



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Five Wells

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

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Introductory sections 1 – 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

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

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

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

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

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

2. Description of the establishment

HMP Five Wells is a category C prison (for prisoners who cannot be trusted in open conditions but are unlikely to attempt escape) for adult men in Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, opened in February 2022. The prison is managed by the private security company G4S and was originally contracted to house 1,680 prisoners¹, providing rehabilitation and resettlement for those with up to two years left of their sentence. By March 2025, the capacity had increased to 1,735 and the population had increased further, to 1,757, by March 2026. Accommodation comprises seven houseblocks, each with four floors, plus a care and separation unit (CSU), where prisoners can be held separately from the main population to help maintain safety and security, protect themselves or others, or manage serious incidents and risk. There are other significant buildings that provide facilities such as 24 workshops, one of which has been converted into a gymnasium, education, visits, resettlement and healthcare, although there is no provision for in-patient healthcare.

Most prisoners have a single-cell, with an in-cell shower. There is in-cell telephony, plus an electronic kiosk (a self-service computer terminal that allows prisoners to manage their daily affairs) on each wing, and prisoners are provided with electronic computer tablets.

By the end of the reporting year, men convicted of a sexual offence (PCoSO) accounted for 56% of the prison population and were fully integrated with others for both residence and activities.

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 correspond with Official Statistics later published by the Ministry of Justice.

3. Key points

3.1 Main findings

From the Board's observations, the prison has benefitted from stable leadership during the year under the Director appointed in June 2024. During the reporting year, communications, staff and prisoner relationships and staffing levels have been improved.

The prison has operated a stable 'green' regime throughout the year, which refers to the full operational delivery of all activities and services for prisoners. There has been minimum disruption to this regime, which provides a stable environment for both prisoners and staff.

Staff and prisoner relationships have been improved through a number of initiatives, including the 'Bridges' initiative, which has provided a mechanism for staff and prisoners to raise concerns and have these discussed and addressed. The prison has again reviewed the peer-led initiative (PLI) groups operating in Five Wells and reset their composition to provide better support for prisoners and work more proactively with staff.

Again from our observations, staff recruitment and retention have improved, leading to a more experienced prison officer population. However, staffing levels do still appear stretched periodically, with gaps appearing in areas such as movement control and prisoner social and legal visits. Recruitment of tutors for education or workshops continues to be challenging, with vetting delays restricting the ability of the prison to provide training with external accreditation.

The prison has made good progress in many areas during the year, but more needs to be done, in the Board's view, to fulfil its potential as a resettlement prison. Accepting that national population-management measures are outside the control of the prison, the Board is concerned about issues such as limited space for resettlement-related activities.

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 prison) of the prison has been increased to 1,769 during the year to assist with reducing strain on the prison system. This has clearly placed challenges on the accommodation available and on the ability of the prison to provide purposeful activity for all prisoners.

Throughout the reporting year, the prison has operated on an integrated basis, meaning that mains and PCOSOs live alongside one another rather than on separate houseblocks. Although prisoners often grumble about these arrangements, this approach has been successful, and incidences of violence, for example, have been on a declining path during the year.

Safety

- Although substance misuse remains an issue at Five Wells, data show a reduction in both the number of drug-related incidents and the rate of positive random drug tests.
- The frequency of self-harm incidents has decreased significantly during the reporting year and the management of the assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) process, for prisoners at risk of self-harm and suicide, has improved, in the Board's view.

- Use of force incidents have fallen by around 30% compared with last year, partly due to improving the resolution of situations before force is required.
- The frequency of violent behaviour has reduced by nearly 50%, to 297 incidents in the year. Prison initiatives continue to focus on incentivising good behaviour to reduce incidents further.

Fair and humane treatment

- In the Board's view, the standard of accommodation remains good at Five Wells. The vast majority of prisoners continue to have single cells with showers. Operational capacity has again been increased during the year, meaning that additional cells have been 'doubled up' and the Board remains concerned about two prisoners sharing cells designed for one.
- The prison has introduced a process to reclassify landings as 'super-enhanced' (as part of its incentives scheme), subject to prisoners meeting specific behaviour expectations. Prisoners living on these landings are entitled to more time out of their cells and can access other benefits. The initiative has been well received by prisoners.
- The building design issues highlighted in previous reports remain. The prison is endeavouring to address challenges such as poor airflow on the houseblocks. As the population has increased, limitations in the available space have also become more apparent, affecting the prison's ability to deliver the full range of activities and programmes originally intended.

Health and wellbeing

- From the Board's observations, healthcare services continue to generally meet the needs of the prison population, and we have no significant concerns about access to care or waiting times, although we continue to receive some complaints from prisoners about delays to routine appointments.
- Prisoners still have to make paper-based requests for appointments, as IT access for all healthcare staff has yet to be resolved.
- Despite more information being given to prisoners surrounding the changes that may have been made to their medication, we still receive concerns. From our observations, Practice Plus Group (PPG), the healthcare provider, continues to try to improve communication.
- Approximately 35% of prisoners receive 'in possession' medication, although a secure, lockable system is still to be implemented on all houseblocks.
- In the Board's view, support systems for neurodivergent prisoners have very much improved over the year, with many new initiatives implemented to support individuals.
- The number of recorded self-harm incidents has reduced considerably since March 2025. Incidents had fallen to 75 in March 2026, with 39 prisoners involved. The most prolific self-harmer was responsible for seven incidents, while two others were involved in six incidents each.
- The ACCT process has improved significantly. By the end of the reporting year, the number of men on an ACCT had fallen to 19, compared with a typical figure in the 40s during the previous year.
- In the Board's view, continuity of care for prisoners leaving custody who require support for drug and/or alcohol misuse remains good.

- Regular meetings between healthcare staff, safety teams and senior managers help to ensure that strong support systems are in place for individuals.
- There are ongoing investigations into three deaths in custody (DIC) in the reporting year.

Progression and resettlement

- Good progress appears to have been made with the recruitment of staff in terms of increasing numbers of teaching staff, managers and support staff.
- The vetting process has led to some delays in recruitment, with a number of applicants withdrawing before the process is completed.
- Opportunities remain to run workshops that lead to employment and offer employer-recognised qualifications.
- The Board received consistently positive feedback from prisoners attending education and working in the prison's industries. The library team has worked hard throughout the year to introduce a variety of initiatives to help improve participation across the prison population.
- The progression of prisoners has been well managed, in the Board's view. However, it has been impacted by the measures to manage the national prison population, such as prisoners arriving for only a short stay and distant from their home locations. Other limiting factors are the lack of space for accredited programme delivery and training for work-related qualifications.
- In the Board's view, prisoner progression has been managed effectively. However, progress has at times been affected by measures introduced to manage the national prison population, including the placement of prisoners for short periods and at establishments far from their home areas. Further constraints include limited space for the delivery of accredited programmes and work-related training and qualifications.
- Support for prisoners in maintaining family relationships, particularly with their children, appears to be good.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- What improvements is the Minister planning to support prisoners without a licence requirement, particularly in relation to accommodation and access to services, given the heightened risk of reoffending shortly after release?
- Given concerns about the reduced availability of approved premises, what assurance can the Minister provide that sufficient accommodation capacity will be available, both locally and nationally, to meet current and future demand?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- Noting the high demand for Building Choices at Five Wells but the limited numbers of prisoners able to access the programme, what plans does HMPPS have to expand capacity and enable more prisoners to benefit from these courses?
- How will the Prison Service address the shortage of suitable space for delivering courses and initiatives, particularly in key areas such as neurodiversity and mental health support?

TO THE DIRECTOR

- How will the prison continue to improve its performance in respect of safety, including addressing issues raised in the external reviews of deaths in custody?
- How will the prison embed good practice in areas in which concerns have been raised, such as searching, enforcement of the incentives scheme and servery oversight?
- How will the prison ensure that the qualifications offered at Five Wells provide genuine access to work opportunities on release?
- How will the prison meet its targets for purposeful activity?
- What action is being taken to improve the use of technology across the prison, including ensuring that healthcare and other staff have timely access to the systems they need to work effectively and deliver high-quality services?

3.3 Response to the last report

Issue raised with the Minister	Response given	Progress
During the year, the IMB has noticed an increasing number of recalled prisoners. What is being done nationally to improve the monitoring and support for newly released prisoners, to reduce the likelihood that they are recalled for minor indiscretions?	The decision to recall a person to custody is never taken lightly and is guided by rigorous thresholds based on licence compliance and the ability to manage escalating risk in the community. Nationally, we recognise that good resettlement planning is key to reducing the likelihood of recall, particularly for minor breaches. However, challenges such as securing suitable accommodation can hinder successful reintegration. In response, the East of England region has undertaken a review of recall cases over the past 12 months to identify common themes and addressable issues. We are also strengthening pre-release planning and expanding the role of peer mentors, including initiatives where mentors meet individuals at the gate to provide immediate	Ongoing efforts are being made to strengthen pre-release planning and community communication. The proportion of recalls fell this year but is still significant, at 17%.

	support. Prison and probation colleagues are collaborating more closely to improve communication at the point of recall, ensuring that timely and accurate information is shared to support individuals effectively. This includes the use of a standardised proforma to ensure timely information sharing, particularly for those on fixed-term recalls, enabling us to better identify and meet resettlement needs and support individuals towards successful re-release.	
What improvements are planned to remedy faults in the design of new prisons, such as poor ventilation, lack of facilities and poor physical security, which have been identified in IMB reports?	The Ministry of Justice is actively applying lessons from across the New Prisons Programme to ensure that each successive build addresses previously identified weaknesses. For example, at HMP Fosse Way, built following HMP Five Wells, 84 additional interview rooms were incorporated, as well as seven large group rooms, and air-conditioning in the staff training space to improve working conditions. Unfortunately, there are no immediate plans to make physical improvements to HMP Five Wells, as there are a number of competing demands for maintenance across the	There have been no significant changes to Five Wells in the past year to remedy the issues raised in previous IMB reports. The prison does continue to adapt the accommodation to fit changing needs against a background of increasing population demands, which put pressure, for example, on accommodation and work facilities.

	prison estate and HM Prison & Probation Service (HMPPS) must prioritise work based on risk to life, capacity and decency.	
What steps will the Minister take to improve the poor recruitment record for IMB members?	The IMB Staff is taking active steps to improve recruitment processes and outcomes. The IMB recruitment process is currently under review to streamline procedures and improve efficiency. This includes updating guidance for both applicants and interview panels to ensure high-quality candidates are attracted and appointed. It is also developing a new database and application system to make it easier for individuals to apply and for vacancy managers to track progress through each stage of recruitment. The IMB Staff's next national campaign is scheduled to launch in January 2026 and, as with all campaigns, it will target promotional efforts to support establishments facing recruitment challenges, such as HMP Five Wells. It also has regionally based staff dedicated to local outreach and community engagement, and tailored advertising to ensure as broad and representative a pool of potential volunteers as possible can be reached.	Five Wells IMB is pleased that three new member candidates have recently passed the interview stage of recruitment. However, from this Board's perspective, the recruiting process continues to be lengthy and bureaucratic, with focus only on national campaigns and no liaison with local Boards to establish specific needs. Recent evidence of a broken process is an appeal from the IMB Staff team for help with another Board where the last two members had resigned.

The original designation of Five Wells was as a resettlement prison for men in their last two years in custody. As the composition of the prison population has changed to accommodate a significant number of men who are not in their last two years of custody and on current projected availability of programme delivery capability, is there any plan to change the designation of Five Wells as a resettlement prison?	There are currently no immediate plans to change the designated function of HMP Five Wells. However, the contract for the prison was designed with flexibility in mind, recognising the need to adapt to pressures within the wider prison system and operational requirements on site. As such, while the primary function remains resettlement, the cohort has been flexed in response to system-wide capacity demands. Notably, in January 2024, a trainer cohort was introduced, and as of August 2025, the population at Five Wells comprises approximately 56% resettlement and 39% trainer. Looking ahead, the HMPPS Estate Configuration Review, alongside the Independent Sentencing Review and the Independent Review of Criminal Courts, will inform future decisions about prison functions and offender flows across the estate. A 2027 Configuration Ambition has been agreed as a holding position which, for HMP Five Wells, includes a model of 85% Resettlement C and 15% Trainer C, ensuring the prison continues to meet the evolving needs of the system while	No changes noted.
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	maintaining its core resettlement focus.	
What steps is the Prison Service undertaking to improve the system for recording and transferring prisoner property?	We take the concerns raised about the handling and transfer of prisoner property seriously and are actively working to improve systems and accountability in this area. In response to the findings of the IMB national thematic report and the Independent Prisoner Complaint Investigations review, HMPPS has actively reminded Governors and senior leaders of key property handling responsibilities, including adherence to volumetric control limits. While digital transformation in this area remains constrained by wider pressures, we have embedded the use of the digitally recorded Person Escort Record (dPER), which includes a property section that accurately logs sealed items transferred with the prisoner and supports investigations into any loss. Additionally, the Prisoner Escort and Custody Services (PECS) contract includes regular complaint reviews and has introduced a new vehicle fleet with increased capacity to carry additional property. We continue to consult with prisons on further improvements	Issues related to property, which arose during transfer from other prisons, continue to be a significant driver of applications to the IMB. Whilst the process for managing property once it arrives at Five Wells appears to be working well, the process for tracing missing property with other prisons and/or security contractors responsible for transfers continues to be inefficient.

	and remain committed to strengthening the integrity and traceability of prisoner property handling across the estate.	
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Issue raised with the Director	HMP Five Wells Response
Safety What steps will the prison take to reduce the frequency of self-harm incidents?	Bright Start are a PLI group that works collaboratively with staff to support the reduction of self-harm. The initiative proactively uses a multi-disciplinary approach to prisoner safety by identifying individuals with histories of self-harm or open ACCT (assessment, care in custody and teamwork) documents for targeted support. By integrating high-level case coordination for those in crisis and conducting weekly safety reviews, it ensures that complex cases are managed through collaborative team meetings involving mental health, education and houseblock staff. This strategy extends beyond immediate intervention to include monthly trend analysis and a focus on purposeful activity, ensuring that even when prisoners are temporarily removed from standard work or education due to safety concerns, they receive consistent support and clear guidance.
How will the prison engage with staff and prisoners to reduce instances of violence and use of force?	Our strategy for reducing violence and the use of force is built on proactive engagement, cultural transformation and data-driven accountability. We are embedding a culture of collaborative problem-solving through regular Bridges forums, which bring together staff and prisoners to foster mutual understanding and deescalation. Alongside this, we are actively driving the TRUCE campaign, utilising a tiered incentive structure tied to sustained periods of zero violence to actively shape a shared community ethos and promote non-violent resolution. To ensure accountability and drive systemic improvement, we have newly established use of force forums. These forums move beyond incident review to strategically analyse the root causes of refusals to relocate and force initiation, allowing us to proactively identify training needs, systemic issues and policy adjustments to safely and continually drive down these incidents.
What additional security measures will be taken to limit the number of illicit items found on the premises?	HMP Five Wells will shortly receive its second Rapiscan Device to help with the ingress of illicit items through the mail. Our internal physical processes are being tightened to make ingress via throwovers, drones more difficult.

Fair and Humane Treatment What steps will be taken to improve the airflow in houseblocks?	HMP Five Wells is currently a pioneer for the Digital Twin project. This involves a 3D digital model of the prison linked to real-time sensors throughout the houseblocks. Real-time Tracking: Sensors monitor temperature, CO² levels and air quality. Smart Adjustments: The Building Management System (BMS) uses this data to automatically adjust ventilation rates in specific areas before they become overheated or stuffy. This is currently on St Johns with a review to roll out sitewide.
What plans are there to make cells that have been 'doubled up' more appropriate for use by two prisoners.	Population pressures have meant that 54 additional prisoner places (APPs) have been activated by the MoJ. The only option we have is to double up cells that are ultimately designed for one person. Once the APPs are removed, the small double cells will revert to single cells.
When will the policy be enforced on the use of vapes for both staff and prisoners?	There is a process already in place. Prisoners are challenged if they are seen to be vaping in unauthorised areas. Staff have been reminded of designated vaping areas. There have been significant improvements in this area.
Health and wellbeing What steps are being taken to introduce electronic communication between the healthcare unit and prisoners?	We currently do not have full access to the CMS service across all PPG computers. At present, CMS is only available on one prison-owned computer in healthcare and one on each houseblock. For Traka activity, we rely solely on the single CMS-enabled computer in the healthcare unit. I would like all healthcare staff to access to CMS, as this would enable direct access to applications submitted via CMS, allowing healthcare to view patient requests immediately - removing delays caused by paper based internal mail or officer-mediated transfer. Faster and more consistent triage, supporting compliance with required healthcare timeframes and reducing clinical risk. More efficient rollout of the Traka system across all houseblocks as staff would be able to update and process information without relying on limited access points. Expanding CMS access would significantly improve workflow, responsiveness and the overall quality of patient care
How is contacting the prisoners via their computer tablets improving communication?	The ability to contact prisoners on their tablets is beneficial and allows for more timely communication links. Prisoners can make applications to individual departments and book visits and gym sessions. They can contact their POM for resettlement issues and

	admissions in reference to property issues and staff are able to provide a timely response. Tablets also provide greater access for maintaining family ties through phone calls and EMAP application, which is soon to be replaced by the introduction of a computer application (which allows prisoners to message their families). This will provide a cheaper and much improved service for prisoners .
How can the healthcare unit improve prisoner understanding of changes to their medication?	Changes to complex poly-pharmacy remain one of the most significant challenges for both healthcare teams and patients. One approach to improving this is to provide clear, accessible information explaining why medication changes may occur. Education is often the most effective way to support patients in understanding these decisions. At a previous site, we displayed information in reception for all new arrivals, which helped set expectations from the outset. I am also exploring how we could introduce pain management clinics, similar to those offered in the community, to further support patients in managing their conditions and understanding their treatment plans.
How are the new lockable lockers having an impact on the dispensing of medication?	Traka is currently implemented on two houseblocks, and as we are still in the early stages of rollout, we only have limited outcome data available at this point. The plan is to have three houseblocks fully set up by the end of March. By the end of April, we expect to have one to two months of data, which will allow us to assess how effectively the monthly "own possession medications are being collected and whether this is having a positive impact on medication rounds and overall patient care.
How are all parties ensuring the safety of pharmacists and men at the dispensary hatches?	An officer is present at all hatches during medication times. They are there to deal with any incidents that arise.
Progression and Resettlement Will there be an increase in the delivery capability of the Building Choices programme in the future?	The team currently is targeted at 100% capacity to deliver Building Choices at HMP Five Wells, We currently deliver entirely accredited programmes and have no capacity to deliver any other programme to target those who need work on D Cat development. Our waiting lists are extensive and my staff are currently being developed to deliver LDC versions of Building Choices. We currently have over 1000+ prisoners who qualify to complete Building Choices. Because of the size of my team, we will be able to reach a little over 100 in any year. This is an increase of about 25% on last year's targets, which is due to being directed by

	Intervention Services to increase accredited programmes from three sessions a week to four, which brings down the length of time spent on the programme. Lastly, due to restraints to both office space and delivery space, there is a real physical barrier to increase the Intervention department.
What steps are being taken to ensure that prisoners do not remain unallocated for long periods before being assigned to meaningful activity?	We look at the unallocated list daily and at where the spaces are. We then look at who's applied for those areas that are out of work, and then look at their need and length of time on unallocated. We can't always get someone into work as quickly as we should do, but that's usually down to lack of spaces in the work areas they want.
What is being planned to ensure all men are in meaningful employment for at least 28 hours a week?	As mentioned above, we look at this daily. We do have a high turnover of prisoners being released and transferred into us weekly, which makes the process longer.
Accepting the factors constraining Release on temporary licence (ROTL) for outside employment, is it envisaged that any prisoners will be granted ROTL in the next or subsequent years?	At present, due to the ongoing popular pressures and the implementation of the sentencing review that has already commenced with FTR56 going live, we are currently unsure how ROTL will look under this review. The review is set to change all sentencing guidelines, along with ceasing schemes such as Home Detention Curfew (HDC). At present, it is impossible to predict ; however, this will be reviewed as the various schemes are rolled out throughout 2026 and into 2027.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

The Board considers that prisoners arriving at HMP Five Wells are treated with professionalism and care. On arrival, prisoners are provided with briefings on the prison from experienced prisoners from the PLI (prisoner-led initiative) team, as well as going through initial health checks and registration processes, before being placed on the induction wing. There is a large amount of information for prisoners to take in on arrival and this can lead to some of them taking time to adapt to the regime. The most common concerns raised with the Board by recently arrived prisoners relate to delays in being allocated work, receiving a computer tablet and property going missing in transit. Once at Five Wells, however, property appears to be well managed and appropriately controlled.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

Rates of self-harm during the reporting year have reduced significantly from the levels noted last year. Total self-harm incidents in the year fell from 2,326 to 1,603, and serious incidents reduced from 49 to 17. From our observations, progress in this area resulted from a strong management focus on self-harming prisoners, use of the Bright Start prisoner-led initiative (PLI) group to improve engagement, and attention to the quality of oversight of individual cases. Management continues to focus on identifying trends in prisoner behaviour to reduce incidences further.

A consequence of this success has been a reduction of around a third, on average, in the number of open assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) plans in place at any time. Significant effort has been made during the year in improving the quality of ACCT reviews and documentation so that they more effectively support prisoners, and this is likely to remain a priority to embed good practice. The IMB welcomes the clear and significant improvements demonstrated in this area, but notes that overall levels of self-harm remain high compared with similar prisons and further work is required to continue the progress made at Five Wells.

There were no suicides during the reporting year and four deaths in custody. Although each death occurred in different circumstances, the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman's (PPO) independent investigations identified a number of recurring themes. These included the use of restraints when seriously ill or infirm prisoners were being transported to, or treated in, hospital, and the timeliness of healthcare responses and transfers to hospital in cases involving severe illness.

The IMB considers that the changes made to processes, including the identification of prisoners who do not require restraints during hospital visits and enhanced training for healthcare staff, should be kept under review to help ensure that these issues are not repeated.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

The number of violent incidents at Five Wells reduced from 586 last year to 297 in the reporting year, a fall of 49%. This significant reduction follows a sustained programme of activities focused on addressing the harm caused by violence, together with a strong management focus that has strengthened ownership of the issue at houseblock level, and incentives for prisoners who demonstrate significant periods of violence-free

behaviour. Additional initiatives targeted at specific groups, such as the under-25s, have focused on prisoners who are more likely to become involved in violent behaviour.

The use of challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs), to manage prisoners with violent tendencies, has increased. However, the Board remains concerned that the quality of these documents could be improved, by, for example, setting appropriate individual targets for prisoner behaviour, using multi-disciplinary teams to conduct reviews and ensuring that cases are closed only when those targets have been met.

4.4 Use of force

From our observations, the prison has demonstrated significant progress in the management of use of force (UoF) during the reporting year. The number of UoF incidents fell by 30%, to 772. Steady progress in this area has been noted through a focus on incident review, staff training and the sharing of good practice. For example, by focusing on the use of de-escalation techniques, the prison has encouraged more effective incident control. The prison's initiatives to reduce violence, including targeted campaigns and the use of PLI groups, also appear to have been beneficial. Challenges remain in ensuring the consistent application of good practice in both spontaneous and planned incidents. This includes the use of handheld cameras during planned incidents and ensuring that body worn video cameras (BWVCs) are activated in all incidents.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

The Board considers that some progress has been made in reducing the number of illicit items found in the prison. Although drugs continue to be available, the positive rate for random drug tests has fallen from over 25%, as reported last year, to 18%. Concerns raised by the Board in previous years regarding the entry of illicit items via drones or 'throw-overs' have diminished, partly, we believe, as a result of improved movement control in the prison, which has made it more difficult for items entering the establishment in this way to be retrieved. The prison has also successfully identified staff who colluded with prisoners and who were subsequently prosecuted and convicted of misconduct in public office.

During the reporting year, the prison discontinued the designation of a specific houseblock landing as a drugs rehabilitation unit. Prisoners on this landing were restricted in accessing other areas of the prison, and it proved challenging to provide appropriate and sufficient meaningful activity for these individuals. Since the prisoners have been integrated into other houseblocks, the Board has not identified any adverse consequences. Prisoners found under the influence are managed through the wellbeing intervention support plan (WISP). The number of prisoners managed under this process during the year to March 2026 fell by around 40% compared with the previous year, which is consistent with the improvements seen in other areas.

The level of finds in the prison of common illicit items (illicitly brewed alcohol, or 'hooch', phones, weapons, drugs, etc) have all fallen during the year. The prison continues to engage in disruption activity to discourage illicit trade, including the transfer of individuals to other establishments where appropriate.

Improving the consistency and quality of searching of prisoners has been a key focus in the second half of the reporting year. Inconsistent or poor-quality searching has contributed to a number of incidents in areas where prisoners congregate on the way to work, education or other activities.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing and food

The Board remains concerned about the use of single cells to accommodate two prisoners and the resulting lack of personal and storage space. Increases in the prison's operating capacity, required by the Ministry of Justice, have further exacerbated this issue.

The Board has consistently monitored standards for the serveries. Whilst there have been improvements, we have observed widely varying standards, such as the use of hands to serve food and the wearing of inappropriate clothing.

5.2 Segregation

There continues to be effective management of the care and separation unit, or CSU (where prisoners can be held separately from the main population to help maintain safety and security, protect themselves or others, or manage serious incidents and risk). A small number of prisoners (particularly those who are being transferred to category B prisons) remain on the unit for longer than would be ideal. Typically, the unit manages 4-8 prisoners at a time.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

The prison has benefitted from a more experienced staffing profile as retention has improved. However, despite management focus, the Board has observed inconsistencies with staff implementing the regime, for example in respect of searching. Staff and prisoner relationships have generally improved, supported by a number of initiatives such as Bridges (which bring together staff and prisoners to foster mutual understanding and deescalation) and the availability of additional communication routes such as the prison council and regular forums on specific issues.

Key worker sessions continue to improve, with the prison hitting over 90% of targets.

5.4 Chaplaincy

Attendance at Friday Muslim prayers and some Christian services remain high. All other faiths appear to be recognised and the extensive chaplaincy team provides broad support for all men through a programme of events and individual meetings. The team offers support to prisoners in times of need.

5.5 Incentive schemes

The prison has introduced a process to reclassify landings as 'super-enhanced', subject to specific conditions around existing prisoner behaviour being met. This process has been well received.

The consistent application of the incentives scheme remains a focus for management, particularly in relation to non-attendance at work or education. Support for prisoners on the 'basic' level, the lowest tier of the scheme (with 'standard' and 'enhanced/super-enhanced' levels above it), whose privileges have been restricted, has been strengthened through a PLI group that provides guidance and support to help them work towards the restoration of those privileges.

5.6 Complaints

From the Board's review of the complaints system, response times to complaints have continued to improve during the reporting year, with an average of 88% of complaints responded to on time. The Board is aware that many of the complaints received require responses from other establishments over which Five Wells management has no control. In addition, 63% of discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs) were responded to within the required timescales. While this remains an area for improvement, it represents a significant improvement on last year's performance. It is hoped that, with the prison similarly focusing in this area, the response times will improve.

5.7 Property

The Board continues to receive applications (prisoners' written representations to the IMB) concerning property that has not been forwarded from other prisons. The prison's ability to follow up these cases with other prisons is limited, as there appears to be no effective national process in place.

5.8 Other activities

The prison has successfully introduced a range of additional services and activities for prisoners, including sporting events, quizzes and competitions, debating opportunities, and media and communications projects. These activities have generally been well attended and positively received.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

The NHS-commissioned Practice Plus Group (PPG) continues to provide healthcare services in the prison. The head of the healthcare unit left in January 2026 and a successor was appointed shortly afterwards. While there was little opportunity for a formal handover, the deputy head of healthcare appeared to provide effective support during the transition.

Healthcare management continues to have monthly meetings, attended by senior healthcare and prison staff and the local NHS Commissioner. The local authority, which has responsibility for social care in the prison, is invited and attendance has improved over this year.

At the end of the reporting year, there were still three pharmacy vacancies, and one for a GP for one day a week.

A locum psychologist provides cover for two days a week, while a bank psychiatrist works three days a week. Permanent appointments have been made, but the successful candidates are awaiting clearance.

Three paramedics were appointed during the reporting year, although one of these posts will shortly become temporarily vacant.

The Board received 83 applications relating to healthcare, compared with 114 in the previous year. The majority of applications were about a change of medication on arrival, management of medicines and waiting times for healthcare appointments.

From our observations, communication between prisoners and PPG has improved. Prisoners' non-attendance at healthcare appointments is being carefully monitored.

PPG has been working with G4S to be able to provide access for prisoners via the tablet system so that a prisoner can have an immediate acknowledgement. Although it was hoped that this would be achieved by September 2025, not all relevant staff are able to access relevant systems (CMS).

The prisoner-led HASLine (healthcare advisory service) continues to support the healthcare unit and is a valuable asset. They work to reduce non-attendance at appointments.

Approximately 35% of prisoners receive in-possession medication.

There are Traka cabinets (secure electronic medication lockers that enable the safe, controlled and auditable storage and distribution of medicines to prisoners) on three houseblocks, with a fourth due to be installed soon. However, access to CMS is still an issue, especially for pharmacy staff.

Improvements appear to have been made in the distribution of prescriptions at the hatches, and officers are now generally in attendance, with the result that pharmacy staff report feeling safer.

6.2 Physical healthcare

The Board continues to receive complaints about waiting times for routine appointments, which can be up to four weeks for a GP appointment.

A nurse carries out an initial assessment of each prisoner when they arrive at the prison.

PPG is also involved in the general induction process and is working to make explanations about changes to medication clearer and more accessible for prisoners, supported by the development of informative posters. In addition, a pain management clinic is planned for those who would benefit from this support.

A nurse is in attendance when prisoners are released, alongside a member of the substance misuse team, who should help ensure that prescribed medication is given.

Health screening programmes appear to be comprehensive, and vaccination provision is broadly in line with that available in the community.

A nurse and health care assistant provide night cover.

6.3 Mental health

Urgent mental health referrals are seen within 24 hours, or immediately if a code red is called (a medical emergency code for major blood loss or trauma). The Board understands that routine cases are usually seen within three days.

The ACCT process has received high priority and appears to be much improved. Recording and attendance at ACCT reviews has also greatly improved, in our view.

The neurodiversity support team works closely with the head of the education department and the PPG team, and the identification of prisoners' needs has improved significantly. This is reflected in the range of high-quality support groups and activities available.

The mental health team holds regular weekly meetings with the safer custody team, where individuals with the highest level of need are discussed. This collaborative approach appears to have greatly improved the outcomes for a number of men.

The safer custody team manages a caseload of 151 men, who are subject to regular monitoring, including 30 who were referred as urgent cases.

There are 164 prisoners who are on antipsychotic monitoring, as well as prisoners on ACCTs who require short-term crisis intervention.

There were four patients under review for sectioning under the Mental Health Act (where someone is detained in hospital for mental health assessment or treatment, even against their will, when they have a mental disorder and are a risk to themselves or others) at the end of the year. Two patients moved to mental health facilities during the year. The time frames for mental health assessment are sometimes an issue, but this appears to be usually down to NHS funding and specialist care logistics.

6.4 Social care

The number of patients requiring specific social care has fallen to five, despite the number of older people in the prison. Two landings have been designated for older, less able prisoners.

Activities such as coffee mornings and reading groups are offered, as well as gentle exercise.

A variety of activities are also being offered to support neurodivergent prisoners and those under-25.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

Under the 'green' regime, prisoners spend three hours and 15 minutes in work or education in both the morning and the afternoon, in addition to 45 minutes for the collection and eating of meals. This regime has enabled mass movement of prisoners to and from work and education to be managed more effectively. However, challenges remain in relation to the quality and effectiveness of searches carried out when prisoners leave a houseblock or workplace.

A broader range of activities has been available to prisoners during the reporting year, as well as additional opportunities for specific groups such as the under-25s and retired prisoners. The prison continues to adapt to a changing prisoner mix, partly due to a high prisoner turnover.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

The PPG substance misuse team screens prisoners on arrival at Five Wells. The drug Strategy team coordinates rehabilitation activities and supports prisoners who request assistance relating to their addiction or who are identified as being under the influence and placed on a wellbeing intervention support plan (WISP).

A PLI group, New Steps, is used to provide peer support and appears to be working effectively. During the reporting year, the drug rehabilitation unit (DRU) was closed. The DRU separated prisoners with addiction issues from the remaining population, but proved to be a focal point for any substances in the prison. Effective physical separation on the DRU landing also proved challenging and provided limited opportunities for meaningful work or education for the prisoners participating. The closure of the DRU does not appear to have had a detrimental effect on rehabilitation activities.

At the end of the reporting year, there were 129 men on the caseload of prisoners receiving opiate substitute medication. This number has increased during the second half of the year, with most of these prisoners receiving methadone. The number of prisoners receiving Buvidal has increased rapidly during the year. As a once-monthly injectable treatment, Buvidal offers a number of advantages over medications that require daily administration

Despite modest resources, support groups include:

- Higher Power, which is run by the chaplaincy team
- Alcoholics Anonymous
- SMART groups, led by the PPG substance misuse team
- Narcotics Anonymous
- Gambling peer support

Additional services are available, including:

- Breaking Free, an online programme of education and support for prisoners. It attracts a significant number of participants, although information on the extent and duration of engagement remains limited.
- Recovery library, covering all aspects of recovery and rehabilitation.

The prison maintains supplies of naloxone to enable a prompt response to suspected opioid overdoses and ensures that staff are trained in its use. Prisoners assessed as being at risk are also offered naloxone training before their release.

6.7 Soft skills

Various sporting activities have run throughout the reporting year, including a regular park-run, relay challenge and power-lifting challenge.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, Library

Education

Education at HMP Five Wells has been delivered by Novus since July 2024 and is led by a permanent head of education. During the reporting year, there appears to have been a proactive approach to staff recruitment, resulting in an increase in the number of core education staff, support staff and managers. A number of prospective staff (primarily teachers) are going through the onboarding process. However, delays in vetting new recruits have continued to affect the number of education places available to prisoners. Over the past 12 months, the education team has achieved greater stability in staff retention.

The curriculum plan for the year delivers 34 courses, assuming a full complement of staff. The number of spaces and courses has significantly increased under Novus. If fully staffed, there are 274 spaces, but the team is working to 232 spaces, with outreach classes used to close gaps. From a vocational perspective, there was an ongoing issue with the recruitment to three posts (plumbing, barbering and kitchen fitting), which negatively impacted spaces.

A staff development plan has been developed in response to feedback from teaching observations, with training sessions delivered by an experienced Novus quality manager.

The proportion of men completing their basic English and Maths qualifications and achieving the required standard was 82% in 2024-2025. In 2025-2026, achievement rates were 72% in English and increased from 71% to 79% in Maths. The decline in English outcomes was partly linked to the transition from paper-based to online assessments, which required staff to familiarise themselves with the new system. Learner numbers have increased, and there are three classes in both English and Maths, representing a growth when compared with previous years and a forecast of 90%.

Achievement rates for accredited courses ranged from 68% to 92%, against a target of 80%. The cancellation of examinations between January and March, following a Northern Council for Further Education national systems outage, adversely affected results. Had these examinations gone ahead as planned, overall achievement for the quarter was estimated to have been around 87%.

Regular IMB visits to the education department during the year confirmed some excellent courses, including a business programme that helps prisoners write their CVs for when they are released and teaches them how to set up a business using accounting software. Success rates on these courses are high.

The Shannon Trust charity supports literacy and numeracy development through eight prisoner mentors, who have assisted 25 literacy learners and 15 numeracy learners. There were 203 reading intervention sessions with trained, qualified mentors. There are 57 men working on Open University courses and 72 involved with the Prisoners' Education Trust.

Average attendance for the reporting period was 76.5% (69.7% in the previous year). Those courses that had long-term vacancies or were unstaffed have not been included in the average attendance figure.

PLIs continue to follow-up non-attendance, as in previous years, with one PLI per houseblock together with three co-ordinators (higher education, intervention, administration). During March 2026, the PLI team completed 1,500 engagements, while the number of negative awards under the incentives scheme fell significantly.

A reading scheme was introduced in August 2025 with around 110 men involved to date.

Other successes include: the Koestler Awards for arts in criminal justice, with 47 entries from HMP Five Wells ,and a debating society comprising 25 members.

Library

Whilst the size of the library space has not increased, extra shelving has provided more space to store stock, with additional shelving also on order. The stock of DVDs has increased during the year and monthly orders top up these resources.

Attendance has increased from 55% last year to 75% this year, with the aim of achieving 80%. There is a comprehensive range of activities timetabled across the week; the sessions for the chess club and LGBTQ+ are particularly well attended. A book club was introduced during the reporting year, which has resulted in successfully being introduced in the library and other houseblocks. A successful author event for 40 attendees was held in October 2025.

Staffing has appeared to remain stable throughout the year. This has helped create a positive environment, which is more proactive than in previous years. Access to a regular monthly budget for purchasing books has enabled the team to focus their attention on feedback from library users.

7.2 Vocational Training, Work

There are 24 workshops available, with six delivered by Novus and the rest by G4S.

Analysis of provision takes account of the employment needs of both the local area and the wider region. Throughout the year, the team has responded flexibly to changing patterns of demand. For example, an increase in the number of young offenders has led to greater demand for vocational pathways, while prisoners convicted of sexual offences have tended to pursue more academic routes, such as A Levels and Open University courses.

Discussions have continued throughout the reporting year on the development of additional workshops to provide prisoners with a broader range of employment opportunities. To support this expansion, recruitment is underway for customer service and painting and decorating tutors. Work has also been undertaken during the year to strengthen links between courses, workshops and employment opportunities within course materials and the induction booklet. Further work is needed to ensure that this information is accessible, relevant and meaningful from the prisoners' perspective.

A dedicated team has developed positive relationships with a number of employers, with a view to exploring job opportunities. Some interviews have taken place during the reporting year, with some prisoners being successful. Realistically, employment positions for PCoSOs are more difficult to find. Work has commenced to have a formalised tracking system for employment from industries and the education department.

There are 16 accredited courses available. Whilst sign and design and print continue to take on work from external companies, issues relating to G4S nationally resulted in some non-payment of invoices. This had an adverse effect on outputs. Other areas working with outside providers include: Salvation Army (upcycling); recycling cycles; textiles; and carpentry. The introduction of a new system involving dedicated administrative support was introduced towards the end of the reporting year. The success of the gardening programme is evident in the prison grounds. Warehousing and forklift training continue to run well, although space constraints remain an issue, as noted in previous reports. Both an industries shop in the reception at HMP Five Wells and a stall at a local retail park have opened, selling quality items made by the men.

Kitchen fitting experienced difficulties with staff recruitment. Whilst multi-skills provides a qualification, there is an opportunity (subject to recruitment) to offer a bricklaying course that may lead to employment. Other courses include: plumbing and heating, art, fitness academy, Fluidmaster and cleaning. The radio and media team regularly produces videos featuring the Director and senior management, as well as videoing special events. Feedback from the prisoners has been extremely positive, with many valuing the opportunity to take part in work-related activities. Some workshops continue to experience fluctuations in the volume of work available, which can affect levels of purposeful activity.

7.3 Offender management, progression

7.3.1 Offender management overview

The satisfactory management of the OMU (offender management unit) caseload is a creditable achievement due to the significant input of all staff, including relevant senior managers. This is particularly noteworthy given that, during the year, staffing levels were, typically, around 87% for prison offender managers (POMs) and 68% for administrators, placing additional pressure on existing resources and contributing to wider workforce challenges.

The significant workload pressures this year are illustrated by:

- 176 more receptions and 170 more releases this year, with an average population. of 1,724, fluctuating between 1,690 and 1,764.
- the introduction of measures to reduce the national prison population, including:
 - the most recent FTR (fixed term recall), which required review of 175 release dates of prisoners on standard recall to be considered for eligibility of reduction to 56 days.
 - other measures, including FTR 48 (for prisoners serving less than four years to be released after 28 days) which, in total, required many hundreds of reviews to be undertaken earlier than would previously have been expected.
- significant receptions without offender assessment system(OASys) completions, typically about 50 each month; although some of these arrivals had only a short time at their previous prison, the majority should have had their OASys completion within ten weeks of sentencing. By the end of March, because of significant dedicated time to reducing the backlog, there were only 88 outstanding and there are ongoing efforts to continually ensure timely

completions. Some prisoners were released without a plan in place, but there is no available data to quantify.

- review of cases resulting in an increase from last year of 135 releases on HDC (home detention curfew).
- 2,625 recategorisation reviews, resulting in 201 approvals for transfer to category D prisons (76 less than last year) but 22 recategorised to category B (21 last year).
- 152 parole hearings were held (36 less than last year), ordinarily requiring the input of an externally provided psychologist. Psychologists also advise on suitability for inclusion in the Building Choices programme.
- at year end, there was an increase from 15 last year to 19 IPP (imprisonment for public protection) prisoners, whose progress and concerns were managed well.
- Toolkits, such as Skills for Relationships and Victim awareness have been provided by POMs to a few prisoners who were eligible but not prioritised for Building Choices; these would ordinarily have been delivered in the community and it is not expected there will be future delivery of these in the prison.

7.3.2 Programme delivery

This reporting year has seen a successful change from delivery of the Thinking Skills Programme (TSP) to Building Choices, with the final two TSP courses completed and 10 Building Choices courses delivered. The programme department has qualified staff to deliver Building Choices courses for prisoners in need of either a moderate- or high-intensity course, but neither space nor staff to deliver more courses.

There was overall positive feedback from participants completing Building Choices and only 3% were unavoidably unable to complete Building choices in this first year; this compares well with the 12% who did not complete TSP in the previous year.

Whereas 140 places were available for TSP last year, the planned delivery capacity for Building Choices next year is 100 completions across 12 courses. This is expected to be achieved through a change in delivery arrangements, with intervention services increasing sessions from three to four per week, thereby reducing the overall programme duration. However, this approach will allow less time between sessions for participants to reflect on the material and will increase facilitators' workloads by around 25%. The impact of these changes will be monitored during the coming year.

At the end of the reporting year, there were 1,274 potentially eligible participants, but those selected will be prioritised from the 640 prisoners who are due for parole or release during the year.

The Board is aware of a number of prisoners who would like to undertake the programme but, despite meeting the eligibility criteria, are unable to do so because of the limited number of places available. We are concerned that, in a prison with a rehabilitative focus, fewer prisoners may have the opportunity to complete a cognitive behavioural programme, which could have implications for their rehabilitation and future risk of reoffending.

7.4 Family contact

From our observations, provision for family contact has remained good, and visitors continue to be welcomed in a positive and supportive environment. However, the number of visitors has continued to decline, with adult visits falling by around 11% and

child visits by 40% in the year to March 2026 compared with the previous year. The likely contributory factors include:

- the significant proportion of prisoners convicted of sexual offences, some of whom have restrictions, resulting in some families not able or willing to bring children.
- the distant home locations of many of the prisoners, for whom the logistics and travel costs of transport for visitors may be restrictive.
- the high churn, with a consequence for some prisoners that there is reluctance to schedule social visits because of an uncertainty about the length of stay.

Recognising that some prisoners do not receive visits, the prison has established a prisoner-led team that seeks to engage with those individuals, offer support and help organise regular social events. The delivery of these events is dependent on staff availability and, on occasion, this has limited what can be provided.

Support that remains to be put in place but is expected in the coming year includes:

- Official Prison Visitors: this service, which aims to provide visits for prisoners who do not receive visits from family or friends, has not been available due to a lack of volunteers.
- Storybook Dads: this service, which enables parents in prison to record stories and messages for their children, has not yet been available.

The support for prisoners by the prison family intervention team, as well as by the prisoner-led family intervention team to assist and facilitate engagement with family and friends, is very good.

Social visits routinely take place on five days each week, over 11 sessions, with space for 37 visitor places. There have been various other events to assist family contact such as:

- two family day events each month with a seasonal or other theme, specifically for prisoners to meet with their children.
- opportunities for Dads to engage and maintain relationships with their two to four years old children as part of Invisible Walls 'Little Wells' scheme for about 10 prisoners each month.
- family lounge visits where prisoners can meet with their children in dedicated private areas, enabling them, for example, to have the opportunity to watch films together for about 12 prisoners each month.

In addition to social visits, the provision of social video visits increased from five to six terminals by the end of the year, to meet increased demand. It is unfortunate that two terminals had been unavailable for some weeks, although now resolved.

Surveys of visitors' experiences were carried out in September and March, receiving 155 and 187 responses respectively, with over 96% of respondents reporting that...

- they were treated well;
- the visiting environment was child friendly.

Plus, more than 60% indicated a high level of satisfaction with the provision of facilities and refreshments.

Where suggestions for improvement were made, these were addressed as far as possible and displayed on a 'You said, we did...' board in the visitor waiting area.

Some of the identified issues of concern remain:

- a lack of seating for disabled visitors
- occasional unavailability of disabled parking spaces
- the lack of a possibility to pay for refreshments by card

Prisoners are responsible for booking social visits, which is intended to be the most convenient and effective approach for both prisoners and their visitors. However, an average of around 260 prisoners each month did not attend their pre-booked visits, often without explanation, which may have reduced the availability of visiting slots for others.

Examples of new initiatives started this year include:

- 'Time Out for Parents: Dads', a parenting course in January 2026
- 'Prison Intervention Project' which aims to build relationships with the Northamptonshire Police, Fire, Crime Commissioner's office for children in Northamptonshire impacted by parental imprisonment, providing an opportunity for children to understand the process of imprisonment and manage their relevant emotions

7.5 Resettlement planning

An action plan to support the prison's reducing reoffending strategy was developed during the year. Although reducing reoffending meetings were scheduled to take place every two months, only three were held, and the Board observed that attendance was generally low. A new head of rehabilitation has indicated that meetings will be held more regularly next year, with improved attendance and ongoing oversight of the strategy and action plan. The Board will monitor progress in this area during the coming year.

In the Board's view, resettlement provision is appropriate. A survey of prisoners in the weeks prior to release received 112 responses, with 66% indicating that they felt Five Wells had done as much as possible to support their resettlement. However, a number of challenges remain in achieving positive resettlement outcomes, including:

- The commissioned rehabilitative services (CRS) contracted provision, based in the prison, for accommodation (by Seetec) was only for releases in the East of England region, but 55% of releases last year were to regions other than East of England. With effect from 1 April, the previous Seetec team transferred to the Probation Service, which should provide continuity of service, but also only for the East of England. Referrals to CRS in other regions for appointments need to be facilitated by either the pre-release team or POM. Also reported was a less good responsiveness from Community Offender Managers (COM) in some other regions.
- The outcome for accommodation on release was that the proportion of prisoners accommodated on release was about 89%, a reduction from 92% last year. In a survey of prisoners in the few weeks prior to release, 20% of 115 responses said they had no accommodation prior to imprisonment, but about 27% said they would either be homeless on release or in CAS3 (community accommodation service tier 3 provision for 84 nights' temporary housing for those at risk of homelessness); this is broadly consistent with the reported 25% who were actually either homeless or at risk on release.

- The pre-release team have been concerned that they frequently had a very short time to meet prisoners who have arrived with very little time to serve prior to release; this has added pressure to the team, which has not been fully resourced during most of the year.
- We understand that a number of approved premises have closed in some regions. Given that the largest proportion of releases is to approved premises (around 24%), the potential impact of these changes will be kept under review.
- Although affecting only a small number of cases, concerns have been raised by staff about prisoners with limited mobility who are required to travel long distances to their home area following release, which can present logistical challenges. Similar difficulties can arise for other released prisoners who need to undertake lengthy journeys while also meeting requirements such as reporting to probation on the day of release.
- It is disappointing that, whilst it was planned to hold monthly employment advisory board meetings, only three were held, with minimal employer involvement. However, there are positive plans to re-energise the board with the appointment of a new chair.
- A significant factor negatively influencing employability on release is the reluctance by employers to offer a job to a PCoSO. A forum for potential employers and relevant external agencies to address the specific concerns about employment of PCoSOs was held in July. This was a well-attended event with good engagement on the day, but the PEL (prison employment lead) left shortly after, and there is no evidence of any follow-up or specific outcome. Subsequently, no PEL was in post for about three months and no handover data was available. However, subsequently there have been significant efforts to engage with potential employers, evidenced by 11 job fairs or other employer events, which resulted in 15 job offers and at least eight of which took up the offer. There are now confirmed plans to provide specific training opportunities with the potential to provide employment on release. Employers have, however, commented that employment prospects would be enhanced if they had space and opportunity to provide more relevant work-related training leading to specific qualifications.
- It was reported that around 7% of prisoners were in employment six weeks after release, rising slightly to around 8% after six months. In a survey of prisoners conducted in the weeks before release, 41% reported having been in employment before entering custody. Of these, 13% expected to return to their previous job, while 27% hoped to secure new employment following release.
- There is a waiting list for Foundations of Rehabilitation courses, with an estimate that less than half will be able to benefit, noting also that about 10% of those are referrals from POMs, with priority for those wanting to progress to category D (eligible for an open prison) or nearing release. It is, however, commendable that 18 courses were run, with 174 completions being achieved, especially in the absence of a facilitator and a substantive team leader for part of the year. It is anticipated that the team will be increased this next year, with the potential to increase the number of course participants.
- It is unfortunate that, due to the significant number of high-risk prisoners, it has not been possible to provide opportunities for work on ROTL (release on temporary licence).
- Assistance was routinely provided each month to help prisoners obtain an average of six bank accounts and 16 birth certificates. However, opportunities to apply for driving licences have not yet been available. Given that 26% of

respondents to a pre-release survey reported having no form of identification, plans to introduce support for driving licence applications during the coming year are a welcome development.

- The Board frequently received positive feedback about the support provided by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), particularly in helping prisoners make Universal Credit claims where required. However, DWP staff and others working in the resettlement hub often reported that they lacked access to suitable private space in which to meet and interview prisoners.

8. The work of the IMB

The Board at Five Wells has continued, with fewer members than last year, to maintain a strategy of planned monitoring of the prison environment. The findings are reported weekly to the Director, and questions to management form part of the report. The monthly board meeting continues to welcome the Director and Controller, who share updates and highlight issues that are being dealt with. A senior manager is also invited to brief us on departmental issues and plans for the future. It is important to maintain relationships with prison staff, from whom we receive good cooperation.

The Board has regular face-to-face interaction with prisoners at reviews, adjudications, when dealing with applications to the IMB and when monitoring wings. Our annual team performance review provides an opportunity to review our monitoring of all aspects of the prison's management.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board member	15
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	4, plus 2 in training
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	5
Total number of visits to the establishment	372

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	37	42
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	54	38
C	Equality	0	4
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	41	40
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	37	18
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	39	29
F	Food and kitchens	35	22
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	114	83
H1	Property within the establishment	79	56
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	55	49
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	40	18
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence), parole, release dates, re-categorisation	45	63
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	46	42
K	Transfers	15	4
L	Miscellaneous	155	82
	Total number of applications	792	590

Annex A

Service providers

- Aramark: prison food contract
- Change, Grow, Live: health and social care charity, delivering life skills' courses
- Department for Work and Pensions (DWP): assistance with financial needs, debt issues and setting up benefit payments ready for release
- Ingeus: Commissioned Rehabilitative Service (CRS) accommodation support service
- Seetec (formerly Seetec Interventions Alliance): support in securing accommodation in preparation for release.
- Invisible Walls: visitor centre services
- Nacro: wellbeing services after release
- New Futures Network: provider of employment services
- North Northamptonshire Council: social care provider
- Novus: education and skills provider
- Probation Service
- Practice Plus Group: NHS-commissioned healthcare provider
- Samaritans
- Shannon Trust: charity supporting literacy and numeracy development

Annex B

Issues raised with management by the Board

The Board's weekly monitoring report is sent to the Director and senior managers. In the report, key issues from the week are raised and a response requested. The table below gives a breakdown of the number of issues raised for each category in the reporting year.

	Category	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation/laundry/clothing	76	31
B	Discipline/adjudications/incentives schemes	17	9
C	Equality	3	0
D	Purposeful activity/education/work/ training/ regime	68	35
E1	Letters/visits/phones/PPU	4	7
E2	Finance/cash	1	0
F	Food/kitchens	27	14
G	Medical/healthcare	24	7
H1	Property within Five Wells	8	1
H2	Property during transfer	0	0
H3	Canteen/facilities	1	1
I	Sentence management/ROTL/HDC/parole/ recategorisation/release dates/OMU	11	2
J	Staff and prisoner concerns/ bullying/ discrimination	0	3
K	Transfers	0	0
O	Other	11	3
S	Safety	18	5
	TOTAL	269	118



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