



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Whatton

**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 establishment¹

HMP Whatton, near Bingham in Nottinghamshire, is a category C training prison (for those who cannot be trusted in open conditions but are considered unlikely to try to escape) for men convicted of sexual offences. The prison offers a wide range of learning and skills programmes, as well as employment opportunities, such as in manufacturing and horticulture.

The prison's operational capacity is 836. The monthly average number of prisoners over the reporting year was 820, with 829 prisoners at the start and 821 at the end.

The prison's accommodation consists of 14 residential wings: A wings, 1 to 8 (constructed in 2006), with a care and separation unit (CSU) comprising eight cells, which is attached to the A3 residential unit; B wings, 1 to 3 (constructed during the 1960s, when the prison was a detention centre housing young offenders); C1 (constructed in 2005); C2, which was replaced by modular, prefabricated, two-tier cells, constructed and opened in September 2023, providing additional accommodation for 39 prisoners; and C3 (constructed in 2008). There is a dementia suite on B wing.

The cells comprise a mixture of single and double accommodation (with en-suite toilet, a washbasin and a shower) and older facilities (with an in-cell toilet and shared shower accommodation). The accommodation in B wing is the oldest and has previously been criticised by the IMB and HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP): the cells are small and cramped for shared accommodation, with few en-suite facilities and limited natural light.

- The Board considers the B-wing accommodation to be inadequate. It understands that there are no plans to replace the B wings, or add additional accommodation, in the short to medium term.

Ministry of Justice (MoJ) project delivery has advised that the pipework project which began on site in November 2025 is expected to run for two years. Planning and preparations are in place for building alterations and the upgrading of the fire alarm system, to commence in September 2026 and scheduled as a 4.5 year project.

Accommodation for purposeful activity includes a sports field, a sports hall (including three badminton courts and a cardiovascular exercise suite), an indoor gym with weight-training facilities, a new courtyard suite of exercise apparatus, an extensive gardening and horticulture facility, manufacturing workshops, a large education unit, and a large kitchen facility. The kitchen is used by prisoners undertaking the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in catering.

The establishment has a well-resourced library that caters for all levels of literacy and for those undertaking higher educational qualifications. The prison library is run by People Plus.

Outside the prison's secure compound, there is a purpose-built visitor reception centre, which is managed by HMP Whatton, and a staff training centre.

There are three externally commissioned services:

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.

- Healthcare services, provided by Practice Plus Group
- Facilities management, provided by Amey
- Learning and skills, provided by People Plus

Prisoners who come to Whatton do so because of the opportunities for training and courses for those who have committed sexual offences (PCoSOs – prisoners convicted of sexual offences). They have all been in other prisons and are accustomed to routine and regulation.

There have not been any critical incidents (such as fires, riots, escapes etc.) this year. Occasional serious incidents were rapidly resolved and did not become critical.

3. Key points

3.1 Main findings

Safety

- The Board has reviewed the prison's safety policy and practice this year and finds them to be well managed.
- The prison has a strong commitment to ensuring prisoner safety. This is especially evident in the Care and Separation Unit (CSU) where prisoners are placed there for their own safety or for the protection of others.
- The prison is diligent in its detection of illicit items, in preventing them from entering the prison, and in reducing the transfer of illicit substances, including psychoactive and prescription drugs, between prisoners.

Fair and humane treatment

- HMP Whatton receives prisoners from a wide range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Without the evidenced care and underlying principles of fairness and equality, there could be conflict, in the Board's view. Many of the Board's monitoring reports show that the prison makes strenuous efforts to ensure fairness in dealing with prisoners in all aspects of the regime. A particular strength of the prison is the representation of prisoners with protected characteristics on the Whatton Equality Action Team (WEAT). The Governor also holds "surgeries" with different groups to listen to their opinions and complaints.
- The prison has an effective CSU, which is well managed by specially-trained staff. The Board has observed staff demonstrating great emotional intelligence and understanding when interacting with vulnerable prisoners.
- The prison is kept clean and orderly, with value placed on employing prisoners in cleaning roles across the prison site.
- Staff work hard to establish positive relationships with prisoners within the context of clear and strictly applied prison rules. Staff-prisoner relationships are consistently reported to the Board as being good and observed to be so during monitoring visits. This is particularly the case with adjudication hearings which are carried out in a purposeful but friendly manner: staff ensure that prisoners understand charges being made against them, know the consequences of negative behaviours and have a route towards better behaviour.
- The Board notes the positive and important role played by the Chaplaincy in all aspects of prison life.

Health and wellbeing

- Prisoners have access to a wide range of medical treatments inside the prison and to hospital or clinical advice in NHS hospitals when necessary.
- The Board finds that mental healthcare is treated with particular importance, reflecting the needs of the prisoner cohort. This includes expert psychological assessment, monitoring and nursing support. From discussions with prisoners and staff and from attendance at meetings discussing interventions with prisoners, the Board is confident that mental healthcare in the prison is good and that expert help and support are provided.

- The delivery of medical support to prisoners at HMP Whatton is significantly affected by the condition of the healthcare facilities. Whilst the prescribing of medicines is good, the daily, weekly and monthly collection of medicines takes place in a cramped corridor space, usually with long queues and delays for prisoners needing to move on for work or training. The facility is particularly difficult for those in wheelchairs and their pushers. The recent introduction of TRAKA cabinets (designed to securely manage and distribute medication), to enable monthly medication to be collected at wing level, is a positive development but yet to be widely deployed. Overall, and despite attempts by managers to adjust schedules, medicine delivery in the prison is a source of constant frustration for prisoners and staff.
- As noted in previous reports, the Healthcare Manager and her staff are forced to carry out diagnosis and treatment in limited, out of date facilities. The situation has been exacerbated this year because work on the heating system has necessitated the use of temporary buildings. There is a constant threat to the provision of sufficient clinic sessions and there is also a lack of toilets and sheltered waiting areas in the temporary healthcare unit. Overall, the situation remains challenging for prisoners, healthcare staff and supervisory staff.

Progression and resettlement

- HMP Whatton is a training prison and is not resourced to prepare prisoners for release. However, prisoners are released throughout the year, often to other prisons or lower Category D prisons and are offered re-orientation support at an appropriate time before release. The psychology service provides group-based support events and pays close attention to up-coming release dates in allocating prisoners to courses prior to parole hearings.
- Prisoners released from Whatton often find it difficult to find housing and work, and families may not always welcome them back. As HMP Whatton is not a local prison, it can be difficult to track employment and housing when prisoners return to their home areas. Contact with released prisoners is the responsibility of the probation service.
- In the Board's view, education provision has been good, with impressive completion and success rates, but current cuts to courses will have a detrimental effect on the rehabilitation of prisoners. The Board is especially concerned at the recent decision by HMPPS to cut Business Studies, Computerised Accounting and Bookkeeping courses after 14 years. These courses are of particular value in supporting self-employment on release; prisoners from HMP Whatton often find difficulty in obtaining employment in other areas.

3.2 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

1. As in two previous Annual Reports, the Board remains concerned that there is currently no solution to the injustice of IPP sentences, although it notes that the issue is under political discussion. IPP numbers at HMP Whatton remain high (around 15%). These sentences have a severe impact on the mental health and well-being of affected prisoners. Many are serving considerably longer than their original tariffs intended. Although IPP sentences have been discussed and altered slightly, individual prisoners do not get support that refers specifically to their extended

sentence. We believe that some form of regular interview with IPP prisoners would recognise the particular pressures that they are under and facilitate the development of realistic survival strategies. What measures is the Minister considering to resolve issues with IPP sentences?

2. Is the Minister aware of the poor oversight of projects affecting prisons? Problems include indeterminate starting dates, inadequate financial planning, and changes to contracts. Structural and maintenance projects planned by the prison and given financial go-ahead are frequently delayed or abandoned for reasons outside the prison's control. Aside from the waste of time and resources, this affects the running of the prison and the ability of managers to respond to challenges, make plans or improve conditions. Similarly, when expansion is proposed, prison staff need to know about proposals well in advance so that regimes and staff numbers can be adapted to meet new estate provision. What plans does the Minister have to facilitate more reliable and efficient planning and implementation of projects?

3. What initiatives is the Government prepared to explore to enable Prisoners Convicted of Sexual Offences (PCoSO) to build meaningful partnerships with employers and charities and to facilitate appropriate employment opportunities upon their release?

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

1. HMP Whatton continues to receive complaints about missing property on transfer to the prison, causing anguish and frustration to prisoners. What plans does the Prison Service have to resolve this long-standing, service-wide problem?

2. Why is the Prison Service making significant cuts to specific, occupationally relevant education and training provision at training prisons, including to courses of proven value to PCoSO prisoners on their release? What plans are there to offset this and the likely problems it will inevitably cause?

TO THE GOVERNOR

1. What pressure is the prison management team exerting on the Prison Service to seek improvements to the prison's healthcare facilities and the mechanisms for medication delivery, and what overall plan does it have in place for the improvements that are necessary?

2. In the absence of major improvements to these facilities, what is the prison's strategy for ameliorating current difficulties and avoiding greater discontent or serious disruption by prisoners?

3.3 Response to the previous report

Issues raised	Response given	Progress
To the Minister 1. The problems we referenced in our previous report regarding IPP prisoners persist. There are a large number of IPP prisoners at HMP Whatton and the Board is concerned that they may feel pressure or mental stress, because they are unable to see any future that may make the present tolerable. Is the minister planning to consider IPP prisoners' welfare and wellbeing? If not, can you explain why?	1. This is a serious and important issue. Nationally, a refreshed IPP Action Plan strengthens how sentence plans are developed and delivered. The Action Plan also introduces measurable targets to improve transparency and accountability in how progress is monitored across the system. The collaborative work continues with NHS England to improve mental health support for prisoners, including those serving IPP sentences.	1. Despite recognition of the issue and the national Action Plan, there has been no significant change to the number of IPP prisoners at HMP Whatton or to strategies for the support of such prisoners.

To the Prison Service 1. The resourcing of the prison, from catering to building repairs and development, is not being met satisfactorily, in the Board's view. It is apparent that all aspects of funding must meet difficult rising base costs. How does the Prison Service plan to ensure that funding will meet the rising costs of food and maintenance so that health and safety standards are maintained? 2. What steps will the Prison Service take to ensure reliable access to chaplaincy facilities for prisoners with mobility issues, given that the stair lift remains unreliable and no progress on repairs has been made since the last report?	1. HMPPS recognises the Board's concern that rising baseline costs are placing pressure on catering and estate maintenance. Across the national estate, HMPPS continually reviews investment requirements, drawing on comprehensive condition surveys that assess the fabric, cells and critical assets of each prison. These surveys inform long-term forward maintenance registers. Budgets for prisoner food have increased. At HMP Whatton, a recent review of the catering menu has expanded available choices in line with the national food budget uplift. The fire safety project remains in its early development phase, and water pipe replacement is being scoped. A new rapid deployment unit is scheduled for installation during 2026, which will provide an additional 59 places once operational. 2. A replacement stairlift for the multifaith area has been delivered.	1. Resource budgets continue to be constrained against continually rising costs. These projects are in hand. 2. The stairlift has been installed and is operational.
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To the Governor 1. The IMB has observed – and noted – changes in the provision of education and training for prisoners, including bringing in different qualifications with the new PES/education contract. We anticipate that staff will raise standards and improve outcomes for prisoners, in particular the acquisition of life and social skills in preparation for release. How will data be collected to give firm evidence of improvement?	1. No response received.	
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Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Safety management

4.1.1 The Board has monitored the prison's safety management this year. Members regularly observe committee meetings and have reviewed policy statements. The prison has three committees directly concerned with prisoner safety:

Safer Custody Committee (meets monthly): Attended by prisoner representatives (Listeners, Insiders, peer-conflict resolution) for part of the agenda. Includes Samaritans report, first night reception, Chaplaincy engagement, Cell bell usage, and Challenge, Support and Intervention Plans (CSIPs; the national case management model for managing those who are violent or pose a raised risk of harming others through violent behaviours), safety incident statistics, serious near misses, deaths in custody, performance and comparator group analysis.

Safeguarding Committee (sometimes called *Safeguarding Panel*; meets monthly): Reviews active cases involving safeguarding, dementia, autism support, diversity and inclusion.

Safety Intervention Committee (meets weekly, including monthly review): Considers prisoners in the CSU on an ACCT plan (Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork, used to support prisoners who are at risk of self-harm or suicide), self-harm, food refusal, CSIPs, violence, debt, CSRAs (cell sharing risk assessments), diversity and inclusion.

- The Board finds that the remits of these committees overlap slightly but this means that cases are considered both reactively and strategically.
- Some meetings of Safeguarding Committee have, on occasion, been hampered by absence of Healthcare representatives. The Governor has noted the occasional absence of key staff from committee meetings and the matter is being dealt with.

4.1.2 The prison's "Safeguarding Adults, Local Operating Procedures" document covers matters dealt with by the *Safeguarding Committee*. It was approved for use from June this year, for revision in 2027. The work of the other two committees is covered by the "HMP Whatton Safety Strategy", revised in January 2026, for revision by January 2028. The prison also has current policies for Debt (2025-2027), Isolated and Vulnerable Prisoners (2025-2027), Razor Blades (2025-2027), Violence and Anti-social Behaviour (2025-2027), and Supportive Items (for neurodivergent and neurologically-affected prisoners, 2024-2027).

- The Board finds that prison safety policies are appropriate and up to date, with the exception of the Razor Blade policy; this needs to be reviewed and updated to reflect HMPPS's introduction of electric razors across the adult male closed estate, which has replaced wet-shave razors due to their potential use as weapons. Overall, the Board is satisfied that the prison's safety policies are appropriately applied and followed by staff.

4.1.3 A survey carried out by the prison in July 2025 found that, of the 38% of prisoners who responded, 74% felt safe and 5% felt unsafe. Areas of the prison where some felt unsafe included communal areas, particularly at times of mass movement and during medicine collection. Most respondents who had been on an ACCT felt that they had been well supported by staff.

4.1.4 The prison was subject to an external safety inspection in February 2026. The Board understands that the prison is responding to individual matters highlighted in the report.

- Overall, the Board finds that the prison has a strong commitment to prisoner safety.

4.2 Reception and induction

4.2.1 On reception, prisoners' warrant categorisation and identification details are checked, and details of their property are logged. Disallowed items are placed in the prisoner's property box and instructions provided about what they need to do next.

4.2.2 Their CSRA (Cell Sharing Risk Assessment, HMPPS's risk-assessment process for assessing the risk of serious harm between prisoners in a shared cell or other enclosed, unsupervised space) is considered when determining whether they can safely share a cell. Prisoners are seen by a member of the healthcare team within an hour of arrival. They are also seen by a member of staff from the education department to assess their current ability level and learning needs. Prisoners are informed of support available to them from the Samaritans, Listeners (prisoners trained by the Samaritans to provide peer support), mentors and key workers. They are clearly told the rules of the prison, which may differ from those in prisons from which they have been transferred. Incoming prisoners are initially housed in wing A4 until induction and assessments have been completed (usually a few weeks or days), before being moved to their permanent wing.

- The induction process for incoming prisoners is regularly monitored by IMB members. The Board finds that staff are caring, considerate and helpful with new arrivals. Prisoners are given the information they require about life and procedures at Whatton, and are seen by healthcare and education staff to assess their needs.

4.2.3 Most issues arising from prisoner arrival and induction at HMP Whatton relate to the whereabouts of follow-on property. Problems are common; items often go missing and the system to track them is not wholly effective. Prisoners may have to follow a protracted process to find their belongings or claim compensation. This causes frustration and stress for prisoners and extra work for staff.

- The extent of delays and losses of prisoner property during transfer between prisons remains a major concern to the Board.

4.3 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

4.3.1 There have been five deaths in HMP Whatton during the reporting year. Four of these have been confirmed as due to natural causes. One is awaiting a coroner's report.

4.3.2 Prison staff ensure that those likely to be affected by deaths have access to counselling. The Chaplaincy team holds a service to mark the death, which prisoners

can attend. Staff from the Marie Curie charity offer end-of-life support to prisoners, if so wished.

4.3.3 There were 251 recorded incidents of self-harm over the year, an increase of 16% compared with 2024/26. These were carried out by 63 individuals (52 in the previous year), three of them being responsible for one third of the total. 17% required hospital treatment. The most common drivers of self-harm were found to be mental health (48%), family issues (24%) and issues with other prisoners (24%).

4.3.4 124 new ACCTs were opened during the year, compared with 109 in 2024/25, and 13 prisoners with existing ACCTs were transferred to Whatton from other establishments (22 in 2024/25).

- The Board finds that the prison takes all incidents of self-harm seriously, records such events diligently and analyses statistics appropriately. Self-harming individuals are given immediate first aid and medical treatment where appropriate. They are monitored in the longer term and receive on-going mental health support where appropriate.

4.4 Use of force

4.4.1 “Force” means any incident in which a member of staff interacts physically with a prisoner, from gentle guidance to active restraint involving the use of cuffs or batons or the deployment of PAVA spray. In Spring 2026 the prison issued guidance on the correct positioning of handcuffs and implemented a staff training programme. In addition to the above, a *Use of Force Committee*, which meets quarterly, reviews all incidents in which force has been used to control prisoners.

4.4.2 During the reporting year, use of force was recorded in 94 incidents involving 60 individuals.

- The Board finds that all incidents where force has been used are reviewed in detail, incorporating staff statements and evidence from body-worn video and fixed cameras. Use of Force Committee meetings, observed by members of the Board, discuss incidents in detail and evaluate the appropriateness of the force used, whether guidelines have been followed and if any staff training may be needed.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

4.5.1 The Board notes the high proportion of prisoners on prescription drugs (around 85% of the population); this reflects the profound mental health needs of many of the prisoners who come to Whatton.

4.5.2 The prison is aware (from the Governor’s report) that prescribed medications are sometimes passed from one prisoner to another for recreational use, and sometimes used for extortion. There is zero tolerance in HMP Whatton for handling, passing on, or acquiring drugs of any kind, from whatever source, and this is strictly adhered to. The new systems for collection of prescription medicines (see Section 6.1.4) should help improve this.

4.5.3 The Board is aware that the post room monitors incoming mail and identifies potential drug-carrying paper or packages. Block searches of cells and wings, including based on intelligence reports, find and remove illicit substances from circulation.

- The Board is not aware of any incidents of illicit items being dropped in the prison by drone. The Governor regularly encourages all staff to be alert to this possibility and tells us that the prevalence of illicit items in HMP Whatton is relatively low compared with other prisons.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

5.1.1 The replacement of in-cell fire detection and pipework on B wing is underway and expected to take two years.

- As noted above, B-wing accommodation is out of date and considered by the Board to be inadequate. Healthcare facilities are also inadequate, as detailed below (6.1.3, 6.1.4). Whilst major development at the prison is understandably restricted by cost, the prison often experiences long delays or reversals to smaller projects and maintenance operations for reasons outside its control. Examples include the repair of a faulty stairlift (which prevented some prisoners from accessing the chaplaincy), the centralisation of fire detection alarms, and the maintenance of heating and pipework. Senior staff report to the Board that funding is sometimes withdrawn after plans have been agreed, that contracts may be changed and that activities may occur out of sequence. This is particularly problematic when projects require temporary evacuation of accommodation or other facilities.

5.1.2 Food is served on the B wing servery; some prisoners choose to eat there, while others prefer to take their food back to the cells.

- Food is tasted periodically by IMB members; food quality and portion size are considered to be acceptable. The Board has only received two applications relating to food provision.

5.1.3 One prisoner who arrived this year was deemed to be an escape risk during escorts and therefore had to wear E List yellow-striped clothing.

5.2 Segregation

5.2.1 The care and separation unit (CSU) accommodates prisoners either as a result of an adjudication or for personal safety (including being a risk to others or on healthcare-recommended mental health grounds). It is staffed by specially trained and accredited officers.

5.2.2 The CSU regime is flexible and designed around the needs of the prisoners: showers, telephone calls, library facilities and exercise are all made available to prisoners who are compliant. Officers provide vocabulary cards in prisoners' own language for those who have little or no English. Activity packs are provided on request, and the stock of reading material is updated regularly. The unit is light and airy, with adequate facilities and a generally calm atmosphere. Cleaning orderlies (prisoners who provide services) maintain a clean environment.

5.2.3 The unit has a frequent turnover of prisoners but has not reached its capacity this year. Visits from the Duty Governor are made each day; healthcare, psychology and chaplaincy teams also visit as required or requested. All visits to the CSU by staff are logged and details of prisoner interactions and responses are recorded.

- Board members visit the CSU at least weekly and find that the unit operates under a consistent and efficient regime. Officers are able to deal with the complex needs and behaviour of prisoners, some of whom can be challenging.

- It is stated in many of our monitoring reports that relationships between CSU staff and the prisoners are very positive. Many prisoners report to us that the care and support they receive in the CSU is of a good standard. This is despite the staff sometimes being faced with prisoners with extremely challenging behaviour.

5.3 Adjudications

5.3.1 Adjudications are disciplinary hearings, held when a prisoner is alleged to have broken prison rules.

5.3.2 Whatton uses an incentive system of rehabilitative awards, especially for adjudications involving poor behaviour or the use of illicit drugs. If found guilty, they may have to spend time in the CSU and other penalties may be applied (pay being cut or stopped, privileges reduced or stopped for a limited period etc.)

5.3.3 Board members are invited to observe adjudications. They countersign adjudication reports to indicate that they have observed the process and record their attendance in monitoring reports.

- The Board finds that adjudication hearings are conducted properly and fairly and that prisoners are treated with respect during the process. The presiding governor ensures that the prisoner clearly understands the reasons for the adjudication and is given an opportunity to put their case. The paperwork relating to Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) documents in the CSU is completed correctly.

5.4 Staff and prisoner relationships

- Prisoners report to the IMB that their relationships with staff are in general both respectful and professional. Our monitoring reports and observations of meetings corroborate this.
- The Board notes there are activities that encourage engagement in religious, cultural and other events, relevant to diverse groups of prisoners. These are well attended and contribute significantly to positive interactions between prisoners and staff.

5.5 Equality and diversity

5.5.1 As indicated in the statistics (below), HMP Whatton holds prisoners from a wide diversity of ethnic, social and religious backgrounds. This has the potential to create disharmony and conflict but, in general, the prison maintains a tolerant and respectful atmosphere.

5.5.2 The Governor meets prisoner representatives, such as from minority ethnic and sexual orientation groups, on a regular basis to listen to issues and complaints. The prison regularly informs the population of the proportions of ethnic minority prisoners allocated to programmes.

- Board members find that matters relating to equality and diversity seldom arise in applications: 4% are related to this issue.
- The majority of our observations, at wing level and around the prison, show that where officers supervise prisoners' daily routines there is a consistency of approach, that rules appear to be applied fairly, and that prisoners are treated with respect.

- In our experience, adjudications and punishments have been fair, consistent and unaffected by protected characteristics.

5.5.3 The prison uses a Discrimination Incident Reporting Form (DIRF) on which a prisoner may set out an accusation of racial abuse, report inappropriate staff attitudes, language or actions, or complain that decisions have been unfair on racial or other grounds. The prisoner adds evidence and witness details. An officer deals with the accusation, explaining the investigation process to the prisoner. Information is recorded but treated as confidential while the enquiry is carried out. Where a case is proven, the perpetrator may be given training to help an attitude change.

- Our monitoring finds that this process is thorough, clearly recorded and handled appropriately.

5.5.4 The WEAT (Whatton Equality Action Team)/Equality committee, which is chaired by the Governor and includes prisoner representatives, meets on a monthly basis.

- The Board has not received any applications or heard of any incidents involving race issues. Two applications from a single prisoner concerned an apparent discrimination over employment allocation.

5.6 Faith and pastoral support

5.6.1 The chaplaincy team is a crucial part of the prison organisation, working specifically for the wellbeing of prisoners. Staff represent the major religions, although there has been a vacancy for a Church of England (CofE) chaplain for the whole year. Members of the team act for their own faith and for others where no pastoral help exists.

5.6.2 The chaplaincy team is involved from the moment a prisoner enters HMP Whatton. They are available when required to address pastoral issues related to visits, serious health issues in the family outside, and other anxieties. The chaplaincy team also supports prisoners affected by death in custody, including through memorial events. Team members attend safety, equality and other prison committees. Prisoners in the CSU are regularly visited by a member of the chaplaincy team and are supported in their isolation.

5.6.3 The full range of religions is supported by collective acts of worship and celebrations, including appropriate observances and meal offerings during religious festivals. For smaller groups, such as Pagans, Rastafarians, Spiritualists and Buddhists, the chaplains facilitate faith participation through, for example, worship online.

5.6.4 The chaplaincy department and rooms for religious worship are on the first floor of B wing. Access to this area for prisoners with limited mobility has recently been improved by a stairlift.

- Members find that religious services are well-attended, with prisoners involved in planning and leading services.
- The Board acknowledges the important contribution made to prison life by the Chaplaincy service. Aside from the ongoing absence of a CofE pastor, the Board has no concerns about the provision of faith and pastoral support for the full range of faiths represented in the prison.

5.7 Incentives schemes

5.7.1 HMP Whatton has an incentives scheme to encourage good prisoner behaviour and to encourage the right choices towards crime-free lives. The majority of prisoners enter at the level they obtained at their previous prison. At the end of the reporting year there were seven prisoners on Basic level, 286 on Standard, 487 on Enhanced and 43 on Enhanced 2. The incentive level can be reduced as a punishment for poor behaviour or indiscipline.

5.7.2 Many prisoners take on voluntary roles, such as supporting wheelchair users and taking them to health care, acting as Listeners and being part of the Insiders team. These roles, as well as being beneficial to the prison community, keep prisoners occupied, can support their chances of successful parole and help them to manage their lives after release.

- The Board finds that the prison's incentives scheme is effectively managed and fairly applied and, in general, has its intended effect on prisoner behaviour and wellbeing.

5.8 Property

5.8.1 Prisoners arriving at HMP Whatton are allowed to bring three bags of property and one outsize item, plus legal documents.

5.8.2 Transporting prisoners is carried out by external contractors. The vans are usually full, limiting the quantity of property that can be carried. This can result in a prisoner's property being left at the original prison to follow on. Legal documents are always transported with the prisoner.

5.8.3 Prisoners are responsible for paying for the transportation of any additional property they want to take with them, and the originating prison should arrange this. This is explained to prisoners on admission and before transfer.

5.8.4 Prisoners may complain to the prison about delayed or missing property through the usual complaints' procedure. The prison will follow up, usually by email, with the sending prison, which is required to respond within two weeks.

5.8.5 Where missing property cannot be located or where damage cannot be rectified, the prisoner's stated loss is checked against the signed property card that was issued at reception. Compensation is arranged, up to the value stated on the prison facilities list. In the current year, HMP Whatton paid a total of £312 to prisoners for lost or damaged property.

- Fourteen applications to the IMB this year related to property, either within the prison or associated with prisoner transfer. This is approximately 18% of total applications received and a similar proportion to the previous year.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

6.1.1 Clinics of various types are held every weekday. These include GP access, mental health clinics, dentistry and podiatry.

6.1.2 Over 80% of prisoners are on prescribed medication, whether for age-related reasons, for physical or mental health or for treating drug addiction.

6.1.3 The prison's healthcare facilities are old and cramped. The Healthcare Manager and her staff are forced to carry out diagnosis and treatment in limited, out of date facilities. There is constant pressure on the provision of sufficient clinic sessions. Building alteration work (scheduled for 3 months) has necessitated the relocation of most healthcare services to a temporary facility elsewhere on the site. This facility is smaller than the normal centre and there is a lack of toilets and sheltered waiting areas. This has restricted further the number of appointments and services which can be offered.

- The Board notes that the facilities for health care continue to be inadequate and out of date, exacerbated this year by building work. There is pressure on appointments and treatment sessions. Overall, the situation remains challenging for prisoners, healthcare staff and supervisory staff.

6.1.4 Medicines are dispensed daily, weekly and monthly. During the reporting period, the structure of medicine delivery was adapted to improve safety for vulnerable service users, including for wheelchair users. An electronic locker system (TRAKA) for medicine delivery to some individuals was introduced towards the end of the current year.

- Members of the Board continue to observe lengthy queues for medications, sometimes causing prisoners to be late for work or training. We note that although prisoners are not penalised for arriving late at work as a result of health queue issues, this causes frustration to staff and prisoners. Late prisoners may miss out on work task choices, opportunities for progress in the work setting, or scheduled recreational time. Queuing for the dispensary and cramped access conditions are frequently mentioned by prisoners in informal contacts with Board members.
- Over 30% of applications this year related to health matters; this is twice the rate compared with last year. These arise from a range of issues with no common patterns identified.

6.2 Physical healthcare

6.2.1 Gymnasium facilities are well equipped and have appropriately trained supervisory staff. A range of different sessions and sports activities are offered, including those tailored to specific prisoner groups.

6.2.2 There is a well-used weight-training and intensity gym in B wing. A suite of outdoor gym equipment has been installed in the B wing exercise yard.

6.2.3 The playing field is accessible at supervised times and is particularly well used in the summer.

6.3 Mental health

6.3.1 Mental health and drug and alcohol rehabilitation are significant issues at HMP Whatton.

6.3.2 The prison provides expert psychological assessment, monitoring and nursing for prisoners with mental health issues and also offers support platforms for neurodivergent prisoners. These include support for communication, concentration, motor skills and emotional regulation provided by our NHS-commissioned health services.

6.3.3 The prison's large team of HMPPS professional psychologists run group therapy programmes (for personal skill development and psychological progression) and also carry out psychological profiling in preparation for probation assessment. The timing and availability of these activities for individual prisoners takes account of the length of sentence and the date of release

- Members of the Board have observed the contribution of mental health staff to the support of prisoners, including at times of potential crisis, and monitored meetings at which mental health treatments and interventions are reviewed. The Board finds that mental wellbeing is treated with particular importance. From discussions with prisoners and staff and from observation of meetings, the Board is confident that a high standard of mental healthcare is provided in the prison.

6.4 Social care

6.4.1 HMP Whatton has a relatively elderly age-profile of prisoners. The most elderly or frail, and those with disabilities, are mainly housed in Wing A8. Social care needs are identified during a prisoner's initial health screening or by referral from staff. Nottinghamshire Social Services provide initial assessments, and care assistants are provided in-house.

6.4.2 Marie Curie staff offer support for end-of-life prisoners, funded by NHSE through application by Practice Plus Group.

6.5 Time out of cell, regime

6.5.1 At the start of the reporting year, 74% of 829 prisoners at HMP Whatton worked full or part time and 11% were unemployed; 16% were retired due to age or medical conditions (rounded figures) and 5 were unfit for work. At the end of the reporting year, 73% of 821 prisoners were employed, 10% were unemployed, 17% were retired and 5 unfit for work.

6.5.2 All prisoners follow fixed regimes for free association and time out of cell. Listeners and mentors are readily available for contact during these periods. Prisoners in the CSU have access to a secure outdoor exercise yard.

6.5.3 Time out of cell may sometimes be restricted due to staff shortages, for example when prisoners need to be escorted to hospital, during staff training events or when staff are dealing with violent incidents.

- The IMB has observed exercise on the yards, which appears to be enjoyable and beneficial to prisoners. Activity in the association rooms, where table-top games and other pursuits are available, seems settled and enjoyed by the prisoners, and the Board finds that there is usually a calm atmosphere.

6.6 Soft skills

6.6.1 The prison provides many opportunities for prisoners to develop and practice soft (personal development, transferrable) skills. All employment provides the opportunity for skill development, particularly approaches and methods that emphasise values such as patience, diplomacy and resilience. Whilst HMP Whatton is not a resettlement prison, a proportion of men are released from the prison each year and need this kind of support as part of their general preparation for leaving.

- The IMB has observed staff acting as role models for prisoners and creating opportunities for personal development. For example, the prisoner representatives on WEAT (Whatton Equality Action Team) and those who meet with the governor learn how to make their points effectively and how to represent the views of others.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Library

7.1.1 Besides books, the library holds CDs and games that cater for all levels of literacy. Library access at weekends is subject to staff availability.

7.1.2 Prisoners are allowed up to two three-hour sessions per week away from their workplace to study at the library computers. Quantities of books are also made available on the wings.

7.2 Education and training

7.2.1 The prison runs a comprehensive, multi-level programme of educational courses, staffed by highly trained and qualified staff in designated educational centres.

7.2.2 Prisoners are assessed upon reception and given a personal learning plan. Courses are provided in maths (five levels) and English (five levels). These have high rates of attendance, with completion rates of 93% and 97% respectively. There is specific support for prisoners who do not have English as a first language.

7.2.3 A wide variety of accredited and unaccredited courses include those for forklift training, self-employment skills, AIM awards (skills relevant to industries including kitchens, food safety, horticulture, transport & logistics, environmental sustainability, health & safety) and others. For some courses, prisoners are able to study in-cell under the Way2Learn scheme. The prison contributes 10% to the cost of Prison Education Trust courses.

- The Board is greatly concerned at the recent decision by HMPPS to cut Business Studies, Computerised Accounting and Bookkeeping courses from the educational/vocational provision after 14 years. The Board finds this to be highly regrettable. These courses are of particular value in supporting self-employment on release; prisoners from HMP Whatton often find difficulty in obtaining employment in other areas.

7.2.4 The prison has provided several courses in computerised accounting, bookkeeping, basic business and IT, of particular relevance to those who may consider self-employment after release. These courses have high (89-100%) completion rates.

7.2.5 Reading continues to be a focus across the establishments, including a comprehensive programme of activities for the National Year of Reading, for which 94% of prisoners have registered. A prison-wide reading strategy caters for those with diverse reading needs, using easy-read materials, Braille resources, and reading pens. The library runs various reading groups. 91% of prisoners reported that their reading skills had improved. There is a Reading Strategy Coordinator who runs literacy courses under the Shannon Trust programme.

7.2.6 Currently, 14 prisoners are studying with the Open University (OU). There is a designated Open University Coordinator, although that individual's hours have been reduced this year. She coordinates liaison with external tutors, arranges for access to otherwise restricted material needed for courses, and ensures continuity of study when prisoners are released or transferred.

7.2.7 The prison has 60 Coracle laptops in circulation, used for OU work, wellbeing, distraction etc., as well as for workshop-related activities. OU students store their work on the Virtual Campus or their Student Wallet, to which the OU Coordinator has access. The prison laptops are fully allocated at all times and in high demand. Prisoners sometimes complain that these are not linked to the library computers and that transfer of material by USB is not permitted.

7.2.8 As a training prison, there is strong encouragement for participation in purposeful activities related to education or work. This year there have been 33 prisoners trained as peer-mentors, to support learners.

7.2.9 Educational courses in the prison have overall satisfaction rates of around 90% amongst those participating. Eighty-six per cent of attending prisoners would recommend their courses to others. Similar numbers say that they are treated fairly while studying and feel safe doing so.

- The Board is impressed by the quality and high success rates in all these educational courses, noting the clear value placed on them by prisoners, and by the professionalism and expertise of education staff.

7.3 Vocational training, work

7.3.1 In the current year, the prison has offered a range of work opportunities, including prison radio, waste management, horticulture, work in the kitchens and staff mess, amongst others. The laundry, textile workshop and DHL (product orders and distribution) also provide services for other prisons.

7.3.2 There are corresponding qualifications to be obtained, including for food safety, practical cleaning skills, painting and decorating, spray painting and health & safety. These have completion rates of 92-100%.

7.3.3 While working, prisoners are encouraged to attend sessions on employability, fundamental British values, and understanding PREVENT (a government-led programme to help stop individuals becoming radicalised, supporting terrorism or being involved in extreme right-wing activism). In a survey, 94% of prisoners who responded reported an increased awareness of radicalisation and British values.

7.3.4 A quarter of prisoners are age- or medically-retired. OPAL (Older Person's Activities and Learning) offers these individuals purposeful activities such as crafting and gardening, with twice-yearly events to showcase their work.

7.3.5 The prison gardens won the Windlesham Prize again this year. Some 40 entries for the Koestler Arts Awards (a charity that allows prisoners to express themselves creatively) have been submitted.

- Overall, the Board's visits to the prison reveal the high quality and extent of the educational, vocational and work opportunities available. Conversations with prisoners make clear the high value placed on them by those who participate.

7.4 Offender management, progression

7.4.1 Courses necessary for rehabilitation and preparation for release are available to prisoners who are within a certain period (usually the last six months) of their release date.

7.4.2 There were 10 parole hearings in May 2026; the number fluctuates slightly from month to month. This is a significant improvement from the previous year.

7.4.3 HMP Whatton holds 101 Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentenced prisoners, a figure which is fairly consistent year on year. The number of prisoners serving mandatory life sentences is 113, reduced from 121 last year.

- From conversations with prisoners, the members of the Board are aware of the frustration felt by many prisoners on indeterminate sentences and the effect of these sentences on their mental health. Despite the excellent mental health support available to them, such prisoners often express a lack of hope and purpose and may have suicidal thoughts.

7.5 Visits and family contact

7.5.1 Visit days include occasions for families to spend time together in a less formal setting. Board members observe these from time to time. The Visits Hall is clean, tidy and welcoming, as are the toilet facilities. Officers wear plain clothes when children are visiting. There is a table with a buffet lunch and refreshments for prisoners and their families.

- The Board has some concerns over the organisational arrangements for visitors prior to their visit time, including the waiting facilities for early arrivals and access to toilets.

7.5.2 Less than a fifth of prisoners receive regular social visits. This is because HMP Whatton is not a local prison and also relates to the nature of offences committed. Those who do not receive visits are given a separate opportunity for socialising including group games, and arts and crafts, and to obtain food similar to that available during social visits.

7.6 Resettlement planning, release

7.6.1 Between 1 July 2025 and 30 June 2026 there were 144 releases from custody at HMP Whatton. Although HMP Whatton is not a resettlement prison, it is usual for about a fifth of prisoners to be released over the year.

7.6.2 Some prisoners are transferred to Whatton to complete programmes before release. The entrance to courses is guided by the prisoners' release date.

7.6.3 PCoSO prisoners find it extremely difficult to find employment. Despite this, the prison staff work hard to prepare prisoners for release, with help to set up bank accounts and apply for benefits. Great emphasis is placed on ensuring that every prisoner has accommodation to go to on release.

- Members of the Board observe releases from time to time; they are impressed by the care taken by staff to ensure that prisoners are as prepared as possible for their exit from prison life.

8. The work of the IMB

The IMB monitors the prison through regular monitoring visits, by observing prison meetings, prisoner reviews and adjudications, and by informal chats with prisoners and staff.

Applications are collected weekly or fortnightly from each wing. Members of the Board deal with them as part of their monitoring visits and try to ensure that this is done in a timely fashion. Applications and the responses of the Board are recorded, along with detailed monitoring visit reports, using the Kahootz case management platform.

- We have experienced problems in ensuring that the application system is secure and confidential, and that collection boxes are accessible for Board members; these issues have been now resolved by Amey (facilities management) but over the year have resulted in some lengthy delays in responding to prisoners.

The Board continues to meet on the second Wednesday of the month. Meetings include a report from the Governor. We also have occasional guest speakers from amongst senior prison staff, providing valuable background information.

We added one new member to the Board this year and have one inactive member. We remain well below the recommended complement (upper limit) of 15 Board members.

The Board is part of a wider East Midlands Group. There are regular group and national meetings in which we discuss practice and outcomes and provide support for Chairs and Vice-Chairs in their responsibilities.

- We emphasise that IMB members have a monitoring role and represent neither the prison nor the prisoner. Members of the Whatton Board believe strongly that independence, as perceived by prisoners and staff, is key to its effectiveness. It is essential that the distinction between monitoring and inspection is maintained.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	15
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	9 (including one inactive member)
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	10 (including one inactive member)
Total number of monitoring visits to the establishment during the reporting year	168

Applications to the IMB

The number of applications received by the Board has declined steadily over recent years: 183 in 2022-23, 138 in 2023-24, 99 in 2024-25, 78 in 2025-26.

Applications received in the previous and current years, by category, are as follows:

Category	Type	2024-25	(%)	2025-26	(%)
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	10	(10)	4	(5)
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives schemes, sanctions	5	(5)	2	(3)
C	Equality	0	(0)	3	(4)
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	7	(7)	4	(5)
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	9	(9)	5	(6)
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	2	(2)	0	(0)
F	Food and kitchens	2	(2)	2	(3)
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	15	(15)	24	(31)
H1	Property within the establishment	12	(12)	5	(6)
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	7	(7)	9	(12)
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	1	(1)	1	(1)
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence), parole, release dates, recategorisation	5	(5)	5	(6)
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	7	(7)	8	(10)
K	Transfers	4	(4)	2	(3)
L	Miscellaneous	13	(13)	4	(5)
	Total	99		78	



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