

UK NPM Reporting Dashboard
Quarterly Analysis
Q4 (January – March) 2025/26



At a Glance:

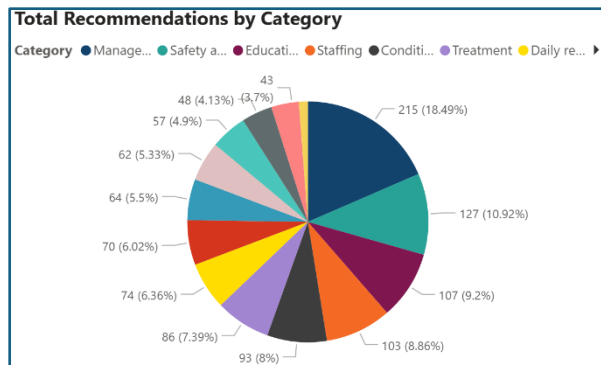
Total Records	Recommendations	Best Practices	Total Reports
1,047	707	340	75

Top tags	Top categories
Wellbeing support	Management, Oversight and Procedures
Education	Education and purposeful activity
Case progression	Safety and security

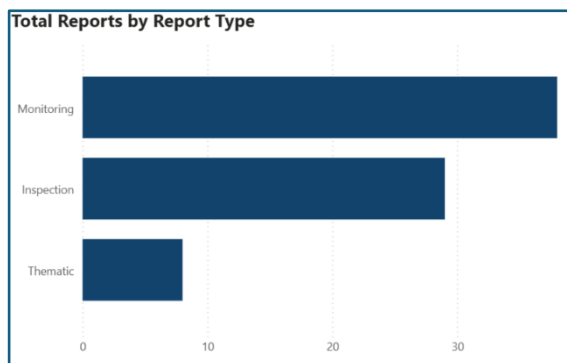
Overview

During Q4 of 2025/26, a total of 1,047 records were entered on the Dashboard, from 75 reports produced by UK NPM bodies. Of these records, 68% (707) were recommendations, and 32% (340) were examples of good practice. This represents a slightly higher proportion of good practice examples than in the first three quarters of 2025/26.

Top categories in recommendations this quarter were **management, oversight and procedures, safety and security** and **education and purposeful activity**. Top categories in good practice were **education and purposeful activity, social connection** and **treatment**.



More specifically, top thematic tags in recommendations across all sectors were **governance**, **safeguarding** and **education**. The most commonly identified good practices related to **wellbeing support**, **staff-detainee relationships** and **case progression**.



The 75 reports published in this quarter comprised 36 monitoring reports, 29 inspection reports and 8 thematic reports. There were slightly fewer reports than in previous quarters, but the spread remains consistent.

52 of reports were on prisons, 14 on police custody, 11 on secure children's homes, 4 on police custody, 3 on immigration detention, and 2 each on court custody and secure mental health settings.

Prisons

This quarter, 32 monitoring and 14 inspection reports were published on prisons across the UK. Six of the thematic reports published this quarter also relate to the prison estate. Key themes of concern related to **staffing levels**, **education** and **maintenance**, while good practice was seen in **wellbeing support**, **staff-detainee relationships** and **case progression**. The total number of recommendations made and good practices identified was 525 and 277, respectively.

Over the year, the most common areas for concern were employment and staffing levels, indicating that these are persistent structural pressures rather than isolated issues. Good practice was seen consistently in wellbeing support and staff detainee relationships, highlighted in all four quarters, suggesting a pattern of good practice in these areas.

Immigration Detention

A total of three reports on immigration detention were published. 21 recommendations were made, and 10 examples of good practice were identified. Recommendations focused on issues of **safeguarding**, **connection to the outside world** and **translation and interpretation**, while good practice was found in **physical provisions**, **wellbeing support** and **connection to the outside world**. The inspections occurred in England and on one removal flight to France.

Time in detention remained one of the most common themes of recommendations, as well as safeguarding and governance, suggesting ongoing concerns about detainee protection and oversight. A general stability in day-to-day care in detention is evidenced

by consistent good practice identified in staff-detainee relationships. Further, good practices relating to wellbeing support, detainee access to information, connection to the outside world, and physical provisions, were also repeated throughout the year.

Police Custody

This quarter, four Independent Custody Visiting Schemes' annual reports were published. Areas of concern were **maintenance**, **mental health assessment** and **mental health support**, but **dignity**, **maintenance** and **detainee access to information** were recognised as areas of positive practice. These records reflect findings in England only. Overall, 4 recommendations were made, and 17 good practices identified.

Despite Q4's focus on mental health concerns, over the 2025/26 reporting year, key areas of concern were staffing levels and detainee access to information. This suggests that staffing pressures might undermine the consistent fulfilment of detainees' rights. However, staff practice was most commonly highlighted as a positive, with staff-detainee relationships and staff training and oversight being repeated throughout the year. This may explain the identification of good practice in other areas, including this quarter's findings on access to information, where sufficient staffing improves overall care.

Court Custody

One inspection report of court custody facilities in England was published in the quarter, as well as the Lay Observers' Annual Report. The 29 recommendations for this setting centred around **safeguarding**, **time in detention** and **mental health assessment**. There were only 2 areas of good practice identified, relating to a mix of **detainee access to information**, **living conditions** and **staff-detainee relationships**.

As there were relatively few recommendations made on court custody provision throughout the year, a number of themes were referenced. However, detainee dignity was most frequently identified as an area of concern, suggesting ongoing challenges in how detainees experience custody in practice. This appears to intersect with related concerns around fair treatment and inclusion, disabilities, and time in detention. Good practice was also mixed, most commonly referencing staff training and oversight, alongside positive staff-detainee relationships, highlighting the role of effective staff practice in mitigating risks where broader concerns were identified.

Secure Children's Homes

The top concerning themes in the secure children's estate for the quarter were **safeguarding, data recording** and **governance**, while positives were found in **case progression, staff-detainee relationships** and **healthcare treatment**. These records were found in 10 inspection reports of secure children's homes across England and one thematic report from the Children's Commissioner. Across the quarter, 99 recommendations and 31 examples of good practice were identified.

The most common area for improvement in the secure children's estate this year was staff training and oversight, followed by data recording, governance and safeguarding, indicating weaknesses in organisational control rather than frontline delivery. This is backed up by good practice being consistently identified in staff-detainee relationships and wellbeing support, despite the shortcomings in formal systems.

Secure Mental Health

Of this quarter's two reports on secure mental health, one was an inspection report from Scotland, while the other was CQC's annual *Monitoring the Mental Health Act* report in England and Wales. Concerns were found in **mental health treatment, staffing levels** and **fair treatment and inclusion**. On the other hand, areas of good practice were identified in **data recording** and **detainee access to information**. Overall, 29 recommendations were made, and 3 examples of good practice identified.

In contrast to this quarter's findings, across the year, the most common themes of recommendations in secure mental health care were data recording and maintenance. Staffing levels were also referenced, and may have contributed to wider shortcomings, particularly where effective record-keeping depends on staff capacity, for example. Overall, good practice was most commonly identified in detainee access to information, with a mix of other examples noted throughout the year. Notably, data recording was also repeatedly found to be a positive. This might simply suggest that this is an area heavily scrutinised by bodies when inspecting secure mental health establishments.

Examples of Good Practice

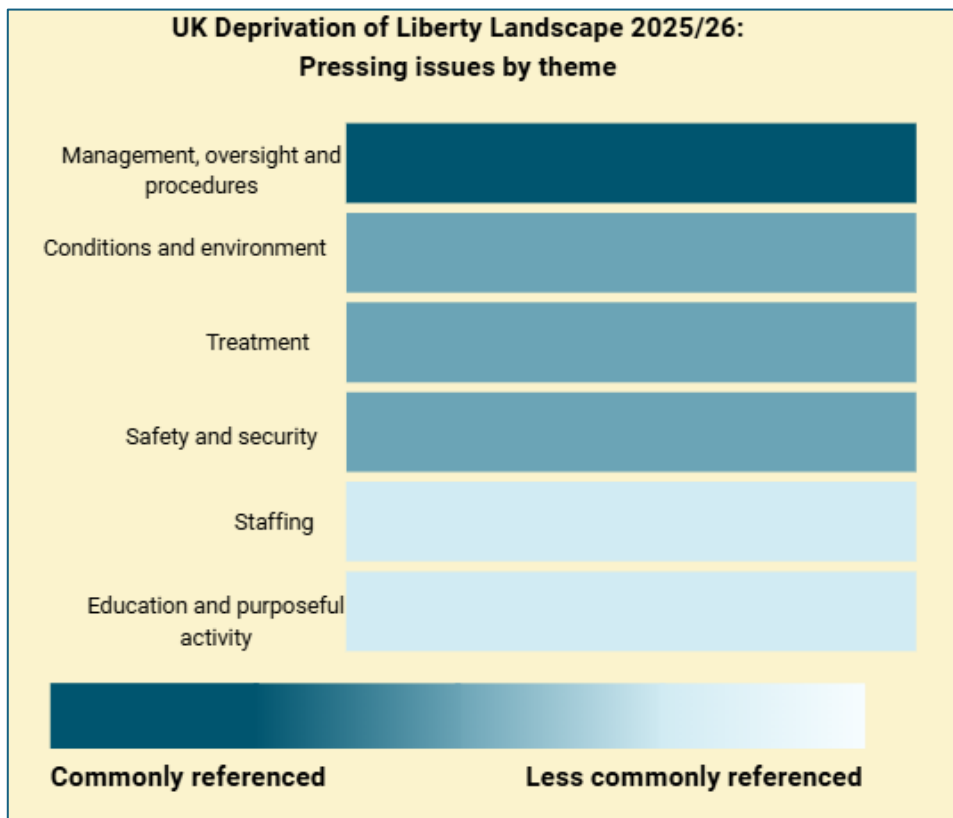
Good Practice	Establishment
<p>The best practice that Lay Observers see is when the receiving custody officer takes time to engage with the detained person in a confidential area, explaining what will happen, responding to concerns, and establishing a calm, respectful relationship. In these circumstances, a checklist supports the conversation rather than replacing it.</p>	<p>Multiple – Lay Observers’ Annual Report</p>
<p>The library was an excellent social hub, which provided a variety of facilities and well-attended activities. Women highly valued the constant availability of staff to support them with requests and concerns.</p>	<p>Derwentside IRC</p>
<p>Norfolk Constabulary recognised the impact that trauma informed policing can have on young people and undertook to improve the facilities available for young people visiting custody. Certain cells have been designated...solely for juvenile use that are quieter and are naturally lit. These are clearly identified by coloured doors, with a commission to add entertainment decals into the cells, such as targets for footballs to be thrown at. A selection of age-appropriate activities and reading materials were provided along with a small selection of cuddly toys. The use of a separate booking in area was also implemented to reduce young people’s exposure to detained adults.</p>	<p>Police Custody Establishments in Norfolk</p>
<p>The individuals we met with were aware, and had a good understanding, of their rights under the legislation. We were told that these had been explained to them during admission and also latterly during their inpatient stay when their mental health had improved and they were able to better understand this information.</p>	<p>Rohallion Clinic</p>
<p>Children were helped to understand their personal history through well-planned and sensitive life-story work. This work was informed by guidance from the psychologist, ensuring a trauma-informed approach that matched to the child’s emotional needs and level of understanding. Staff helped the children to explore their experiences at an appropriate pace, using clear and honest explanations. As a result, children were developing a stronger sense of identity and were increasingly able to make sense of their past and current circumstances.</p>	<p>Atkinson Unit</p>
<p>It was notable that the NIACRO-supported Springboard Hospitality initiative provided training programmes for 40 prisoners. This resulted in 58% of them gaining employment on release, providing a critical direct link from custody to work in the community.</p>	<p>HMP Magilligan</p>

For more detailed analysis on good practice, please refer to the UK NPM’s monthly thematic analysis of good practice.

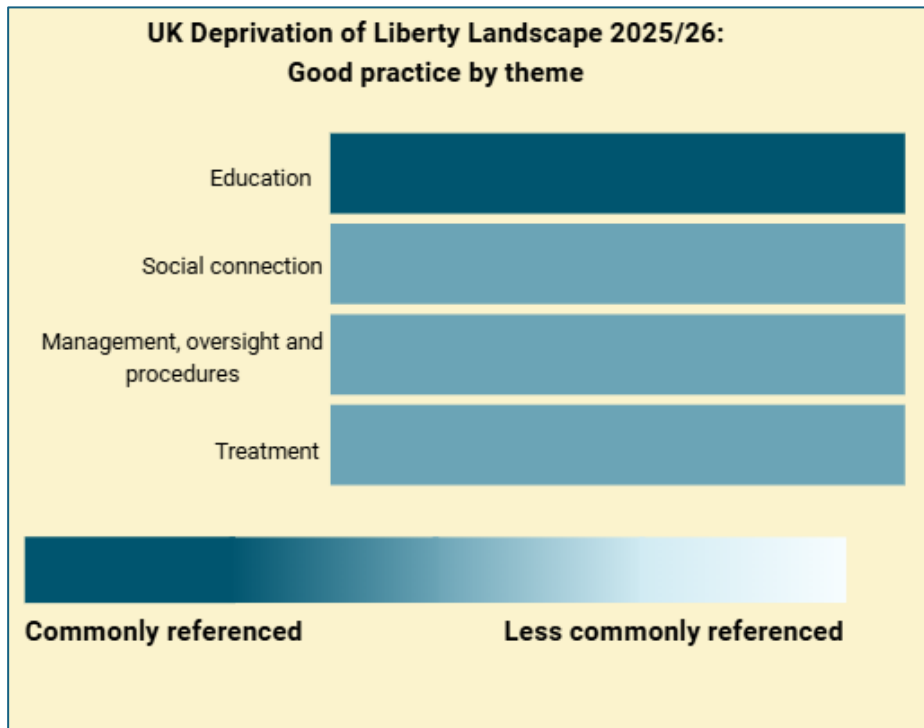
2025/26 Overall Analysis:

Across 2025/26, dashboard data suggests a sustained focus on management, oversight and procedures, which appears as a top recommendation category in every quarter. This points to continuing challenges around governance and the way key processes – for example, entry to and exit from detention, behaviour management, and complaints – are managed across deprivation of liberty settings. In the first half of the year, recommendations also clustered around conditions & environment and treatment, indicating that day-to-day lived experience and humane treatment remained key areas for both scrutiny and improvement.

In the second half of the year, safety and security rose into the top categories (Q3), followed by education and purposeful activity (Q4). It is worth noting the UK Government’s October 2025 announcement of cuts to education provision across prisons in England and Wales, which may have contributed to heightened scrutiny of education towards the end of the reporting year.



Notably, areas of good practice appear remarkably stable: examples most often highlighted wellbeing support and staff–detainee relationships, with purposeful activity/education and social connection also frequently cited as strengths.



It is important to interpret dashboard data carefully, as thematic reports focusing on specific themes can skew frequencies. With this caveat in mind, overall, the year reads as a dual narrative: recurring structural and procedural improvement needs, while relational practice and wellbeing-focused activity repeatedly stand out as the strongest foundations to build on.