



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Stafford

**For reporting year
1 May 2025 to 30 April 2026**

Published October 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 establishment¹

Located at the edge of Stafford town centre, during the period of this report HMP Stafford

- was one of the oldest fully operational prisons in England and included several Grade II listed buildings
- was a category (cat) C training prison
- was for people (men) convicted of sexual offences
- had a certified operational capacity of 761 prisoners

The prison includes seven residential wings with most cells accommodating two prisoners. Each wing has in-cell sanitation and a shower block. Except for four cells in B wing, in-cell showers were only available in the newest wing (G). One wing (D) was used for induction, to accommodate the healthcare centre and the care and separation unit (CSU). G wing also accommodates the special care unit (SCU) an eight bed unit utilised regionally for prisoners who require rehabilitation and palliative care.

The outside environment was exceptionally clean and tidy and provided exercise yards, bench seating, an astroturf pitch, well-tended flower beds and garden areas and beehives. Some areas were decorated by prisoner painted murals. New outdoor exercise equipment was also installed in several of the yards, funded from the Governor's budget as an improvement to the regime.

The Hive provided a separate area for the senior support group (SSG), which was used for activities, as well as providing opportunities for relaxation and socialising. This facility was shared with men serving life and imprisonment for public protection (IPP) sentences, who met at separate times due to their differing needs. The new facility was larger and offered the opportunity for a wider range of activities to be undertaken. However, the new facility did result in the loss of access to outdoor space, which the prison did try to resolve through the creation of a smaller seating area with a lock back gate, which allowed fluidity of movement and fresh air flow.

Significant workshop space was provided for employment.

Fulford's Bistro, provided catering for staff and visitors, and was staffed and managed by prisoners, enabling them to obtain catering qualifications.

Unity 7 supplied refreshments for prisoners, Barista training courses, a charity shop and meeting place for many clubs. The facility enabled prisoners to gain skills in managing cashless payment systems.

Many voluntary organisations supported the prisoners, including Samaritans (prisoner support and training for Listeners), Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT), who run the visitors' centre, Lincolnshire Action Trust (resettlement), the Shannon Trust reading plan "Turning Pages", the loss and bereavement service and chaplaincy volunteers, including official prison visitors.

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

3. Key points

3.1 Main findings

Safety

- In the Board's view, HMP Stafford remained a generally safe, low-risk establishment, with prisoners reporting that they felt safer in a prison designated specifically to men convicted of sexual offences.
- Self-harm and use-of-force incidents increased, largely due to a small number of prolific individuals, and will be a continued focus for IMB monitoring.
- The rise in self-harm has been acknowledged by the prison and incorporated into its 2026-27 safety strategy.
- A new Head of Safety was appointed and plans to strengthen intelligence-led early intervention, alongside the prison's zero-tolerance approach to violence. The Board will monitor the success of these plans.

Fair and humane treatment

- As with last year's report, the Board did not observe, nor was it made aware of any major concerns regarding the fair and humane treatment of prisoners.
- Prisoners generally reported respectful, supportive relationships with staff.
- The prison environment was kept clean and well-maintained despite issues with legionella and infestations.
- Equality, diversity and inclusion work remained strong, and complaints were handled promptly and professionally, demonstrating a consistent focus on humane treatment.

Health and wellbeing

- Healthcare provision remained strong, with a wide range of in-house services and national recognition for end-of-life and cardiac rehabilitation care.
- Prisoner "health champions" provided valued peer-led support on physical and mental health, contributing positively to prisoner's wellbeing.
- A range of activities supported the mental health and engagement of the men across the prison.
- Regime and time out of cell were generally good, although purposeful activity was the most raised concern in IMB applications.

Progression and resettlement

- HMP Stafford releases significant numbers of prisoners but receives no resettlement funding, limiting its ability to support reintegration.
- Prisoners convicted of sexual offences (PCOSOs) face additional barriers to accommodation and community support on release.
- PCOSOs also face additional challenges in securing employment on release
- Education, work and purposeful activity opportunities exist, but concerns about access and consistency remain.
- External organisations provide some resettlement support, though provision is constrained by the lack of dedicated resources.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- I. Can the minister explain why prisoners in employment in establishments run and managed by private sector companies are given much higher rates of pay when compared to those in prisons run entirely by HMPPS? This disparity causes concern for those prisoners who transfer from private to public sector establishments and also causes confusion when the nature of the offences for which they have been convicted are the same.
- II. The longstanding and ongoing issues with legionella in the prison places all prisoners, particularly the elderly and vulnerable at increased risk of health problems. Whilst the Governor and senior leadership team continue to do their utmost to manage this risk, the IMB believe a permanent solution is long overdue. Can the minister identify and authorise capital funding to address this long-standing issue?
- III. It is acknowledged that prisoners leaving HMP Stafford can face additional challenges due to their offending history. How does the Minister plan to address this issue in order to give the prisoners released from HMP Stafford a better chance of successfully reintegrating into society and thereby reduce their risk of reoffending?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- I. Every year HMP Stafford has to prepare and release significant numbers of prisoners back into the community, yet receives no funding to do this as it is not designated as a resettlement prison. When does the prison service plan to fund the valuable resettlement service?
- II. Will HMPPS review the current pay-budget allocation model to ensure establishments with high work participation are not disadvantaged in the pay rates they can offer to prisoners?

TO THE GOVERNOR

- I. What progress has been made in reviewing incentives for elderly prisoners who cannot meet the requirements for enhanced status due to mobility or health limitations?
- II. How will the Governor ensure that actions agreed at Prisoner Council meetings are completed more promptly, given that some items have remained unresolved for several months?

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

During the reporting period a new Head of Safety was recruited.

4.1 Reception and induction

The prison continues to have an active and dedicated team of trusted prisoners, 'Insiders', whose role it was to welcome new arrivals and ensure they were given a tour of the prison, made aware of how the prison operated and clarified the expectations around behaviour. The Board observed Insiders supporting new arrivals to settle on the induction wing, remaining available to answer any queries that arose during the first few weeks.

During the reporting year new Insiders were recruited to the team.

The Insiders request all new arrivals at HMP Stafford complete an anonymous questionnaire about their experience. The overall feedback from the Insiders, and the prisoner questionnaire, was overwhelmingly positive. This was supported by feedback obtained during Board monitoring visits and discussion with prisoners who explained that they felt much safer in HMP Stafford when compared to other establishments. However, prisoners frequently reported that although HMP Stafford was a category C prison, it felt more like a category B due to its age and infrastructure.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

During the reporting period there were four deaths in custody, all of which were believed to have been the result of natural causes, pending the outcome of any inquests. This is a reduction compared to last year's figure of 11 deaths. Given the age demographic of the prison population, the Board considers this to be a relatively low number of deaths.

The Board is pleased to report that there were no self-inflicted deaths, during the reporting period.

There were 135 incidents of self-harm during the reporting year, which was a significant increase when compared to last year's figure of 66. The overall increase in self-harm has been noted by HMP Stafford and has been included in their strategy for 2026-27 as to how to address and reduce the number of incidents.

Cutting, remained the single most common cause of self-harm, with 97 incidents recorded. Two individuals accounted for the majority of these instances, one with 19 incidents, and one with 26 incidents. As such, these two repeat self-harmers have contributed significantly to figures for the period.

The main reasons for self-harm were often identified during the ACCT process as being due to poor mental health and a lack of coping mechanisms or as a response to punitive measures. The prison informed the IMB that in the coming year they will consider how to support prisoners who are subject to adjudication sanctions/negative IEPs etc.

Some habitual self-harmers were subject to several Assessment Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCTs, used to support prisoners who are at risk of self-harm and

suicide). Additionally, there were 33 prisoners who were subject to ongoing ACCTs suggesting that there are a population of prisoners with long term mental health needs that require long term monitoring and support.

The increase in self-harm was partly responsible for the slight increase in ACCT's during the reporting period. This reflected the prison's proactive approach to identifying and offering ongoing support to prisoners with mental health issues.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

During the reporting period there were 15 recorded assaults which is comparable to last year's figure of 17. There were three reported incidents involving assaults on prison staff. The Board notes that this is an extremely low number when compared to other similar establishments. From the Board's observations, it reflects both the excellent prisoner/officer relationships and that the majority of prisoners with whom the Board has spoken experience a feeling of safety and lack of fear when located in a prison dedicated specifically to managing those convicted of a sexual offence.

During the reporting period the prison introduced a zero-tolerance policy towards violent incidents. Whilst this initially resulted in an increase in prisoners being referred to the CSU, the overall numbers remained comparable to the previous year.

4.4 Use of force (UoF)

During the reporting period there were 67 UoF incidents, which was more than double last year's 30 UoF incidents. The prison reviewed all available body worn video camera and CCTV recordings of UoF incidents, and the Board had a standing invitation to attend these meetings.

Of the total figure, 49 incidents involved the use of cuffs compared to 16 last year and PAVA (an incapacitant spray, similar to pepper spray) was used on one occasion. No incidents required the use of batons. Of the 67 UoF incidents, 49 were unplanned.

The main reason given for the UoF was due to threatening and abusive behaviour (19 incidents). UoF increases were partly impacted by one prisoner who had significant behavioural and discipline issues during the period. He was subject to some form of force on 14 separate occasions and due to his conduct was eventually recategorised and transferred.

Most use of force incidents occurred spontaneously in response to situations arising from prisoners' behaviour.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

Like most other establishments, illicit items are available in HMP Stafford; however, the number of recorded finds remained extremely low. The reception area has an X-ray body scanner, which can be used to identify possible concealments of illicit drugs, mobile phones or similar items when new arrivals are being processed. The security team also acted on intelligence reports and undertook cell searches as required.

Random testing for illicit substances was undertaken throughout the reporting year with only five returning a positive result (1.44% against a target of 5%).

In relation to illicitly brewed alcohol (hooch) the prison operated a live action plan to identify and restrict the supply. This particularly focused on key events such as Christmas and significant sporting events. A joint action in December 2025, involving residential and security teams, resulted in seven litres of hooch being retrieved.

The prison also had an incentivised substance free living unit (ISFL) and all prisoners within the ISFL were subject to two oral drug swab tests per month. Since it opened in 2024, there has been no positive results detected.

The above data reassures the IMB that the strategies used by HMP Stafford to identify and limit the ingress of illicit substances appear to be successful.

4.6 Safeguarding monitoring/management

The Board considers HMP Stafford to be a generally safe prison. This is underpinned by mechanisms and processes that provide ongoing assessment and actions to identify and support vulnerable prisoners including; safety intervention meetings (SIM); challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs, used to support and manage prisoners who pose an increased risk of violence); and ACCTS.

Monthly safer custody meetings provided analysis of safeguarding issues to inform policy. Analysis provided at the meeting helped to identify trends relating to prisoner demography, diversity strands and specific prison locations. 'Insiders' (prisoners who are trusted to guide and support new prisoners) and Listeners (prisoners trained by the Samaritans to provide confidential emotional support to fellow prisoners) representatives attended these meetings and provided update reports. The summary above is supported by the data in the table below:

Reporting year	Self-harm incidents	ACCTs	Adjudications	Deaths in custody	Assaults	Use of force
2025-2026	135	146	488	4	15	67
2024-2025	66	107	439	11	17	30
2023-2024	131	160	671	5	12	57

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

The Board observed the establishment to have been kept very clean, tidy, and fresh looking, which for one of the oldest operational prisons in England is remarkable and testament to the hard work of both prisoners and officers. However, throughout the reporting period, there have been recurring problems with legionella.

The impact of legionella resulted in showers across the establishment being out of action on the wings, with temporary showers installed in Portakabin's in the yards. Whilst prison staff worked hard to maintain prisoners access to the facilities, this was not always possible, including during the winter months when temporary showers could not be used when it was dark. In this situation, prisoners were not always able to access a shower or had to queue for showers on other wings. The Board acknowledges that without significant capital investment, issues with legionella will be ongoing.

There were no cells holding more prisoners than they were designed to accommodate, however the majority of prisoners shared two to a cell. The Board observed in its conversations with some prisoners that this situation was accepted and most found ways of getting along with their cell mate, although there were instances where this relationship had broken down. The Board received complaints about a lack of privacy in the cells, particularly when prisoners had to use the toilet facilities (although a door could be closed for additional privacy). Several prisoners, who had been in other prisons, (including privately run establishments) commented that HMP Stafford's cells were less spacious and they often had a single cell in other prisons.

Vermin was an ongoing problem in parts of the prison despite some success in eradication. One prisoner described how, on his wing, it was not unusual, when waking in the night to go to the toilet, to discover cockroaches scurrying on the floor.

The Board continued to be impressed by the work of the catering team. With only a small increase in their budget in a period of food price inflation, they provided a daily choice of five menus and were able to meet a variety of dietary needs including those with medical needs and support special menus for celebratory one off events including Christmas.

The change, required in all prisons, to provide a healthier diet, was promptly introduced. Prisoners were keen to talk to the Board about this during the monitoring visits. The feedback about the change has been mixed with some prisoners expressing hope that the change would assist them to lose weight, whilst others advised that there were not eating the new meals. This will be an area that the Board continues to monitor as the changes are embedded.

The wings in the prison were provided with toasters and microwaves. This was welcomed by prisoners, however access to the new facilities was not consistent, with access restricted on some wings.

5.2 Segregation

HMP Stafford's care and separation unit (CSU) was small and contained only three cells, which reflected the overall safety and good behaviour of the prisoners. It was

extremely rare for all three cells to be in use at the same time. The CSU was used on 91 occasions with over half of prisoners (49) being aged 20-39 years old, no prisoner stayed longer than 42 days. This was an increase on the previous year and something the Board will continue to monitor.

As part of its regular monitoring, IMB members visited the CSU to talk to prisoners and attend adjudications. The unit was clean and calm during Board visits. The prisoners that were spoken to, raised no complaints about their treatment. Adjudications attended by the Board followed the required procedures.

5.3 Staff and prisoner relationships, key workers

During the reporting period, the Board noted that during its wing visits, the relationship between staff and prisoners appeared relaxed and constructive. Feedback received from prisoners about wing staff was generally positive with a small number of officers receiving high praise, including one officer described as 'polite, gentle and helpful' and others praised for 'going out of their way to help'

The Board regularly attended the monthly prisoner council meetings, which included prisoner representatives from across the establishment and was supported by the senior leadership team (SLT) and Governor. The relationships between senior staff and prisoners appeared to be constructive and respectful, with staff listening to concerns and adopting a problem-solving approach. The Board noted that some issues have remained outstanding on the meeting agenda for several months, despite actions being agreed by senior staff at earlier meetings.

Comparative data shows that HMP Stafford completed a higher rate of keywork sessions than most other prisons in the West Midlands region, although delivery had been inconsistent during the reporting period.

In November 2025, the Board spoke with over twenty prisoners on different wings about their experience of keywork. The feedback was varied; some prisoners confirmed that they rarely saw their keyworker, or felt that their sessions were not constructive. Other prisoners were also very positive about their experiences. One prisoner spoke highly of his keyworker, stating:

"He's switched on. If I need something, he sorts it or goes to find out. Can't fault him. He lets me know when he is on keywork and comes to find me. We have a bit of a laugh as an icebreaker. We have discussed my sentence plan, what I've achieved, and what's left."

The SLT have confirmed that there are ongoing plans to improve keywork in the prison. To help with this, prisoner council representatives were engaged in helping to monitor the progress of keywork by carrying out a survey of fifty prisoners each month. The results from the most recent survey showed significant improvement from earlier feedback and will remain an area of focus for the Board to monitor.

5.4 Equality and diversity

The Board was pleased to witness the continuing commitment of the Governor and other SLT members to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) initiatives. A quarterly EDI meeting was held and led by a specialist equality advisor. EDI is organised into thirteen 'strands', with each strand having an SLT lead and prisoner representative.

The Board was impressed by the meaningful, focused approach taken at the EDI meetings and by the number of initiatives and events planned and delivered during the reporting period.

There were 83 discrimination incident reporting form (DIRF) submissions during the year, which is less than the 97 reported in the previous year. Concerns related to ethnicity (29) and disability (22) were the most commonly raised issues. 37% of DIRFs were upheld during the reporting period, compared to 33% from the last reporting year, with seven cases being withdrawn.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

There was a reduction in the number of prison chaplains/ faith leaders during the reporting year with some faiths not being represented by a faith leader. Despite the shortage of staff, the chaplaincy adopted a multi faith approach, providing support to all faiths and ensured there was a member of the chaplaincy team available daily. Prisoners were able to request 'quiet time' in the chapel by submitting an app.

5.6 Incentives schemes

The national incentives framework was followed at HMP Stafford with prisoners earning 'enhanced status' by demonstrating sustained good behaviour, engaging in purposeful activities (like education and employment) and supporting the rehabilitation of others. Wing representatives were positive about a year end bonus that was paid to all prisoners who had achieved the required standards.

Elderly prisoners were unable to achieve a status above 'standard', as they were unable to meet the requirements of undertaking purposeful activities. This issue was raised at prisoner council and remains under review.

5.7 Complaints

During the reporting period there were 1573 complaints, which included Comp1 (initial complaint), Comp1a (appeal to the response provided against the initial complaint) and Comp2 (confidential complaint). This was an increase of 134 complaints on the previous year (1,439 complaints). Of the 1573 complaints, 329 (21%) were upheld by the establishment.

Once again, the Board wishes to acknowledge the efforts of the staff in ensuring that an effective system for tracking complaints was in place. The Board often needed to review specific complaints and the details of these were provided swiftly which enabled the Board to communicate promptly with the prisoner. The Board were satisfied that the responses to the complaints were answered in a polite and timely manner.

5.8 Property

The number of applications (prisoners' written representations to the IMB) received regarding property issues reduced significantly to 7.92% (eight applications) from 14.7% (25 applications) in the previous year. Items which went missing whilst in the prison were often traceable with help from the reception staff, despite a manual recording system being in place. No apps were received about property issues during transfer or in another facility.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

The prison facilitated a wide range of in-house healthcare services including general practitioners, dental treatment, chiropody, audiology etc. Healthcare was provided by the Practice Plus Group (PPG) on a contracted basis. PPG received a national award for excellence in delivering end of life care in a prison setting. HMP Stafford was the first prison in England to be acknowledged for this award. PPG also received recognition for establishing a cardiac rehabilitation group within the prison in conjunction with Katherine House Hospice.

New outdoor exercise equipment was installed in the prison and was regularly used by the prisoners. This equipment supplemented the facilities available in the prison gym.

6.2 Physical healthcare

The prison utilised an excellent team of prisoner health champions who were trained to provide support and encouragement to other prisoners on a range of issues, including monitoring the medication desk, weight loss and healthy eating and providing “health awareness” sessions to other prisoners on a range of topics including diabetes. The health champions also played an important role in supporting prisoner’s mental health. The health champions received regular training and obtained the Royal Society for Public Health qualification.

The health champions worked closely with the healthcare team and were supported by the prison lead on health champions who provided an overview of the role and the positive impact this had on prisoners.

The Board observed the work undertaken by the health champions and how they were greatly appreciated by other prisoners. The Board believe that the health champions contributed to positive prisoner healthcare.

The health champions felt undervalued as they did not believe that their pay reflected the positive impact they had.

6.3 Mental health

The prison offered a range of activities which appeared to have a very positive impact on the health and wellbeing of prisoners. As with last year, the Jail Arts and Music Society (JAMS) continued and was well attended by prisoners. JAMS members demonstrated their skills by performing at various events in the prison during the year.

6.4 Time out of cell, regime

The Board acknowledges that HMP Stafford’s overall regime was positive, with a focus on allowing prisoners as much time out of their cell as was possible for the prison to manage safely. There were occasions, usually as a result of short staffing due to emergency escorts, when prisoners were locked in their cell during their recreation time. The prison operated a rotational system of wing closures, so, no one wing was disadvantaged over another wing when recreation time was cancelled.

The Board notes that of the 101 IMB applications received during the reporting period, 22 applications related to purposeful activity and was the most frequently raised issue. This differs to the preceding two years when issues concerning healthcare were the most commonly raised issue. It is an area that the Board will focus on during the forthcoming reporting year

The prison provided a range of activities for prisoners to engage in during recreation time, and included learning to play an instrument, playing snooker or board games and reading. Some activities were led by peer mentors. One prisoner reported the “pleasure” he got from singing with the choir, which held weekly practices in the chapel.

The Hive provided a separate area for the senior support group (SSG) which was used for activities, as well as providing opportunities for relaxation and socialising. It provided a positive regime for older prisoners. This facility was shared with men serving life imprisonment for public protection sentences who met at separate times due to their differing needs. The new facility was larger and offered the opportunity for a wider range of activities to be undertaken including independent living skills, rather than just hobby based activities. However, the new facility did result in the loss of access to outdoor space, which the prison did try to resolve through the creation of a smaller seating area with a lock back gate, which allowed fluidity of movement and fresh air flow. The Board recognise that space is limited at HMP Stafford and they have responded to prisoner feedback. The Board did receive apps about the new space and will continue to monitor the experiences of older and IPP prisoners.

Whilst outdoor space is mainly tarmacked, the areas of garden were maintained to an incredibly high standard by the prisoner gardening team who each had responsibility for a specific area.

The Board acknowledges the introduction of an “early bird” gym session which allowed more men to access the gym facilities first thing in the morning before the days work, training and education programmes commenced. This had a positive impact on prisoner well-being.

6.5 Soft skills

Soft skills development at HMP Stafford focused on providing prisoners with a more positive mindset during their time in prison and on the key skills they would require upon their release.

Workshop-based initiatives were deemed to be successful and provided prisoners with many of the skills necessary to assist with rehabilitation and reintegration into the community.

The ‘Building Choices’ programme helped to prepare prisoners for release by supporting prisoners to develop their skills in managing emotions and healthy thinking. The programme is delivered by a mixed team of prison and psychology staff.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

Novus retained the contract for education services at HMP Stafford. The focus during the reporting year was on the acquisition of skills, which was seen as more appropriate to the prison population, than education per se, although the importance of prisoners obtaining level 2 maths and English was still encouraged.

A rapid screening process was carried out during prisoner induction and identified learning difficulties or gaps in maths and English. Prisoners were additionally supported through the year by OLIPs (Offender Learning in Prison) peer mentors and IAG (Information Advice and Guidance) mentors. The mentors helped to improve the quality, and accessibility of education and learning opportunities offered to prisoners, and also assisted with prisoners' personal goals and pathways.

Novus offered four pathways relating to education, training and employment; employment, work skills, personal development and resettlement. Each pathway had an associated set of courses and these pathways were reviewed annually with the help of tutors, IAG mentors and the prisoners' personal individual learning plans.

Quarterly feedback continued to show 99% student satisfaction with topics such as personal goals, individual learning plans and pathways. Each pathway formed a plan for the prisoner to follow so that they developed the right skills to help them to reach their long-term goals.

A dedicated mentor was recently introduced to encourage older prisoners to participate in functional skills and wider "skills" and educational opportunities. In addition, the IPP/lifer groups continued to run fortnightly meetings, with the young prisoner group (YPG) meeting monthly.

The library remained a valuable resource, which was much appreciated by the prisoners. The library staff were employed by Staffordshire County Council and staffing shortages were again experienced, although, recruitment had been completed towards the end of the reporting period. The staffing issues did impact on the accessibility of the library, with opening hours reduced. Despite these difficulties, the library was well used by prisoners with each wing having dedicated times allocated for their prisoners. The library also held early evening sessions to allow those prisoners who were at work during the day to have access. The prisoner library orderlies provided great support to the staff and prisoners. The layout of the library was changed during the reporting year, and it remained a very welcoming space.

Monitoring shows that all wings had well-stocked shelves of fiction.

HMP Stafford continued to maintain low numbers of unemployed prisoners, with most prisoners progressing directly into an activity from induction.

7.2 Vocational training, work

The Board was aware that HMP Stafford was one of only a few prisons that generated income, and we acknowledge the tremendous outcomes achieved by both the staff and the prisoners associated with the workshops, in terms of income generation and education.

The weekly labour board continued to play a central role in ensuring fair, consistent, and well-informed allocation of prisoners to work and activities. The board drew on information from various teams including neurodiversity, security, education, inclusion, safer custody, OMU, and healthcare. Each prisoner was considered individually, with an assessment undertaken of their developmental pathway, educational background, including reading ability and qualification, and any additional support needs they had.

The Board acknowledged that although there were a number of employment opportunities for prisoners at HMP Stafford, PCOSOs often face additional challenges in securing employment due to the nature of their offences. The Board would like to acknowledge the work the prison have done to improve the likelihood of prisoners being employed on release. This included an employment event, bringing together potential employers to highlight the employability skills of PCOSOs and Entrepreneurs Unlocked, an initiative that provided advice on self-employment and tax, in recognition that many PCOSOs are likely to become self-employed on release.

The introduction of additional roll calls, did result in regular recounts, which impacted on prisoners who were late for industries and other appointments. However, the Governor and SLT kept the system under constant review and this had improved by the end of the reporting period

The Board received regular feedback from prisoners regarding the level of pay which, they felt, was very low when compared to the pay received at other prisons. The Board was aware that the prisoner pay budget was fixed and, because over 95% of prisoners were in either work or education, this limited the payrates that could be paid to prisoners. The prison did complete a pay review and increased pay rates where possible.

The Board received feedback from prisoners that they would welcome a broader range of building skills, however it is understood that this is dependent on the availability of trainers with the required skills. The Construction skills certificate scheme (CSCS) which supported training in groundworks was offered but as it is time limited, could only be undertaken close to release, and so needed careful planning to implement.

7.3 Offender management, progression

Men both serving IPP and life sentences continued to hold their own forums. The majority of prisoners participated in the building choices programme as part of sentence planning and preparation for release.

7.4 Family contact

The Board observed that the visits centre run by PACT was particularly welcoming for young people and children. All visits sessions included activities for children, including games, and occasional music. Food could be ordered. As with last year, the Board noted that the experiences of visiting families continued to be good

A family forum took place regularly in the visits centre, and was led by either the Governor. Arrangements were made for family members to attend virtually, and families reported that their queries were always addressed, which was appreciated.

The prison continued to hold the step forward initiative for prisoners who did not receive any visitors. The initiative allowed prisoners to socialise with each other and enjoy activities and games. These regular events provided prisoners with additional time 'out of cell' and allowed them to experience something similar to a family visit.

7.5 Resettlement planning

Although not resourced as a resettlement prison, HMP Stafford continued to release prisoners directly into the community. 127 prisoners were released during the reporting period (up from 103 in the previous year). Of the 127 prisoners released, 92 were released with access to accommodation. The remaining 35 prisoners found accommodation on the day of release.

During the reporting period six bank accounts were opened, 18 photo ID letters were issued and 26 jobcentre plus appointments were held. The Board recognised the considerable amount of work undertaken by the prison staff to prepare prisoners for discharge, particularly when HMP Stafford was not funded to provide this type of support to prisoners. The Board wishes to commend the hard work of the resettlement team in preparing prisoners for release and securing suitable accommodation, despite these limitations.

As highlighted above, the Board acknowledged that prisoners leaving HMP Stafford could face additional challenges to gain employment owing to their offending history. The prison had consistently tried to forge links with various industries but there had been limited success owing to the reluctance of employers to recruit people convicted of a sexual offence. The employment advisory board has been created and work is ongoing to develop local links and identify creative solutions. This will be an area that the Board continues to monitor.

8. The work of the IMB

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	14
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	8
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	8
Total number of visits to the establishment	227

N.B. the total number of visits to the establishment listed above only reflects the visits made to the prison and relates to the amount of expenses claimed by Board members. This figure does not include the time spent by members at home making phone calls, responding to emails, and investigating Apps. The Board now operates a hybrid system of Board meetings which include both face to face and Zoom meetings.

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	20 (11.76%)	12 (11.88%)
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	8 (4.70%)	3 (2.97%)
C	Equality	2 (1.17%)	2 (1.98%)
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	9 (5.29%)	22 (21.78%)
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	13 (7.64%)	14 (13.86%)
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	12 (7.05%)	1 (0.99%)
F	Food and kitchens	3 (1.76%)	9 (8.91%)
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	30 (17.64%)	9 (8.91%)
H1	Property within the establishment	15 (8.82%)	8 (7.92%)
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	10 (5.88%)	0
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	3 (1.76%)	2 (1.98%)
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence), parole, release dates, recategorisation	8 (4.70%)	1 (0.99%)
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	16 (9.41%)	11 (10.89%)
K	Transfers	3 (1.76%)	1 (0.99%)
L	Miscellaneous	18 (10.58%)	6 (5.94%)
Total number of applications		170	101

Annex A

Service providers

- Physical health and social care provider: PPG
- Mental health provider: PPG, subcontracted to Inclusion and MPFT (Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust) which, together form, an integrated mental health and substance misuse service
- Education services: Novus
- Career information, advice and guidance services: The Growth Company
- Reading and numeracy support: Shannon Trust
- Library services: Staffordshire County Council
- Escort contractor: GEO Amey
- Canteen*: DHL
- Facilities management: Amey
- Visits management: PACT

**Canteen is the prison's equivalent of a high street shop, allowing prisoners to order items such as toiletries and other approved goods once a week.*



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