



Report on an independent review of progress at

## **HMP Erlestoke**

by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

24–26 May 2022



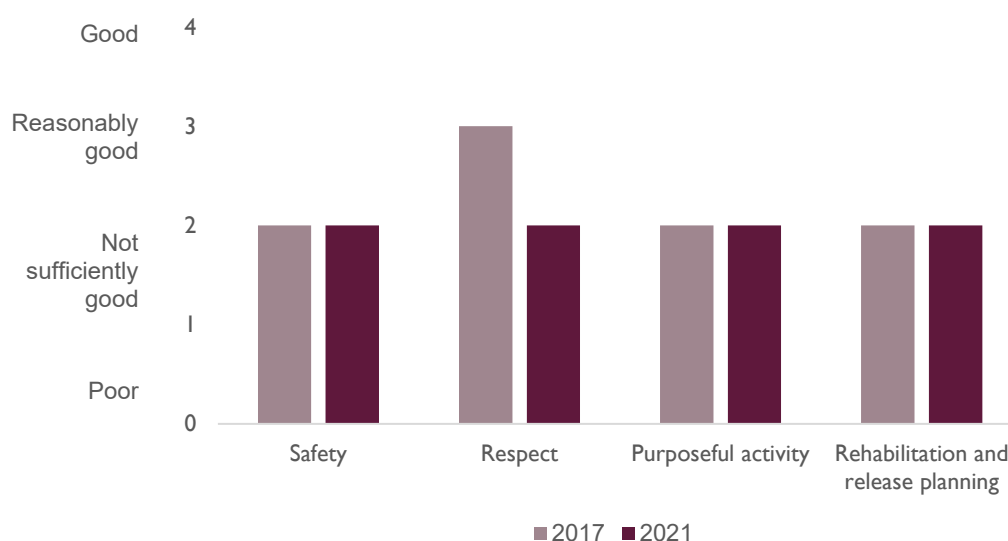
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## Section 1 Chief Inspector's summary

- 1.1 HMP Erlestoke, built on the former grounds of Erlestoke manor house, became a young prisoners centre in 1970 and was converted to a category C adult male prison in 1988. Since 2018, it has been an adult category C training prison, with many serving long and/or indeterminate sentences.
- 1.2 At our previous inspections of HMP Erlestoke in 2017 and 2021, we made the following judgements about outcomes for prisoners.

**Figure 1: HMP Erlestoke healthy prison outcomes in 2017 and 2021**



- 1.3 Our full inspection in August 2021 followed a scrutiny visit in 2020, at the height of the pandemic, at which we had found a serious deterioration in safety, poor living conditions and a lack of purposeful relationships between staff and prisoners. In 2021, we found little improvement, and, indeed, deterioration in the areas covered by our 'respect' healthy prison test. Frustration among prisoners was linked to rising levels of violence and of self-harm, as well as to an unduly impoverished regime. Leadership was not strong and many of the staff lacked confidence in the absence of active support from managers.
- 1.4 During this independent review of progress, we examined 13 key recommendations, and our colleagues in Ofsted addressed progress against three themes. There had been a serious attempt to address the growing concerns of our previous two visits, with the result that we found reasonable or good progress against all but two of our key recommendations, while Ofsted assessed progress against all three of their themes as reasonable. In the two areas where progress was judged insufficient, there had been a start on measures to address the deficiencies, but their impact was not yet clear.

- 1.5 The quality of leadership had improved, with some energetic new senior managers, and some new posts had been created, targeted to key priorities such as the upskilling of new staff, better use of data on matters of safety (both violence and self-harm), and development of equality work.
- 1.6 There had been improvements in work to understand and counter the sources of violence, especially debt, focusing especially on young adults. Self-harm had reduced considerably, and better support was being given to those at risk of it. Scrutiny of use of force had improved, although the shortage of working body-worn cameras was problematic. The segregation unit was beginning to work more positively towards reintegration of its occupants into the wider prison community. Problems with drugs and alcohol remained acute, and this was an area of insufficient progress.
- 1.7 The very mixed living environment had been further improved and was cleaner, including the reception area as well as the less congenial of the residential blocks. The relationships between staff and prisoners, however, had not improved sufficiently. Work and training were going into this, but the inexperience of a number of staff members and a lack of real engagement by some officers were illustrated by tolerance of some low-level rule-breaking behaviour. Equality work was improving from a fairly low base, but some complex issues needed to be grasped. The specific issues about health care appointments, similarly, were being addressed practically, but without yet having solved the capacity issues that caused some delays.
- 1.8 Leaders (see Glossary) had moved fairly quickly to take advantage of the freedoms resulting from the recent lifting of the COVID-19 restrictions, in opening up the regime. Time out of cell (see Glossary), and the numbers in activities, had improved markedly, although there was still some way to go before the ethos of a 'normal' category C training prison could be re-established.
- 1.9 Work with families, especially visits, had been maintained reasonably through the pandemic and was quickly gaining momentum. The offender management unit was another area which had been strengthened recently, through some key probation appointments in particular, and it was commendable that a pattern of monthly contact with every prisoner had been established.
- 1.10 After a few years when Erlestoke had not been moving in the right direction, it was encouraging to see that it was now doing so across most areas. The improvements were in many cases recent, and resulted, in part, from new managers and newly funded roles. There is no reason why these improvements should not become embedded, if the resourcing in key areas and the leadership momentum can be sustained.

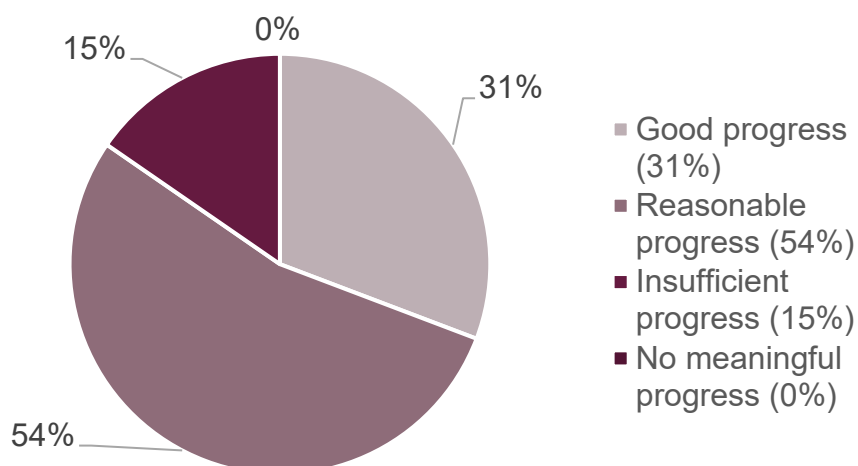
**Charlie Taylor**  
HM Chief Inspector of Prisons  
June 2022

## Section 2 Key findings

- 2.1 At this IRP visit, we followed up 13 recommendations from our most recent inspection in August 2021, and Ofsted followed up three themes based on their latest inspection or progress monitoring visit to the prison, whichever was most recent.
- 2.2 HMI Prisons judged that there was good progress in four recommendations, reasonable progress in seven recommendations and insufficient progress in two recommendations.

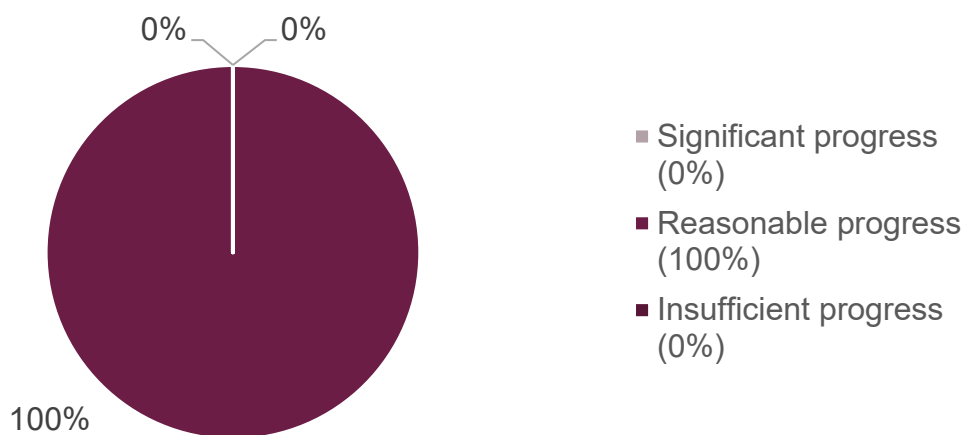
**Figure 2: Progress on HMI Prisons recommendations from August 2021 inspection**

This pie chart excludes any recommendations that were followed up as part of a theme within Ofsted's concurrent prison monitoring visit.



- 2.3 Ofsted judged that there was reasonable progress in three themes.

**Figure 3: Progress on Ofsted themes from August 2021 inspection/progress monitoring visit**



## **Notable positive practice**

- 2.4 We define notable positive practice as innovative work or practice that leads to particularly good outcomes from which other establishments may be able to learn. Inspectors look for evidence of good outcomes for prisoners; original, creative or particularly effective approaches to problem-solving or achieving the desired goal; and how other establishments could learn from or replicate the practice.
- 2.5 Inspectors found one example of notable positive practice during this independent review of progress.
- 2.6 The psychology team produced detailed, individualised guidance to support staff in managing some of the more complex long-term prisoners in the segregation unit, to support their reintegration. (See paragraph 3.18)

## Section 3 Progress against the key concerns and recommendations and Ofsted themes

The following provides a brief description of our findings in relation to each recommendation followed up from the full inspection in 2021. The reference numbers at the end of each recommendation refer to the paragraph location in the full inspection report.

### Early days in custody

**Concern:** The reception area was small with only one functioning holding room and no designated private space, limiting the ability to undertake safety assessments confidentially. First night and induction cells were in poor condition, dirty and ill-equipped. There was a limited induction with a lack of focus on prisoners' progression and rehabilitation. The regime during prisoners' early days was inadequate, with each receiving only 30 minutes a day out of their cell.

**Recommendation: Early days arrangements should be reviewed so that all aspects of prisoners' arrival to the establishment are decent, fit for purpose and have a focus on progression and rehabilitation.**  
(1.45)

- 3.1 Refurbishment had started in reception and there was now a private space where safety assessments were completed confidentially. Health care staff now attended routinely and peer mentors supported new arrivals. Further funding had recently been secured to add an additional interview room.
- 3.2 First night and induction cells were clean and fully equipped, including shower curtains, which had not been available at the time of the inspection. There was now a dedicated 'cell ready' orderly, who made sure that the cells were in good condition before new arrivals moved in, and managers had oversight of this.
- 3.3 The induction programme had been reviewed and there was more focus on the prisoner's rehabilitation and progression, with a structured five-day programme. Various agencies in the prison met the new arrivals, and there was a tour of the establishment and specific sessions for young adults as required.
- 3.4 There was more oversight of the induction orderly, who worked with an officer in delivering the sessions. The induction records we reviewed showed that all departments were completing the necessary paperwork, and although this system had only started two weeks earlier, prisoners were positive about the information they were receiving.

- 3.5 There had been an increase in time out of cell on the induction wing, and quarantining prisoners on the reverse cohort unit (see Glossary) had come to an end in the last week.
- 3.6 We considered that the prison had made reasonable progress against this recommendation.

## Managing behaviour

**Concern:** Over half of respondents in our survey reported feeling unsafe and prisoners who had chosen to self-isolate because they feared other prisoners were unsupported. Violence towards staff was high and increasing, but the prison had no plan to tackle the violence. Poorly attended safer custody meetings did not analyse information effectively or identify actions to improve safety. The management of the perpetrators of violence and support for victims were weak and too many investigations into incidents were incomplete.

**Recommendation: The prison should develop a plan to reduce violence with clear criteria for how it will be reduced and by when.**  
(1.46)

- 3.7 The safety strategy had been updated since the inspection and was focused on specific local issues, such as debt. Some other useful initiatives had been developed as part of the strategy; a violence reduction prisoner representative met all new arrivals to offer support, and funding had been obtained for a dedicated staff member, who analysed safety data regularly and shared useful monthly and weekly notices with staff.
- 3.8 There was an appropriate and timebound safety action plan to support the delivery of the strategy, and managers had responded well to some identified areas of concern. For example, leaders had identified that young adults were disproportionately involved in acts of violence, and had introduced regular focus groups as well as structured interventions for them. There were also plans to introduce a debt strategy, in order to address the concern that debt was linked to most of the violence at the establishment.
- 3.9 Overall, the number of recorded incidents of violence in the previous six months was similar to that in the same period before the inspection. Prisoner-on-staff assaults had reduced, but prisoner-on-prisoner assaults had increased. Leaders told us that they had anticipated that this would happen when COVID-19 restrictions were lifted and prisoners could move about and mix more freely, and they were monitoring the situation closely.
- 3.10 Challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs; see Glossary) were used more effectively and all violent incidents were referred for investigation. Several training packages had been delivered, with more planned, to improve the quality of CSIPs; quality assurance of these had been introduced recently.



- 3.11 We considered that the prison had made reasonable progress against this recommendation.

## Use of force

**Concern:** The use of force and special accommodation was high. Staff did not always demonstrate the use of de-escalation techniques and not all incidents involving the drawing of batons were investigated. Too much use of force documentation was missing and scrutiny by leaders was insufficient. We were not convinced that use of force was necessary or proportionate in every case we reviewed.

**Recommendation: Use of force and the use of special accommodation should only happen as a last resort. Leaders should develop alternative approaches which will reduce the need for such interventions. (1.47)**

- 3.12 A weekly use of force scrutiny meeting had been introduced to scrutinise records and footage of all incidents. Leaders had appointed a dedicated use of force coordinator to improve standards and there were signs that this was having an impact. For example, there was little recent outstanding paperwork. Additionally, an appropriate use of force action log was completed following the review of an incident, which demonstrated a focus on improving standards.
- 3.13 There were too few body-worn cameras available and they did not always work. Leaders told us that they were waiting for new cameras to be installed, which meant that scrutiny of use of force was weakened. Too few incidents were recorded, so leaders could not fully assess whether force had been used as a last resort and if de-escalation techniques had been deployed effectively.
- 3.14 In the sample of paperwork that we reviewed, too often the use of de-escalation was not well documented. However, video footage showed evidence of staff trying to de-escalate situations well before using force. Concerns that we identified, such as use of incorrect techniques and shouting during incidents, had already been picked up through the scrutiny process and referred to the deputy governor, and appropriate action had been taken.
- 3.15 The special accommodation cell had been used only once in the previous six months. Records indicated that this use had been proportionate. There had only been one segregation monitoring and review group meeting in the previous six months, but there were plans to increase the frequency of this meeting, to ensure fuller monitoring of special accommodation. The deputy governor quality assured all use of this accommodation.
- 3.16 We considered that the prison had made reasonable progress against this recommendation.

## Segregation

**Concern:** The day-to-day regime for prisoners in the segregation unit was poor. Too many prisoners were seeking protection there and wanted a transfer to another prison. Reintegration planning was poor and meetings to monitor the use of segregation were too infrequent.

**Recommendation: The segregation unit should provide a safe, decent and purposeful regime that promotes improved behaviour for prisoners held there and their reintegration with the wider prison.**  
(1.48)

- 3.17 Time out of cell for prisoners in the segregation unit remained low, with a maximum of 50 minutes out of cell per day. However, there had been an improvement in the amount of meaningful in-cell activity available to prisoners, and of time in the open air. For example, education staff visited the unit weekly and provided in-cell packs, prisoners could request books from the library twice a week and gym staff visited the unit twice weekly to deliver fitness sessions.
- 3.18 Reintegration planning for all prisoners now started after the first 72 hours of segregation. The plans we reviewed were reasonable, but some target setting was too generic and it was not always clear how it would support the prisoner to reintegrate effectively. The psychology team worked well with segregation staff, providing detailed guidance to them on managing some of the more complex long-term prisoners in the unit, to support their reintegration.
- 3.19 We considered that the prison had made good progress against this recommendation.

## Security

**Concern:** Prisoners reported that drugs and alcohol were easily available. There were frequent medical emergencies resulting from the suspected use of psychoactive substances (see Glossary) and other unknown substances. Many prisoners said that the availability of drugs made it difficult for them to maintain recovery. Not all staff were confident about the searching procedures for detecting the concealment of contraband items. There was a lack of a whole prison approach to tackling drug supply.

**Recommendation: The prison should take robust action to reduce the availability of illicit drugs and alcohol.** (1.49)

- 3.20 Leaders were aware that drugs remained a serious problem at the establishment. The monthly local tactical assessment reflected this and provided a good overview of key risks. Managers had developed good working relationships with the regional team, which visited the prison regularly to carry out detailed searches. This had yielded some positive

results; in the previous six months, there had been 68 drug, 61 mobile phone, 34 weapon and 50 alcohol finds.

- 3.21 Enhanced gate security had been introduced, which was intended to provide an airport-style level of searching on entry to the prison, although there was no X-ray machine to enable effective entry searching for staff and visitors. However, there was effective use of a machine to detect drugs coming in through the mail, and of the body scanner to detect and deter the trafficking of illicit items into the prison.
- 3.22 Mandatory drug testing had not taken place during most of the pandemic. It was resumed in November and December 2021, with a high positive rate of 21.28%. It was then reintroduced again two months before the current review visit and the resulting rate of 39.13% was very high. This indicated that illicit drugs were readily available at the establishment, and prisoners confirmed this to us.
- 3.23 Given the rural location of the prison and the long perimeter, items were thrown over the wall regularly. Managers worked well with the police when this occurred, and work to tackle staff corruption was also good.
- 3.24 We considered that the prison had made insufficient progress against this recommendation.

## Safeguarding

**Concern:** Recorded levels of self-harm had increased considerably and were significantly higher than most similar prisons. Despite this, leaders had not identified suicide and self-harm prevention as a key priority, and the safety action plan was not shared or reviewed to direct work to reduce self-harm. There were gaps in the quality of support delivered through the new assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) case management model.

**Recommendation: The prison should develop an effective plan to reduce self-harm and deliver consistently good care for at-risk prisoners. (1.50)**

- 3.25 Levels of self-harm had reduced considerably. In the six months before the inspection, there had been 221 incidents involving 64 prisoners, and in the six months before the current review visit there had been 128 incidents involving 50 prisoners. The rate had been higher than at comparable prisons in the former period but was now similar.
- 3.26 The newly appointed head of safety had implemented a new safer custody strategy and action plan, which identified sensible goals for self-harm, such as improving the quality of the assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) case management process for prisoners at risk of suicide or self-harm, and providing support to prolific self-harmers. Good progress had already been made on some of these actions. The prison had also appointed a safety analyst (see paragraph

3.7), who had begun to collect useful self-harm data which was shared with staff electronically and at monthly safer custody meetings. These data were used to identify emerging trends, to inform future preventative work.

- 3.27 The quality of support for prisoners on ACCTs had improved, and those we spoke to said that they generally felt well cared for. The quality of ACCT documentation had also improved overall, although it was still variable in the examples that we checked. Leaders were aware of this and had begun to offer additional training to operational staff in the new version of the ACCT case management system, as well as improving the quality assurance process, which allowed them to identify and address weaknesses.
- 3.28 The weekly safety intervention meeting effectively identified and monitored prisoners with complex needs or who were vulnerable to self-harm, and was suitably multidisciplinary. The format of the meeting had been restructured to make sure that actions were recorded clearly and followed up appropriately.
- 3.29 Near misses and serious incidents of self-harm were now well investigated. Where failings were identified, the investigations demonstrated that leaders had acknowledged weaknesses, learned lessons and taken appropriate action to address inadequate staff performance when necessary.
- 3.30 We considered that the prison had made good progress against this recommendation.

## Staff-prisoner relationships

**Concern:** Staff interaction with prisoners lacked consistency, leading to insufficient engagement and low behavioural expectations. Prison officers spent much of their time in unit offices rather than supervising and actively engaging with prisoners on the landings. Poor prisoner behaviour often went unchallenged. We saw staff failing to enforce even the most basic of behavioural expectations, such as music volume, the inappropriate use of cooking equipment and dress codes. There was a lack of leadership in supporting staff to develop the confidence to challenge poor behaviour.

**Recommendation: Staff should be supported to positively engage with prisoners and where necessary to challenge poor prisoner behaviour. (1.51)**

- 3.31 We observed some positive staff interactions with prisoners, and on some of the units officers appeared to be spending more time out of the office and engaging with prisoners on the landings. However, we did not see this on every unit, and the picture remained inconsistent across the prison. Some prisoners told us that staff did not always engage with them.

- 3.32 We continued to see low-level rule-breaking, such as vaping on the landings and the playing of loud music, going unchallenged by staff. However, we saw no evidence of cell door observation panels being covered, as they had been during the inspection, and managers said that they often reinforced to staff the importance of monitoring this.
- 3.33 The leadership team was aware that more work was needed to support staff to engage positively with prisoners and to be more visible on the landings. Prison officers said that they recognised the efforts being made by the leadership team to support them, especially those who were new in their role, but more needed to be done. Steps were being taken, including appointing a dedicated mentor for new staff and an apprenticeship coach. A training plan was in the early stages of delivery, including psychology-led 'supportive authority' training within the progressive regime unit. Training had been rolled out to support line managers in managing staff, under the title of 'reward, opportunities, aspirations and development' (ROAD).
- 3.34 We considered that the prison had made insufficient progress against this recommendation.

## Living conditions

**Concern:** Too many areas of the prison were dirty and unkempt, with too few prisoners actively engaged in keeping the prison clean, a lack of cleaning materials on some units and insufficient managerial oversight of standards.

**Recommendation: Basic standards of cleanliness and decency should be set and maintained consistently across the prison. (1.52)**

- 3.35 The standard of accommodation varied; the new, temporary accommodation for enhanced prisoners on the Wren unit was in good condition, whereas the older Alfred and Wessex wings were less well kept. However, since the inspection the overall standards of cleanliness across the prison had improved, and the cells and communal areas were generally clean and in good repair. Better and more consistent work was being done by wing cleaners, painting teams and prisoners trained to use pressure washers, to keep the wings in good condition. However, on the older units, rubbish continued to accumulate in cell window grilles.
- 3.36 The prison had appointed a 'clean and decent' lead manager, who had been overseeing the improvement of living conditions across the establishment effectively. This included developing better oversight to make sure that there were sufficient wing cleaners, that all cells were properly furnished and had basic amenities, such as shower curtains and intact, uncovered observation panels, and that prisoners had access to cleaning materials. Most prisoners we spoke to said that suitable materials were available to keep their cells clean.

- 3.37 The new showers installed on Wessex, Alfred and Sarum wings remained in good condition and were deep-cleaned regularly. Cells on the permanent residential wings were in the process of being repainted by prisoner working parties, improving their condition and removing any graffiti.
- 3.38 The rat problem had been addressed intensively and pest control services had confirmed that there was no longer evidence of internal or widespread infestation.
- 3.39 We considered that the prison had made good progress against this recommendation.

## Equality, diversity and faith

**Concern:** Work to promote equality remained too limited, a concern we had raised in our two previous visits. Protected characteristic (see Glossary) and minority prisoners had negative perceptions. Data was not used effectively to identify or address areas of inequality or discriminatory treatment. Prisoners told us of racist behaviour on the part of staff, but this was not always effectively identified or acted on.

**Recommendation: The prison should take robust action to promote equality and eliminate discriminatory treatment and racist behaviour.**  
(1.53)

- 3.40 An equality and diversity team had been recruited, with a new temporary full-time staff member and management oversight from the new head of health and well-being. The team had raised the profile of equality work and there was now clear direction to drive improvements.
- 3.41 Diversity and inclusion meetings were not always well attended, and monitoring data were not analysed consistently. This had been recognised and a database for this information, to capture data from all departments across the prison, was progressing well. When finished, this would support a more in-depth analysis of data.
- 3.42 There were more diversity and inclusion representatives, and they were now able to work across the prison since the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions. They took part in the forums, which had restarted in the last two months, and in producing newsletters which gave relevant information both to prisoners and staff. The equality and diversity team trained the representatives and provided good oversight of their work.
- 3.43 Some prisoners from protected groups still had negative perceptions about their treatment, especially based on ethnicity. Prisoners continued to make allegations of unfair allocation of job roles. Although some work had started on addressing this, including attendance by the equality and diversity team at the education and employment allocations meeting, more work was needed.

- 3.44 In the previous six months, 40 discrimination incident report forms (DIRFs) had been submitted. Management and oversight of these were now carried out by the equality and diversity team and investigations had started to improve. Concerns about delays in investigation had been addressed and there were early signs of progress. The charity Recoop continued to complete some independent scrutiny of DIRFs.
- 3.45 We considered that the prison had made reasonable progress against this recommendation.

## Health, well-being and social care

**Concern:** The lack of custody staff to escort patients to the health care department and to external hospital visits had significantly affected the delivery of health services in the prison and had led to the cancellation of 17 out of 38 hospital appointments in the month of our inspection, including two patients who had prepared for surgery.

**Recommendation: Health care and hospital appointments should not be cancelled or delayed. Prisoners should be able to attend appointments at the time and date set by health care staff to best meet the prisoners' health needs. (1.54)**

- 3.46 Until very recently, access to appointments in the health centre had continued to be hindered by a lack of officers to escort prisoners there. There had been some improvement during the previous few months, and the recent reintroduction of free-flow movement, enabling prisoners to attend the health centre without being escorted by an officer, had improved access to appointments. Since then, some clinics had run with 100% attendance.
- 3.47 Before the recent easing of restrictions, the health care team had delivered services on the wings where possible, including mental health and substance misuse support. Primary care nurses continued with their 'see and treat' sessions, whereby a prisoner could apply to see the nurse and would be seen on the same day. The physiotherapist visited patients on the wings and carried a mobile couch with him – an effective initiative to reduce waiting times. However, the backlog for some services had led to excessive waits, particularly for the dentist, although additional sessions had been agreed to reduce this.
- 3.48 Over the last six months, fewer external hospital escorts had been cancelled because of prison operational issues. However, they were functioning at a reduced level and there continued to be cancellations, by the hospital, by prisoners declining treatment or by the prison. For example, in April 2022, 16 appointments had been booked, of which six had been cancelled – three by the hospital and three by the prisoners concerned.
- 3.49 There had been pressure on the current provision of 10 prison officer escort slots per week for external hospital appointments. The prison was supportive in expediting urgent consultations but routine

appointments were usually rescheduled to accommodate this. For instance, in March 2022, 14 out of 25 appointments had been cancelled, in six cases because the prison had prioritised urgent consultations instead of those planned. The GP provided appropriate clinical oversight of which appointments could be rescheduled in this way. Cancelled sessions were rebooked, but this led to delays in treatment. The process for postponing any external hospital appointment was now overseen by the governor or deputy governor, who made these decisions in conjunction with the health care team.

- 3.50 The team felt that the pressure on the 10 slots per week would increase with a return to pre-pandemic NHS activity, an ageing prison population and increasing clinical need, with more patients with long-term conditions. This had been raised with health commissioners, and a central database was planned to monitor this activity, overseen by the head of health care and the new HM Prisons and Probation Service (HMPPS) health and well-being lead (this was a temporary position to provide additional support and enhance communication between the prison and the health care service).
- 3.51 We considered that the prison had made reasonable progress against this recommendation.

## Time out of cell

**Concern:** Time unlocked for many prisoners remained very limited at around two hours a day on weekdays and just an hour at the weekend. Although those on the enhanced units had up to 10 hours a day unlocked, few prisoners were actively engaged in any purposeful activity for any length of time, fostering a sense of aimlessness across the prison. Leaders had not maximised the opportunities to increase places for such activities through stage 3 of the HMPPS recovery plan (see Glossary), in particular those that could have taken place in the open air or large workshops. On a walk-through of activity places, we found only five prisoners engaged in workshops and four in the whole of the education building, three of whom were cleaners or orderlies.

**Recommendation: Leaders should urgently prioritise increasing time unlocked and the number of in person places in education, skills and work activities to enable a larger number of prisoners to attend them.**  
(1.55)

- 3.52 The recently implemented new regime had increased time unlocked, from around two hours a day to an average of six hours on weekdays, and from one hour a day to around four hours at the weekend. Those on enhanced units continued to have up to 10 hours a day unlocked and those on Wren unit (the temporary accommodation) had around 13 hours. Prisoners we spoke to were positive about the new regime and it appeared to be working well around the establishment.



- 3.53 In our roll check, 32% of prisoners were off the units in education and workshops. Some prisoners were engaged in unit-based jobs, and on the drug-free unit nearly all prisoners were involved in the programme being delivered. However, about 100 prisoners were not involved in purposeful activity and more work was needed to engage this group.
- 3.54 Education and workshop places had increased since the inspection, and on a walk-through there were reasonable numbers in attendance. These sessions appeared to be well managed and prisoners we spoke to were enjoying having purposeful activity. There were plans to increase the number of activity places (see Education, skills and work).
- 3.55 We considered that the prison had made reasonable progress against this recommendation.

## Education, skills and work



This part of the report is written by Ofsted inspectors. Ofsted's thematic approach reflects the monitoring visit methodology used for further education and skills providers. The themes set out the main areas for improvement in the prison's previous inspection report or progress monitoring visit letter.

**Theme 1: Leaders must urgently prioritise increasing the number of available face-to-face places in education, skills and work activities to enable a larger number of prisoners to access and attend these activities.**

- 3.56 Leaders and managers had introduced an effective prison-wide process for tracking prisoners' engagement in education. On entering the establishment, managers used prison systems to gather information centrally on prisoners' past learning, English and mathematics assessments, and prior qualifications. They used this information to provide a tailor-made induction experience, where prisoners benefited from discussing their future ambitions. When prisoners did not participate, managers worked with the offender management team to encourage their engagement. As a result, managers could clearly identify prisoners who were participating and those who were not. A few of the prisoners who had not engaged were now starting to do so.
- 3.57 Leaders had worked well to reintroduce face-to-face teaching and workshop sessions. They rightly prioritised teaching those prisoners who were due to be released. At the start of May 2022, all restrictions within the prison had been lifted. This enabled leaders to increase their offer of face-to-face teaching sessions, workshops and work. They had

started by expanding the recycling workshop from four allocations to 18, and they also extended their work with employers and introduced additional areas of work to the 'bulk and hardware' workshop, at the same time as increasing the number of part-time jobs. However, leaders acknowledged that they needed to do more to engage prisoners. Some prisoners were still waiting for an induction, and a few others were not fit for work. This left approximately a quarter of all prisoners disengaged across the prison. In addition, leaders identified that staffing issues had created barriers to opening some workshops. For example, the lack of qualified staff had stopped the new textile workshop from opening, and long-term staff sickness had prevented the popular brick and plastering workshop from reopening. These barriers had reduced the number of jobs available to prisoners.

- 3.58 Ofsted considered that the prison had made reasonable progress against this theme.

**Theme 2: Leaders and managers should ensure that prisoners engage in vocational and practical areas to enable them to acquire the skills they need to complete their accredited qualifications.**

- 3.59 Since the removal of COVID-19 restrictions, managers had ensured that a steadily increasing number of prisoners could engage in vocational and practical activities. Prisoners developed their personal and practical skills and, in some cases, completed qualifications. A good number of prisoners had now returned to work in the prison farms and gardens after a long break during the COVID-19 restrictions. In the bicycle repair workshop, the quality of the refurbished bicycles was very high. Similarly, the farms and gardens areas were extremely well-resourced and provided an excellent learning and personal development environment, in particular for those prisoners who enjoyed working in these areas or wanted to achieve horticultural qualifications.
- 3.60 Many accredited courses were set to resume imminently, but too many, such as the levels 1 and 2 in bricklaying, would not restart soon because of staff shortages. The new textile workshop was ready to operate and would accommodate up to 15 prisoners, but it did not currently have a tutor.
- 3.61 Managers had made sure that prisoners who had completed an in-cell pack in the theoretical aspects of an accredited course during the pandemic were subsequently prioritised to complete the practical elements and gain the qualification. However, the number choosing to do so, and who had done so successfully, was so far small. Just under half of the prisoners on the forklift truck programme had completed their course in this way. Furthermore, the number of completers in information and communications technology, carpentry, textiles, art, and cookery was much lower. Overall, only one in five learners had progressed from in-cell work to accredited qualifications. However, all

the learners on the current forklift truck and cookery courses had completed their in-cell work and were now on target to achieve.

- 3.62 Ofsted considered that the prison had made reasonable progress against this theme.

**Theme 3: Leaders must urgently improve the provision of pre-release support, careers advice and guidance for prisoners as they near the end of their custodial sentences to prepare them better for their next steps.**

- 3.63 Leaders had responded constructively to the need to improve the support for prisoners nearing release. They formed an 'employment hub' which was designed to provide prisoners with increasingly coordinated practical support, advice and guidance during the 12 weeks before their release. The hub had only begun to operate recently. Nevertheless, the contacts and working partnerships available to hub staff were growing steadily over time.
- 3.64 Prison leaders regarded the hub as one of the 'success stories in the prison'. It gathered a wide representation, including staff from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), specialists in information, advice and guidance (IAG) and a prison resettlement facilitator. This enabled prisoners to receive accurate and useful information to help them understand their options for the next steps.
- 3.65 IAG staff provided careers advice and guidance at induction, during which they completed prisoners' learning plans. Closer to prisoners' release, these staff helped them to produce a CV and write letters of disclosure, and conducted practice interviews with them. DWP staff provided information about employment opportunities and identified key points of contact in job centres located where prisoners were being released. The resettlement facilitator focused on helping to secure approved forms of identification, such as driving licences, passports or citizen cards, and helped prisoners open bank accounts. At present, hub staff had no data to establish what impact they were having on prisoners' prospects once they were released.
- 3.66 Prisoners nearing release recognised that the hub and its staff were a potentially useful resource for greater success in finding and retaining work on release. A few were sceptical, but most were positive that the hub was a step in the right direction.
- 3.67 Ofsted considered that the prison had made reasonable progress against this theme.

## Children and families and contact with the outside world

**Concern:** Not enough was done to encourage prisoners to maintain contact with their children and families, and family engagement provision was too limited. Take-up of social visits was very low, and difficulties with technology, booking slots and limited call times had also led to low take-up of secure video calls (see Glossary).

**Recommendation: Prisoners should be encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with their families and friends. (1.56)**

- 3.68 The availability and take-up of social visits had resumed almost to pre-pandemic levels, with 265 social visits in April 2022. Prisoners appreciated that the duration of social visits had been extended to two hours, and that restrictions on physical contact and the consumption of refreshments had been relaxed. Some enhanced prisoners were still receiving two visits per month rather than the three they were entitled to, but leaders were working to expand access equitably.
- 3.69 Although there was a modest take-up, the prison had continued to offer secure video calls, which provided family contact for a small number of prisoners whose families and friends could not travel to the prison.
- 3.70 Family days had resumed, with one in February 2022 and three more to take place in the weeks after the current review visit. The process for prisoners to apply to attend a family day was appropriate and the schedule for these days was suitably focused on building family ties. Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT) staff supervised the sessions and provided advice to prisoners and their families.
- 3.71 The installation of in-cell telephony across the establishment had been completed, and this was valued by prisoners. Many told us that it had helped them to maintain better contact with their families and loved ones.
- 3.72 There was some family support work. A local community group provided transport for visitors between the prison and local transport hubs. Another charity, Turning Point, provided support to families and 'through-the-gate' support for prisoners living in Wiltshire. In addition, PACT workers were in the prison four days a week, running visits sessions and offering support to family members. The Storybook Dads scheme (in which prisoners record stories for their children) was in operation.
- 3.73 We considered that the prison had made good progress against this recommendation.

## Reducing risk, rehabilitation and progression

**Concern:** The offender management unit was acutely under-resourced with too few probation offender managers, and caseloads were too high. Frequency of contact between both prison and probation offender managers and prisoners was inadequate and did not drive their sentence progression effectively.

**Recommendation: Probation offender manager staffing levels should be increased sufficiently to provide manageable caseloads and effective case management of prisoners' sentence planning and progression. (1.57)**

- 3.74 The appointment of a new senior probation officer and two new probation-employed prison offender managers (POMs) had relieved the staffing pressures on the offender management unit (OMU), which was now almost back to its full staffing level. The caseloads for both prison- and probation-employed POMs were now of a suitable size and case type, and fell within Offender Management in Custody model (see Glossary) guidelines.
- 3.75 POM contact with prisoners had continued to be variable for much of the time since the inspection, but since April 2022 OMU staff had begun to record monthly contact with each prisoner. The nature and extent of this contact varied, depending on prisoners' circumstances; some prisoners with fewer urgent needs were contacted by telephone, whereas others were seen in person.
- 3.76 The OMU had recently begun using an experienced member of prison staff to support POMs by carrying out engagement work with prisoners, including speaking to those who struggled to engage with offender managers, and delivering some non-accredited programmes. This was a creative use of resources which made sure that prisoners still had contact with the OMU while relieving the pressure on POMs.
- 3.77 The backlog of offender assessment system (OASys) reports remained low and was being addressed by an external agency worker. OMU staff were moving towards more proactive monitoring and use of the national best-practice tool, to make sure that sentence planning activity remained timely.
- 3.78 The prison's 'progressive regime' programme, for a key group of those with long and/or indeterminate sentences, was under new leadership, and had now regained its focus on promoting prisoners' progression.
- 3.79 We considered that the prison had made reasonable progress against this recommendation.

## Section 4 Summary of judgements

A list of the HMI Prisons recommendations and Ofsted themes followed up at this visit and the judgements made.

### **HMI Prisons recommendations**

Early days arrangements should be reviewed so that all aspects of prisoners' arrival to the establishment are decent, fit for purpose and have a focus on progression and rehabilitation.

#### **Reasonable progress**

The prison should develop a plan to reduce violence with clear criteria for how it will be reduced and by when.

#### **Reasonable progress**

Use of force and the use of special accommodation should only happen as a last resort. Leaders should develop alternative approaches which will reduce the need for such interventions.

#### **Reasonable progress**

The segregation unit should provide a safe, decent and purposeful regime that promotes improved behaviour for prisoners held there and their reintegration with the wider prison.

#### **Good progress**

The prison should take robust action to reduce the availability of illicit drugs and alcohol.

#### **Insufficient progress**

The prison should develop an effective plan to reduce self-harm and deliver consistently good care for at-risk prisoners.

#### **Good progress**

Staff should be supported to positively engage with prisoners and where necessary to challenge poor prisoner behaviour.

#### **Insufficient progress**

Basic standards of cleanliness and decency should be set and maintained consistently across the prison.

#### **Good progress**

The prison should take robust action to promote equality and eliminate discriminatory treatment and racist behaviour.

#### **Reasonable progress**

Health care and hospital appointments should not be cancelled or delayed. Prisoners should be able to attend appointments at the time and date set by health care staff to best meet the prisoners' health needs.

#### **Reasonable progress**

Leaders should urgently prioritise increasing time unlocked and the number of in person places in education, skills and work activities to enable a larger number of prisoners to attend them.

**Reasonable progress**

Prisoners should be encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with their families and friends.

**Good progress**

Probation offender manager staffing levels should be increased sufficiently to provide manageable caseloads and effective case management of prisoners' sentence planning and progression.

**Reasonable progress**

## **Ofsted themes**

Leaders must urgently prioritise increasing the number of available face-to-face places in education, skills and work activities to enable a larger number of prisoners to access and attend these activities.

**Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers should ensure that prisoners engage in vocational and practical areas to enable them to acquire the skills they need to complete their accredited qualifications.

**Reasonable progress**

Leaders must urgently improve the provision of pre-release support, careers advice and guidance for prisoners as they near the end of their custodial sentences to prepare them better for their next steps.

**Reasonable progress**

## Appendix I About this report

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMI Prisons) is an independent, statutory organisation which reports on the treatment and conditions of those detained in prisons, young offender institutions, secure training centres, immigration detention facilities, police and court custody and military detention.

All visits carried out by HM Inspectorate of Prisons contribute to the UK's response to its international obligations under the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT). OPCAT requires that all places of detention are visited regularly by independent bodies – known as the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) – which monitor the treatment of and conditions for detainees. HM Inspectorate of Prisons is one of several bodies making up the NPM in the UK.

Independent reviews of progress (IRPs) are designed to improve accountability to ministers about the progress prisons make towards achieving HM Inspectorate of Prisons' recommendations in between inspections. IRPs take place at the discretion of the Chief Inspector when a full inspection suggests the prison would benefit from additional scrutiny and focus on a limited number of the recommendations made at the inspection. IRPs do not therefore result in assessments against our healthy prison tests. HM Inspectorate of Prisons' healthy prison tests are safety, respect, purposeful activity and rehabilitation and release planning. For more information see our website: <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprisons/our-expectations/>

The aims of IRPs are to:

- assess progress against selected key recommendations
- support improvement
- identify any emerging difficulties or lack of progress at an early stage
- assess the sufficiency of the leadership and management response to our main concerns at the full inspection.

This report contains a summary from the Chief Inspector and a brief record of our findings in relation to each recommendation we have followed up. The reader may find it helpful to refer to the report of the full inspection, carried out in [MONTH, YEAR] for further detail on the original findings (available on our website at <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprisons/>).

### IRP methodology

IRPs are announced at least three months in advance and take place eight to 12 months after a full inspection. When we announce an IRP, we identify which recommendations we intend to follow up (usually no more than 15). Depending on the recommendations to be followed up, IRP visits may be conducted jointly with Ofsted (England), Estyn (Wales), the Care Quality Commission (see Glossary) and the General Pharmaceutical Council. This joint work ensures expert knowledge is deployed and avoids multiple inspection visits.



During our three-day visit, we collect a range of evidence about the progress in implementing each selected recommendation. Sources of evidence include observation, discussions with prisoners, staff and relevant third parties, documentation and data.

Each recommendation followed up by HMI Prisons during an IRP is given one of four progress judgements:

**No meaningful progress**

Managers had not yet formulated, resourced or begun to implement a realistic improvement plan for this recommendation.

**Insufficient progress**

Managers had begun to implement a realistic improvement strategy for this recommendation but the actions taken since our inspection had not yet resulted in sufficient evidence of progress (for example, better and embedded systems and processes).

**Reasonable progress**

Managers were implementing a realistic improvement strategy for this recommendation and there was evidence of progress (for example, better and embedded systems and processes) and/or early evidence of some improving outcomes for prisoners.

**Good progress**

Managers had implemented a realistic improvement strategy for this recommendation and had delivered a clear improvement in outcomes for prisoners.

When Ofsted attends an IRP its methodology replicates the monitoring visits conducted in further education and skills provision. Each theme followed up by Ofsted is given one of three progress judgements.

**Insufficient progress**

Progress has been either slow or insubstantial or both, and the demonstrable impact on learners has been negligible.

**Reasonable progress**

Action taken by the provider is already having a beneficial impact on learners and improvements are sustainable and are based on the provider's thorough quality assurance procedures.

**Significant progress**

Progress has been rapid and is already having considerable beneficial impact on learners.

Ofsted's approach to undertaking monitoring visits and the inspection methodology involved are set out in the *Further education and skills inspection handbook*, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework>.

## **Inspection team**

This independent review of progress was carried out by:

Charlie Taylor	Chief Inspector
Martin Kettle	Team leader
Rebecca Mavin	Inspector
Tamara Pattinson	Inspector
Chelsey Pattison	Inspector
Maureen Jamieson	Health and social care inspector
Bev Ramsell	Ofsted inspector
Nick Crombie	Ofsted inspector

## Appendix II Glossary

We try to make our reports as clear as possible, and this short glossary should help to explain some of the specialist terms you may find. If you need an explanation of any other terms, please see the longer glossary, available on our website at: <http://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprison/about-our-inspections/>

### **Care Quality Commission (CQC)**

CQC is the independent regulator of health and adult social care in England. It monitors, inspects and regulates services to make sure they meet fundamental standards of quality and safety. For information on CQC's standards of care and the action it takes to improve services, please visit: <http://www.cqc.org.uk>

### **Challenge, support and intervention plan (CSIP)**

Used by all adult prisons to manage those prisoners who are violent or pose a heightened risk of being violent. These prisoners are managed and supported on a plan with individualised targets and regular reviews. Not everyone who is violent is case managed on CSIP. Some prisons also use the CSIP framework to support victims of violence.

### **Key worker scheme**

The key worker scheme operates across the closed male estate and is one element of the Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) model. All prison officers have a caseload of around six prisoners. The aim is to enable staff to develop constructive, motivational relationships with prisoners, which can support and encourage them to work towards positive rehabilitative goals.

### **Leader**

In this report the term 'leader' refers to anyone with leadership or management responsibility in the prison system. We will direct our narrative at the level of leadership which has the most capacity to influence a particular outcome.

### **Offender management in custody (OMiC)**

The Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) model, being rolled out across the closed male prison estate, entails prison officers undertaking key work sessions with prisoners (implemented during 2018–19) and case management, which established the role of the prison offender manager (POM) from 1 October 2019. On 31 March 2021, a specific OMiC model for male open prisons, which does not include key work, was rolled out.

### **Protected characteristics**

The grounds upon which discrimination is unlawful (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2010).

### **Psychoactive substances (e.g. spice)**

Synthetic drugs that mimic the effects of cannabis but are much stronger, with no discernible odour, and cannot be detected by drug tests.

**Recovery plan**

Recovery plans are published by HMPPS and aim to ensure consistency in decision-making by governors, by setting out the requirements that must be met for prisons to move from the most restricted regime (4) to the least (1) as they ease COVID-19 restrictions.

**Reverse cohort unit (RCU)**

Unit where newly arrived prisoners are held in quarantine for between seven and 10 days.

**Secure video calls**

A system commissioned by HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) that requires users to download an app to their phone or computer. Before a visit can be booked, users must upload valid ID.

**Time out of cell**

Time out of cell, in addition to formal 'purposeful activity', includes any time prisoners are out of their cells to associate or use communal facilities to take showers or make telephone calls.

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This publication is available for download at: <http://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprisons/>

Printed and published by:  
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons  
3rd floor  
10 South Colonnade  
Canary Wharf  
London  
E14 4PU  
England

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