Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Wymott

For reporting year
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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 Wymott is a category C training prison (for prisoners who are not trusted in an open, category D, prison but are not considered a high escape risk) for adult men. 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) is 1192[1], with approximately 200 prisoners sharing cells, although this was temporarily reduced to 1110 from April 2026 while essential fire alarm work was carried out on A and B wings. The population comprises approximately 40% mainstream category C prisoners and 60% prisoners convicted of a sexual offence (PCOSO). Most of the prisoners are serving sentences of four or more years. The accommodation mainly dates from the 1970s, with a few later additions. It comprises 11 wings, several of which offer specialist functions, including a drug therapeutic community wing (TC) and two psychologically informed planned environment (PIPE) units for prisoners who have some personality-related needs and screen onto the offender personality disorder (OPD) pathway (a personality disorder diagnosis is not needed**).** There is also a specialist wing for older and disabled prisoners, with dedicated healthcare assistant(s) based on the wing.

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

3. Key points

In common with many other prisons, Wymott struggles to deal with the large number of illicit items, particularly drugs, that enter the prison. There has been a notable increase in drone activity during this reporting year.

The prison continues to suffer the effects of staffing shortages across both directly and indirectly employed staff, putting a strain on the ability to maintain a consistent regime. This has regularly impacted on prisoners' experiences, for example through lack of access to the library. The number of Band 3 wing officers has been reduced in order to increase the number of Supervising Officers (SO) and at the time of writing stands at 206. Seventy-two have been in post less than two years.

The prison now has a strong mix of officers of different ethnicities, which is to be commended, although it has become apparent that there is a need for some cultural awareness training of staff. Currently 30% of the wing officers are foreign nationals.

The persistent lack of progress with major refurbishment projects has seen a continuation of the deterioration in living conditions, with recurrent failures of heating and water supply. National population pressures have forced the prison to locate many prisoners in accommodation that is not fit for purpose.

3.1 Main findings

Safety

The apparent ease with which illicit items such as drugs and mobile phones are entering the prison is a major concern, and drone sightings are a regular occurrence. Despite the prison's best efforts drug use within Wymott has continued to rise (*see section 4.5*).A probable knock-on effect of the increased drug use has been an increase in violence, debt and self-isolation (*see section 4.3*).

The Board is concerned that the lack of sufficient experienced officers has contributed to an increasingly unsettled atmosphere on some of the wings (*see section 4.3*). Inexperienced staff may not have the knowledge or skills to de-escalate potential violence.

The Board would wish to commend the Safer Living Team for the work that they do to keep prisoners safe through the ACCT and CSIP processes (*see sections 4.2 and 4.3*) and the Support Intervention (SIM) meetings. A dedicated officer also supports prisoners who have chosen to self-isolate.

Fair and humane treatment

The Board is once again raising concerns about the very poor state of some of the accommodation, including the sanitary facilities on A and B wings and the unreliable heating and hot water on G / H wings (*see section 5.1*).

HMP Wymott houses a high number of older and disabled prisoners who have difficulty moving around the prison. The stair lifts have been out of order for much of the year, limiting their access to certain areas (*see section 5.1and 5.4*). Visitors have had to be taken via circuitous routes to reach the visits halls. Wheelchair provision and repairs have also been problematic (*see section 6.4*).

Health and wellbeing

Under the new contract, healthcare staff do not have the facility to get electrocardiograms interpreted within an acceptable time frame (*see section 6.1*). This has resulted in a significant increase in the number of ambulance call-outs and put a strain on the prison to provide escort staff.

Medication delivery on the wings remains a concern (*see section 6.1*). Medication times often clash with labour movement and sometimes nurses have refused to return to the wing to finish off if they have been called away during dispensing. Ensuring continuity of medication on return from outside hospital is also problematic.

Delivery of appointment slips and waiting times have been an on-going concern (*see section 6.1*). Prisoners complain to the Board about non-receipt of slips and missed appointments. Waiting times for specialist clinics such as podiatry are unacceptably long for a prison that houses a high number of older and disabled prisoners.

Staffing of hospital escorts has continued to be problematic as the current contract allocation is insufficient (see section 6.1). Routine out-patient appointments regularly have to be triaged.

Some waits for mental health referrals to secure units have failed to meet the now mandatory 28-day limit (*see section 6.4*).

Progression and resettlement

The Board is concerned that Wymott still accommodates the highest number of prisoners serving indeterminate sentences for public protection (IPP) in the north-west (*see section 7.3*). This is a cruel and inhumane sentence that takes away hope and provides little incentive to progress.

Budgetary constraints within the education department have led to a reduction in the service, with most of the accredited courses being replaced by shorter non-accredited courses (*see section 7.1*).

Staffing shortages for escorting prisoners have meant that the library has been under-utilised this year. Satellite ‘book libraries’ have been introduced on the wings, but these cannot offer the full service of the main library, which prisoners are entitled to (*see section 7.1*).

Shortage of probation officers within the prison has produced a backlog in completion of prisoners’ sentence plans, and prisoners regularly complain to the Board that they cannot get to see their probation officer or prison offender manager to find out what they need to do to progress (*see section 7.3*).

Early release schemes have put pressure on resettlement services to find appropriate accommodation for prisoners on release. Eleven prisoners were released without accommodation and a further 48 to short-term or temporary housing *(see section 7.5*).

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

Can the Minister assure Board members that the cruel and inhumane IPP sentence will be reviewed as a priority with a view to repealing the legislation? Those who are fortunate enough to be released on parole live with the constant fear of recall for the slightest infringement.

A new prison is to be opened next to the existing HMP Wymott and HMP Garth. Given the current problems with staffing levels at both of these establishments, how can the Minister be confident that there will be sufficient experienced officers to staff the new prison safely?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

Drone incursions remain a regular occurrence and the promised window grilles have yet to be fitted. Whilst the Board is aware that a number of measures have already been taken, what further action can we expect to see?

The accommodation at Wymott has been in dire straits and deteriorating for many years. What plans does the prison service have to address the many deficiencies in fabric, infrastructure and services such as heating and hot water?

In the response to the last IMB Annual Report, HMPPS said that discussions were on-going regarding a kitchen upgrade. What progress is being made?

The Board remains concerned about certain aspects of the service provided by both Practice Plus Group and Amey. Can HMPPS reassure the Board that any contract renegotiation will better address the needs of the prison?

The lifts and stair lifts at Wymott are continually breaking down. Given that repairs carried out so far have repeatedly failed, is HMPPS planning to invest in replacements in the foreseeable future?

TO THE GOVERNOR

What further action might the Governor take to address the increasing availability and use of illicit substances within Wymott?

Can the Governor assure the Board that there is adequate training of officers to ensure that routine tasks such as food service / medication delivery on the wings are properly supervised?

Library access for prisoners is a statutory entitlement, and Wymott has an excellent library. Books are available on the wings, but can the Governor ensure that prisoners are enabled to make regular use of the full range of library services?

How does the Governor plan to ensure that prisoners and visitors are not discriminated against in relation to access as a result of the regular breakdown of lifts and stairlifts?

3.3 Response to last report

Issue raised	Response given	Progress
• Will the Minister give any reassurance that there will be an easing of population pressures at HMP Wymott in light of the planned new prison?	Operational details are still being developed. Locally, the prison continues to work closely with Population Management to ensure that transfers in and out are managed as effectively as possible.	Prisoners continue to share cells designed for single occupancy. Transfers have been limited to security / compassionate moves.
• How does the Minister envisage implementing the policy around timely relocation of prisoners to secure mental health units?	A Strategic Advisory Group will be responsible for agreeing a joint workplan to support implementation of the statutory time limit, identifying solutions to common barriers to timely transfers and holding relevant parties to account.	There have been several breaches of the mandatory time limit at Wymott due to a lack of suitable places (*see section 6.3*).
• What steps will the Minister take to protect the employment status of officers recruited from overseas?	Under current arrangements, prison officers already sponsored via the Skilled Worker route will be able to remain in post and extensions will be considered in line with Home Office policy.	Visa extensions have allowed some foreign national officers to remain in post.
• Can HMPPS reassure the Board that funding for the essential refurbishment, which has been highlighted for a number of years, will be forthcoming?	The main contractor for A and B wings went into receivership, leaving these areas in a state that is unfit for purpose. The project has now been retendered, and the newly appointed contractor is validating the work of the former contractors and finalising delivery plans. HMPPS remains in active dialogue with budget holders regarding funding and approvals for further refurbishment.	Progress on A and B wings has been delayed due to the need to upgrade the fire alarm system. A bid for funding to upgrade the kitchen has been submitted(*see section 5.1*).
• How will HMPPS tackle the increase in drone activity and its impact on the prison and its population?	HMPPS is investing over £40m this year in physical security across 34 prisons, including approximately £10m on anti-drone measures such as window replacements, external window grilles, and specialist netting across 15 priority prisons. HMP Wymott is further mitigating against drone incursions by introducing a local drone incursion contingency plan and a drone sighting protocol.	Despite the introduction of a drone sighting protocol, drone activity is still a regular occurrence. Window grilles have yet to be fitted (*see section 4.5*).
• What steps are being taken to mentor and	New Colleague Mentors are in place within all prison sites, and	

support the professional development of new and recently recruited officers?	they establish, run and maintain a buddy scheme within their prisons. A new enhanced onboarding programme has been developed at Wymott.	
• What is the Governor doing to protect prisoners' entitlements in relation to time out of cell, library access and purposeful activity?		A new regime was introduced from May 2026. It is too early to comment *(see section 7.1).*
• Prisoners on the mainstream side of the prison have been without regular work for the entire year. How does the Governor plan to ensure that they make full use of employment opportunities as the workshops reopen?		The Board is aware that the prison has introduced sanctions for prisoners that refuse to attend work *(see section 7.2).*
• How will the Governor address the increasing incidence of prisoners being found under the influence of illicit substances?		Increased searching of cells following drone sightings and new drug strategy (*see section 4.5*).
• The report raises a number of concerns about the delivery of medication and essential repairs to the fabric of the prison. What will the Governor do to ensure that the service provided by external agencies (such as Practice Plus Group, Amey) is of an acceptable standard	The prison responded to a specific issue with medication delivery that was raised at a meeting in January 2026, which had been resolved. The prison's Combined Action Plan (CAP) report states that responses to further issues would be reported back at IMB monthly meetings.	Issues with delivery of medication continue to be raised by Board members and responded to individually. The Board remains concerned about certain aspects of the service provided by both Practice Plus Group and Amey as a result of the terms of the contracts.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

Members of the Board regularly visit the Reception area as part of their monitoring, and no significant concerns have been identified. New reception prisoners are observed to be treated with professionalism and respect.

The Board sends a letter and IMB leaflet to all prisoners during their induction period, explaining our role and how they can contact us.

In October 2025 the prison began to collect “Do It” profiles during induction to identify barriers to learning, including neurodiversity. This information is passed to Education and the Neurodiversity Support Manager, who visits the prisoner to carry out a needs assessment (*see section 5.4*).

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

Prisoners who are deemed to be at risk of suicide or self-harm are managed through the assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) process, a tool used to support individuals through regular meetings, target setting and a set of actions agreed with a custodial manager. In the 2025/6 reporting year, 265 ACCTs were opened, which is a little lower than in the previous year. The number of self-harm incidents increased by 11% from 554 to 614, which is a further increase on the previous year. However, the Board notes that in the two months with the highest number of self-harm incidents, namely October 2025 and November 2025, each with 76 reported incidents, one prisoner was responsible for 17 incidents of self-harm in October and one prisoner was responsible for 11 acts of self-harm in November. Overall, 127 incidents took place in the care and separation unit (CSU), representing 21% of the total number of acts over the year. This is an area of the prison where there is little to engage prisoners, with no television, no access to vapes and only limited distraction activity, such as reading, puzzle books and, if recommended by mental health nurses, painting-by-numbers kits. It is also an area that contains some of the most challenging prisoners who may be located there as a sanction, for their own safety or to protect stability on the wing.

As in previous years, the majority of self-harm acts are through cuts and scratches (in 2025 and in 2026 to date, just under 70% of all self-harm incidents were categorised in this way).

While the proportion of PCOSOs and mainstream prisoners in the prison is approximately 60:40, the number of self-harm acts over the year has been fairly equal, with 300 involving PCOSOs and 314 involving mainstream prisoners. This is a very similar proportion to the previous reporting year, when there were just 10 more acts of self-harm amongst mainstream prisoners than amongst PCOSOs. There may be a number of reasons for this, for example PCOSOs have had many more job opportunities than mainstream prisoners, the incidence of drug use and the debt associated with that predominates on the mainstream wings, and there is a more flexible regime operating on two of the PCOSO wings where prisoners are located on open landings, with more opportunities for association and access to peer support.

While all incidents of self-harm are of concern, the Board remains satisfied that the prison is taking reasonable steps to manage and, where possible, reduce this. During the past year the prison acquired two ponies that were intended as a therapeutic intervention, but so far they have not been used in this way. Sadly, the therapy dogs that have visited in the past are no longer used, but the Board understands that there are plans to reinstate them. The prison does not currently have safety officers located on the wings due to lack of staff; however, the Safer Living team maintains a prisoner interventions tracker that logs work undertaken with both individuals and groups of prisoners deemed to be at risk of self-harm.

There were 11 deaths in custody during the 2025-26 reporting year, the same number as in the previous reporting year. Of these, seven occurred in the prison and four in hospital. The Board completes a report on all deaths in custody and receives copies of initial and final Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) reports. Final reports have been received for six of the deaths, with one further initial report awaiting a final version. Although the outcomes of the inquests are yet to be notified, one of the deaths was judged by the PPO in its initial report to be self-inflicted, and a recommendation was made that all staff working at HMP Wymott should receive ACCT awareness training as it was considered that the mental health nurse involved in this case had not escalated a matter of concern appropriately. All remaining deaths for which reports have been produced were suspected to be from natural causes and no further recommendations for action were made to the prison by the PPO.

It is the view of the Board that the prison continues to manage the process of dealing with a death in custody in an appropriate and sensitive manner. Families, prisoners and staff are all offered support through, for example, family liaison officers (FLOs), chaplaincy and listeners. Visits are made to wings where prisoners have been impacted, a member of the senior leadership team visits next of kin, where appropriate, and memorial services are held in the chapel.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

During the period 1 June 2025 to 31 May 2026 the prison reported 218 incidents of violence, an increase of 40 or 22% on the previous year. One hundred and forty-nine (149) of these involved prisoner-on-prisoner assaults while 15 were alleged sexual assaults, of which 10 have occurred in the last three months of the reporting year. There were more than twice as many acts of violence involving mainstream prisoners than amongst PCOSOs. The number of assaults on staff increased from 32 the previous reporting year to 48 this year. While most of these were not serious, several have involved hospital visits, albeit primarily just to be checked over. The Board has raised concerns over the past year about the lack of experience of many staff that may be contributing to an increasingly unsettled atmosphere on the mainstream wings. In addition, for much of the year there have been very limited opportunities for employment for mainstream prisoners due to continued closure and reduction in numbers of some workshops. This has sometimes resulted in large numbers of prisoners remaining on the wings with little to occupy them.

Recent changes in the prison regime, the increase in opportunities for work, along with the expectation that prisoners will engage in meaningful activity and the reduction in time out of cell for those who refuse to work has increased the number of prisoners who are off the wings during the working day(*see section 6.5*) . This has

particularly impacted mainstream prisoners, many of whom have declined to attend work over the past year. The Board will continue to monitor the effect this change may have on a number of factors, including acts of violence.

The Board routinely monitors the number of prisoners who are self-isolating and visits these from time to time. The average per month over the reporting period was 16, compared to 11 the previous year, with the highest number during any month being 24 in January 2026 and 22 in November 2025. The majority have chosen to self-isolate as they say they feel threatened or unsafe on the wing and a significant number of them cite debt as the reason. The prison manages self-isolating prisoners through a separate regime, with some prisoners reporting to Board members that they have not routinely received exercise or access to showers. However, on checking it has sometimes been found that prisoners have been offered regime but have declined it. At the very end of the reporting year a new regime was introduced across the prison that is more explicit about arrangements for showers and exercise for those who are self-isolating. All such prisoners are managed under the challenge support and intervention plan (CSIP) process and are visited at least fortnightly by the custodial manager who has specific responsibility for self-isolating prisoners. He also carries out quality checks on active CSIPs and the outcomes are reported to the monthly safety meeting. Over the past year the daily safety reports have indicated that CSIP reviews have not always been carried out in a timely fashion; indeed, one scrutiny of this data in early February found eight overdue CSIP reviews on one day and six on another. The Board is pleased to note, however, that changes to the way that CSIPs are managed and the daily public reporting of overdue paperwork appears to be resulting in an improvement in the situation.

4.4 Use of force

The Board receives monthly reports on the use of force within the prison, a Board member frequently attends the prison's safety meeting, and the data is tracked and discussed at the Board's monthly meeting. During the 2025-6 reporting period there were 556 incidents involving use of force, compared to 476 the previous year, an increase of 17%. Over the past four years for which the Board has been maintaining this data the number of incidents of use of force has increased by 131%.

Batons were drawn on just two occasions but only used once, while PAVA, an incapacitant spray, was drawn on six occasions and used three times, all during the same incident. Rigid bar cuffs were used in 62% of incidents and the reasons for the majority of uses of force were refusal to locate to cell (21%) and to prevent harm, assault or harm to others (20%). The nature of incidents where force is used ranges from guiding holds, where a prisoner is moved using direct contact, through to a full planned removal when officers may be kitted up in personal protective equipment (PPE). Over the 2025/26 reporting year there were 107 such planned events, an increase of 65% on the previous year.

The Board is disappointed to report that the use of body worn video cameras (BWVCs) decreased slightly over the year, with an average of 76% of incidents of use of force being captured on camera. This is despite the prison’s efforts to enforce the collection and use of BWVCs and the reminder that cameras should be activated in the event of an incident, even if this is done afterwards, as footage will still be captured. The Board remains concerned that, on average, nearly a quarter of incidents involving use of force are not captured on BWVC.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

There has been an overall increase in many measures that would suggest that the prevalence of illicit items has increased. The last four quarters for which data is available indicate that the number of adjudications has increased significantly over the past year, while the most common reason for an adjudication is being in possession of an unauthorised article. Regular searches are carried out by specialist search teams and extensive finds are documented on an almost weekly basis.

The Board has frequently raised concerns about the number of reports of drone activity over the reporting year. The prison's location, near to the two major conurbations of Manchester and Liverpool and adjacent to HMP Garth, makes it particularly vulnerable. A number of drones have been spotted and located and, if they can be identified, prisoners' cells have been searched following a suspected drone drop. Some of these have resulted in very large finds of illicit items. There have been reports of prisoners shouting abuse and throwing items at staff whilst they are conducting drone patrols. There are plans to fit grills on many of the cell windows to prevent prisoners from accessing packages that have been dropped by drones; however, to date, this has not happened even though the grills are being constructed in one of Wymott's workshops.

Despite the number of drone interceptions and finds, there will inevitably have been successful deliveries of drugs, mobile phones and other contraband, as has been evidenced through a number of spikes in prisoners being found under the influence of an unknown substance. It is also inevitable that most drug use takes place behind closed cell doors and is therefore not detected. This is of particular concern as prisoners can have an adverse reaction and may not be discovered until it is too late.

Where a prisoner has collapsed and is suspected of being under the influence (UTI) the prison responds by calling a Code Blue alert for healthcare and an ambulance is routinely called, although this is often subsequently stood down. In addition to all healthcare staff, 23 officers across the prison have now been trained to administer Naloxone, a medicine that can reverse an opioid overdose (*see section 6.6*). A Board member was informed that this is a very small increase on last year.

Where there is a spike in the number of prisoners being found UTI on a particular wing, the prison responds by shutting down the wing and unlocking the prisoners in cohorts, thereby reducing the circulation of any illicit substances. Any prisoner suspected of dealing is removed to the CSU and the incidence of prisoners on the wing being found UTI is then monitored.

The National Dog Search Team (NDST) makes regular visits to the prison and carries out extensive searches. Over the past year a number of substantial amounts of contraband have been found through this means, particularly following a drone sighting.

During the year the prison has introduced transparent bags for all staff, and the use of these to carry personal items into the prison was mandated. The prison has also acquired a scanner for use in the gatehouse, but to date this is not in operation.

All new arrivals are body scanned in reception and if any suspect items are found the prisoner is taken to the Care and Separation Unit (CSU) until such time as they can produce a clear scan. Mandatory drug tests (MDTs) are carried out, although when

staffing numbers are short, officers are taken off these duties to cover other tasks. During the reporting period the prison met its target for random drug tests , although additional suspicion testing and risk testing has been abandoned altogether. When Board members have made random checks they have found that test results are often not processed in a sufficiently timely manner and many positive tests are found to be associated with prescribed medication. Any prisoner who fails an initial MDT is given an adjudication which is normally opened and then adjourned until the results of a confirmation test are received. All prisoners who are found guilty of being in possession of an unauthorised substance or article associated with illicit drug use are referred to the drug and alcohol recovery service (DARS) (*see section 6.6*).

While the Board recognises that the prevalence of drugs in prisons is a national problem, it does have concerns about the apparent increase of availability and use of a number of illicit substances in some areas of HMP Wymott. A revised drug strategy has been developed and has been in operation for a year (*see section 6.6*)

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

The condition of the buildings in HMP Wymott remains poor and has in several cases deteriorated. Across the whole prison problems with power supply, heating, hot water supply, equipment and general maintenance have been so frequent as to become routine.

The refurbishment of A and B wings has still not started, and the wings remain unfit for purpose. The prison has been monitoring the appalling state of the showers and toilets regularly through the year using a red, amber, green (RAG) rating system, the results of which paint a sorry picture of blocked and broken toilets, blocked showers and loose tiles, with very few green areas. Issues identified have been reported to Amey, but some remain outstanding for long periods.

There have also been further problems with the hot water supply on both wings, and it has been necessary to remove all electrical equipment from the spurs as the fire alarm system was found to be inadequate. This is currently being remedied by the contractors. Many of the issues have been repaired multiple times only to reoccur due to long standing and deep-seated problems with the fabric of the buildings.

Despite having a temporary boiler unit for the supply of heating and hot water G and H wings have again faced long periods in the winter months with no heating and/or hot water. The unit itself, which is on hire, has broken down on several occasions and was at one point emitting toxic black fumes. It is the Board's understanding that the rental cost of the unit is high, and it should therefore function as if new or be replaced.

During the reporting period it has also been necessary to provide heating and hot water to C and D wings via a similar unit to that mentioned above and it too failed and had to be repaired. The heating problem was subsequently remedied and the unit removed.

Across the prison power outages have been frequent. This has been particularly problematic on K wing where prisoners faced many nights of broken sleep as the return of the power led to noisy fans becoming operational often several times. On G/H wings the food servery hot plates do not reach the correct temperature following power outages. Most worrying of all power outages on Haven wing affect prisoners who have to use nebulisers or other breathing aids.

Even after several years, repairs to the floors on K wing are still ongoing.

The fact that wings remain without washing and drying facilities for long periods of time whilst repairs are ongoing means that the prisoners are forced to send their clothes to the central laundry. They have to sign a disclaimer regarding any damage which might occur and the prisoners have no right to compensation.

There are several lifts in the prison and all of them have been out of order at least once during the reporting period. The lift to the visits hall has now been condemned as it has never worked properly and the stairlift on Haven wing has now been out of order for a year. As there are now no longer any prisoners accommodated on the ground floor who are able to climb the stairs none of the prisoners can access the recreation room on the first floor (*see section 5.4*).

The Board notes that Amey, the contractors, have once again been served with an improvement notice despite some progress noted in the previous report. The minutes of the Estates meetings show some actions outstanding from as far back as 2023. Several changes in the management structure of the works department have not helped this situation. Repairs remain outstanding and take far too long to complete despite the best efforts of prison staff.

It remains the case that over 200 prisoners are currently sharing cells at HMP Wymott. Only a small number of these are large double cells, the majority were originally single cells. There is only room for one chair in these cells and prisoners must therefore either stand or sit on the toilet to eat their meals and their clothing is often stored on the floor. Refusal to share a cell without a valid reason results in the prisoner being sent to the CSU.

The kitchen continues to struggle to cater for nearly 1200 prisoners; the facility was designed to cater for just 800 prisoners and there has been no increase in its size since then. This undercapacity has led to many problems with the fabric of the facility and its equipment. At one point one company refused to install new equipment as the building was in such poor condition and the ventilation was inadequate.

Of major concern to the Board is the poor supervision of the food trolleys and the serveries especially on the Cat C side of the prison. Lack of proper protective clothing for the workers, prisoners climbing over the counter and eating or vaping whilst serving have been observed by Board members.

The kitchen is unable to fully comply with the new national healthy eating framework due to supply problems from Bidfood the designated supplier. Special diets for religious or medical reasons remain a challenge as they are much more expensive than the main menu. The kitchen staff are to be commended for the way in which they cope with this. The Board notes that it has received few complaints about the food during the reporting period.

5.2 Segregation

Prisoners who are subject to segregation are held in the care and separation unit (CSU), a specialist unit that comprises 13 regular cells, two special accommodation cells, two safe cells, one constant supervision cells and a neurodiversity room. At one point there was a plan to fit out a room for storing and issuing medication, but this has not happened.

Despite some periods of instability during the year when there has been a lack of regular, knowledgeable staff on occasions, the officers who are detailed to work in the CSU generally form a cohesive and effective team. They are trained in a range of areas, including use of the body scanner, and are offered support through the psychology service for what is a particularly difficult role. The Board has routinely praised these officers for their dedication and the support they offer to some of the most challenging prisoners at Wymott.

The average number of prisoners who have been held in the CSU has varied between seven and 14 over the reporting period. On occasion prisoners have been located in a totally unsuitable cell due to being taken to the CSU when no appropriate accommodation was available. The Board is pleased to note that this

practice has ceased, as cells that are badly damaged and are awaiting repair are taken out of action.

All prisoners who are signed up under Rule 45 (Own Interest or Good Order and Discipline) are scheduled to attend a Segregation Review Board (SRB). It is a requirement that the IMB is notified of a prisoner being signed up under Rule 45 and advised of the date and time of the SRB meeting. There have been periods over the past year when this notification has been somewhat spasmodic, and paperwork has not always been completed correctly. However, a more stable and consistent staff team is now operating within the CSU, with an experienced custodial manager (CM) and supervising officer (SO) ensuring that the unit runs smoothly. A somewhat complex reintegration plan and incentive scheme has now been replaced by a more streamlined process that involves CSU staff carrying out regular reviews with prisoners in the Unit. Towards the end of the reporting year the number of prisoners in the CSU had reduced dramatically and at the time of writing there is much more emphasis on returning prisoners to wings rather than transferring them to other establishments. Unfortunately, this has sometimes resulted in prisoners refusing to relocate, or refusing to share a cell, and so their period in the CSU is prolonged.

During the current reporting year members of the Board have attended 199 SRBs and have been generally satisfied that the process has been conducted in a fair and appropriate manner. It has become an expectation that governors will be well briefed prior to chairing an SRB, having consulted the Security department, Safer Living, CSU staff and other relevant parties.

The prison reports that the average length of stay for prisoners in the CSU ranges from nine in June 2025 to 14 in April 2026. Over the year there have been eight prisoners whose stays were much longer (in excess of 9 weeks in the case of seven of these), although this is a reduction on the previous year.

If prisoners are placed in special accommodation, where basic items have been removed in the interests of safety, the Board should be informed immediately and notified again when the prisoner is moved out. Use of special accommodation in the CSU is relatively rare (just two cases recorded by the Board over the reporting year) and in almost all cases the length of stay has been minimal (usually minutes rather than hours) and the Board has been appropriately notified so that the prisoners can be visited and paperwork signed.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

The frequency and quality of keywork sessions have shown some improvement over the year, as evidenced by key workers' entries on the Digital Prison System (DPS). The prison conducted an audit covering January to March 2026, and monthly quality assurance checks have been introduced. At the end of the reporting period the target was one session per prisoner every four weeks, but Board members still find that some prisoners claim not to know who their key worker is.

The Board does have some concerns about staff/prisoner relations as there has been an increase in the number of applications received. There has been a notable increase in complaints about treatment by staff. Complaints about staff are not investigated by the Board; prisoners are encouraged to submit a confidential access complaint form (COMP 2) to the prison's senior management (*see section 5.7*).

5.4 Equality and diversity

In addition to the bi-monthly Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI) meetings, the DEI Manager runs various focus groups throughout the year representing most of the recognised protected characteristics. These groups help to identify issues that are specific to the group and are appreciated by the prisoners. The DEI Manager also organised events and festivals to raise awareness and celebrate various groups such as Black History Month and Pride. Most of the PCOSO wings and protected characteristics have Diversity Representatives, but the mainstream Cat C side is under-represented.

In January 2026 the prison accommodated 36 foreign national prisoners. In addition to 6-monthly visits from the Home Office, the DEI Manager and the Offender Management Unit (OMU) held two focus groups to address Wymott-specific issues.

The appointment of a number of foreign national officers has presented a challenge to both staff and prisoners. Issues arising from cultural misunderstandings have highlighted a need for cultural awareness training that will benefit both staff and prisoners. Positive action is being taken by the prison to provide cultural awareness training to all staff.

Approximately 30% of the prison's population is over 50 years of age, mainly residing on the PCOSO side. A significant number of older prisoners have complex physical and social needs, and many are supported by buddies (trained prisoners who offer help with daily tasks – *see section 6.4*). Around 100 have a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) in place. The prison does its best to meet the needs of the older population, but applications to the Board indicate concerns with inability to access parts of the prison.

In January 2026 sixty prisoners were under 25 (5% of the population) of whom ten were from ethnic minority backgrounds. Around 90 prisoners have reported being previously in care, 17 of whom are young adults. Young adults have continued to be over-represented in prison data on disciplinary issues, despite efforts to engage them in activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. Between January and March 2026 10% of adjudications involved young adults.

The stair lift on Haven wing which houses older and disabled prisoners has been broken and out of use for most of the year. Most of the wheelchair users are accommodated on the ground floor, but they are unable to access the recreation room upstairs (*see section* 5.1). Some prisoners who use walking aids struggle and Board members have raised concerns about them trying to negotiate the stairs with a walking frame.

Prisoners who self-identify as neurodiverse during induction (*see section 4.1*) are referred to the Neurodiversity Support Manager (NSM). She compiles a profile with them, including any support plans, that sits within the prisoner's electronic record available to all staff. Prisoners may be offered the support of a buddy if appropriate. Approximately 45% of the prison population are identified as having support needs, and 20% are referred to the NSM and Learning Disability Practitioner. The Board commends the prison for the progress in this area, although it is unclear whether the wing staff routinely access and use the information in the support plans.

There were 13 discrimination incident report forms (DIRF) submitted over the reporting year – a significant reduction on last year's total of 38. Seven related to disability, three to ethnicity, two to religion and one to sexual orientation. They were all investigated and four were proven, eight unproven and one rescinded. There was no clear reason given for the reduction, except that the criteria for being accepted as a claim of discrimination have been tightened up and some are now treated as complaints *(see section 5.7).*

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

Since the Head Chaplain left in May 2025, an Acting Head of Chaplaincy (AHC) has been in place. The Chapel continues to provide services and festival celebrations for a number of faiths, but the AHC has told Board members that he feels unable to implement changes / improvements while his position is uncertain.

The prison still has no Roman Catholic priest to take mass on a regular basis. This year there was no Roman Catholic service on Easter Sunday.

Since May 2025 there has been no Family Liaison Officer on the Chaplaincy team. Family support following deaths is provided by a small group of trained FLOs.

5.6 Incentives schemes

Revisions to the local Incentives and Earned Privileges (IEP) Policy were issued in June and July 2024 and again in March 2025. The current policy is due to be reviewed and revised during the next reporting year. The prison applies sanctions for refusal to attend scheduled induction sessions and refusal to share a cell in cases where the cell sharing risk assessment does not preclude it. The Board notes that the prison has applied this sanction rigorously, even though many cells are not suitable for double occupancy.

In recent months the Board has raised concerns about the implementation of the IEP policy after a number of prisoners contacted the Board through the application process. There have been examples of prisoners not being informed when negative comments are made, written warnings have not always been issued and when a prisoner's IEP status has been downgraded in error, this was not always rescinded. On several occasions recently members of the Board have intervened to ensure that the process is conducted correctly.

The number of prisoners on Basic, the lowest IEP level, is consistently higher than the national average for comparator prisons. The Governor at HMP Wymott attributes this to the sanctions applied to prisoners who refuse to attend work. Since the implementation of the new regime in May 2026, there is an expectation within the establishment that this number will reduce. The Board will continue to monitor the situation as it develops.

5.7 Complaints

The prison recorded 2499 complaints in the reporting period, including 251 stage 2 appeals (COMP1A forms) where the prisoner was not satisfied that the original complaint had been adequately addressed. As in the previous year, the greatest number of complaints related to residential matters, sentence management and work/activities.

The Board monitored a sample of responses to complaints throughout the year and these were mostly consistent with the values of Procedural Justice (voice, respect, neutrality and trust). Most complaints were responded to within the HMPPS timescale, but some remained unresolved for significant periods. Sometimes prisoners sent in IMB applications regarding the complaints process, and they could also refer the matter to Independent Prisoner Complaint Investigations (IPCI, part of Prisons and Probation Ombudsman) if they had exhausted the prison complaints system.

In the reporting year 139 confidential access complaints were submitted, a substantial increase from the previous year. As in previous years the Board found that some prisoners misunderstood the purpose of confidential access complaints (COMP2) and as a result a significant proportion were rejected by the Governor or Prison Group Director (PGD). Some prisoners were even advised by officers that if they were not satisfied with the response to a COMP 1A appeal they should submit a COMP 2, rather than follow the correct procedure which is to appeal to the Independent Prisoner Complaint Investigations (IPCI).

During the year several prisoners approached the IMB as they had no record of whether or not confidential complaints had been passed through to the Governor. A system was subsequently put in place whereby prisoners would receive an acknowledgement, including information about how the complaint was to be handled and by whom, and whether or not it was deemed to be related to a confidential matter.

The Board has carried out several checks of complaint responses and considers that the process is generally well managed by the prison. A recent change has been the publication of lists of all overdue complaints and this appears to have reduced the number that have not received a response within the statutory time period.

5.8 Property

The failure of property to accompany the prisoner from another prison remains a concern. Many prisons fail to respond to prisoners' complaints in a timely manner if at all. Follow on property has also caused problems, for example too many bags or bags which are too full and therefore split. The Board continues to receive a significant number of complaints in this regard.

There have been delays in getting the prisoners to reception to collect their property and it is still the case that there are often delays in getting parcels to prisoners as they have to be checked by the 'sniffer' dogs. The Board also notes that the prison's response to property complaints has on occasion been inadequate and unsympathetic.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

Practice Plus Group have now completed their first full year as the sole provider of healthcare at Wymott. The Board is pleased to note that regulations were lifted following feedback from the Care Quality Commission (CQC). The provision is also out of enhanced surveillance by NHS England (NHSE). However, the Board still has some significant concerns about the prisoners' experiences of the service, and these are reflected in the high number of applications received (69), which remains similar to last year (see section 8).

The prisoners' healthcare forum continues to meet monthly, although participation by the mainstream Cat C prisoners is minimal, and attendance from the dental, mental health and social care teams has been sporadic. The Patient Engagement Lead promised by PPG has still not materialised.

6.2 Physical healthcare

The Board is concerned that the process previously used to get rapid interpretation of electrocardiograms (ECG) is no longer available to healthcare staff. PPG use Technomed and the Board was told that the equipment provided is difficult to transport around the prison and results take longer to come back, especially as the service is only open at set times. This has led to an increase in unplanned hospital escorts. The Head of Healthcare has escalated concerns to the Commissioner NHS England (NHSE).

Delivery of medication remains a concern. Healthcare staff have on occasion refused to return to a wing when prisoners have missed collecting their medication through no fault of their own. Medication times on the wings may clash with labour movement, forcing prisoners to choose between collecting their medication or going to work. On one occasion medication was given to the wrong prisoner, resulting in a hospital visit. Fortunately, it did not leave any long-term effects. Prisoners have also complained to the Board that medication issued to them while in hospital is taken from them for re-prescribing when they return and may not be re-issued for several days if it occurs over a weekend.

Provision of essential items such as Tena incontinence pads and stoma bags has been inconsistent. The Board was made aware of one prisoner who had to make do with layers of toilet paper for several days as there were no Tena pads available. Thankfully this issue has now been rectified.

Appointment slip distribution and missed appointments have been an on-going concern. Prisoners complain to the Board that they have missed appointments due to not receiving notification. On a few occasions prisoners have been taken across to healthcare only to find that they are not on the list for that day. There have been several attempts to find a reliable system for notifying prisoners, but communication between healthcare and prison staff has been an issue.

Waiting times for the podiatrist and the optician are unacceptably long and the Head of Healthcare has escalated concern to the Commissioners. As the prison accommodates a high number of older prisoners, access to podiatry services is vital. The Board is also concerned that the current contract only provides funding for four

half-day optician sessions per month. Some prisoners were unable to access education courses due to not having glasses, so the prison has obtained a supply of reading glasses for general use and provided the wings with repair kits.

Monitoring visits to the waiting rooms have regularly found PCOSO prisoners waiting for long periods to be taken back to the wings after their appointments. This could be because they are less likely to 'kick off' if they are held in the waiting room or because some of the PCOSO wings are further away for the officers to escort them back.

Hospital escorts continue to be a pressure point, with increasing triaging of routine outside hospital appointments. The contract allocation of three escorts am and pm is insufficient for a prison with over a thousand prisoners, many of whom have complex health needs, and this has been escalated to the Commissioner.

The mattress supply and replacement process has been a source of much debate through the year. Prisoners with medical needs have been unable to obtain suitable mattresses that meet the CRIB 7 fire regulations, and there have been insufficient ordinary mattresses available. The Board is pleased to report that the prison has now agreed to source additional mattresses, although appropriate orthopaedic mattresses are still not available through local health and social care providers.

6.3 Mental health

Staffing was a concern at the start of the reporting year, but recruitment has been on-going and the mental health team is now fully staffed. A substantive psychiatrist started in March. The latest available data (April 2026) shows that urgent triaging waits average two days, routine triaging five days, psychiatrist 57 days and psychological interventions 72 days. These are an improvement from the start of the year. Whenever an ACCT is opened the prisoner receives a mental health triage.

Waits for mental health referrals to secure units have been of concern, for example in May 2026 the Support Intervention Meeting (SIM) recorded nine prisoners currently in secure accommodation, with two referrals awaiting a place. These two have breached the 28-day mandatory wait due to there being no suitable places available.

6.4 Social care

Lancashire County Council (LCC) provides social care and occupational therapy services to the prison. Prisoners can self-refer or be referred by staff for an assessment of need. Daily living aids, such as grab rails can be provided, although it often takes some time for Amey to install them.
RECOOP buddies currently support 155 clients with everyday living and they work closely with the LCC staff. The Co-Ordinator left in August 2025, and the buddies lacked consistent leadership for a time, but a permanent replacement is now on-site. Wheelchair provision and delays in repair have been problematic, with buddies complaining to Board members that there are not enough wheelchairs available for general use. The prison has done some work on this recently – an audit and review of the current stock has begun and two members of staff have been trained as assessors to determine the level of need. Some prisoners need a wheelchair just to get around the wing, but others can use strollers on the wing and only need a

wheelchair to move around the prison. One prisoner has been provided with an electric wheelchair as it was deemed unsafe for buddies to push him around.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

As the Cat C workshops came back on stream, time out of cell improved for most prisoners. Prisoners who refuse to work are demoted to Basic incentive level and their time out of cell is limited to a 45-minute morning domestic period and one association period a day. When the prison is particularly short staffed regime restrictions have been implemented during the week and at weekends a lock-down rota has been used. This was quite frequent at the start of the year, but has become less so towards the end of the year.

The period of Covid and the workshop closures had an impact on the ethos of the prison as a working prison. A Senior Management team has spent several months developing a new regime, consulting widely in an effort to return the prison to a more effective working prison. This began to be implemented in April 2026, with most of the changes being introduced in May. The Board is monitoring this.

6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

The substance misuse services (SMS) are now all part of the PPG provision. This consists of a drug and alcohol recovery service (DARS), a substance misuse non-clinical service and a Therapeutic Community (TC). A prison governor is responsible for developing and maintaining the drug strategy policy (*see section 4.5)*, and the team meets monthly to co-ordinate the strategy.

Any prisoner who is found ‘under the influence’ is referred to the Robust Recovery (RR) team and offered the opportunity to be referred on to the substance misuse services. In May 2026 the RR team saw 45 prisoners who were not previously known to them, but only 11 accepted referral to the services. The others preferred to continue with their habit.

Naloxone has proved to be beneficial in reducing the number of ambulance call-outs. By May 2026 23 staff were trained in the use of naloxone, ten as trainers. A number of prisoners have also been trained and they are offered a limited supply of it on release.

In May 2026 there were 63 new referrals to the DARS team, compared to 38 in September 2025. The total caseload at the end of the reporting year was 272. Staffing constraints have meant higher individual caseloads and this has limited the service. Seven prisoners were released in May following substance misuse interventions compared to 11 in Sept 2025. The team works to link prisoners with external services on release.

Population pressures have meant that the TC has had to accommodate ‘lodgers’ - prisoners who were not on the programme - and this has had a disruptive effect. The incidence of drugs in this supposedly drug free community increased significantly. In September 2025 the Manager reported that the availability of drugs on the wings was affecting motivation and engagement on the programme. Recently however there are signs that the slight reduction in prison numbers has begun to have an effect, and the TC managers have focussed on recruiting more suitable prisoners. In May 2026 the caseload of prisoners on the programme was 48, with ten lodgers, six of whom were interested in doing the programme. The manager said that individual

community members were more motivated and she felt more positive, as evidenced by the quotes below:

- *'Patient A just moved up to Dependence, negative drug test. Group attendance, work ethics, turned down his CAT D as feels needs to complete the programme and get continued skills/tools to support him on his release.'*
- *'Patient B's behaviour was chaotic, including increased substance misuse. He has moved to the Haven unit to support his care needs and has settled really well. Reports to being substance free and his health is improving. He reported to having a first birthday where he celebrated with cake and sweets instead of drugs. Staff around the prison keep commenting on how well he looks which has supported increasing his motivation.'*

  (Drug Strategy meeting minutes)

The SMS team identified the key drivers of drug supply and use to be unemployment/boredom, targeting of prisoners to test new supplies and targeting of known users. The Board recognises that the prison is striving to tackle the supply of drugs coming into the prison (*see section 4.5*) and to reduce the demand through work and disruption of drug networks within the prison.

6.7 Soft skills

The asset-based community development (ABCD) programme has extended on A, B and Haven wings, with groups including arts and crafts, book club, gardening club and British Sign language. In December 2025 there were 163 participants. Sadly there has been no interest from the mainstream Cat C side.

The OneHub began towards the end of the last reporting year to offer support and engagement to prisoners at risk of becoming socially isolated. In December 2025 13 referrals had been received, with prisoners being offered support through the RECOOP buddies, the ABCD groups and sensory room sessions. Following a brief hiatus in the spring referrals are building up again.

The prison has begun to run chess clubs on some wings, and a Federation Master came in to play against prisoners. A Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme has been introduced for younger prisoners on the mainstream Cat C side.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

The education provider at Wymott is Novus. During the reporting period, rising cost pressures nationally affected the volume of provision available through Core Education contracts and, as a consequence, the range of accredited courses offered has been significantly reduced. The Board is concerned that this could impact on prisoners' employment opportunities on release. Several courses have been reduced to ten weeks and all are only provided on four days a week (Monday to Thursday).

There is a strong focus on building the prisoners' basic functional skills, and support with Mathematics and English is offered whilst they are in their workplaces as well as on the education concourse. Some employment opportunities are only available to prisoners who have attained Level 1 in Maths and English.

A new course, Employability and Personal Development has been introduced which helps prisoners prepare for outside life. It develops life skills and preparation for employment. Other non-accredited courses include Digital Skills and Creative Art/writing.

As part of a push to encourage prisoners into work, they now have to attend all their work/education sessions in order to be allowed to attend additional gym sessions. As a result prison data shows that attendance in Education has improved on days when there is a gym session.

Prisoners who are on Open University courses now have access to 35 Coracle laptops. These laptops have enabled prisoners to continue to work on their assignments whilst in their cells. For part of the reporting period there was no dedicated tutor assigned to the Distance Learning Department. Tutors from other areas provided cover but were only able to give limited advice. Open University students can have some limited telephone tutorials with their OU tutor.

Neurodiverse prisoners are offered support to enable them to participate in education, for example through learning aids or peer mentor support.

Throughout most of this reporting period prisoners' access to the library has been restricted. The prisoners from the wings and workshops had little, or no, access; the only ones having regular access were those that were in education located in classrooms off the library. To compensate for this, small book areas have been introduced on the wings to allow prisoners access to books. Access to a library is a statutory entitlement and prisoners made complaints about this to the IMB via applications and during conversations. The new regime introduced in May 2026 should address this, and the Board will continue to monitor prisoners' access.

Library staff told IMB that security clearances for the prisoner orderlies were taking many months to be processed during most of the reporting period but has improved lately.

7.2 Vocational training, work

The reduction in available budget mentioned in section 7.1 has seen several changes to the vocational work in the prison. Several courses have lost their accredited qualifications and been replaced with shortened, non-accredited courses. Prisoners complete a portfolio of their work, but some tell IMB that the portfolios

mean nothing. They say that they would rather have the old system of qualifications taken inside the prison that will get them a job when they get out, They can still obtain the Construction Skills Certificate Scheme card (CSCS) that is needed to work on a building site, but this is only for prisoners with less than a year left on their sentence as the card is only valid for four years.

NVQ L2 Catering has now been changed to a non-accredited Production Catering and Customer Service course and prisoners have complained about the lack of qualifications which had previously resulted in attaining jobs upon release.

At the end of October 2025 the mainstream Cat C workshops re-opened following a long closure due to roof repair work. Initially their capacity was capped at 25% due to issues that still needed to be rectified, but by the end of the reporting period the Cat C industries were fully operational and planning to bring in longer working hours. There is now a job/education place for every capable prisoner within the prison.

As workshop places came on stream some prisoners were reluctant to work (*see section 7.1*). Refusals to attend work or education are also sanctioned using the Incentive and Earned Privileges (IEP) scheme. Towards the end of 2025 there was a seven-week long delay in prisoners being allocated a job due to a backlog in security vetting.

Workshops employing PCOSO workers have been fully functioning throughout the reporting period. The Laundry has contracts with outside agencies and prisoners are involved in the Longer Working Hours Initiative. Some have told the IMB that this has impacted on their time for exercise and showers when they go back to the wings.

The prison gardens' workers continue to maintain an attractive external environment. At Southport Flower Show Wymott won two trophies and a gold medal for their floral display. Cat C gardens also won a 1st, 2nd and 3rd prize at the same show for their vegetables.

7.3 Offender management, progression

The Offender Management Unit (OMU) has experienced many difficulties throughout the year. The number of Probation Officers (PO) has been low; at the end of the reporting period there were four probation officers on sickness or maternity leave. Although there are also uniformed Prison Offender Managers (POM) there are some tasks that only Probation Officers can do, such as OASyS updates, so this has produced a backlog. This causes frustration among prisoners, who are anxious to begin work on their sentence plan, or who are approaching dates for recategorisation or parole. The workload of the Prison Offender Managers (POMs) is about 40 cases and the PO's cases about 70.

When the prison had shortages of staff to deliver the regime, some POMs were reallocated to support the regime. This, along with reduced numbers of Probation Officers, has meant there were reduced opportunities to see the prisoners.

Under the national Temporary Presumptive Recategorisation Scheme (TPRS) OMU had to check prisoners' eligibility to be recategorised as Cat D. Also during this period they had to assess prisoners who were eligible for release under the staggered changes to the Early Release Policy. These added further pressures onto OMU and also affected the ability for prisoners to speak directly to their POMs or POs.

In May 2026 Wymott's population included 113 prisoners (10.2%) serving indeterminate sentences for public protection (IPP) and 182 (16.4%) prisoners serving life sentences. This means that over 25% of the prisoners at Wymott have no clear end date to work towards. The prison has implemented measures to support these prisoners, but the Board would welcome some indication that government is working to address the inhumane IPP sentence.

HMP Wymott offers a number of offending behaviour programmes. There are two PIPE Units (Psychologically Informed Planned Environment), one on each side of the prison, to work with prisoners with personality disorders. There is also a drug Therapeutic Community (TC) for prisoners to develop strategies to overcome addictive and anti-social behaviours.

The low staffing levels experienced during the reporting period had an effect on the running of these wings. Staff have been deployed to help with the regime on other wings leading to loss of programme sessions which had a negative effect on some of the men on the PIPE Units.

National population pressures on prison places have meant that the TC has had prisoners located there who were not on the programme. This has resulted in unrest on the wing and more access to drugs brought in by the prisoners 'lodging' on the wing (*see section 6.6*).

Building Choices, which replaced a number of other offending behaviour programmes run at Wymott by the NW Area Psychology Services, started in January 2025. Initially, Wymott delivered six strands of Building Choices, but this year it has been reduced by one. Places on the programme have been limited, and those nearer to their release date have been prioritised, which has caused some frustration amongst prisoners. The Early Release Schemes have also affected the Programmes Department, as they have had to check which prisoners due for early release were also waiting to complete Building Choices.

As part of preparation for release, the Reducing Reoffending team have engaged with outside companies who will sponsor workshops. These involve talks from the firms, mock interviews and advice up to in-prison training and conditional job offers.

7.4 Family contact

The family liaison service provider remains Partners of Prisons (POPs); they are supported by the prison's Family Development Officer. Their strategies to assist family contact include family days, new fathers' days and other day long special visits. These are much appreciated by both families and prisoners. There are also video visits although there have been several problems with these during the reporting period.

The family forum continues to function and is an opportunity for families to meet staff, air any problems and share ideas for the future. The staff are trying very hard to improve the family participation in the forum.

The major problem regarding visits this reporting period remains access for visitors with mobility issues. The stair lift enabling access to the first floor visits area has now been condemned as it is unfit for purpose. Visitors who cannot climb the stairs continue to have to enter the prison through the vehicle lock. They then proceed through the main concourse to the lift in order to gain access to the visits area. This

entails the possibility of encountering prisoners being escorted to activities. The Board considers this arrangement to be highly unsatisfactory and not a decent manner in which to treat visitors.

The Board has received numerous complaints about the length of time take to add PIN phone numbers to prisoner's lists. This has created difficulties in contacting not only families but also solicitors and receiving and responding to legal mail in a timely manner.

7.5 Resettlement planning

Despite the fact that HMP Wymott is not a resettlement prison, there were 280 prisoners released during this reporting year. This is around 20 prisoners per month. There are three members of staff in the Resettlement Hub dealing with bank accounts, careers information and guidance (CIAG) and Through the Gate (TTG) programme. They work with prisoners in the weeks / months prior to their release. The Resettlement team has also been running Release Workshops in the library.

Some prisoners on release are not told what accommodation they will have until the last minute due to a shortage of approved premises. This is a source of great anxiety for prisoners and has been exacerbated by the Early Release programmes - with many more prisoners competing for the available accommodation. Community Offender Managers (COM) can ask for released prisoners to go to the relevant council for emergency housing.

TYPE OF ACCOMODATION	NUMBER
Approved Premises	114
CAS 2*	15
CAS 3**	33
Friends/Families	67
Homeless/Rough Sleeping	11
Immigration Detention	1
Long Term Residential Healthcare	3
Rental Accommodation private	18
Supported Housing	6
Transient/Short term	12
Total Prisoners Released	280

*CAS 2 (Community Accommodation Service 2) is short term supported housing

**CAS 3 is up to 12 weeks temporary housing and support for those at risk of homelessness

8. The work of the IMB

Despite participating in national recruitment campaigns, no new members joined the Board during this reporting year, and one member left due to health reasons. Two potential new members have been interviewed and are in the process of being recommended for appointment by the Minister.

Board members have continued to carry out their usual monitoring activities despite some negative publicity regarding the future of the IMB through visiting the prison, responding to prisoners' applications and meeting monthly with the Governor to discuss their findings. Board members also monitor meetings relevant to their area of specific interest in addition to the prisoner-led Prison Council, which helps to identify prison-wide issues of concern to the prisoners.

The Board reports regularly to the NW Regional Representative and the Chair and Vice Chair have attended quarterly regional IMB meetings to learn of new developments and to share good practice.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	16
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	6
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	5
Total number of visits to the establishment	412

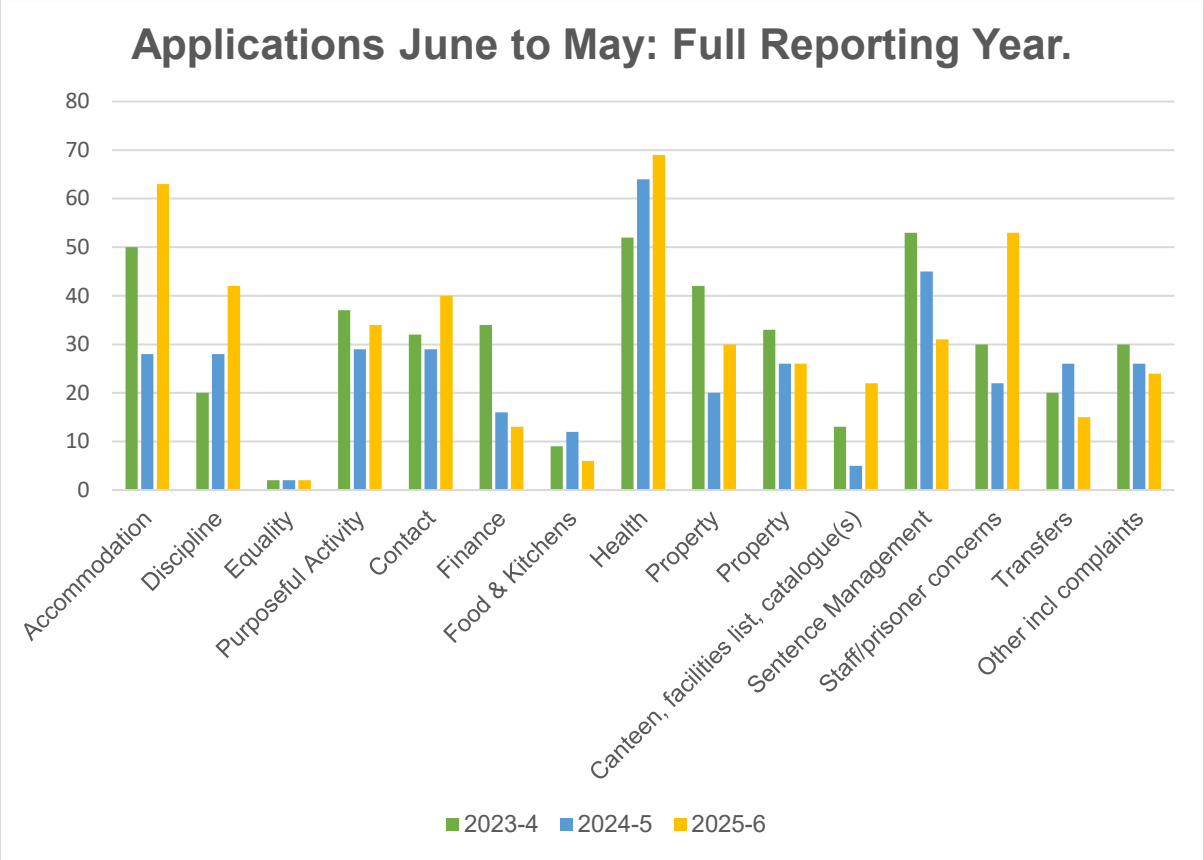
Applications to the IMB

All new prisoners receive a letter and leaflet from the Board explaining the role of the Board and how they can make contact through the applications process. The Board logs all applications received and operates a rota system for responding to these. In almost all cases this involves an initial visit to the prisoner within a few days, followed by a written response with the findings of any investigation.

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	28	63
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	28	42
C	Equality	2	2
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	29	34
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	29	40
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	16	13
F	Food and kitchens	12	6
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	64	69
H1	Property within the establishment	20	30
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	26	26
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	5	22
I	Sentence management, including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-categorisation	45	31
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	22	53
K	Transfers	26	15
L	Miscellaneous	26	24
	Total number of applications	**378**	**470**

Following a reduction in the number of applications to the IMB in the previous reporting year, there has subsequently been an increase of just over 24%. The most notable increases are in staff/prisoner concerns, with an increase of 141%, accommodation, with an increase of 125% and discipline with an increase of 50%. Further scrutiny shows that there were two months when the Board received nine applications about staff/prisoner concerns and, of these 18, 10 were related to allegations about the conduct of officers. In all such cases, the IMB advises prisoners to submit a confidential complaint. Concerns regarding healthcare continue to generate the highest number of applications, as in the previous reporting year.

Sixty percent of all applications were submitted by PCOSOs, 36% by mainstream prisoners and the remainder came from units with a mixed occupancy. This closely reflects the population of the prison.


Applications June to May: Full Reporting Year.
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Accommodation
Discipline
Equality
Purposeful Activity
Contact
Finance
Food & Kitchens
Health
Property
Property
Canteen, facilities list, catalogue(s)
Sentence Management
Staff/prisoner concerns
Transfers
Other incl complaints
2023-4
2024-5
2025-6

Annex A

Service providers

- Maintenance: Amey
- Education: Novus
- Escort contractor: GeoAmey
- Healthcare and pharmacy: Practice Plus Group (PPG)
- Dentistry: Time for Teeth
- Mental health: Practice Plus Group
- Substance misuse services: Practice Plus Group
- Social Care: Lancashire County Council
- Visitors' centre: Partners of Prisons (POPS)
- Psychology: NW Area Psychology Services



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