on education to provide skills relevant to employment on release.
- The Board recognises the prisons efforts in gaining agreement of the quarterly prioritisation board to secure a start date for the mobile phone trial. The two month trial commenced in March 2026.

- The red line policy has been reviewed and enhanced detailing the expected behaviour of prisoners.
- The construction of rapid deployment cells that will accommodate 97 prisoners at an enhanced level should be completed in November 2026.
- Towards the end of the reporting year, the prison increased its personal officer interactions which have risen to 84% of the population.
- The IMB has observed very caring behaviour by prison staff when dealing with vulnerable prisoners, particularly when the news from home is not good.
- The chaplaincy staff, embodying a wide variety of beliefs, make for a very good team in this respect and the Board is satisfied that they are widely respected in the prison.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

- Due to the pressures on the prison system nationally HMP Leyhill has often experienced quite a high turnover of prisoners. Of course, it is to be welcomed that prisoners are moving from closed conditions to open and then released into the community, but it does have an effect on the staff and long-term inmates.
- The percentage of prisoners convicted of a sexual offence (PCOSOs) increased from 59% in January 2025 to 72% in January 2026.
- 109 prisoners were transferred back to closed conditions during the reporting period. Almost all were for 'security' reasons. 142 were transferred in the previous year.
- There were five absconds during the year.
- There were 80 Temporary Release Failures (TRFs) during the year, which was slightly more than last year. Three incidents were reported as UALs within this period. The vast majority were mostly administrative in nature e.g. late return or missing paperwork.
- The 'safer custody voicemail', which is a way for family members outside to raise concerns with the prison, was monitored daily by the Duty Governor.

4.1 Reception and induction

- Reception staff often deal with prisoners transferred from closed conditions arriving with more possessions than are allowed at HMP Leyhill.
- There have been times when prisoners have arrived late in the day and unable to be seen by the healthcare team until they are next on site.
- The induction process works well, with weekly induction meetings and trusted prisoners showing the new ones around the site. Moving from closed conditions to the more open environment of HMP Leyhill can be a significant adjustment, but the staff and peer supporters help make the transition as smooth as possible. However, the IMB has received complaints that the lack of in-cell telephony and having to queue to use a phone in a communal area is a backwards step.
- The age profile of prisoners has changed slightly over the last 12 months, with there now being 51% over 50 years old compared with 48% a year ago.
- Sentence lengths have also changed slightly, with 71% (excluding lifers and IPP) serving sentences over four years compared with 67% last year. 5% are serving sentences under four years (9.5% 12 months ago). The number of prisoners serving life sentences (excluding IPPs) has reduced from 79 to 43. The number serving IPP sentences has increased from 28 to 69. The IMB has attempted to reach out to IPP prisoners to determine if they have additional issues.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

- Assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documents were opened 26 times for 23 individuals during the year. Opening an ACCT is a mandatory process used to support prisoners identified as being at risk of suicide or self-

harm, involving personalised care plans, regular monitoring by staff, and multi-disciplinary reviews to ensure the inmate's safety and well-being.

- There was a spike of ACCTs in July regarding release planning. This coincided with the national SDS40 early release scheme.
- There were five self-harm incidents during the year, which was slightly fewer than the year before.
- There was one death in custody (in hospital). The coroner determined he died from natural causes.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

- There were eight violent incidents during the reporting year, comprising two assaults against staff and six prisoner-on-prisoner assaults.
- Challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs) are used to manage prisoners who display violent behaviour, pose a heightened risk of violence or who may be victims of violence. Both perpetrator and victim are managed and supported on a plan with individualised targets and regular reviews. No significant trends have been identified.

4.4 Use of force

- There were 11 total use of force incidents. Two involved C&R, one involved guiding holds, and one involved guiding holds at outside hospital during a return to closed conditions. Seven involved the use of handcuffs as a risk-reduction measure only. Most returns to closed conditions do not require the use of force.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

- There have been regular, low-level finds of alcohol on the estate.
- Many drug tests were performed during the reporting period, with 14 positive results recorded (seven from random MDTs and seven from tests conducted on suspicion).
- Illicit mobile phones continue to be found, and there are indicators of illicit mobile phone use at night. Prison staff say there are not enough staff on duty at night to conduct a physical search safely.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

Accommodation at Leyhill is split over three units: Ash, Beech and Cedar ('A, B and C Units'). Each unit has its own kitchens and association rooms. Except for about eight dorm rooms housing up to four prisoners (usually new arrivals), all other rooms are individual occupancy. Total estate capacity at Leyhill is now 474, with about 460 of these being single room occupancy. However, 12 rooms have been lost due to rotating upgrading works in Ash unit in accommodation corridors over the last two years. This work will transfer to Beech in 2026.

The single room entitlement is perceived by prisoners as being one of the principal benefits of being transferred to Leyhill. There is no segregation or distinction of any sort for the more than 50% of prisoners who have been convicted of sexual offences (PCOSOs).

Ash unit, with capacity of 213 residents, has historically been predominantly reserved for younger, short-term prisoners. As a result, at periods of high turnover necessitated by, for example, the early release schemes instigated by the government in 2025, there was more disruption and 'noise' in this unit. Since the last early release scheme in Q3 (July to September) 2025, the prison residency has been a lot more stable with a noticeably less stressed environment. Due to its ramp access capabilities, Beech, with 207 residents, is prioritised for the older population and those with a physical disability. These prisoners tend to prefer a quiet life, and the regime is more predictable. Cedar 4 is a privileged accommodation unit housing up to 40 prisoners. Placement on the unit is granted under the incentives scheme to those who are on the 'enhanced' level, having demonstrated consistently positive behaviour.

During 2025, after delays of a few months, Cedar 1 completed its upgrade work, necessitated by requirement to remove asbestos from the ceilings. It was opened in October with a capacity of 28. Like Cedar 4, it was also open to application from prisoners who qualified under the incentives scheme.

At the end of January 2026, it was announced by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) that the future expansion plans for Leyhill have been postponed until further notice. Community and stakeholders have been notified. This means there will be no further expansion at Leyhill after 97 rapid deployment cells (RDCs) are complete in Autumn 2026.

Funding for several building refurbishments has been agreed and will be implemented through a change/transformation board that meets each month.

The IMB notes that the condition of the toilets and showers (recesses) in A and B Units would benefit from review. Several areas had a damp smell, which has been attributed to limited ventilation. To help increase air movement, recess and corridor doors are sometimes wedged open; this practice conflicts with fire safety requirements.

New access ramps are operational in Ash Unit and could improve wheelchair access to additional rooms; however, due to the current fire evacuation arrangements in those areas, their use is not presently permitted.

Heating in some A Unit cells failed in Q4 (October to December) 2025, and small electric heaters were issued while repairs were completed.

During Q4 2025, the installation of new phone booths improved access and reduced queuing in Ash and Beech Units. For most of the reporting period, there were no external telephones in Cedar 4 and prisoners could use the telephones in Cedar 1 from 6am to 8pm. Towards the end of the reporting year, telephones were installed in Cedar 4, although the Board was informed that only one was operational at that time. All other prisoners have access to PIN-protected phones until 11pm.

The Board has noted regular faults affecting the installed BT phones. Reported issues have been linked to cabling, handsets, on-site hardware and software. At times, these faults have been resulted in extended periods of reduced access or complete failure, which can contribute to prisoner frustration and stress.

The proposed trial of issuing a PIN-protected mobile phone for each prisoner has not yet commenced. However, at the end of January 2026, we were advised that 48 trial handsets, assigned to individual prisoners, are planned to be issued to prisoners in Cedar 4 during Q1 (January to March) 2026. Use is expected to be restricted to prisoners' own rooms. If the trial is successful, it is envisaged that mobile phones would be made available to all Leyhill prisoners, with the potential for wider use across the open estate. The introduction of mobiles is expected to be well received; reviews of unauthorised phones that were found or confiscated indicate they were mainly used to contact family.

The prisoner video conferencing facility adjoining the library continues to be popular.

In the unit kitchens, the provision of induction cookers and plans to introduce air fryers in near future to replace the old grills has proved very popular. Self-catering reduces demand on the central kitchen and encourages prisoner self-sufficiency and purposeful engagement. Food supply from the planned new Leyhill store serving both the public and prisoners is expected to further expand this self-catering provision.

Other improvements implemented during 2025 include,

- Concrete path access to A unit
- Improvements in association rooms, including re-felting snooker tables,
- Cameras in the unit kitchens to monitor use and abuse of equipment and fridges.
- Conversion of old palliative wing in B unit to a new wellbeing area (work ongoing)
- Washing machine and drier in Cedar 4 kitchen
- Access to washing machines at weekends for those working outside the prison estate during the week. However, there is only one machine in Cedar 4, which struggles to cope as most prisoners work outside.

Food

The kitchen manager has had another challenging year, with an inconsistent work force and unreliable equipment but has largely provided a steady service. Kitchen facilities have been kept going with little new investment in anticipation of an

eventual rebuild as part of the foreseen expansion project. It awaits to be seen how the kitchen will be affected by the recent cancellation of the expansion project.

The kitchen coped well with the new flooring installation in the dining hall, during which prisoners were catered for in shifts as the work was carried out in two phases. A reduction in the highest pay levels for kitchen workers as a result of the new incentives scheme (see below), and a reduced available prison workforce due to growth in external opportunities, has meant a less consistent workforce.

Food safety is monitored by kitchen band 4 employees.

The kitchen continues to cater for those returning late from external employment. The prison has adopted a healthy food initiative with a focus on less fat, more fruit and vegetables, healthy preparation and less additives (including salt). Much of the vegetables continues to be supplied by the prison market garden.

The food forum has been reactivated and has become a useful exchange of information between prisoners and the kitchen. A food survey, the first for a long while, has been carried out in January 2026. Results are awaited. Prisoners continue to be encouraged to grow their own fruit and vegetables in the Leyhill allotments, which are very popular.

5.2 Segregation

There is no segregation unit at Leyhill.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

As last year, relationships between prisoners and staff observed by the Board are generally good, though not without concerns. In a voluntary IMB exit survey completed by 33% of prisoners released, 88% said they felt safe or fairly safe, and 81% said they had been treated fairly during their stay at Leyhill.

A separate prison survey reported similar findings. Many prisoners described staff as 'supportive, helpful and approachable', and some officers were singled out for praise.

The IMB received only two official complaints against staff, both from the same person, though this should be treated cautiously as both IMB members and the LCC (Leyhill Consultative Committee) regularly hear informal complaints about staff behaviour. The prison recorded 12 complaints specifically about staff through the formal complaint's procedure. Most referred to bullying or maltreatment, but others reflected concerns about lack of empathy, poor follow-through in departments, inconsistency between officers, and limited availability, explanation, or feedback. Prison management are aware of these concerns and are focused on improvements.

The personal officer scheme (POS), referred to in last year's annual report, continued in 2025 with mixed success. Under the scheme, officers are tasked with holding a meaningful monthly conversation with each allocated prisoner, record the key points. Senior staff review those records regularly. Personal Officer completion for the reporting period was 70%. This included November and December, when a POA dispute led to a temporary withdrawal of the scheme. Discounting those months, completion averaged 80%, with the highest month achieving 86%. In total, 3,934 interactions were completed against an average population of 471.

A subsequent survey of prisoner attitudes to life in Leyhill identified the POS scheme as its weakest area: many prisoners claimed they did not know and had not received any contact with their PO (personal officer).

In response, the residential management team is working hard to raise standards and improve awareness of the POS from arrival. They aim to make it clear, visible and reliable, with a new initiative allowing prisoners to keep the same PO wherever they move within the prison.

Away from the wings, the chaplaincy, representing all major denominations, continues to provide strong support. On occasion, when prisoners receive bad news from home, the IMB has observed them receiving excellent care at such times.

The IMB regularly observes adjudications (disciplinary hearings when a prisoner is alleged to have broken prison rules). Members continue to be impressed by the way Governors handle these events, with sensitivity and understanding.

In summary, the IMB considers staff-prisoner relations to be generally good, with management working hard to improve them further. Some officers, managers and frontline staff, are described as excellent and highly regarded.

5.4 Equality and diversity

The Board has determined that HMP Leyhill prison demonstrates effective management regarding equality, diversity, and inclusion. The population profile of HMP Leyhill maintains a complex and diverse community with distinct needs and characteristics.

In the last quarter of the reporting year the following data was recorded:

- Age: The population is largely middle-aged, with over 65% between 30 and 59 years old. Those aged 60 and above represent 26%, emphasising the need for tailored work opportunities, both inside and outside the establishment, as well as resources for healthcare provision and elderly care. Young adults (21–24) account for just 1.26%, reflecting a predominantly mature demographic.
- Disability: There remains a significant 39% of individuals identifying as having a disability, underscoring the importance of inclusive support and accessibility.
- Gender and identity: The population is male (98%), with a visible transgender representation.
- Nationality: Less than 1% are foreign nationals, indicating a largely domestic population.
- Veteran status: Nearly one in 10 individuals have served in the armed forces, bringing unique experiences and potential support needs.
- Ethnicity: The community is predominantly white (80%), with Black, Asian, mixed, and other ethnicities making up the remaining 20%, reflective to Q2 (April to June).
- Care experience: Around 9% have been care-experienced, which may influence their support requirements and engagement.
- Sexual orientation: Remains comparable to previous quarters, 86% identify as heterosexual, though there is a notable presence of LGBTQ+ individuals, with 6% identifying as gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

- Religion and faith: Faith is diverse, with Church of England (14%) and Christian (20%) being most common. Smaller groups include Roman Catholic, Muslim and Buddhists.
- Offence demographic - Overall the population convicted of a sexual offence is now 72%.
 - Determinate sentences: 357 (75%); 248 PCoSO
 - Indeterminate sentences: 111 (25%); 76 PCoSO

Discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs)

During the reporting year, 39 DIRFs were submitted, representing an increase from the previous year's total of 35. Of these, 13 were referred to the complaints department for further examination. Analysis of submissions indicated that Black, Muslim, Asian, and prisoners over the age of 70 submitted an increased number of DIRFs.

Quarter	DIRFs submitted	DIRFs redirected to complaints	Average response time (days)	Longest DIRF resolution time (days) and reason
One	6	3	11	26 days Difficulties collecting during staff annual leave
Second	9	2	5	One required 14 days for resolution
Third	15	5	5	One required 16 days to resolve
Fourth	9	3	5	One required 11 days to resolve

Scrutiny panels convene regularly to ensure all DIRFs are responded to accurately and in a timely manner.

Key observations:

In the Board's opinion, HMP Leyhill maintained a generally stable, safe, and decent regime, with no widespread concerns identified within the establishment. The overall environment continued to be positive and well-managed, supporting the wellbeing of those in custody.

Nevertheless, a limited number of potential disproportionalities were observed among protected characteristics, highlighting areas that require further attention and scrutiny. These concerns were identified from low numbers and small cohorts, and thus there was no evidence to suggest any systemic issues.

Disproportionalities were noted in the following areas:

- Searches and returns to closed conditions
- Use of force (UoF)
- Adjudications

- Access to release on temporary licence (ROTL)
- Internal and external work placements

The groups affected included individuals with disabilities, people of varying ages, and those from ethnic, religious, or LGBTQ+ backgrounds. Neurodiverse individuals also remained within the scope of consideration.

These findings reinforce the importance of ongoing monitoring, ensuring fair decision-making, and promoting inclusive engagement across the establishment.

The Board observes that frequent awareness-raising events are organised for staff and prisoners. These events feature displays and informative literature, which are available to the diverse population.

Population overview:

An overview of the population data from quarters one, two, and three has established:

- With an ageing population, there is a growing need for elderly care and enhanced health resources.
- Ethnic diversity is shifting, with a reduction in the Black population and an increase in mixed-race individuals, underlining the critical importance of cultural inclusion.
- Barriers to ROTL persist, particularly for minority and LGBTQ+ groups.
- Disproportionalities in searches and returns have shifted towards younger cohorts, as well as Black and mixed-race prisoners.
- Faith-based disproportionality in the use of force remains a significant issue.
- Mental health concerns are prevalent among older prisoners and those with disabilities.

Health and wellbeing:

- The high rates of disability within the population indicate a need for robust healthcare services, effective peer support, and comprehensive mental health provision.

Cultural and faith needs:

- Given the diversity of religious and ethnic backgrounds at Leyhill, it is important to maintain inclusive practices and provide appropriate spaces for all cultural and faith needs.
- With many individuals aged between 30 and 59, there is a necessity to ensure that activities and support services are age-appropriate and meet the needs of an ageing population.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

Faith at Leyhill is notably diverse, with Church of England (14%) and Christian (20%) being most common, with smaller groups including Roman Catholic, Muslim, and Buddhist communities also being represented.

The chaplaincy team, under the leadership of the managing chaplain, reflects this diversity by representing a wide range of faiths. The team provides both pastoral and

spiritual support to those in custody. This includes the organisation of religious festival meals and services for prisoners.

The chapel is open daily until 7.30pm, offering spaces for communal worship, wellbeing events, and study classes. There is good access to religious artefacts. The available facilities comprise a well-equipped chapel, a multi-faith room, a mosque, a Buddha garden, and a Pagan grove, all of which accommodate private worship for various faiths.

The chaplaincy plays a significant role in supporting resettlement by connecting prisoners to faith communities upon release and recruiting volunteers to aid reintegration. Notable recent initiatives have included the hosting of an interfaith week and the provision of an LGBTQ+ affirming Christian service.

In the unfortunate event of a death in custody, the chaplain extends compassionate support to bereaved families and assists with funeral arrangements. If there are no family members available, the chaplain assumes responsibility for organising the funeral. Memorial services are held at HMP Leyhill to honour the memory of both prisoners and staff who have passed away, following the death of a prisoner.

5.6 Incentives schemes

The incentives scheme (a system of earned privileges to incentivise positive behaviours), launched in 2024, has been reviewed. A simpler version was introduced in late 2025 to improve transparency, reward good performance within roles and, as highlighted by the 2023 HMIP visit, ensure prisoners do not lose money when undertaking training or education.

Although there was some initial concern because overall pay was reduced, the changes were broadly accepted because they were applied evenly. Importantly, the recent pay restructure has benefited most prisoners. Previously, lower-end pay was £12–£15 per week increased to £17. Mid-range pay increased from £20 to £21. Top level pay increased to £25. Following the restructure, most prisoners received a pay increase rather than a reduction.

The salaries listed below are higher than in the closed estate. ‘Basic’ refers to the lowest level of the incentives scheme, ‘standard’ refers to the middle and ‘enhanced’ is the highest level.

	Basic	Standard	Enhanced	Plus, supplement
Level 1	£14.60	£16.50	£17.00	No qualifications
Level 2 and Education	£18.25	£20.00	£21.00	Qualified
Level 3	-	-	£25.00	Enhanced skills and responsibility
Kitchen supplement	+£5.00	+5.50	+£5.00 or + £11.00	For unsociable hours

As part of the 'Golden Thread' initiative, with the goal being an eventual planned employment post release, in each role it is intended that there will be opportunities to progress to higher pay levels by demonstrating progress over a period not less than 12 weeks.

There are pre-established quotas in each business area that limit how many can get to the enhanced pay level. Pay progression is not guaranteed and is subject to budgetary constraints. There are perceptions amongst prisoners of varying progression opportunities depending on the employment area.

In exceptional cases there are opportunities for manager to authorise discretionary additional payments or bonuses, provided pre-authorisation is obtained, such as, for example, working in the kitchen at Christmas, bio-hazard cleaning, and additional unforeseen work within a job role. There is also an innovations fund, which can be used to incentivise prisoner or staff-related ideas to increase employability and positive community outcomes. E.g. re-felting the snooker tables, new window cleaning operation and beekeeping.

An incentivised substance free living (ISFL) initiative is active within the prison. This rewards prisoners with access to privileged events (e.g. sports competitions and celebrations) for avoiding drugs and providing regular negative test results. Recent results have been very positive with a high take-up of the initiative and an almost zero incidence of unauthorised drug taking. This initiative may well be rolled out in other prisons.

5.7 Complaints

The IMB has observed that complaints from Leyhill prisoners have continued to fall, from 519 in 2023 and 449 in 2024 to 413 in 2025.

A large proportion of complaints concerns the offender management unit (OMU). The recent government implementation of early release schemes with fixed implementation dates have inevitably placed the OMU under considerable pressure. The OMU continues to rise to the challenge.

The second highest category of complaint is residential, down by 10% from 2024. It is perceived that this will decline even further with the proposal to issue prisoners with mobile phones.

Finally, the next most common complaints concern property, mainly due to items lost during prison transfers. The Board considers that full implementation of the formal process at all locations could resolve many of the issues observed.

The IMB continues to observe adjudications (disciplinary hearings when a prisoner is alleged to have broken prison rules) and finds that they are conducted both fairly and sensitively by the duty Governor.

Relationships between prisoners and staff vary widely. The Leyhill Consultative Committee (LCC) continues to receive a small number of verbal complaints about some staff. However, this is only one side of the story, as prisoner complaints have fallen and many staff are considered to be doing an exceptional job.

5.8 Property

The Board remains concerned about property transfers between Leyhill and other establishments, with items often reported lost or misplaced. The 2022 national prisoners' property policy framework sought to address storage issues through volumetric control, requiring property to fit into two standard boxes of up to 15kg each. However, the policy has not been fully implemented at all locations. Prisoners transferring to Leyhill often bring more than the limit allows. Evidence suggests a similar position at other prisons. The allowance guidelines are set out in the Leyhill new prisoner induction booklet.

Property stored at Leyhill already exceeds the storeroom's capacity. After their first two months, prisoners may request up to six items from home or buy them from dedicated websites. Prisoners have also had to be reminded of the policy on transferring items between individuals, following several breaches. The prison is working on a revised gifting process through an application system.

The Lobster Pot community, a centre for over-50s, provides clothing and bags on loan to prisoners who need suitable clothes for external events such as ROR (restricted overnight release), interviews, court hearings and funerals.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

The healthcare service at Leyhill is provided by Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust who have held the contract since 2022.

The department consists of a dedicated team of professional staff covering Primary care and mental health.

The department is staffed every weekday between the hours of 7.30am and 5.30pm and at the weekends and bank holidays between 7.30am and 12pm. Should there be a requirement for any advice outside of these hours then the 111 service is utilised.

As a resettlement prison, there is a requirement to provide a service that closely mirrors that which the prisoners will find in the community when they leave the prison and that is the case at Leyhill.

Covid and flu vaccinations have been completed on all eligible/compliant prisoners.

Of concern to the IMB are the many occasions when prisoners arrive at Leyhill after the healthcare staff have left for the day. This is despite the extension to healthcare staffing hours in an attempt to mitigate this situation. If the transport is late arriving, the medical part of the induction must wait until the following morning, with possible unknown issues. This is regularly reported as a safeguarding concern and is on the risk register.

DNA (did not attend) activity has markedly reduced over time during the reporting period: data capture started in May 2025 recorded 456 DNA cases. From that point the monthly total reduced to 61 by January 2026. This represented an 87% reduction from May 2025 to January 2026. The pattern suggests sustained improvement in reducing missed appointments, although medicines management remained the largest contributor to overall DNAs. Any missed appointments without valid reason now result in an incentives scheme warning. This approach was introduced in the Autumn 2025 and whilst early results were promising, the numbers of DNAs are still fluctuating.

The emergency call buttons on residential landings and pull alarms in recesses are not working. This is a risk to the more elderly and vulnerable prisoners. The funding to carry out the necessary work has been approved in principle and is awaiting design.

There is a close professional relationship between prison and healthcare staff and prisoners with complex needs are discussed during the two weekly safety intervention meeting (SIM) (previously held monthly).

Whenever an assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) document (used to support prisoners who are at risk of self-harm and suicide) is opened, a member of the primary care team attends. All subsequent reviews have someone from either primary care or mental health attending alongside the prison staff.

Prisoners are encouraged to complete prison-led surveys detailing their experience with Leyhill healthcare. The aim is to get responses from 5% of the population, which is regularly achieved.

Examples of good areas:

- “Psychology have helped me so much. For the first time in forever I feel comfortable talking.....and not feel judged or ignored. Couldn’t praise enough.”
- “Because you are very kind and I am thankful for your service”
- “Great staff – thank you”

Examples of less positive areas:

- “Introduce pm In Possession meds dispensing”
- “Faster appointment”
- “More appointments”

There was one death in custody, apparently from natural causes this year.

6.2 Physical healthcare

Physiotherapy services have been boosted over the year from time to time using local healthcare funds and by utilising an unused half day from another local prison, however, the waiting times are still of concern.

Optical services are provided by a local Specsavers branch and an optician who visits the prison.

The Specsavers route can only be utilised by prisoners who have been boarded for ROTL and so any delay in this process has an impact on the waiting list.

Other visiting services such as GPs, podiatry, audiology and dental services have more acceptable waiting times.

Health screening such as AAA, bowel screening and retinal screening have taken place this year.

Lung CT scans took place in the spring for prisoners aged 55 – 74 with a history of smoking.

Internal health promotions have included better understanding on the impact of steroid use.

Complaints from prisoners are few, often about medication changes and few are upheld.

6.3 Mental health

The running caseload remains at 60-70 patients.

There is a psychiatrist who visits once fortnightly meeting current population needs.

The many group sessions of former years have reduced in favour of 1 one 1 therapy, which has proved to be more effectual.

It is believed that 50% male prisoners have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). But as there is no commissioned diagnostic pathway, this is an estimate.

The PCU building once used for palliative care has become a health hub to give more clinical space to physical and mental health teams, also offering sensory rooms and gardens and breakout spaces.

Neurodivergent prisoners are well supported at Leyhill. The prison has a dedicated staff member who helps prisoners during their time in prison and also helps prepare them for life in the outside.

Staff members are encouraged to attend training sessions to better understand the needs of neurodivergent prisoners.

6.4 Social care

Currently, we have three prisoners receiving personal care assistance. This is provided by South Gloucestershire Council.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

Leyhill is fortunate in having large grounds available to the prisoners. Parkrun is popular held on Saturdays in the large top field and a walking club at weekends. There is also a plan to form Leyhill Ramblers, with outside guided walks.

The tennis courts were sacrificed to erect the rapid deployment residential units, but a MUGA (multi-use games area) is expected sometime in the autumn. Gym sessions are plentiful but much of the equipment could do with replacing due to condition and/or age.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

This service is provided by Change, Grow, Live, (CGL) an organisation sub commissioned by Oxleas to deliver drug and alcohol work through groups and 1:1s.

There are support groups running, such as AA, CA, and Smart Recovery and these mostly take place in the evenings and weekends to allow those working out to attend. Peer mentors provide drop-in sessions.

Wellbeing walks take place once a month as well as recovery talks from people who have been substance abusers in the past.

In the 12 weeks before release, CGL clients have the opportunity to attend a release preparation group. This aims to give the prisoners information about facilities available in the area where they will be living, such as support groups and to bring them up to date on current drug trends as well as looking at their prescription needs. Naloxone, a medication to reverse the effects of opioid overdose, is offered for prisoners to keep in their possession on release.

6.7 Soft skills

The Lobster Pot is a drop-in area for the over 50s, retired prisoners and those under 50 who are neurodiverse and for whom access is considered to be beneficial.

The prisoners can sit and talk, read or take part in the activities organised. Staff are on hand to provide support and advice within this designated area.

Coats or bags for going out on ROTL can be borrowed if the prisoners do not have their own and they can also be accompanied by Lobster Pot staff if anxious about taking their first step alone.

There are 36 allotments available, some with raised beds which are managed by the Lobster Pot and are very popular.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

Leyhill has continued to work on improving the 'purposeful activity' offered at the prison. During the reporting year, some progress against the targets set by Ofsted were observed.

Leyhill has adopted the following learning objectives, with the principal goal being to provide ROTL paid work opportunities whilst at the prison. The intention is that these will lead to employment post-release:

- Embedding reading strategy
- Progress in English and maths qualifications to at least Level 1
- Increase the total qualification achievement
- Engagement in at least half-time purposeful activity

The prison's 'red line strategy', being renamed the 'behavioural expectations and fair outcomes policy', requires prisoner compliance with the above. The incentives scheme has also been amended to ensure prisoners do not suffer any detriment whilst attending training.

Opportunities for enrichment are listed in the 'prisoner journey' booklet. However, the availability of many of the courses listed has been reduced due to contractual, budgetary and operational constraints. Much of this limitation is a direct consequence of a 40% reduction in education hours from October 2025, following changes to prison education provision and the introduction of a new education provider.

The IMB is concerned that such a funding reduction represents a significant challenge to Leyhill.

Upon arrival at Leyhill, as part of the 12-week induction process, all able-bodied prisoners below retirement age are expected to work. The focus on a specific work sector featured in the prisoner journey booklet is intended to assist a prisoner obtaining employment on release. During this period, they must be able to demonstrate progression, particularly in education in maths and English to at least level 2, or they may not be permitted to apply for external jobs. Prisoners unable to achieve level 2 in maths and English are subject to review before being permitted to apply for external employment.

Prisoners also have the opportunity to build the necessary skills to secure employment on release. These include the following:

- Values, attitudes and behaviour
- Job application and industry related courses
- Appropriate prison work
- Appropriate external work

Education provision at Leyhill is split into several parts: education, PES, work skills, and PEDP (explained below).

PES – Prison education service is tendered centrally by the MoJ. MKC (Milton Keynes College) were successful in their bid for the South of England PES contract which commenced in October 2025. The previous incumbent, Weston College, continued under the prison education framework until MKC were in post.

There was some uncertainty with budgeting, the future of the education department, and the courses the new provider would offer with a reduction in budget.

The following courses are provided under the MKC contract:

- Functional Skills in English and maths (Level 1 – mandatory and 2)
- CSCS (construction skills certification scheme)
- Horticulture Level 2 City and Guilds
- Warehousing, storage and distribution, Level 2 City and Guilds
- Enterprise
- Open University
- Construction - buildings maintenance and operations
- Business enterprise

Many courses were removed from the previous curriculum, including Business Administration, Accountancy Level 1, Essential Digital Skills, Independent Learning, Health and Safety in the Workplace, Food Safety. Painting and Decorating, Professional Cookery.

There are now six tutors, which has reduced from nine last year. The Open University tutor is timetabled for four half-days a week and supports up to 40 Open University or distance learning students on a year average. The tutor does not routinely see all OU/distance learning students every week. There have been consistent tutor shortfalls due to sickness, holiday or delayed recruitment with no back-up provision.

To increase coverage and attendance, the Education Department has moved to a “Roll On, Roll Off” provision for core subjects of English and Math’s where class sizes range from 8 to 15. Instead of the previous six-week, cohort-based process with exams at the end, the new process allows new entrants to join the classroom every Monday. The tutor endeavours to manage the learning needs of all through teaching multiple topics simultaneously. The intent is to allow the exam to be taken as and when the tutor considers the learner is ready. Every course has its own guided learning hours. MKC may extend guided learning hours to 1.5 times the suggested guided learning hours where appropriate.

Support is available from two peer mentors per class. The Shannon Trust charity also assists outside the classroom.

Under the current framework contract, the MoJ can fine the provider. If a tutor or course is unavailable, if a student fails an exam, or if it turns out that a prisoner has been assigned to the wrong course, the supplier may receive a penalty. We are advised by the Governor that the money from the fine is indirectly available to Leyhill from the MoJ, for use under the PEDPS (see below).

There are now facilities in the education department during working hours for managed access to the internet for education learning, using Oracle computers in a PC room. These need to be booked and content viewed is managed.

Education, tied to 12-week work-readiness period has improved attendance. Average attendance across all education by the end of the reporting period had increased to 89%. This approach has proved to be beneficial to all.

PEDPS – prison education dynamic purchasing system. The prison commissioned a dynamic purchasing system (DPS) prompted by the 2025 learner needs assessment to ensure the provision of work-based training meets population needs and labour market demands. Prison staff use this to secure training qualifications and diplomas (see vocational training below) through whatever suitable means are available. Some are sourced externally; others are in-house by prison employers. The reduction of available funding has required sourcing training from charities and other providers, including prisoner mentors.

The Leyhill reading strategy is intended to strengthen literacy across the establishment. A peer-led reading group runs a programme, 'That reading thing', to maximise engagement. Work in the library and on the units with reading mentors is ongoing. In addition, the Shannon Trust support prisoners who have not yet achieved entry level English and maths.

Library

- The library is open to prisoners seven days a week. Prisoners can borrow up to six books for four weeks, one DVD for one week and one console game for two weeks.
- The library has its own budget to buy books and can also borrow books from a consortium of public libraries across the South and Southwest. Prisoners can request literature support to investigate their legal rights.
- The library maintains a good selection of newspapers and magazines which are very popular, particularly amongst the more elderly prisoners.
- Plans are in place to introduce up to 15 Digital Education Platform computers in the room currently used for video calls that adjoins the Library. This will enhance access to digital resources and support further learning opportunities.
- Computers are only currently available in the education department during restricted opening times.
- The video calling facility will be moved to another location.

7.2 Vocational training, work

Vocational training

Whilst at Leyhill a prisoner's progress is managed by the activity board, which is comprised of the coordinators and heads of the teams involved. There are weekly meetings that consisting of staff from education, learning and skills, and work experience. They provide evidence of progression, behaviours and attitudes of the prisoners. This is recorded in the prisoner PIW (progress in work) booklets, where the tutors and mentors document the skills and talents of the prisoners in their workplaces.

Career pathway courses offered or planned for 2026, include:

- Warehousing and Storage (DHL) Leven 2 City and Guilds
- Printing
- Horticulture (Market Gardens) Level 2 City and Guilds
- Recycling
- Joinery will be offered later in 2026
- Hospitality and Catering
- Railtrack
- Car Valeting (Garage)
- Industrial Cleaning
- Employability (support for CVs, interviews, etc)
- CSCS – sourced externally as MKC not able to provide
- Others such as HGV, Forklift, Bike Mechanics are available from time to time.

The Board is concerned some courses are unlikely to be available to meet demand including:

- Professional cooking
- Painting and Decorating
- Independent Learning Skills
- Construction
- Accountancy

At the end of the reporting year The majority of prisoners of working age are employed inside the prison. Current figures are DHL, 48; Waste Management Unit, 20; Market Gardens, 8; and Kitchens, 32; with 28 as the average around shifts. Other internal workplaces include the laundry which serves five prisons and external contracts, woodwork, garage, printshop, and stores.

Support from Route office, a prisoner-led service that provides peer support and practical assistance to prisoners preparing for employment on release, is available to advise on the expectation regarding a CV and interview. The word processing capability in the Route office has recently been withdrawn. A prisoner can only access Coracle PCs on Monday afternoons in the Education department. The sessions are unsupported.

Work

CET (community employment team), formerly WEX, reports a successful year, with new external employment placements rising from under 50 to over 80. The Governor set more ambitious targets for 2026. However, CET says it could fill many more roles, but its main challenge is the growing proportion of PCoSOs at Leyhill that increased from 55% to over 70% during the year. Despite some employers' reluctance to hire PCoSOs, CET placed about 38 in external roles.

This has sometimes required a 'slow burn' approach, matching individuals with specific employers and providing further explanation about their offences. The Board acknowledges that the higher proportion of PCoSOs at Leyhill will make it more difficult to increase the number of prisoners in external employment.

CET's six staff operate an open-door policy, and one staff member attends the employment hub for 90 minutes every Saturday morning.

The prison recognises that there are several barriers to increasing the number of prisoners employed externally including:

- Restricted transport capability to some geographic areas.
- Prison processing of night workers when leaving or returning to Units at unsocial hours.
- Limited opportunities for training for prisoners to get CSCS cards

The Prison is undertaking a formal review of employment and opportunities for those with limited mobility or nearing retirement age. Recent indications are showing signs of success from monthly prison statistics, including an increase in the following:

- ROTL (release on temporary license) external paid work per 1,000 prisoners.
- Percentage of prisoners in employment six weeks after leaving Leyhill.
- Daily attendance at courses and employment.
- Course completion and exam performance.
- Proportion of prisoners on half-time purposeful activity

Occupation of the RDCs (rapid deployment cells) and proposal to permit prisoner self-transport to external employment locations will provide increased flexibility and opportunities.

There are enrichment activities and peer-led roles, creating opportunities for prisoners to take responsibility and contribute positively to the prison community. These include use of unit kitchen facilities for self-catering, allotments, games nights, music groups, sports, gymnasium, religious celebrations, Lobster Pot over 50s facility, discussion groups, opportunities to participate in prisoner engagement groups such as the food forum and the Leyhill Consultative Committee (LCC).

New incentives that promote a work ethos are happening. The Governor proposed to start a 'Dragons' Den' style initiative but could not progress due to financial rules and MoJ estate constraints regarding business set ups. In the future, it is hoped that the prison can work with the charitable sector to set up a scheme and bid for innovation fund grants.

7.3 Offender management, progression

As a resettlement prison, Leyhill's prisoners are understandably focused on securing parole and release. This process can be time-consuming, especially because risk assessments are more rigorous in a prison with a high proportion of high-risk prisoners.

OMU (offender management unit) resources have been stretched by the introduction of several new and developing initiatives. During the reporting year, the OMU was tasked several times to provide extra assurance on complex multiple sentences, including consecutive and concurrent terms. This required OMU staff to revisit initial sentence calculations and assess them against specific criteria, creating additional unplanned work to meet an MoJ imposed deadline.

Examples include:

- OMU reported 53 initial ROTL (Release on Temporary Licence) boards exceeding the 12 week Leyhill target.
- Delays were linked to slower communication with external agencies and more complex cases needing significant multi disciplined input.
- HDC (Home Detention Curfew) was extended from 180 to 365 days in June, requiring sentence recalculations. OMU identified 46 prisoners with revised dates.
- OMU informed the IMB that despite advance planning of parole hearings, some prisoners could not complete enough RDRs (Resettlement Day Release) or RORs (Resettlement Overnight Release) before their hearing. Limited AP (Approved Premises) availability was a key factor; the OMU acknowledged the issue and is seeking to improve the ROTL process. This often results to delay in progression to parole.
- ROTL numbers fell during the festive period and temporary closure of many external placements. OMU ensured all eligible prisoners had family time over Christmas, supported by coordinated work across OMU, Reception, Gate staff and managers.

The IMB recognise that OMU has been put under significant additional pressure implementing the above schemes/initiatives/actions. Throughout the reporting year the IMB has raised a number of issues with the OMU.

There have been some delays in approving ROTL applications that have been raised this year. In July 2025, OMU said it was working to improve the process, noting that some applications had been misplaced and others were held up awaiting feedback from prison offender managers (POMs)/community offender managers (COMs)/external functions.

The OMU said electronic submissions system would improve transparency by tracking applications through the system.

In February 2025, the Lord Chancellor changed the Risk Assessed Recall Review (RARR) policy to ease pressure on prison capacity. In response, the Governor increased Leyhill's occupancy from 460 to 474, creating additional places in the open estate.

Despite these added pressures, the OMU continues to 'rise to the challenge' and the IMB has noted seen a steady increase in the ROTL figures throughout the reporting year.

Category	December 2024	June 2025	December 2025	January 2026
ROTL applications	1547	2115	2597	2663
RDR's (day release to Bristol)	401	719	793	694
RDR's (unpaid work)	1	33	16	0
RDR's (paid work)	826	1175	1557	1685

ROR's	106	96	107	100
SPL's (special purpose leave)	71	72	74	86
Education and training	9	30	28	15

ROTL figures have improved, but the number of prisoners working outside the prison remains lower than in some other open prisons. In January 2026, the daily figure was typically around 101 prisoners in paid work ROTL (including 18 drivers and five in the onsite café), suggesting about 80 were working for external employers.

7.4 Family contact

HMP Leyhill assists and encourages all prisoners to maintain contact with their families, friends and the community. Visits take place in a safe, decent, and secure environment or via video using a laptop. Visitors can sit in the visits centre whilst waiting to be admitted into the main visits hall and there is access to toilets. A coffee shop, outside the grounds, is also available for all visitors.

Social video calls are also used to assist the maintenance of family ties. Four laptops are available, so that prisoners can speak to family/friends via pre-booked 35-minute sessions. Prisoners book these visits by putting an application through the mail room, who then manage the bookings.

Children's family days have taken place four times this year, whilst adult family days have been held on three occasions. The sessions are planned to coincide with school holidays for children and adult family days are set at either end of the year if feasible. In the visits hall, there is a children's play area with a range of toys, books, play equipment and arts and craft facilities. There is also a 'teen zone' for older children.

Phone access has in the past been limited, leading to long waits. However, in the reporting year additional phones have been installed the majority of wings. A mobile phone trial for 48 prisoners on two wings is set to begin March 2026, providing each participant with a phone.

7.5 Resettlement planning

The IMB recognises that one of the main reasons for the low figures for prisoners in external employment is the increase in PCoSOs (prisoners convicted of a sexual offence) as a percentage of the prison population. For the period between February 2025 and January 2026 the percentage of PCoSOs increased from 58% to 72%. The figures below show more detail:

Date	PCOSOs (%)	PCOSOs (Number)	Prison population
January 2025	58%	270	459
June 2025	62%	287	462
January 2026	72%	342	473

Resettlement told the IMB that local businesses were sometimes reluctant to employ PCoSOs; despite initially saying they were open to all types of prisoners.

The number of prisoners available for working outside the prison has reduced because many are beyond retirement age, ill, disabled or close to release. Despite this, Resettlement told the IMB that it was optimistic it could significantly increase the number working out.

In March 2025, the OMU told the IMB that pressure from the schemes and initiatives outlined in Section 7.3 had caused delays to ROTL applications.

Positively, Leyhill was praised by the Avon Police and Crime Commissioner and British Transport Police for how it managed a staggering large number of releases. On one day, 20 releases were handled at three-hour intervals.

In April 2025, resettlement reported a clear improvement over the previous three months, with the community employment team (CET) securing more external work placements. CET now runs a Saturday drop-in service at the employment hub to discuss these opportunities. They also said more companies were willing to take on PCoSOs. However, only a quarter of prisoners interviewed regarding external work, expressed an interest, citing concerns about disclosing their offences to potential employers and working with the public. Despite this, there was real optimism that Leyhill would continue to secure more external placements.

One of the concerns of the IMB is the lack of AP accommodation for low-risk prisoners on release and that some prisoners were anxious about being released with little support and no accommodation.

In June 2025 the IMB received complaints from several prisoners that there were too few suitable employment opportunities for professional or white-collar prisoners, such as those with IT or financial experience.

The deputy Governor expressed real positivity in the working out figures, saying how there was more to come.

In August 2025, the IMB was told by the Resettlement Hub that there were no external vacancies on the notice boards, a view shared by several prisoners. The OMU told the IMB that some prisoners who worked out later secured jobs in the same roles after release. There was a view that CET could do more to develop external placements with existing partner companies, and this would be explored further.

The Board acknowledged that, after a strong start to the reporting year, it had become increasingly difficult to find new work opportunities, and Leyhill had not reached the external employment levels hoped for. It was unfortunate that some existing companies had reduced placements, with many factors affecting the availability of external employment.

In September 2025, a discussion with the Reducing Reoffending team confirmed that 80 prisoners were working out. The deputy Governor said he was confident the target of 99 would soon be reached.

In October 2025 the OMU stated that recent delays in ROTL Boards were due to fewer available POMs, some of whom were assigned to higher-priority early release initiatives imposed by the MOJ with fixed, non-negotiable deadlines. As early releases take precedence over ROTL, they affected the workload and availability of POMs and COMs for ROTL boards. This concerned the Board and results in delays in progression to parole.

In January 2026, Leyhill reported that 101 prisoners were working out, including 18 drivers and 5 café workers, with 80 were employed externally. Morrisons at Bridgwater agreed to take on four prisoners, which would increase the total. However, there was evidence that some external employers were reluctant to employ prisoners because of stigma and negative publicity. In one case, a company preparing to interview several prisoners withdrew its offer after staff at the company said they would not work with PCoSOs.

In January 2026, the IMB was told by the head of resettlement that there had been 42 releases, many involving high-risk prisoners. Finding approved premises for these prisoners proved difficult in some areas. Some were given only 24 hours' notice of their destination, leaving no time to plan and causing significant stress as release approached.

At the end of the reporting year, CET advised the IMB it had recently experienced a successful period with several new jobs filled and more opportunities emerging with optimism that the target of 98 prisoners working externally would be reached. They stated that its biggest challenge was finding jobs as the number of PCoSOs at Leyhill had risen to 72% of the prison population. It had successfully placed about 38 PCoSOs in external employment and had been explaining the nature of their offences to some employers, encouraging them to assess each prisoner individually.

The IMB continues to be concerned about the situation of imprisonment for public protection (IPP) prisoners, many of whom are beyond their minimum term of imprisonment. In 2023 the HMIP stated that 'They regard the treatment of IPP prisoners as deeply unjust particularly as Parliament has recognised that the sentence was unjust in the first place'.

In January 2025, the number of prisoners serving life sentences was 107, including 28 IPP.

In January 2026, the number of prisoners serving life sentences was 11,2 including 69 IPP.

8. The work of the IMB

There were 267 IMB visits in 2025-2026, compared with 275 in 2024-2025.

The Governor, senior members of the team and staff have all been cooperative and supportive of the Board. The appointment of a permanent IMB clerk is appreciated by the Board and the role continues to develop. The business hub has provided support where possible, often with a reduced number of staff.

The Board has reviewed and analysed completed discharge surveys to identify any trends.

IT access following the system upgrade continues to provide challenges for some Board members. The outsourcing of IT administration has resulted in difficulties for some Board members to gain access to the system.

Two members of the Board have been on sabbatical.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	11
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	13
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	7 + 2 on Sabbatical
Total number of visits to the establishment	267

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	1	1
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	1	1
C	Equality	1	0
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	1	1
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	1	1
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	1	2
F	Food and kitchens	2	1
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	1	3
H1	Property within the establishment	0	3
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	6	4
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	1	0
I	Sentence management, including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	11	7
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	8	1
K	Transfers	0	0
L	Miscellaneous	1	3
	Total number of applications	36	28



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