Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP/YOI Askham Grange

For reporting year
1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026

Published November 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

2.1 HMP/YOI Askham Grange is a women's open prison (which has minimal security and allows eligible prisoners to spend most of their day away from the prison working or in education) and young offender institution in the rural village of Askham Richard, just south of York. The overriding ethos is of resettlement and preparation of the prisoners for their return to the community. The prison has provision for up to 10 mothers and their babies in its mother and baby unit (MBU), enabling them to maintain full-time care of their child up to 18 months whilst in prison. It is complemented by a nursery that is run by the charity, Action for Children. A family team works with them and all other mothers in HMP/YOI Askham Grange to prepare them for life on release.

2.2 The certified normal accommodation, or CNA (the number of prisoners a prison can hold without being crowded), threshold is 128[1]. HMP/YOI Askham Grange has an 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 128.

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

3. Key points

3.1 Main findings

Safety

- It is the view of the Board that HMP/YOI Askham Grange remains a generally safe place for prisoners and staff, with no reported incidents of death in custody. There was one incident where a staff member was assaulted. The prisoner involved was returned to closed conditions. There were a limited number of self-harm incidents during the reporting year involving four prisoners.
- Staff and prisoner relationships remain excellent in the Board's view. The Board considers staff's detailed knowledge of individual prisoners to be one of the most effective factors in preventing potential difficulties, enabling concerns to be identified early and appropriate action to be taken promptly.
- The knowledge that staff have about each prisoner is borne out during various review meetings that IMB members have observed, where this depth of knowledge about individual prisoners is invariably evident.
- The Board has seen no evidence to suggest that either drug or alcohol use is an issue of concern.

Fair and humane treatment

- From the Board's observations, Askham Grange strives to treat both prisoners and staff with dignity and respect. Due to the relatively small numbers of prisoners, staff have every opportunity to get to know individuals well, meaning that they can build good, effective working relationships, which can be both supportive and challenging as circumstances dictate. For prisoners who need extra support in managing their behaviour, a challenge, support and intervention plan (CSIP) may be put in place. This allows the prisoner the opportunity to explore their behaviour with the aim of reducing the risk of violence whilst offering targeted support. It is not a punishment for poor behaviours but, rather, a mechanism to improve outcomes.
- Based upon our conversations with prisoners, key workers, and our perusal of complaints documentation, we note that key worker targets are generally met, particularly in terms of frequency of contacts, and staff continue to engage prisoners in meaningful conversations aimed at reducing reoffending and offering support where required.
- Access to phones, visits and the opportunity for release on temporary licence (ROTL) are essential to ensure family ties are maintained, although the location of some phones used by prisoners impairs confidentiality and privacy. Family days (which bring together prisoners and their families outside of their statutory entitlement to social visits, usually in more informal settings) are held throughout the year.

Health and wellbeing

- Together with both mental and physical health initiatives, prisoners appear to have access to a healthy, balanced diet, spiritual guidance, exercise and social activities, all of which contribute to a healthy lifestyle which, it is hoped, will continue after release.

Progression and resettlement

- Prisoners arriving at HMP/YOI Askham Grange are generally in the latter stages of their sentence and are working towards release. However, there are slightly increased numbers of women categorised as open condition prisoners from sentence. All prisoners are required to work within the prison initially before undertaking either community work and/or paid work outside the establishment, depending on their employment needs/experience.
- A concern highlighted in last year's annual report was that some prisoners arrive in open conditions with very little time remaining on their sentence and are therefore unable to take full advantage of the work and educational opportunities available. This continues to present a challenge.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

The Board has no issues to raise with the Minister arising from this report.

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

Whilst the prison continues to provide valuable rehabilitative opportunities, there is potential to further optimise its impact. Making full use of available capacity would help ensure more individuals can access the establishment's specialist services and interventions at a meaningful stage in their sentence.

TO THE GOVERNOR

The location of prisoner telephones remains an issue, in terms of the limited privacy which is enabled.

3.3 Response to the 2024-2025 report

The Board is grateful to the Minister for his response to our report for 2024-2025 and continues to hope that the eventual impact of the introduction of the Sentencing Act 2026 and the Mental Health Act 2025 will have a positive effect in reducing the amount of short custodial sentences for women.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

4.1.1 Prisoners are received at HMP/YOI Askham Grange after serving the initial part of their sentence in closed conditions within the female prison estate. Although some prisoners are held a considerable distance from home, the prison promotes family contact through visits and ROTL, supporting wellbeing, stability and a safe custodial environment.

4.1.2 Whilst the prison is informed in advance of when prisoners will arrive, transfers are sometimes delayed, often due to transport issues. This is beyond the control of the prison. Once at Askham, prisoners undergo a period of induction where they are shown around the establishment, informed about the regime and those policies that are intended to maintain good order and discipline, and notified of the opportunities for employment and education. The IMB is looking at ways in which we can meet new arrivals on a more organised and routine basis, although this aspiration is hampered by the voluntary nature of our role, whereby we attend the prison at different times each week.

4.1.3 The change in regime from closed to open can be daunting for some. The staff are fully aware that prisoners may be apprehensive about the greater personal responsibilities that being in open conditions brings and, from our observations, are both sympathetic and supportive in helping prisoners adapt to the changes. Peer mentors are also on hand to help the transition go as smoothly as possible.

4.1.4 The support of key workers, specialist workers and peers, in conjunction with varied programmes and activities, are some of the factors that are effective in maintaining a safe environment for both prisoners and staff. IMB monitoring shows that key worker targets are met, that staff have an in-depth knowledge of the prisoners in their care and are able to spot potential problems, concerns or conflict early on and act appropriately.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

4.2.1 There have been no deaths in custody during the reporting period.

4.2.2 Although involving only 11 prisoners, a total of 15 assessment, care in custody, and teamwork (ACCT) documents were opened during the reporting period, an increase of eight from the previous year. ACCT documents are opened to ensure that appropriate monitoring and support is given to those deemed to be at risk of self-harm.

4.2.3 There were six incidents of self-harm, involving four prisoners, all of whom appeared to have been supported appropriately to ensure that concerns were dealt with and perceived risk was reduced.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

4.3.1 Incidents involving violence are rare at Askham and this is reflected in the fact that there was just one incident in the reporting year, when a prisoner assaulted a member of staff. The member of staff was unharmed and offered appropriate support. The prisoner was transferred back to closed conditions pending investigation by the police.

4.3.2 There were a total of 42 challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIP) opened during the reporting year, a slight reduction in number from the previous year. The aim of any CSIP is to: '*Manage and support prisoners who pose a high or increased risk of being violent. It aims to reduce violence by addressing behaviour proactively or reactively through structured support rather than punishment.'*

4.3.3 According to the prison, all CSIPs have an allocated case manager who meets regularly with the prisoner, and a multi-disciplinary team reviews individual targets and support plans to help the prisoner make positive and safe behavioural changes.

4.3.4 CSIPs are also used as a tool for offering extra support to prisoners who may need it, rather than as a consequence of a perceived risk of violence.

4.3.5 Negative behaviour may result in an adjudication (a disciplinary hearing chaired by a Governor), and proven adjudications may attract a range of outcomes, such as a loss of privileges. Depending on the severity or nature of the proven charge, a return to closed conditions may also be considered through a risk escalation board. There were 42 proven adjudications during the reporting year.

4.3.6 A total of 23 prisoners were returned to closed conditions during the reporting year, not all as the result of adjudications.

4.4 Use of force

4.4.1 There were no incidents involving the use of force.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

4.5.1 On arrival at HMP/YOI Askham Grange prisoners are screened for illicit items (drugs, alcohol, tobacco, etc) and random mandatory alcohol and drugs testing is undertaken. As an open prison, Askham promotes rehabilitation and a safe return to the community. This involves prisoners going outside of the prison to work or for release on temporary licence (ROTL) to maintain family ties. Incidents where prisoners have abused the trust placed in them are relatively infrequent. Where such incidents occur, they may result in consequences such as the loss of employment, withdrawal of ROTL, or, in some cases, a return to closed conditions.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

5.1.1 Askham Grange was built in 1886 as a private family home. It was adapted to accommodate women prisoners in open conditions in 1947. In addition to the main house, there is an annex with single occupancy rooms and a mother and baby unit. The accommodation is generally well maintained throughout, with prisoners not otherwise employed allocated to work as cleaners throughout the establishment. They are an integral part of maintaining decent living conditions for everyone. There are relatively few concerns raised, either through the complaints system or in applications (prisoners' written representations) to the IMB, regarding accommodation. One continuing frustration for prisoners is the access to private phone calls. Compared with phone access in closed conditions, the phones at HMP/YOI Askham Grange are located in communal spaces, which some prisoners report can feel like a retrograde step.

5.1.2 HMP/YOI Askham Grange can accommodate prisoners with specific requirements, such as those who need to be located on one level because they are unable to manage stairs due to health or disability-related needs. There is also a bedsit where prisoners who may require a period of separation because of illness, concerns about self-harm or other vulnerabilities can be accommodated for short periods and monitored as appropriate.

5.1.3 Amey (a British engineering company specialising in infrastructure support) is responsible for general maintenance throughout the prison. Although there have been some challenges over the reporting year with maintenance (in part relating to the age of the building), work generally appears to have been completed within a reasonable time.

5.1.4 Catering is done in-house, with food prepared and cooked on the premises. Prisoners are encouraged to give feedback and, overall, this is positive. From our observations, comments are acted on and changes made where appropriate. Food continues to be varied, well-balanced, and caters for dietary and religious requirements. Special diets for medical conditions are confirmed by healthcare staff due to the cost implications of purchasing and preparing specific menus.

5.1.5 Prisoners generally wear their own clothes (although kitchen, gardens and hospitality workers are all issued with appropriate clothing) and have access to domestic washing machines for smaller items. The prison laundry is used for larger items on a rota basis. It is staffed by prisoners, who report enjoying working there.

5.2 Segregation

5.2.1 HMP/YOI Askham Grange is an 'open' prison so does not have a segregation unit. Those few who require to be segregated because of poor behaviour are returned to closed conditions following adjudication and risk assessment.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

5.3.1 HMP/YOI Askham Grange has been governed by the same Governor and Deputy Governor throughout the reporting period. This has ensured consistency for both staff and prisoners. After a period of recruitment, staffing levels have settled during this timeframe, which has also been beneficial to prisoners in terms of consistency.

5.3.2 With regard to staff and prisoner relationships, the IMB regularly observes prisoners being spoken to with respect and treated with dignity, helping to create a positive atmosphere within the prison. Staff appear to have a detailed knowledge and understanding of individual prisoners. This is made possible in part by the relatively small population at the HMP/YOI Askham Grange, but also by the time and care invested by staff, the good communication between teams and the importance placed on this by the Governors. In the Board's view, these practices enable staff to frequently prevent challenging situations from escalating.

5.3.3 The key worker system at HMP/YOI Askham Grange continues to be well utilised by prisoners. Key work sessions are planned at 1.5 hours per fortnight, reflecting the stage many women are at in their sentences and their availability due to external commitments such as work and ROTL. The overall aim of these sessions is to support positive change and contribute to reducing reoffending.

5.4 Equality and diversity

5.4.1 The prison population remained predominantly white British throughout the reporting period, accounting for between 86.52% and 88.64% of prisoners. There were no foreign national prisoners during the year, and three prisoners identified as being from Gypsy, Roma or Traveller communities. Those aged between 40 and 49 years old continued to represent the largest age group within the population, accounting for approximately 30.68% of prisoners over the course of the year.

5.4.2 A new equality and diversity custodial manager was appointed in April of the reporting year. Since taking up the role, they have received positive feedback from both prisoners and staff for their proactive approach and commitment to further developing the prison's equality agenda.

5.4.3 The prison continued to promote awareness and inclusion through a range of activities recognising protected characteristics (including, among others, age, disability, race, religion, sex and sexual orientation, which it's unlawful to discriminate against) and diversity throughout the year. Prisoners were encouraged to participate in events, discussions and forums covering topics such as faith, disability, neurodiversity and LGBTQ+ awareness. These engagement opportunities provide prisoners with a means of raising concerns, sharing experiences and contributing to improvements across the establishment, while supporting communication between prisoners and staff.

5.4.4 The IMB received one formal application and one informal application throughout the reporting year relating to equality, both of which pertained to the same concern which was later raised as a discrimination incident reporting form (DIRF). Eleven DIRFs were submitted in the reporting period, covering issues of gender, race, disability and religion. Following investigation, two complaints were upheld, one was partially upheld, six were not upheld and two were not proceeded with. The Board will continue to monitor equality-related complaints and outcomes.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

5.5.1 From the Board's observations, Askham Grange provides an inclusive chaplaincy service supporting prisoners from a range of faith backgrounds. The Sanctuary provides a dedicated space for religious observance and pastoral support. A new managing chaplain has also been appointed during the reporting period, providing leadership and oversight of the chaplaincy provision.

5.5.2 A monthly timetable of chaplaincy activities is published to ensure that prisoners are aware of worship services and other faith-related activities available each month. Regular provision includes Anglican, Roman Catholic, Jehovah's Witness and Muslim worship, alongside opportunities for meditation. The Sanctuary is also available for prisoners who wish to speak to a chaplain.

5.5.3 Religious festivals from a range of faiths are recognised throughout the year through activities, additional religious sessions and occasional food celebrations. Posters are also displayed around the prison during these periods to raise awareness and provide information about significant religious festivals and observances.

5.6 Incentives

5.6.1 The majority of individuals at HMP/YOI Askham Grange are the enhanced level of the incentives scheme (the highest level of privileges in a system designed to encourage positive behaviour), with only a small minority classed as standard (the middle level). Open conditions are not conducive to prisoners who are on the basic (lowest) level of incentives and, therefore, they remain in closed conditions. The vast majority of prisoners at HMP/YOI Askham Grange are on the enhanced level, with around 4% on the standard level (based on a sample month in June 2026)

5.7 Complaints

5.7.1 Last year (2024-25), 113 complaints were submitted, predominantly by a small number of prisoners. During this reporting year (2025-26), the number of complaints received by the prison increased by approximately 10%, with 124 complaints recorded. Of these, 23 complaints were sent to other prisons for response, while 17 complaints were received by Askham Grange from other prisons.

All complaints appear to have been investigated and responded to, generally within the required timescales. Delays were often due to awaiting information from other establishments or the relevant member of staff at HMP/YOI Askham Grange being on leave. In such cases, prisoners were usually provided with an interim response within the required timeframe.

As in the previous year, the most common complaints related to property missing following transfers to or from another prison. A total of 20 complaints were sent to other prisons for response concerning property that had not followed on transfer, and 10 complaints regarding missing property were received by Askham Grange from other prisons. Of the complaints received during the reporting period, 10 related to staff.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

6.1.1 Historically, it has been a little difficult for the IMB to communicate effectively with healthcare and although that has continued, there has been some improvement over the reporting year. There has been some discussion with the prison about how they monitor the delivery of the healthcare contract.

6.1.2 Although the contract for GP provision was terminated with little warning, alternative GP cover was secured for two days per week, ensuring no gap in provision. Emergency cover for the remaining three days per week, between 8am and 5pm, was provided by the GP at HMP New Hall. A new GP was recruited prior to the contract being terminated. The Board understands that this GP brings experience and skills relevant to working with women prisoners, which should help support the effective delivery of the service.

6.1.3 A business plan was produced which demonstrated the need to increase and rationalise staffing, and this was approved. A new associate nurse practitioner post was created for one day per week to provide specialised clinical input to social inclusion work alongside existing staff. Additional funding was secured for a new nursing post, which commenced in April. The nursing associate practitioner completed their training and returned to full-time work at the end of February. As a result, there is now a full complement of staff, with two nurses on duty each day, enabling the nurse manager to focus on leadership responsibilities and attend meetings. Three members of staff are also available to provide cover during periods of leave, illness or other operational requirements. This increase in capacity has helped to ease what had become a significant workload pressure, allowing staff more time to focus on their specific responsibilities. Understaffing has been a longstanding concern.

6.1.4 At the time of writing, there is a change underway in the way dental care is provided. It will be through flexible commissioning. The integrated care board (ICB), which is responsible for commissioning and overseeing healthcare services in the area, has confirmed that the women can access a dentist in the community: discussions have taken place between two dentists in York and healthcare commissioners. The ICB is in the process of creating a guide which will support referrals to the dentist.

6.1.5 Complaint forms are now more evident within the service, which hadn’t always been the case.

6.2 Physical healthcare

6.2.1 The majority of prisoners now get their prescriptions issued monthly rather than weekly – but continue to collect weekly. Medication is collected only once per day, in the morning, with the lunchtime collection stopped. Initially, prisoners didn’t like this, but they now appreciate its benefits, enabling them to attend lunchtime activities. This has also lightened the workload for healthcare staff. There have been some complaints about medication not being available when prisoners have taken time off work to collect.

6.2.2 A pain-management course has been introduced with weekly sessions for six weeks, with six prisoners participating per cohort. They are given routines and techniques to practise between sessions, plus workbooks to complete.

6.3 Mental health

6.3.1 The Board has not felt it necessary to comment on this issue based upon its monitoring throughout the reporting year.

6.4 Social care

6.4.1 One prisoner is confined to bed and wheelchair and needs social care visits several times per day. A Memorandum of Understanding was drawn up with York City Social Services and an appropriate level of care has been provided. A senior manager monitors the arrangement. There had been problems with some of the carers, but these were resolved. Because of the nature of the prisoner's condition, she did also need some attention from healthcare staff, and this was carried out as with any other prisoner. However, it had not been agreed that Healthcare could see her social care notes, and this made catering for her a little difficult. Organising external appointments and her ROTLs was quite complex, but despite her occasional complaints they do seem to have been achieved well.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

6.5.1 The Board has not felt it necessary to comment on this issue based upon its monitoring throughout the reporting year.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

6.6.1 The Board has not felt it necessary to comment on this issue based upon its monitoring throughout the reporting year.

6.7 Soft skills

6.7.1 A two-day-per-week social prescriber post (for someone who helps individuals access non-medical support and services that can improve their wellbeing and quality of life) was created at the very end of the previous reporting year. The postholder meets with new arrivals within two weeks of reception to identify any specific follow-up support that may be required. Some prisoners do not require any further support or referral, but are reviewed again after six months. Referrals are made to a range of services and resources, including education, employment, chaplaincy and mental health provision. Individual sessions are also delivered where appropriate. Support is available in areas such as artwork, identity work and low-level mental health needs. The social prescriber has also made a range of tools and resources available to help those on their caseload make the best use of their time. Although not overseen by the social prescriber role, mindfulness sessions continue to be delivered through existing groupwork activities.

6.7.2 Re-connect is a national programme that provides continuity of care from 12 weeks before release to six months afterwards. It aims to help prisoners address a wide range of issues, including mental and physical health, disability, neurodiversity and substance misuse. An associate nurse linked to the programme attends pre-release meetings, facilitates referrals to community services and supports women to access those services where appropriate. Healthcare staff have welcomed this provision, as they have often expressed frustration at not knowing whether referrals made to community services have been taken up or what the outcomes have been.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

7.1.1 There is a strong emphasis at HMP/YOI Askham Grange on promoting reading, improving literacy and making the library a calm and positive place to be. It is open for long hours so that prisoners can call in during their breaks or other free time. The open conditions make it easily accessible.

7.1.2 The library is well stocked with a wide variety of books and other reading materials, including newspapers, magazines, audiobooks, jigsaws and DVDs. There is also a selection of large prints and some foreign language books.

7.1.3 There are a number of incentives to encourage reading (e.g. a book club) and also a selection of children's books to allow mothers to read to their children during family visits or to send a copy to them so they can talk to the children during phone or social video calls home. This helps to maintain family bonds.

7.1.4 From our observations, the education, skills and work (ESW) department continues to ensure that the education and training available at HMP/YOI Askham Grange is fully inclusive and can be tailored to meet the individual needs of the prisoners, to help them reach their full potential. This includes appropriate help for those with neurodivergent needs or other educational difficulties.

7.1.5 Through the Your Voice Matters scheme, opportunities are provided for prisoners to be able to let staff know what is helpful for them so that the ESW department can provide tailor-made sessions.

7.1.6 During the reporting year, a new member of staff was recruited as a work progress coach to provide individual support to prisoners in developing their employability skills through specially designed workbooks. Initial feedback from prisoners has been positive, with some reporting increased confidence and self-esteem, alongside valuable practical support

7.2 Vocational training, work

7.2.1 On arrival at HMP/YOI Askham Grange, prisoners are required to work within the prison before becoming eligible for employment outside the prison. A range of in-house opportunities is available, including cleaning, gardening, kitchen work, food preparation, library duties, and roles in The Grange Coffee Shop and Garden Centre, the café and the conference facility. Vocational courses are offered to support prisoners in developing the skills required for these roles.

7.2.2 The employment hub has long-established connections with a number of local and national companies, providing employment opportunities in the community, mainly in hospitality and retail sectors. National employers have been particularly beneficial, as they can enable prisoners to continue employment with a local branch following release.

7.2.3 Several new potential employers have recently been identified including in the construction industry, which is positive for helping women to find work in what has traditionally been male dominated employment.

7.3 Offender management, progression

7.3.1 The offender management unit (OMU) is responsible for ensuring that risk assessments are completed in a timely manner so that ROTL and release plans can be progressed. The OMU assesses and manages risk generally in collaboration with community colleagues, providing rehabilitative opportunities and motivating prisoners to engage with their sentence plans. Prisoners are provided with monthly or fortnightly supervision sessions with their POM to achieve this (depending on their assessed complexity level). Drop-in sessions are also available in case of need twice a week.

7.3.2 Community offender managers (COMs) play an important role in assessing the risk required to progress ROTL assessments, although there are sometimes difficulties when information requested from outside agencies has not been received, causing delays to the timing of the process.

7.3.3 Challenges in preparing someone for release can arise if the prisoner is transferred to HMP/YOI Askham Grange with only a short time left until their release date. This puts pressure on OMU staff to complete pre-release work and also means that the prisoner is unable to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the prison to help with resettlement. In such cases, the employment hub will still work with the prisoner to find employment and support on release.

7.4 Family contact

7.4.1 Maintaining positive relationships with family and friends remains an important aspect of prisoners' wellbeing and rehabilitation. A range of communication methods, including social visits, phone calls and letters, enable prisoners to remain connected with their family. The Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT) charity continues to deliver family support services within the prison, working to support both prisoners and their families to strengthen relationships, and assisting with resettlement planning where appropriate.

7.4.2 The mother and baby unit provides a dedicated living environment designed to support mothers in later stages of pregnancy and for those caring for their children under the age of 18 months while in custody. This is supported by the Action for Children charity, which staffs a linked nursery that helps prisoners develop the skills needed to look after their child and prepares them for transition when their baby leaves the unit at around 18 months of age. The unit can accommodate up to ten mothers and their babies. During the reporting year, a total of five babies resided on the unit, with one still there at the year end.

7.4.3 Significant improvements were made to the unit during the reporting year, with refurbishment aimed at creating an environment that reflects the home environment a child would experience in the community, providing mothers and babies with a positive space to spend quality time together.

7.4.4 The prison holds well-attended family days several times a year. These are days that allow prisoners to see their families and friends in a more relaxed environment than normal visits and include taking part together in various craft and game activities hosted on these days.

7.5 Resettlement planning

7.5.1 Planning for resettlement begins very early on in a determinate sentence, often before the prisoner reaches open conditions. Plans should be realistic and achievable

and require input from both internal and external agencies, particularly in relation to accommodation, employment, drug and alcohol services, healthcare and mental health support. Employment continues to be an important part of resettlement planning, with an increased focus during the reporting year on developing ROTL (release on temporary licence) opportunities to build relationships with employers and, where possible, support women into sustained employment following release.

7.5.2 The delivery requirement for the percentage of released prisoners in employment at six weeks was 48.71% for the reporting year, increasing to 50% from April 2026. This target was generally met or exceeded. Performance was strong towards the end of the reporting period, with 100% of prisoners recorded as being in employment six weeks after release in both February and June 2026. Askham Grange also monitors prisoner employment outcomes six months after release, which were generally positive. The top three sectors of employment across the reporting period were retail (72%), hospitality (11%) and construction (11%).

7.5.3 It was noted that women are measured against the same employment metrics as men leaving prison, despite often facing different and more complex barriers to employment, including childcare, accommodation, family responsibilities and health or support needs. These factors can affect readiness for employment and some women may require tailored support and a different pace of progression to achieve sustainable outcomes.

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	8
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	7
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	6
Total number of visits to the establishment	157

One member resigned from the Board during the reporting period. Monitoring visits are conducted at least weekly, and members of the Board observe meetings, check that complaints are dealt with in a timely manner and respond to prisoners' applications.

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year 2024-2025	Current reporting year 2025-2026
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	10	1
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	1	0
C	Equality	0	1
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	1	2
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	0	1
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	0	0
F	Food and kitchens	1	0
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	0	2
H1	Property within the establishment	0	0
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	0	1
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	0	0
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence, parole, release dates, recategorisation	6	8
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	8	2
K	Transfers	0	0
L	Miscellaneous	1	1
	Total number of applications	**28**	**19**

Annex A

Service providers

- Practice Plus Group: health
- Inclusion: substance misuse
- Novus: education and skills
- Action for Children: nursery provision
- Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT): family engagement
- Amey: facilities maintenance
- GeoAmey: inter-prison transfers
- Women's Estate Psychology Services (WEPS): psychology services

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