



Improving behaviour in prisons

A thematic review by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

April 2024



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Introduction

Prisons in England and Wales are almost full, with men and women serving increasingly long sentences often in overcrowded and squalid conditions. Reoffending rates remain high, and levels of assaults and self-harm are rising. Drugs too are an increasing problem in many jails, despite the use of technology designed to prevent their incursion.

Against this backdrop, it is more important than ever that prison leaders find ways to develop cultures that support prisoners to behave well. If we want to see less reoffending and fewer victims of crime, prisons must deliver on their purpose to protect the public by working with prisoners to help them prepare for their return to society. But we know how difficult it is for staff to do their job when they are spending too much of their time managing disruptive behaviour.

We often report on prisons where behaviour is unacceptable, rules are not clear or enforced, staff lack confidence and do not feel supported by leaders, sanctions are not followed up and there is no effective system in place to motivate prisoners to behave.

Yet we know that some prisons have bucked this trend, creating cultures that encourage men and women to engage constructively with staff and make better use of their time in custody.

In this thematic report, we identify the features of these prisons in the expectation that others will learn from the example, innovation and insight that they offer. We visited eight jails during our research, as well as holding discussion groups with ex-prisoners, governors and academics.

While we did not examine every aspect of life at the prisons we visited, and we know that every jail can improve, we found some examples of truly inspirational work by governors prepared to take risks and staff willing to follow their example. Although two private prisons feature heavily in this report, there was nothing they were doing that could not be replicated in public sector prisons.

In our inspections, we are sometimes told by leaders that improvement is difficult because of the specific features of their prison, including a complex population, unfit accommodation, and negative staff culture. While all of these factors can be challenging, none should limit the ambition and determination to make prisons safer and more purposeful. Our findings underscore the pivotal role of leadership in shaping the culture of prisons and motivating prisoners. Successful prisons exhibited positive cultures driven by leaders who set and enforced clear boundaries, focused on reward over punishment, showed respect for prisoners and looked after their staff. Great resilience and a strong belief in the capacity of people to change were driving characteristics among some of the leaders we met in our preparatory interviews and fieldwork for this report.

Creating safer prisons is fundamental to creating safer communities. Locking prisoners in their cells for long periods in grim, overcrowded conditions, isolated from their peers, does not prepare them to take their place back in society. We

need our prisons to teach people how to be part of a community without turning to violence to solve conflict. We need them to support learning so people can see a path to getting a job on release and a way out of the cycle of offending in which so many are trapped. We need our prison officers to be confident in using their skills to challenge and motivate those in their care without fear of being assaulted or abused.

Prisons can be safe, and they can make our communities safer. But only if governors and directors take inspiration from the creative methods successful leaders are using to motivate prisoners and encourage them to do well.

Charlie Taylor

HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

April 2024

Background

If prisons are to protect the public and help make communities safer, they must actively support prisoners to reduce their risk of reoffending, helping them to address their offending behaviour and equipping them with social and practical skills to build a future free from crime. Too often we find prison leaders struggling to cultivate the type of positive cultures that support rehabilitation, with factors such as high levels of violence and bad behaviour affecting the delivery of their vision and aims. The aim of this thematic review is to identify some of the current initiatives in prisons that are motivating prisoners to behave well and engage in the prison regime so they can progress through their sentence.

Definition of a positive culture

We have defined a positive prison culture as one that invests in prisoners and staff and values their contribution, encouraging and supporting prisoners to engage and progress in their sentences. Leaders in such prisons have created a community with shared goals, good communication systems, and mutual respect for those who live or work there.

When we ask prison leaders during our inspections about what motivates prisoners to behave, most talk about the HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) incentives policy. Each prison is required by the prison service to publish its own policy, within the broad parameters of a national framework. Typically, these have three levels: basic, standard, and enhanced. Prisoners who behave well, contributing positively to the prison community and helping their peers, can progress to the enhanced level of the scheme and will receive additional privileges, such as an extra visit and more time in the gym. Prisoners on the basic level will have restricted privileges such as less time unlocked to associate with peers, fewer and shorter social visits with their family, and the removal of television sets.

We often report weaknesses in the incentives policy, which often involve limited interventions to help prisoners to change their behaviour and too little distinction between the rewards available on the enhanced and standard levels. In our prisoner surveys conducted from May 2021, less than half of prisoners said the incentives and rewards in the prison encouraged them to behave. Prisoners often tell us that those who are well behaved are largely ignored because staff spend their time managing prisoners who are violent or disruptive, and leaders have not established the right balance between punishment and reward.

As part of our preparation for this thematic review, we consulted academic prison researchers, prison leaders, and a panel of ex-prisoners. They supported our view that the link between the incentives scheme and positive behaviour was not as powerful as the link between the culture of a prison and the behaviour of its population. The threat of being placed on the basic level of the scheme, losing privileges such as visits with family and time out of cell, will make most prisoners comply with the rules. However, they are much more likely

to engage actively in their prison community and their own progression when there is an incentivising culture, where positive engagement is rewarded and celebrated.

We selected eight prisons based on our findings in previous inspections and with some input from HMPPS. We chose prisons that seemed to have developed positive, motivating cultures and which had good safety records when compared to prisons of similar size or category. We also included a prison where this culture was in the process of being developed: while outcomes at Holme House had not been sufficiently good for some years, our 2023 inspection found a new leadership approach focused on respect, motivation, and delegating more responsibility to staff and prisoners. This had led to marked improvements in outcomes for prisoners, particularly in respectful treatment of prisoners by staff, a good use of key work and peer work, and a programme of wide-ranging consultation.

We also sought to incorporate different types of prisons, including those run by the private sector. In this report, when we describe leadership in a particular jail, we refer to the 'director' in privately-run prisons and the 'governor' in public sector prisons. When we make wider points about leadership across the sites, we use 'governor' as a collective term.

Our fieldwork revealed a varied picture. At some of the jails we found wide-ranging evidence of clear behaviour expectations underpinned by trust and responsibility, which gave prisoners the hope that change was possible. At others, the extent of the cultural change was less developed. All the sites we visited helped to shape this report and provide valuable insight about some of the ways prisoners can be motivated to behave well, allowing prison officers to work with them effectively and ultimately reducing the risk of them reoffending on release.

Summary of findings

During this thematic review we identified five key elements that leaders used to encourage positive behaviour in prisons.

1. **Leadership was critical to determining the culture of the prison and the extent to which it motivated prisoners.** We found the most positive cultures where governors had a clear vision and objectives, which they successfully communicated to their senior teams and staff groups, gaining their commitment and support. This often involved taking decisions to improve opportunities for prisoners that relied on staff placing a certain amount of trust in them. Some of the most successful initiatives allowed for the fact that some prisoners might not cope with this level of trust, but managed any transgressions from individual prisoners without restricting the opportunities of the majority, who embraced and were accountable for the responsibility they were given.
2. **Leaders set and reinforced clear boundaries, with an expectation of high standards of behaviour from both prisoners and staff.** Expected standards of behaviour were communicated as soon as prisoners arrived at the prison, but so too were the opportunities and rewards for maintaining those standards. Peer workers in reception and on induction units played a key role in explaining the expectations for behaviour, and new prisoners quickly found that stepping outside of those expectations pitted them uncomfortably against the prevailing culture. Most prisoners understood and respected the boundaries because they were clear and made them feel safe, but also because leaders had successfully incentivised positive behaviour, contribution, and personal development.
3. **A focus on reward rather than formal disciplinary procedures motivated prisoners to change their behaviour.** The prisons we visited operated standard disciplinary procedures, including the use of adjudications and segregation, but the focus of their behaviour management strategies was on reward rather than punishment. When incidents of poor behaviour occurred, staff sought to understand the reasons and to address them constructively. Prisoners responded more positively when staff were trying to help them deal with their behaviour problems rather than limiting their response to punishment alone. Punishments were proportionate and staff acknowledged improved behaviour in a meaningful way. This contributed to a mutual respect which underpinned the principles of an effective community.
4. **The quality of the incentives and rewards available to prisoners was key to creating a motivational culture.**
 - At most of our fieldwork sites, prisoners were out of their cells and encouraged to get involved in education, employment and other enrichment activities which were relevant, interesting and stimulating. Prisoners were also more motivated to work and train if they perceived the wages to be fair.

- Most prisoners were motivated by a regime which had different options for them to demonstrate a reduction in risk to help them progress through their sentence. For example, we saw effective use of some more innovative and interesting interventions alongside traditional programmes and education and work opportunities.
- Good quality enrichment activities also helped prisoners to develop important employability and social skills. For some, their involvement in initiatives such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme had given them the confidence to engage in formal education and work.
- Dedicated wings that offered more freedom and time out of cell to socialise with their peers, and spaces to prepare and eat food communally, were a strong motivator for prisoners.
- Family and friends were also a strong motivating factor, and some of the most valued privileges were extended visits with families, particularly when they took place in a private space with less obtrusive supervision. Themed family days, such as those targeted at young children, were particularly appreciated. Inviting families to events celebrating prisoners' achievements in education and offending behaviour work was a valuable incentive and encouraged prisoners to progress. Involving families could also help when prisoners were struggling, and this provided mutual benefits for staff, prisoners, and families.
- Prisoners who had struggled to progress in mainstream units and activities flourished in specialist units or community hubs because their needs were understood and met by multidisciplinary teams through structured group work and varied enrichment activities. These prisoners benefitted from more regular and effective key work and responded positively to creative initiatives such as therapy dogs.
- Rewards that reflected life outside of prison, such as being able to socialise with peers in a café, visit a proper grocery and barber shop in the prison, or take part in a social activity like Parkrun motivated prisoners.
- Where prisoners acting as peer workers had worked with leaders to establish a well-functioning community, they reported feeling a sense of pride and responsibility to perform well in their role. They also developed important skills and confidence which helped them to engage in other work to address their offending behaviour.
- Being consulted on the decisions that affected their day-to-day lives motivated prisoners and encouraged them to engage more positively with staff.
- Prisoners were more hopeful and committed if they felt they were being supported by staff to put measures in place for their release, most importantly sustainable housing and employment. Dedicated resettlement and employment hubs brought multi-agency teams together and encouraged prisoners to commit to their resettlement plans.
- The physical environment of the prison was a visible reinforcement and constant reminder of the culture leaders were trying to establish. Great care had been taken in the prisons we visited to improve the built environment with, for example, murals, and make the most of the outside spaces. In many cases, prisoners had a stake in the design and creation of these spaces, bringing a sense of ownership and

pride. Prisoners aspired to reach the wings that were well looked after and provided good facilities. Many of those we visited during our fieldwork were clean and tidy. Prisoners took pride in their environment and could personalise their living space.

5. **Clear and effective communication and good promotion of the incentives on offer contributed to a shared understanding of the vision, aims and objectives of the prison.** Visible leadership, regardless of the size of the prison, supported good communication and enabled leaders to demonstrate and reinforce the behaviour they wanted to see. An investment in ICT had enabled some prisons to produce high quality written, audio and visual communication. In cell television and radio channels advertised activities, clubs and events and celebrated prisoners' achievements. Peer workers wore bright, distinguishing T-shirts, posters displayed their roles, and their intrinsic involvement in the running of the prison promoted the benefits of positive behaviour and engagement to other prisoners.

Figure 1: The key elements in creating a culture of positive behaviour in prisons

Improving behaviour in prisons



Section 1 The role of leaders

'To be a governor, you have to be brave.'

HMPPS governor

Defining a prison's culture

- 1.1 Leadership was critical to determining the culture of the prison and the extent to which it motivated prisoners.
- 1.2 We judged positive cultures to be those that encouraged and supported prisoners to engage and progress in their sentences. The senior leaders in most of our fieldwork sites had a clear vision for the direction and ethos of their prisons, and the standards and behaviour they expected. Many visions (see example from Oakwood below) referred to the creation of a community where everyone had a part to play in the prison. They outlined the importance of listening to prisoners, with high expectations of good behaviour, which was recognised and rewarded. They talked about how staff should be engaged, informed and positive about their role in rehabilitation. While the governor's role was crucial in this, it was only effective because other managers understood and supported their ambition and translated it into action on the wings. A focus on motivating prisoners through incentivising positive behaviour was inherent in these cultures, which did not rely solely on traditional punitive behaviour systems.

Example vision: Oakwood

'The vision for HMP Oakwood is a prison that runs as a community... where staff and prisoners have expectations of each other, and these are continually met. We want Oakwood to be known as a safe prison where prisoners can truly prepare for life on release. Oakwood will be a working prison where prisoners are expected to be out of their cell engaging in activity and where staff are seen to be fulfilling their roles to support this... All prisoners will be held accountable and also rewarded via the incentives scheme for their behaviour. Opportunities for real work on release will be available and prisoners will be supported to make informed choices about their future both in custody and the community. The prisoners will be given a voice and be listened to about real prison issues with solutions decided on as a community. The environment the prisoners are held in will be maintained to a high standard and there will be expectations that all prisoners play their part in the upkeep of cells and or grounds.'

- 1.3 Establishing clear boundaries with high expectations of behaviour in both prisoners and staff was essential in establishing a positive culture (see Section 2: Boundaries, rules and rewards).

- 1.4 Governors have many responsibilities, but spending time on the wings and around the prison is vital if they are to witness first-hand what is working effectively and what improvements could be made. At many of the prisons we inspected during our fieldwork, governors had prioritised this and we found staff and prisoners were accustomed to seeing leaders on the wings and appreciated it when governors took an interest in them.
- 1.5 Our fieldwork for this report proved that good visibility is possible in even the largest prisons. Oakwood has a population of 2,000, but we saw many prisoners refer to senior leaders by their first names as they walked around the prison, and we were impressed by the level of knowledge leaders had about the prisoners in their care.

‘Managers are very visible and talk to you, they’re on the wings in the mornings. I was very surprised when I was told (name of staff member) wanted to see me – I thought it would be trouble, but he had just got a few prisoners together, bought them food and drink for the café, had a good chat. Other officers too – there was one from another wing who’d seen me when I first arrived and she remembered my name, asked how I was getting on.’

Prisoner, Warren Hill

- 1.6 While senior leaders in the prison played a crucial role in setting the tone and establishing a positive culture, custodial managers (CMs) and equivalent frontline leaders were the conduit between the senior team and staff. CMs have a responsibility to translate aims and objectives in a way that enables staff to put them into practice, and during the fieldwork we saw them play a critical role in demonstrating and reinforcing positive behaviour to staff.
- 1.7 CMs were clear that what staff did was more important than what they said, and both staff and prisoners would mirror the behaviour they saw in frontline leaders. They emphasised how important it was for the CM to lead by example, be visible and available to prisoners and staff while setting the right standards and challenging any negative behaviour. At Swansea, for example, we saw CMs and senior officers (SOs) on the wings interacting with staff and prisoners throughout our visit.

The importance of trust

- 1.8 One of the words that was used repeatedly by prisoners to describe what motivated them to behave was 'trust'. Most prisoners responded well when staff put trust in them and flourished when they were given responsibility to lead and be accountable for the success of a project or work (see Section 4: Prisons as communities). It was clear that, when trust underpinned the prison culture, most prisoners' attitude to authority improved, and some of the barriers between prisoners and staff were broken down.

- 1.9 Prisoners at Rye Hill and Oakwood attributed lower rates of violence, drug misuse and self-harm to a fundamental shift in the way they were treated when they transferred in from other prisons. One of Oakwood's prisoners described prisons he had previously been in as risk averse, quick to punish, reluctant to reward and unprepared to do things differently.
- 1.10 We saw evidence that trusting prisoners to be responsible for the running and maintenance of their community had helped to encourage them to be accountable and conscientious about their work and had led them to become good role models for other prisoners. For example, when prisoners had been involved in repairing prison windows or painting murals on dull concrete walls, their peers respected their efforts and were unlikely to damage their work. When prisoners were trusted to take on challenging mentoring roles such as conflict resolution or substance misuse champions, their authority with and respect from their peers made them a critical asset in supporting the prison's aims. For example, at Oakwood prisoners were trusted and supported to play a significant role in the running of the prison; there were few conflicts between prisoners and most lived together harmoniously.

'I think what other jails could try and do is have the faith that the staff and the governors here have, that give this responsibility to prisoners... you are given the responsibility to be in charge of 10–12 people and you have to make sure they have all the equipment, making sure they do their job... I think that people don't want to abuse that trust because you feel like you have been given responsibility and you want to honour that. They aren't scared to try.'

Prisoner, Oakwood

Clear communication

- 1.11 Clear and effective communication with staff and prisoners contributed to a shared understanding of the vision, aims and objectives of the prison. A good use of multimedia enabled leaders to promote and reinforce the behaviour they wanted to see (see section 7: Communication). The director of Rye Hill delivered a daily video message to prisoners, often involving other functional heads to explain new policies and initiatives. The director of Oakwood also issued a regular video message, which enabled him to communicate to the 2,000 prisoners at this large site.

Overcoming barriers to progress

- 1.12 Most of the governors we spoke to were frustrated by government finance rules and a general lack of control over their budgets which prevented them from making improvements. Governors said they worried about how they could create a rehabilitative culture when they could not even repair floors and showers. For example, overcrowded

living conditions coupled with a lack of investment in the fabric of ageing buildings in need of repair made it harder to motivate prisoners to behave.

- 1.13 Leaders at some of our fieldwork sites were active in bidding for external funding to support initiatives and services that would benefit and motivate prisoners. Leaders at Swansea had secured funding to set up a neurodiversity resource centre (The Harbour) and additional family support from PACT (Prison Advice and Care Trust). The governor of Holme House encouraged his staff to work with prisoners to suggest ways to improve their living and working environment. He then secured funding for an inspiring redecoration project that included vibrant paintings on walls and the transformation of dull walkways.



Corridors at Holme House decorated with coloured Perspex and murals

- 1.14 Leaders in the privately operated prisons we visited tended to have more flexibility in how they spent their budget, and better systems to bid for money from within their company. This was evident in the quality of the enrichment activities they offered and generally good living conditions.
- 1.15 Staffing shortfalls were having an impact on leaders' efforts to deliver purposeful regimes but this did not deter them from work to improve the culture in their prisons. We heard about many initiatives to retain staff through support and recognition. The privately run prisons we visited during our fieldwork mitigated the impact of low staffing levels by harnessing prisoner skills and capability to provide a varied and valued range of services and support (see Section 4: Prisons as communities).

Consistency and stability of leadership

- 1.16 It was evident that, to maintain a positive culture, there needed to be consistency in leadership roles to continue to reinforce the vision and embed practice. The leaders we spoke to who were making progress in difficult prisons had been in their post for several years: the director of Rye Hill had been there for six years, and the governor at Warren Hill for four. The director of Oakwood took up post in 2021 from a

predecessor who had been there for eight years; between them they had established the progressive culture we found during our visit.

Section 2 Boundaries, rules and rewards

'There are a lot of little rules, which sounds pathetic, but they keep you in check.'

Prisoner, Rye Hill

Rules and boundaries

- 2.1 If a prison is to operate safely and effectively, there needs to be an established system of rules and procedures that are clearly communicated, and fairly and promptly administered.
- 2.2 Prisoners often tell inspectors that they like being in a calm environment in which staff maintain good order, challenge bad behaviour, prevent bullying and reward good behaviour. For the most part, prisoners will follow rules and accept sanctions when they feel that they are fair and transparent, and when there is an incentive to do so.
- 2.3 Clearly established boundaries create expectations, and the failure to adhere to them pits prisoners uncomfortably against the prevailing culture.

'You adapt to your environment, so if you are put in a setting and it's absolute chaos and it's survival of the fittest, naturally and instinctively that's how you start to behave. Most people, even if they are coming from wild places, they land here and they feel the energy of the place and they adapt. So, when we came here, we were exactly the same. After two or three months you figure the place out... if you see everyone on the mains behaving, got good jobs, and you're trying to be the wing clown and you're trying to start fights, you're gonna stick out like a sore thumb.'

Prisoner, Oakwood

- 2.4 At many of the prisons we visited, staff and peer supporters worked together to communicate the behaviour that was expected and promote the opportunities available to prisoners as soon as they arrived. Simple rules for clothing, vaping, and lock up times were explained, as were the benefits of living on safe, well-ordered units with good access to valuable incentives. Positive approaches adopted in reception and induction units set the tone and helped prisoners to understand what was expected of them.

'I am not a sheep, far from a sheep. But if everyone around you is doing one thing it is easy to fall into line... if everyone on the wing is chilling and not fighting you've got nothing to get dragged into.'

Prisoner, Buckley Hall

- 2.5 At Warren Hill, prisoners had produced a useful induction magazine to help their peers navigate their time at the prison. Leaders and prisoners at Rye Hill had redesigned their reception environment and processes to work more effectively, including removing separate, small holding rooms to create a brighter, more open space. They also used peer mentors effectively to help prisoners settle in. Similarly, in the reception area at Swansea, first night staff talked about the importance of forging good relationships as early as possible. We observed them putting prisoners at ease and helping them to sort out immediate issues. Reception peer supporters said they felt part of the reception team and were treated 'like human beings'. The approach adopted at Swansea made prisoners feel welcome but also established expectations about behaviour and engagement with the regime.

'Extremely positive culture – doesn't matter where you come from... everyone's together... not fighting... Starts with prisoners being polite and courteous. Reception staff are good and then Insiders set the tone.'

Prisoner, Swansea



An induction brochure from Warren Hill (left) and the reception at Rye Hill

- 2.6 Prisoners at Warren Hill, Swansea, Rye Hill, and Oakwood were given lots of responsibility and enjoyed many freedoms, but they were also clear about the rules and boundaries. During our visits to these prisons, we observed staff, including those who were relatively new, challenging prisoners for minor rule breaches authoritatively, while maintaining good relationships.

- 2.7 At Buckley Hall, staff were working with a group of long-term prisoners to deliver a course and mentoring scheme called LARM – Learning, Accountability, Responsibility and Managing Emotion – which was targeted at prisoners struggling to cope in the prison environment.
- 2.8 Leaders acknowledged that a whole-prison approach to behaviour management was important; it was more than enforcing disciplinary procedures, it was about working together with a shared ambition to motivate prisoners. Some leaders acknowledged they still had work to do, but in most cases, they had managed to strike the right balance between maintaining order and creating opportunity. Prisoners understood and respected the boundaries because they were clear, they made them feel safe, and they incorporated meaningful rewards.

Traditional responses to bad behaviour

- 2.9 All prisons use sanctions to encourage an acceptable standard of behaviour and maintain order and control. These usually involve a loss of privileges and can result in prisoners being separated from their peers. Official sanctions in prisons are applied by staff using the incentives framework for minor infringements and by governors using the more formal adjudication system. More serious breaches are dealt with through independent adjudication by a judge or the police for criminal offences. These systems are clearly embedded in the operation of prisons, which make them a common route to deal with behaviour issues. While there is a need for such systems to punish bad behaviour, it is rare that punishment alone will change behaviour for the better.
- 2.10 The CMs we consulted said that prisoners responded better to tangible incentives and that punishments needed to be proportionate. When we spoke to ex-prisoners, they recalled staff being too quick to use punishment and too slow to acknowledge good behaviour. They appealed for punishments to be fair and proportionate, which was echoed in our consultation with academics.
- 2.11 Leaders in prisons with some of the more positive cultures (notably Warren Hill, Rye Hill and Oakwood) had prioritised the development of a community where prisoners were encouraged to be good citizens (see Section 4: Prisons as communities). While the prisons had clear sanctions in place, their focus was on the use of incentives and rewards to motivate positive behaviour. When a prisoner did break the rules or behave badly, staff sought to understand the reasons and to address the issues.
- 2.12 The challenge, support and intervention plan (CSIP) process was introduced by HMPPS in 2018 and uses a targeted case management approach to manage the perpetrators of violence and, in some cases, to support the victims of violence. In the many discussions we had with prisoners, CSIP was only mentioned on one occasion as an effective process to motivate good behaviour. This was partly because the prisons we visited did not rely heavily on the system. In the case that was highlighted to us, the prisoner was displaying severe and

disruptive poor behaviour. His case was being managed by the head of safety, who had created a detailed plan to help him address his issues. The prisoner's family had also been involved, which he said was a turning point in his decision to change his behaviour.

- 2.13 The CMs we spoke to considered CSIP to be a largely administrative exercise requiring them to document actions, but the system did not provide them with extra tools or additional funding to support effective intervention.
- 2.14 None of the leaders or prisoners we spoke to for this thematic review highlighted the adjudication system as an effective way to motivate positive behaviour. Again, this was partly because most of the prisons we selected for fieldwork addressed behaviour through more proactive interventions. At Warren Hill and Buckley Hall, for example, leaders had introduced adjudication punishments based on principles of restorative justice or community payback. These included litter picking, or the suspension of punishment if the prisoner committed to work with the substance misuse service.
- 2.15 Segregating prisoners to maintain good order and discipline or to protect an individual at risk from other prisoners is common practice in almost all prisons. While prisons need to use segregation in some cases, very few use this time productively to understand and address behavioural issues, or to work out what would motivate prisoners to break the cycle. While we have seen an increase in the use of psychologists in some segregation units, most prisoners' experience in segregation is neither purposeful nor motivational.
- 2.16 Leaders at our fieldwork sites understood that using formal schemes on their own were not enough to engage prisoners. They had built on and adapted the schemes, constantly looking for opportunities to support their desired culture.

Incentives and reward schemes

- 2.17 Establishing and promoting a system with defined expectations about behaviour, and clear guidance on how to gain the incentives and rewards within it, is a sound principle. However, traditional incentives schemes in prisons often have negative connotations, with prisoners seeing them as a tool to punish and isolate them. Very often there is little distinction between the different levels, particularly between standard and enhanced, and they have limited motivational impact.
- 2.18 It was clear from our fieldwork that substantial and meaningful incentives contributed to the positive motivational cultures we found. CMs spoke about the importance of operating the incentive scheme fairly and offering significant rewards to prisoners on the highest level.
- 2.19 At Oakwood, leaders had considered what really motivated their prisoners and the rewards available to those who had contributed most effectively to the prison community. Prisoners on 'platinum' level, usually peer mentors or leaders of a peer-led initiative (see Section 4:

Prisons as communities), benefitted from some of the most valued rewards, including good time out of cell, the best cooking facilities, and additional extended social visits.

‘Those type of initiatives... even if you are not in that role working those type of jobs, it is something that you can aspire to, coz you look at all these lads that are getting all these privileges and want to work towards that.’

Prisoner, Oakwood

- 2.20 Oakwood operated a points-based system with embedded peer support. Leaders had created several 'reward' wings for prisoners who contributed to the prison community, supporting their peers, and demonstrating consistently positive behaviour. On these wings, prisoners enjoyed greater freedom and on the platinum wing prisoners were unlocked with minimal supervision until 9pm. The prison had also gained sponsorship to repurpose a series of unused rooms into individual visit rooms, supervised via camera. These opportunities were advertised and promoted from the day prisoners arrived, and most prisoners talked about their plans to get to the reward wings.
- 2.21 Oakwood also managed prisoners who struggled to comply with the regime in a more effective way than we see in many other prisons. Prisoners on basic were allocated to one of two designated wings, where they took part in structured interventions designed to return prisoners to a standard wing within four weeks. A team of peer workers provided one-to-one mentoring to guide and support this group. Prisoners were required to engage in some form of community payback such as cleaning or redecorating parts of the prison to promote the concept of citizenship. Some attended one of two workshops set up to manage prisoners under 30 and those who were on basic. The workshop timetable was adapted to include a combination of work, recreation, and mentoring, which was effective in keeping the target audience engaged.

‘I am 23 and I just came off basic, I spoke to DoE PLI and he got me on the Duke of Edinburgh course, and from that I got on barbering... it has kinda helped me get back on track, I'm doing everything now that I want to be doing to better myself. The barbering, I can do that when I'm released from prison, I'm really enjoying it. Now in the back of my head, like before I kinda didn't mind if I went to basic, I was in a bad mindset coz I didn't have anything to lose. But now, I have been given all these opportunities, I'm not going to sacrifice that... I'm doing better than I have ever done in jail before.’

Prisoner, Oakwood

- 2.22 Prisoners placed a great deal of value in incentives that mirrored activities or pastimes that were available to them in the community. These were usually activities that enabled prisoners to practise

independent living skills and feel part of a community. They were often linked to a reward scheme and were an effective motivator to behaviour.

- 2.23 Leaders who supported such initiatives placed a great deal of trust in prisoners and their decisions inevitably carried a degree of risk, but, for the most part, this trust was not misplaced as prisoners worked hard to retain the privileges they had earned. As with peer work, most prisoners were motivated by the trust and responsibility given to them. On rare occasions, a prisoner would abuse the trust, and it took courage for leaders to deal with those situations without depriving the majority of much-valued opportunities.
- 2.24 In some prisons that we inspect, there are few inspiring or motivational incentives, and some no longer offer basic privileges that were commonplace prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, we often find that access to recreational equipment like pool tables remains significantly curtailed, and some leaders are slow to replace broken communal toasters and microwaves because they think prisoners will not look after them.
- 2.25 In stark contrast, prisoners at Warren Hill could earn the opportunity to visit a community hub with a cafe, supermarket, clothes store, and barber shop. Rye Hill and Oakwood provided similar well-promoted and highly-valued opportunities. Prisoners at Drake Hall and Full Sutton could access a coffee shop, although leaders there had missed an opportunity to promote and use these facilities to greater advantage.



Supermarket (left) and clothes shop at Warren Hill



Coffee shops at Drake Hall (left) and Full Sutton

- 2.26 Prisoners at Warren Hill – almost all of whom presented a high-risk of harm and serving indeterminate sentences – were managed on the enhanced behaviour monitoring (EBM) scheme, a national mechanism for monitoring risk-related behaviour. A prison psychologist conducted a case history review on each new arrival to provide information to prison offender managers (POMs) and key workers who supported prisoners to manage and reduce their risk. The scheme incorporated a series of stages, similar to the levels within a traditional incentive scheme, with each stage offering better rewards. To move through the stages of the scheme prisoners had to demonstrate to a multi-agency board that they had made progress in reducing their risk.

'The EBM is a good part of Warren Hill... They don't give stage 2 lightly – they are strict here, everyone knows where they stand, you only get to stage 3 if you have really earned it. The benefits are meaningful. For example, at stage 2 you can use the bistro... which provides a really normal type of café experience, and makes a big difference.'

Prisoner, Warren Hill

- 2.27 As prisoners progressed through the three stages of the scheme, the benefits and rewards became more valuable, and included the opportunity to apply for a private extended visit in a unique family room (see Section 4: Prisons as communities).
- 2.28 The EBM process was challenging, and prisoners had to work hard to earn the privileges on offer. Those who were not considered to be making enough progress could find themselves called to a multidisciplinary meeting which would determine the course of action necessary; this could be a regressive move to a lower stage with a new plan in place to help them improve or, in severe cases, deselection from the programme and removal from Warren Hill.

Recognising and celebrating good work

- 2.29 Most prisoners we spoke to were motivated when their achievements and progress were recognised and celebrated. Several prisons we visited operated a peer nomination award scheme. Prisoners told us they valued hearing praise or recognition when they had done something positive. Celebrating success had the added benefit of communicating and promoting good behaviour to other prisoners (see Section 7: Communication).

‘You feel rewarded, appreciated and what you have done, or input you have put into the prison has been noticed. You feel valued and that you are adding some value... and moving forward.’

Prisoner, Full Sutton

- 2.30 In some prisons this extended to staff who could also nominate or be nominated. At Rye Hill, prisoners and staff could nominate a prisoner for an award, and, if selected, the prisoner could invite their family to a celebration event. This was then shared on the prison vlog to promote the achievement. The prison had also introduced a process where prisoners could write about their own achievements and discuss it at their key worker session. This helped prisoners to recognise and take ownership of their own behaviour. Warren Hill had a similar initiative where each prisoner was issued with a folder to record all their achievements and successes.
- 2.31 In some of the fieldwork sites we visited, celebrating good behaviour was inherent in the culture, and most of the prisoners were on the enhanced level of the incentives scheme. In these prisons, general standards were good, staff treated prisoners with respect, and the rewards for actively engaging in the prison regime were valuable and well promoted.

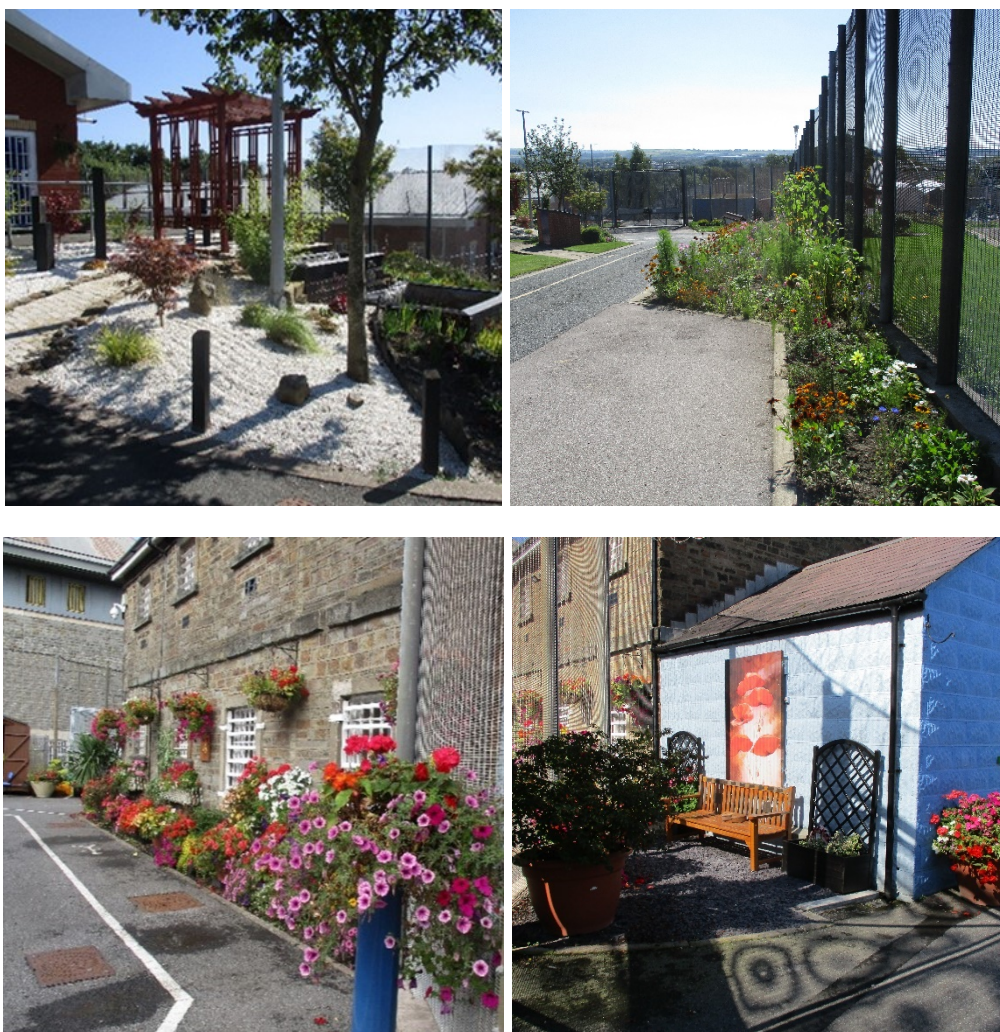
The environment as a motivator

- 2.32 The attention given to the physical environment is often a strong indicator of the culture in a prison and the impact of the environment on prisoners' mood, behaviour and motivation should not be underestimated. The 'broken window' theory (see glossary) is widely accepted in academic and operational contexts; visible signs of disorder and misbehaviour in an environment encourage further poor behaviour by normalising it. The converse is also true; most prisoners are likely to respect and support efforts to maintain a clean, bright and welcoming environment.

‘As soon as the bus came into the gate, you could feel the calmness, you could see it. This prison, the atmosphere, alone, it’s probably one of the best I’ve been to in a long, long time... It all adds a presence to the prison and the people who are in it.’

Prisoner, Warren Hill

2.33 In the prisons we visited for this report, great care had been taken to improve the environment and make the most of outside spaces. Harsh exteriors had been softened with trees, flowers, and shrubbery. During our visits and inspections, we have seen that this is possible even in inner-city, reception prisons on a small site. In many cases, prisoners had a stake in the design and creation of these spaces, bringing a sense of ownership and pride. At prisons including Buckley Hall and Warren Hill, fruit, vegetables and herbs were grown for food, not just in a separate horticulture area, but outside residential units.



Walkways and outdoor seating at Buckley Hall (top) and Swansea



Planting at Oakwood

2.34 Murals and artwork were used extensively to improve austere prison buildings and were a vivid demonstration to prisoners that leaders cared about their living conditions and well-being. At Holme House, the creative use of coloured Perspex on windows and depictions of local beauty spots transformed the otherwise dull concrete walkways. Murals and painted fabrics adorned the walls and corridors, brightening and softening the environment. Impressive artwork had also been introduced across Swansea prison, painted by a skilled prisoner. Despite being an inner-city local jail with limited greenery or outside space, the use of this artwork made the prison more welcoming and improved the environment.



Murals at Swansea (left) and Warren Hill

- 2.35 During our interviews with prisoners, they told us that getting access to a 'better wing' was often a motivating factor in their behaviour. Prisoners aspired to reach the wings that were well looked after, with single cells (especially those with internal sanitation), lots of time unlocked and proper cooking facilities. Many of the wings we visited during the fieldwork visits were clean and tidy. Prisoners took pride in their environment and could personalise their living space.

'But the fact I have a single cell, I can lock myself off, if I'm having a bad day can get a jigsaw out, and I can be myself in this place and in other jails you wouldn't be able to do that.'

Prisoner, Rye Hill

- 2.36 The most inspiring wings were those that operated as communities. Prisoners at Oakwood benefitted from the work of one of their peer-led initiatives (PLIs) (see Section 4: Prisons as communities) where a group of prisoners worked together to make sure the wing communities ran smoothly, organising tasks such as cleaning and kit ordering. The systems worked better than in many other prisons because the prisoners were empowered and invested in the success of the initiative. PLIs provided opportunities for change, enabling prisoners to cope with responsibility and develop new skills – key factors in reducing future risk.

Section 3 Positive, purposeful regimes

Active regimes support better engagement

'The prison gives me room and scope for development if you want that for yourself.'

Prisoner, Warren Hill

- 3.1 Some of the most productive prisons are those in which prisoners are fully occupied for most of their day, either attending work and education, engaging in offending behaviour work, or taking part in other community activities. In prisons where there is little purposeful activity or the quality of the provision is poor, prisoners are usually less inclined to engage, and they will be locked up for most of the day or unlocked but bored on the wing. This does not motivate prisoners to engage positively with prison staff and with their sentence plan, and in some cases can drive negative behaviour, including drug misuse and violence.
- 3.2 In the same way that the community at large was locked down during the COVID-19 pandemic, so too were prisons. Prisoners had very little time out of cell and spent limited time doing anything purposeful. Staffing shortfalls since the pandemic have exacerbated this situation. Even in some of our most recent inspections, we have still found very poor access to purposeful activity, a lack of access to interventions to address offending behaviour, and less effective relationships between staff and prisoners.
- 3.3 In our 2022–23 annual report we said that, despite pandemic restrictions being lifted, 42% of prisoners told us they were still locked in their cell for more than 22 hours on weekdays. At weekends it was even worse, as evidenced by the findings in our thematic review, *Weekends in prison*, published in 2023. During 2023–24, our survey data indicated that 21% of adult men were still locked up for most of the day.
- 3.4 In contrast, our findings at the prisons we visited for this report were more positive. Most prisoners were unlocked and encouraged to engage in varied regimes. At Rye Hill and Oakwood, prisoners were out of their cells in work or education or engaged in an offending behaviour intervention or other purposeful activity.
- 3.5 Despite being a reception prison with high numbers of remand prisoners, one of the most active jails we visited was Swansea. Workshops, classrooms, and the library were busy, and prisoners spoke to us about the importance of being in work and education.

- 3.6 Leaders at Oakwood and Rye Hill actively engaged prisoners to make sure that the regime met the needs of the population. If prisoners identified a gap in a service or process, they were invited to submit a business case setting out how the gaps could be filled. Both establishments also offered prisoners exciting work opportunities in their media hubs, and two of Oakwood's workshops contributed directly to the prison's behaviour management strategy (see Section 4: Prisons as communities).

Education and employment linked to life on release

- 3.7 Prisoners were motivated by work, education and activities that were interesting, stimulating and gave them skills they could use to gain employment on release. One prisoner in Swansea told us about two important things that had happened to him since arriving at the prison. First, his participation in education had given him a sense of purpose and encouraged him not to give up hope. Second, he described how the prisoners and staff worked together to make his wing 'great'. He described his experiences as 'life-changing'.
- 3.8 Buckley Hall provided interesting opportunities, such as a prisoner-led project to make garden furniture from old pallets. At Drake Hall jobs in the Halfords workshop were sought-after job because they offered highly paid, skilled work. There were numerous examples of women being employed by Halfords on release wherever they lived in the country. Leaders had successfully promoted the benefits of the workshop through an advertisement on prison TV. Swansea had plans to introduce a workshop manufacturing windows, where prisoners would develop useful skills and be paid a real wage to help save towards accommodation on release.



The Halfords workshop at Drake Hall

'When jail was first invented... you just locked them and leave them. You now realise that you want to rehabilitate them, you don't want them to come out and just be bums on the street, you want to give them something to do. So like here they let them dig up the ground and create a veg patch, they gave them a timber workshop, these are all skills you can use when you go out, you're giving them something that could get them employed.'

Prisoner, Oakwood

- 3.9 In our inspection reports, we frequently comment on poor attendance at education, work and training. When the education provision in the prison is interesting, well taught, and clearly linked to employment on release, it is more likely to attract and retain prisoners.
- 3.10 In general prison wages are low and often prisoners rely on money being sent in from families to help them fund essentials from the expensive prison canteen. When there is an activity that pays comparatively well, prisoners are motivated to earn and maintain their place on it. In recent years, we have found that more prisons are paying slightly higher wages for vocational work and education to motivate prisoners to engage in activities that will benefit them on release. In many prisons, there will be at least one workshop that operates on a commercial basis that attracts a higher wage. Profits from some of the commercial projects are also donated to charity as a form of community payback. In the two private prisons we visited, most prisoners were better paid than in public sector prisons.



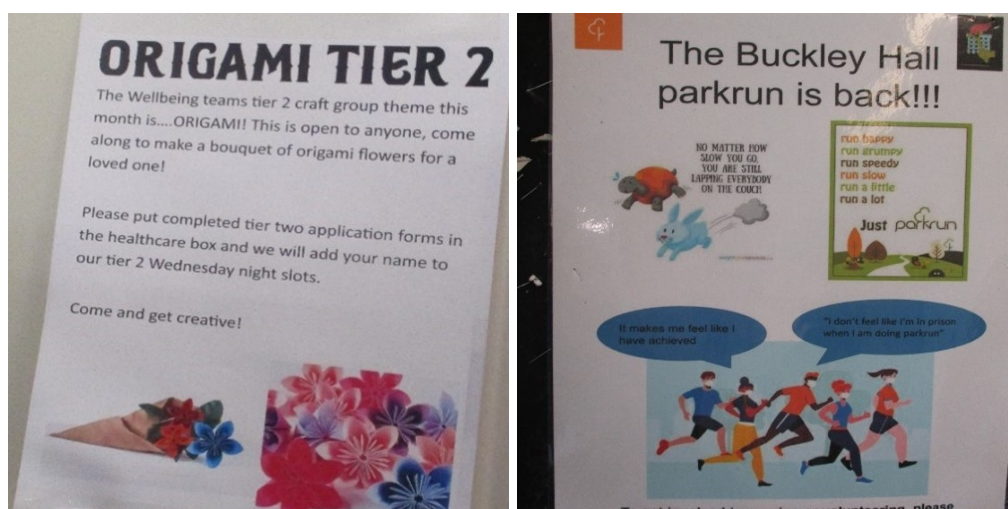
The carpentry workshop at Oakwood

- 3.11 The carpentry shop at Oakwood had been built and was run predominantly by prisoners. The main shop was connected to a series of individual carpentry units, each of which was run as a business by a small number of prisoners. The workshops made and sold products commercially and the prisoners involved benefitted from a percentage of the small profit generated; this served as a motivator for prisoners

who were trying to create some financial stability in prison and on release.

The value of enrichment activities

- 3.12 While education, vocational skills and work were critical components of the prison regime, prisoners also developed important employability and social skills through the provision of enrichment activities. For some prisoners, their involvement in interesting and enjoyable events and activities gave them the courage and motivation to engage in formal education or work to develop their skills.
- 3.13 Most of the prisons we visited offered a good enrichment curriculum. Activities including Parkruns and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme were valued by prisoners. There were also additional activities such as arts classes, music, film nights, and drama club. However, even in our site visits, leaders did not always promote the activities as part of a pathway to rehabilitation. Rye Hill and Oakwood had done this more successfully than others, promoting and celebrating those who had achieved success as a means of motivating other prisoners to get involved.
- 3.14 Buckley Hall had developed a range of evening and weekend activities which prisoners could access. These took place off the wing at the gym, education or the well-being hub known as the 'Hive'. Activities included events such as games nights, 'knit and natter', and men's club. Prisoners valued the sessions, although leaders needed to promote and encourage better attendance.



Posters at Buckley Hall advertising activities

Time out to exercise and interact with peers

- 3.15 Being locked up for long periods, particularly when sharing small cells, inevitably impacts negatively on well-being and motivation. It was not surprising, therefore, that our fieldwork found time out of cell to exercise or socialise with peers was a significant motivator for prisoners. At Oakwood, for example, prisoners could earn a place on

several different reward wings where they were unlocked for longer. Prisoners on the highest incentives level could apply to live on Douglas unit where they were unlocked until 9pm with minimal supervision.



Core values of the Douglas unit at Oakwood

- 3.16 Sport and exercise have always been regarded as powerful incentives to encourage good behaviour in prisons, with additional sessions offered to those on the higher levels of the rewards scheme. We found that exercise motivated prisoners beyond simply complying with the regime – it helped prisoners to relax, build confidence and improve their mental health.
- 3.17 Most of the sites we visited had harnessed this to motivate prisoners. Many had created a designated gym area on residential units to help prisoners maintain a healthy lifestyle. Prisoners at Full Sutton and Buckley Hall, for example, could use the equipment in the morning before the start of work, which they said gave them a routine similar to a ‘normal working day’ in the community.
- 3.18 During our inspections, we regularly highlight enthusiastic physical education teams who have played a pivotal role in motivating prisoners to make constructive use of their time in prison. For example, since its inception at Haverigg in 2017, many prisons now facilitate regular prison-specific Parkrun events (see glossary). The PE officer who developed the concept of Parkrun in a custodial setting aimed to encourage prisoners, especially those who had not previously engaged in physical activity, to improve their health and well-being, and to foster positive relationships between staff and prisoners. Prisoners who take part are also more likely to join Parkrun events on release, helping them to become part of a new community of people.

- 3.19 Similar concepts include the Football Association Twinning project, which is based in 73 prisons, including the women's estate. The project encourages prisoners to engage in football-based programmes to improve their mental and physical well-being and gain a qualification that could lead to employment on release.



A football pitch at Swansea used for exercise and the Twinning project

Helping prisoners to prepare for release

- 3.20 Almost all prisoners will at some point be released back into the community, and prisons are expected to prepare and equip them with the skills and resources they need to reduce the likelihood of them reoffending. Sentenced prisoners should have both a sentence and a resettlement plan which identify their risks and needs, although the quality of both varies greatly across prisons. Most prisoners are motivated to address the objectives in their plans because it means they are more likely to be released sooner and it increases their chances of avoiding crime on release. For the same reason, most prisoners also look for sustainable accommodation and a job, alongside appropriate 'through the gate' support for substance misuse problems and health concerns.
- 3.21 In too many prisons we inspect, prisoners express frustration about the difficulties they have in progressing through their sentence plan. They often tell us they feel stuck due to the lack of offending behaviour interventions and purposeful activity that would help them to reduce their risk and equip them with better skills for finding and keeping a job. This frustration inevitably leads to feelings of hopelessness that can affect their behaviour.

- 3.22 At Swansea an impressive employment hub assessed prisoners on arrival to determine the level of support and interventions they would need to prepare them for release. Prisoners could also attend a discharge board to discuss arrangements for release, and a helpful departure lounge on the day of release.

‘In August 2022 leaders had opened an employment hub and employment support had improved. Three employment fairs had been organised, with a number of prospective employers and support agencies attending. Leaders had established a range of contacts, including employers in the local community, who regularly attended the prison to talk to prisoners about opportunities on release. Employment outcomes on release were better than at similar prisons, with just over a fifth of prisoners leaving with employment.’

HMP Swansea inspection report, 2023

- 3.23 Drake Hall had recently held its first joint housing and employment event involving a good range of employers, training providers and housing providers alongside other support services. This was to become a regular event, working with different stakeholders each time to support women on release.
- 3.24 In the fieldwork sites, prisoners told us that being able to access interventions and receive good support to prepare for release motivated them to behave.
- 3.25 At Drake Hall, a small number of women were able to live in an open unit just outside the prison. They enjoyed greater freedom and were granted release on temporary licence (ROTL) to work in the community which helped them to prepare for release. Leaders at Drake Hall were not, however, maximising the opportunity to promote the unit as an incentive to the women in the closed site.

Section 4 Prisons as communities

Consultation: hearing the prisoner's voice

- 4.1 The role of consultation in motivating prisoners should not be underestimated. Actively seeking to understand the needs of the population, listening to their experiences, and using that learning to improve outcomes means prisoners feel respected and valued. Involving prisoners in the decisions that affect their day-to-day lives helps to build trust and gives them increased responsibility, both of which are important in a positive, motivational culture. Although most prisons have a prisoner council and consult groups of prisoners in relation to specific topics, the quality and effectiveness of these varies greatly.
- 4.2 During inspections, we are often told by prisoners not selected to attend consultation events that they do not know what difference the consultation has made because they have not received feedback. Consultation is usually more effective when the governor or other senior decision-makers are involved, and the outcomes are communicated clearly to all staff and prisoners. Occasionally leaders celebrate what has been achieved through consultation in 'you said, we did' posters, reinforcing a positive message that the prisoner voice is heard.
- 4.3 Consultation played an important role in most of the prisons we visited for this report. At Swansea, prisoners could raise issues with their wing representative who attended a fortnightly wing meeting and provided feedback to their peers on the outcome of discussions. Prisoners said they felt listened to, that their opinion was valued, and as a result they willingly engaged with the process. At Rye Hill, the prison council operated effectively and professionally; representatives worked alongside functional heads on specific areas of business. The council meeting was filmed and shown on prison TV, which provided transparency.

Peer work: giving prisoners a stake in the prison community

- 4.4 One of the most effective ways to motivate prisoners is to give them a stake in the prison community. In most establishments we visit there are prisoners who volunteer or are employed to offer support to their peers. Some of the most common peer support roles include prisoners working in reception and induction units to support new arrivals, prisoners trained by the Samaritans to provide confidential support to prisoners in crisis (Listeners), and equalities champions who support their peers in protected characteristic groups (see glossary). Some prisoners are also trained to provide a mentoring role in areas including education, substance misuse services and health care.
- 4.5 The quality of the peer work scheme in a prison is often indicative of the prevailing culture. In a prison where leaders and prisoners have

worked together to establish a well-functioning community, prisoners are more likely to be trusted and feel invested in supporting that community. In the more effective schemes, peer workers are recruited, have a job description, receive training, and report to a manager who is readily available and will advocate for them if there are obstacles to delivering their work. The schemes are well promoted, and prisoners are motivated to take part.

- 4.6 When peer workers feel recognised and supported by staff, they report feeling responsible for providing a good service and take pride in their work. They also develop important skills and confidence that can give them the courage to engage in other work to address their offending behaviour. The role of peer worker provides an effective incentive to others to behave and engage, particularly because it usually comes with greater freedoms and access to managers and decision makers. For many peer workers, the biggest reward comes from playing an important role in the prison community; they behave because they want to retain their position of influence.

'This jail is good at utilising the skills of prisoners, so when people come here it's like the prison looks and thinks... what can I use them for to make this place better, and has he got these good skills that I can use, is he a team leader... the jail looks at you and asks what does he bring to the table here? Let me give you a trusted position and utilise you and it'll help, so they let you contribute to the ideas.'

Prisoner, Oakwood

- 4.7 While most prisons we visited had embraced peer work to contribute to the effective running of their prisons, Rye Hill and Oakwood had taken it to another level, which leaders considered to be a major factor in their jails being safe and productive. Both had developed a network of peer-led initiatives (PLIs), each of which was designed to add value to the prison community.
- 4.8 Prisoners were encouraged to submit ideas for a PLI by drawing up a business case setting out its purpose and devising a plan for how it would operate and what resources would be needed, including prison governance arrangements. The senior team would consider each PLI and, if successful, the applicant was responsible for setting up the PLI and accountable for its success.
- 4.9 Each PLI was run like a small business, with various levels of managers at prisoner level and appointed prison managers who oversaw the work. PLI leads were responsible for implementing their initiatives in line with the prison's strategies. They had to manage any budget allocated and, at Rye Hill, they also produced a self-assessment report to provide assurance that the PLI was operating effectively. The PLIs enabled many prisoners to learn key business, organisational and leadership skills, as well as giving them significant ownership of their prison community.

- 4.10 The use of peer work under the PLIs was embedded across every function of Oakwood and Rye Hill and made a notable positive difference to the culture and behaviour in the prison. Despite housing over 2,000 category C prisoners, Oakwood was one of the safest and most stable prisons in its comparator group. Contributing to this was the success of two behaviour management initiatives. PLI Peace and Community Engagement (PACE) representatives worked with staff to help resolve conflicts at the earliest opportunity. They met all new arrivals as part of the prison's reception and induction processes and worked with those who had identified a potential conflict with a prisoner already at Oakwood. They then held meetings to decide how this would be managed. In many cases they mediated between parties and negotiated a truce which enabled all involved to take part in the full range of opportunities available (see Section 1: The role of leaders).
- 4.11 Another PLI had been set up to support prisoners who were on the basic level of the incentives scheme. Basic intervention group (BIG) representatives provided a range of interventions (including the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme for younger prisoners) and one-to-one mentoring to help prisoners, who often had a long record of poor compliance, to progress to the standard regime.

'It's something different. In a majority of other jails it's wing cleaning, laundry, kitchens, gym and workshops... when you start in remand, that's the standard, everyone is trying to get the servery job and the wing job because those are the ones that get you out of your cell more. But when you get longer into your sentence, yeah you've done those and got your enhanced, but what skills have you gained and what are you going to take back out to your people...

'When they give them the PLI jobs, they are learning leadership, responsibility, how to behave, and now they don't want to lose stuff that they've worked hard for, realising I can put myself in certain positions now and have faith...

'I never worked a day in my life outside... I never wanted to go for a job interview, but now, I'm confident that I could go there... it helps people to get themselves out of the box they put themselves in. I put myself in that box, the group I was rolling with outside, we were like yeah, they won't give us a job so we didn't even bother with interviews, we did what we did...

'Jim [manager] gave me a chance, and after a while I realised you know what... give yourself a chance, take yourself out of the box you put yourself in. This type of thing [PLI job] helps me do that... it shows people they can do things they never thought they could do.'

Prisoner, Oakwood

Involvement of family

- 4.12 Throughout our inspections and during the fieldwork visits for this report, we were reminded by prisoners that the ability to build and maintain relationships with their family and friends could have a huge bearing on their time in custody. The opportunity to see and hear from family and friends could be an important motivator, improving prisoners' well-being and giving them hope for their return to the community.
- 4.13 In the very best, but sadly rarest, cases, prisons had involved families in casework when prisoners were struggling to cope or behave; an engagement that was beneficial to both the families and the prison. One prisoner at Swansea told us that the involvement of his family while he was on a CSIP for violence was the catalyst for the significant improvement in his behaviour (see Section 2: Boundaries, rules and rewards).

'The last time I was in prison I didn't have any children and now I have four so I have to get out of here for the kids and one reason why I am keeping my head down... I have something to get out to this time whereas last time I wasn't bothered and getting into all sorts of trouble.'

Prisoner, Buckley Hall

- 4.14 Most prisons now have in-cell telephones so that prisoners can keep in touch with their families and friends throughout the day. All prisons facilitate social visits and video calls for those who cannot attend the prison in person. The quality and access to these visits varies between prisons.
- 4.15 Many prisons conduct a regular survey with prisoners' families to capture their views. Swansea had taken this one step further and introduced a 'coffee and chat' session which enabled families to meet a senior leader to ask questions about prison policies or raise issues. For example, a family member had expressed confusion over communication about what clothing was acceptable in visits which led to a local policy review and updated guidance. Leaders at Buckley Hall held regular meetings with families to discuss their experience when visiting the prison. These forums included lunch, a tour and a social visit at the end of the meeting, which did not count towards the prisoners' monthly allowance.
- 4.16 Leaders at Warren Hill, Oakwood, and Rye Hill understood and embraced the importance of family, involving them – where appropriate – in reward schemes and interventions. At Holme House, prisoners on the enhanced incentive level could buy packs of treats from Nepacs (see glossary) for family members who were coming to see them. This was a popular and inexpensive incentive which recognised that families sometimes struggled to cover the costs of prison visits. Buckley Hall hosted a special Mother's Day event, which included afternoon tea funded by the prisoners.

- 4.17 Prisoners on the family unit at Oakwood could apply for an extended visit session with their families to cook and eat a meal together. Leaders had also secured sponsorship funding to refurbish a group of unused rooms to create private visit spaces supervised by CCTV. Known as 'lounge visits', each room was themed: for example one was decorated like a family living room with sofas. The opportunity to meet families in these rooms was a valuable incentive to prisoners on the highest reward level. Warren Hill also harnessed the value of extended, more private visits, offering prisoners on stage 3 of the EBM the opportunity to spend time with family in a more private space furnished with a sofa, kitchenette, children's toys and TV.



Family visiting room and dining space at Oakwood



Stage 3 visits room at Warren Hill

‘Being in jail and being able to spend such a quality time with your kids and family, just for the rest of the days... in the back of your mind you’re thinking “Oh I just want to go back and see my kids again in that similar set up”, so those privileges and what the jail is able to put on for prisoners enforces good conduct and behaviour and you want them to keep those things going.’

Prisoner, Oakwood

- 4.18 Many prisons we inspect offer some family days throughout the year, where prisoners can spend longer with their children in an adapted visit environment. Most of our fieldwork sites offered well-thought-out events targeted at young families. At Buckley Hall and Oakwood, prisoners could take their children to see the prison animals on family days, and at Swansea leaders had introduced toddler visits for those with very young children. Oakwood had also introduced a homework club, parents' evening, and kids' club, recognising the importance of prisoners being able to carry out normal tasks with their children despite their imprisonment.
- 4.19 In some of the fieldwork prisons, leaders had identified that some prisoners did not receive visits from their families and had introduced social visits between prisoners from different wings. At Rye Hill, Warren Hill and Oakwood, friends and family members in different parts of the prison could have a social visit in the visits hall with access to the café and board games.



Animals used at family days at Buckley Hall and Oakwood and the family room used for toddler visits at Swansea (bottom right)

Food, cooking and communal dining

- 4.20 All prisoners are provided with regular meals and most jails operate within similar food budgets. But the quality and popularity of food is often determined by the leadership team and facilities in the kitchen, the involvement of prisoners in selecting and cooking the meals, and the use of freshly grown local produce. Prisoners are required to select their meals weeks in advance, and sometimes the food is not as described on the menu or is substituted with something less preferable. A common complaint is the limited range of culturally diverse food, and a lack of flavour in the options available. For these reasons, prisoners are often excited about the opportunity to cook their own food and most prisons will provide some form of communal cooking equipment, ranging from fully equipped kitchens on wings to a table with a toaster and microwave.
- 4.21 During our fieldwork, the opportunity to prepare food and eat communally was described as one of the most valuable incentives. Cooking had enabled some prisoners to develop independent living

skills. One prisoner in Oakwood said he didn't know that meat had to be stored in a fridge until he learned to cook his own food at the prison.

- 4.22 Several sites we visited for this report used the provision of self-catering facilities as an incentive to encourage good behaviour and engagement with the regime. At Swansea, the substance-free unit provided self-catering facilities, and at Buckley Hall facilities were located on the progression unit. Part of the motivation to engage in the respective regimes on these units was to benefit from these facilities. At Drake Hall leaders had refurbished self-catering facilities on the wings which were well used. Women were also provided with a box of ingredients for each kitchen.



Self-catering facilities at Full Sutton (top left), Warren Hill (top right), Oakwood (bottom left) and Buckley Hall

- 4.23 At Oakwood, prisoners on the gold and platinum incentive levels could access self-catering facilities on several different wings. At Full Sutton, Warren Hill, and Oakwood they could buy food from local suppliers, and we saw prisoners pooling their resources to cook food together, an important normalising feature of living in a well-functioning community.

- 4.24 Some of prisons we visited for this report operated a scheme where prisoners could earn the highly valued privilege of opting out of prison

meals. They were given a small portion of the prison's food budget to buy their own fresh food outside of the usual canteen list. Prisoners told us that part of the appeal was the ability to budget more effectively, to combat low prison wages and high canteen costs. This privilege was available to a number of prisoners at Oakwood. At Warren Hill, it was available on stage three of the EBM scheme and helped to motivate prisoners to progress through their sentence. At Full Sutton, it was available for only a small number of enhanced prisoners and had the potential to be expanded so that more prisoners would feel it was within their reach.

- 4.25 Prisoners on our site visits also spoke about the importance of eating with their peers around a communal table rather than on a bed in their cell next to the toilet, and leaders promoted a community-focused regime with good communal dining facilities. During our inspections, we find that some leaders with a similar focus enable prisoners to eat together outside of their cells, for example by using foldaway tables when space is limited.



On-wing dining facilities at Rye Hill (left) Buckley Hall

- 4.26 Food had also been a central feature of many celebratory and cultural events at the prisons we visited. At Rye Hill, staff and prisoners enjoyed some time away from normal activities to celebrate Jamaica day with cultural education, music, and food. The importance of food as a means of connection and comfort was also highlighted in our 2022 thematic review, *The experiences of adult black male prisoners and black prison staff*.

‘One of the main things you miss in prison is the quality of the food... so to have that plate of food that I was used to on the outside was a big thing for me. I was shocked... this is a rural white area so for them to even do that was a big thing. It was nice of them to do it because they didn't have to.’

Prisoner, Rye Hill

Section 5 Responding to complex needs

Those serving long or indeterminate sentences

- 5.1 The ability to demonstrate progression is especially acute for those serving long or indeterminate sentences. Their release is determined by the Parole Board and therefore behaviour in custody plays a significant part in the Board's decision to release or move a prisoner to open conditions.

'They have been talking about my release, D cat and things like that, and they do have that kind of vibe here where it is all geared towards getting you out and getting you resettled and I think that's one really great thing about this prison. I haven't seen that in any other prison, to that level... even guys who have 10 years left they are on that road, focused on their parole.'

Prisoner, Rye Hill

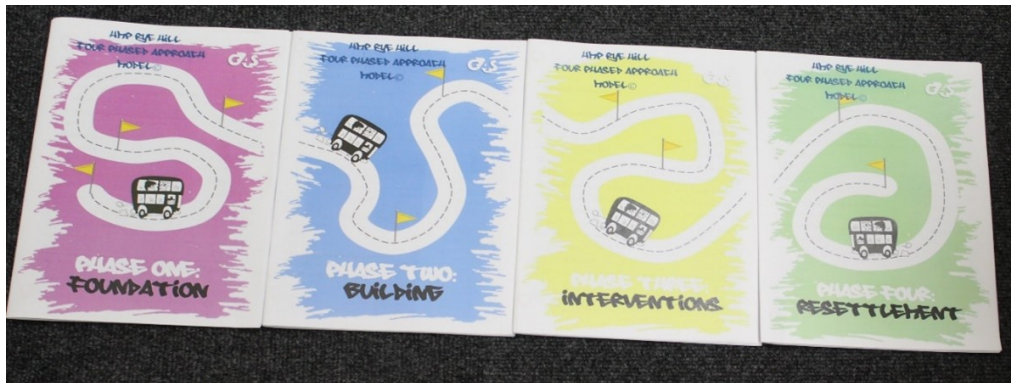
- 5.2 Warren Hill holds long-term prisoners serving life or indeterminate sentences. There was a focus on helping prisoners to reduce their risk and providing opportunities for them to demonstrate that they could be trusted. A 'mock' approved premises onsite allowed prisoners to experience what it might be like to live independently, but with conditions, on release.



Willow 'approved premises' location at Warren Hill

- 5.3 Oakwood had a specialist lifer unit, which provided targeted support and guidance for long-term prisoners. At Rye Hill, peer workers were

involved in the design of a new programme to help prisoners deal with long sentences and maintain a focus on eventual release. Breaking the sentence into clear, manageable blocks of time, the programme looked promising as a means of structuring and phasing rehabilitation and resettlement.



Making sense of a long sentence programme at Rye Hill

- 5.4 ROTL was a huge motivator for prisoners, enabling them to work and learn in the community, rebuild family ties, and prepare for release. It was unsurprising therefore that staff and prisoners at Warren Hill were frustrated that HMPPS had stopped access to ROTL for indeterminate sentence prisoners in the closed estate. Indeed, very few prisoners in any part of the closed estate have been allowed to apply for ROTL in recent years. However, in the absence of ROTL, the prisons we visited still found ways to help prisoners to develop independent living skills, through the provision of more freedom on units with reduced supervision, self-catering facilities, and being employed in trusted positions that taught important skills that could be used on release.

Learning from specialist units

- 5.5 Many of the positive motivating features we describe in this report already exist in prisons across the country in various types of specialist units; from therapeutic communities (TCs) and psychologically informed planned environments (PIPEs) to units that accommodate and support prisoners with similar needs together so that leaders can target resources and interventions. Good specialist units create a positive social climate where prisoners are motivated to behave and learn more productive ways to deal with their problems. They also motivate improved behaviour in those who are waiting for a space on a unit to become available. Holme House and Warren Hill operated effective PIPEs and TCs.

'It's a calm and thoughtful environment and as time has gone it's got even better... because of therapy and being here I think about why I don't like something and have the skills to deal with it in a better way than I used to. I used to use violence which made things worse.'

Prisoner, Warren Hill

- 5.6 Some of the most common specialist units are those accommodating prisoners who are trying to remain substance free (commonly known as incentivised substance-free living, ISFL), units holding either the youngest or the oldest prisoners, and more recently units for prisoners who are neurodivergent. We often find that these units only work well when they have a clear purpose, an agreed entry criteria and trained staff. They often attract some of the best officers who work in partnership with psychologists and health professionals, and, when they work effectively, prisoners benefit from a multi-disciplinary staff group working together to provide support.
- 5.7 These units often have their own distinct cultures that come from a commitment from staff to the prisoners in their care. Many prisoners tell us that they feel safer and more able to progress in a way they could not on a general wing. We often meet prisoners with histories of long periods in segregation or on the basic regime because their needs were not understood or met, who go on to flourish on specialist units.



ISFL gardens at Swansea (left) and Holme House

- 5.8 Several sites we visited operated well-run successful specialist units. We visited several ISFL units and, in most cases, prisoners were positive about the support they were receiving. In Swansea, prisoners on the ISFL were subject to regular drug testing, but also had additional substance misuse support and could participate in a 12-week substance misuse programme. The unit had a small garden where prisoners could grow fruit and vegetables, and they had access to the only self-catering facilities in the prison. Many prisoners we spoke to on other wings said their aim was to progress to the ISFL unit.

'I've been on G [ISFL] wing for a year now and it's the best thing I ever did. I had a job straight away as soon as I came on here. I had everything I wanted and if I needed something they helped me with it... it's mad the way staff treat you on here – they're all out there to help you, to rehabilitate you so hopefully people like me don't come back to jail... I had a few conversations about the 12-step programme. I did the 12-step programme ... it broke me and rebuilt me into the man I am today... from the young kid I was to the man I became.'

Prisoner, Swansea

- 5.9 The Supporting Transition Enabling Progression (STEP) unit at Full Sutton was an 18-bed residential unit for prisoners leaving the segregation unit who were not ready to return to normal location. The STEP intervention formed part of a wider long term and high security estate (LTHSE) strategy to manage and help prisoners with complex needs to make progress through their sentence. Staff set prisoners manageable goals, motivating them to progress through a behaviour management model consisting of five tiers. A multi-disciplinary team, including psychologists, supported prisoners and provided oversight of work on the unit. We were provided with some excellent examples of prisoners making good progress following intervention on the STEP unit.
- 5.10 At Drake Hall women were positive about the support they received on the Hamlet unit, which operated as a small community with a positive culture that derived from its focus on trust, openness, and procedural justice. The unit accommodated 39 of the hardest to engage women, who worked with a team of dedicated staff. Relationships were very good, and the women benefitted from one-to-one support for resettlement and life skills. They also had increased access to therapeutic activities such as painting and crafting.

'[Hamlet unit] has had the biggest impact – it's very homely, makes you think more positively and want to do things right. Good group. It's about changing the way you think about things and think differently about things that might get you into trouble. Help with domestic violence, housing, bank accounts and getting structure and help with things you didn't have before.'

Prisoner, Drake Hall

- 5.11 In many cases, the most organised and effective specialist units are TCs and PIPEs.
- 5.12 PIPEs are specifically designed units that support the rehabilitation of prisoners with personality difficulties. They were established in 2011 as part of the offender personality disorder (OPD) pathway. They are not strictly an intervention, but they create a safe and supportive environment that enables prisoners to develop and make progress in their sentence. Staff on these units receive additional training and

support to develop an increased psychological understanding of their work. The regime on the unit usually includes regular key work, structured group work, socially creative sessions and enrichment activities. Prisoners and staff both report that they benefit from being on this type of specialist unit.

- 5.13 TCs are considered to be long-term accredited interventions to reduce offence-related risk. They are based on the idea that people living together and belonging to a community can change through their interpersonal experience of each other. The regime includes formal therapy groups, but therapy happens every day as all aspects of life on the community are designed to enable personal growth.
- 5.14 Holme House had a well-run PIPE unit to support progression within the offender personality disorder pathway, with increased support from key workers, officers, mental health specialists and psychologists. As is often the case in such units, good joint leadership between clinical and operational managers supported the unit's well-integrated culture and programme.

'The environment is conducive to making changes. At other prisons and house blocks at Holme House, others are predatory and you can't show any weaknesses as you are picked on but on here [PIPE] it is different.'

Prisoner, Holme House

- 5.15 There is evidence that the success of these units does not have to be contained within one or two areas of the prison. Warren Hill as a whole prison had been accredited by the Royal College of Psychiatrists as an enabling environment (EE) (see glossary). The accreditation is normally applied to TCs and PIPEs but at Warren Hill leaders had adopted, and over several years embedded, the principles and practices that work so effectively in these units.
- 5.16 At Swansea, the neurodiversity lead had been successful in securing external funding for a new resource called the Harbour which helped prisoners who might ordinarily struggle to engage in work or education in the prison. The facility incorporated a small classroom where prisoners received specialist teaching, and an excellent sensory room. Alongside more formal education, participants completed sessions involving therapy dogs, physical activity, mindfulness, and self-regulation. Leaders had also appointed several neurodiversity peer mentors across the prison to support the unit's work. This demonstrated the effectiveness of motivating prisoners by tailoring support to meet their specific needs, similar to the approach taken by Oakwood in its specialist 'basics' and under 30s workshops described earlier in the report.



The pallet smashing workshop at Buckley Hall

- 5.19 During our site visits we observed the success of using animals as therapy and as a means of engaging prisoners who were otherwise resistant. Animals were also used to support well-being and to help create a sense of normality. At Buckley Hall and Oakwood, the animal sanctuaries were open during family days, helping prisoners to bond with their children in a pleasant and less institutionalised environment which one prisoner described as 'precious'. Animal therapy was also common on specialist units such as the Hamlet unit at Drake Hall, TCs and PIPEs; this helped to keep prisoners calm, providing companionship, and teaching prisoners to become more responsible. Warren Hill had incorporated a course on caring for birds of prey into its education programme. Prisoners who completed the 'Raptor' course were awarded certificates in recognition of their work.
- 5.20 Dog therapy was common in many of the prisons we visited. Drake Hall and Buckley Hall held a 'bring your dog to work day' and the Harbour at Swansea used dogs to support well-being for some neurodivergent prisoners. Rye Hill and Oakwood made extensive use of PAT (pets as therapy) dogs, where dogs belonging to staff were assessed to accompany them to work. The dogs were present in classrooms, wings and in the outside areas, allowing prisoners to interact with them; this helped them to develop more positive relationships with staff. Many prisoners commented on the impact of being able to pet an animal when they were missing home.



PAT dogs at Rye Hill

- 5.21 These types of initiatives and interventions indicated to prisoners that leaders and staff cared about their well-being and helped to reinforce a psychological contract between the prison and the prisoners who responded positively to the investment made in them.

'Treat us as a human being rather than a criminal - with respect.'

Prisoner, HMP Swansea

Section 6 Relationships between staff and prisoners

Good relationships underpin a motivating culture

- 6.1 The development of a motivating culture relies heavily on staff believing that incentivisation works and that prisoners have the capacity to change. In all of our discussions with prisoners and ex-prisoners, there was a consistent theme about the importance of good relationships with staff, especially wing officers and managers.
- 6.2 Prisoners wanted staff to be caring, supportive and understanding. They also wanted staff to keep them safe by upholding high standards of behaviour and challenging those who breached the rules. Prisoners talked about the importance of staff being fair and consistent in their application of rules, systems, and procedures.
- 6.3 In most of the prisons we visited, there was evidence that staff had bought into the principles of incentivisation, and relationships between staff and prisoners were good. Staff demonstrated good knowledge and genuine care for prisoners. At Buckley Hall, Warren Hill, Oakwood and Rye Hill, the extensive use of preferred names for prisoners and staff showed trust and respect, without compromising authority or the boundaries that had been established.
- 6.4 A positive experience with staff on arriving at a prison could support ongoing good relationships. For example, at Rye Hill, prisoners commented on their anxiety about arriving at a new prison and how this was quickly relieved by their experience in reception.

'It kind of freaked me out how friendly they were... they are more open... they call people by their first names... because it is classed as a community the staff are more open to helping you out, listening to your problems and things. I notice a lot of the guys that are suicidal, they get taken care of, like they are really caring about them. In other prisons they laugh at them, they [staff] go to the [emergency] bell because they have to, not because they want to, whereas in here they actually care.'

Prisoner, Rye Hill

- 6.5 The quality of relationships in the women's estate is particularly important in motivating prisoners. Women respond more positively when staff show compassion and seek to understand the impact of their life experiences prior to arriving in prison; for example, more than half of women in prison report having been victims of domestic abuse and we meet many during our inspections who are trapped in a cycle of homelessness, drug abuse and offending.

- 6.6 Prisoners spoke more positively about relationships when leaders had taken steps to minimise a ‘them and us’ mentality among staff and prisoners. In many of the establishments we visited, leaders had organised joint events to improve relationships. Examples included regular sports events such as cycling and football matches. There were also joint events celebrating key dates in the calendar, such as Jamaica day. These enabled staff and prisoners to see each other in a positive light, breaking down some of the traditional barriers, and providing a foundation to develop more productive relationships back on the wings.



Annual joint bike event at Drake Hall

- 6.7 At Rye Hill the director took part in a weekly circuit class with prisoners. One explained that even though he didn't take part in the event himself, he could see it from his cell, and he liked knowing that the director was engaged with his peers. Joint events had the effect of humanising both staff and prisoners which helped to promote positive relationships and forge a community culture.

Key work

- 6.8 Prisoners expressed appreciation for the staff who took the time to understand their issues and how these might impact on their mood and behaviour. One of the main ways that we saw this develop in the prisons we visited was the use of effective key work.
- 6.9 Good quality regular key work supported prisoners' well-being and their rehabilitation. Although the day-to-day relationships with staff were important, key work provided a valuable opportunity to have in-depth discussions, building the relationship and trust between officer and prisoner. This in turn provided a stable platform for staff to challenge, motivate, and inspire the prisoners in their care. The quality of prisoner

relationships with their key workers improved when staff engaged in meaningful discussions in a private space at an allotted time.

- 6.10 We saw numerous examples of this at Buckley Hall, where key work was making a difference to some of the most challenging prisoners. Four full-time ring-fenced key workers held a caseload of around 40 prisoners who were either a young adult, a care leaver, were serving an imprisonment for public protection (IPP) sentence, or had additional complex needs. These prisoners received regular, good quality support from the same key worker which enabled them to build trust, confidence, and an effective working relationship.
- 6.11 Key work at Warren Hill was informed by a psychology report and supported by a multi-disciplinary team including the psychologist and the POM, adding more depth to the sessions and a clearer route to progression for the prisoner.

'My key worker is brilliant. I was struck that he knew things I hadn't mentioned to him – had looked on the record. He sees me every two weeks, takes me into the garden, a shed, etc, has a proper conversation in private.'

Prisoner, Warren Hill

Training and supporting staff

- 6.12 It was clear from our review that constructive relationships with staff motivated prisoners to engage with the regime and make progress. During our fieldwork visits, and at most inspection visits, prisoners described a good officer as one who treated them as a person, not a criminal, someone who sought to understand them, acknowledged their difficulties and showed empathy. Many prisoners feel a sense of shame about their criminal past and their identity as a prisoner. Therefore, staff who were non-judgemental were effective in encouraging prisoners to develop. Prisoners are often powerless to get things done without a member of staff advocating for them. They also need assurance that officers will challenge bad behaviour in others (prisoners and colleagues), enforce rules and maintain control on the wing.

'A good prison officer is firm and fair... open-minded and not thinking just a prisoner or a criminal... we're still humans... try to get to know them and what makes them tick and explode. But don't be too soft.'

Prisoner, Holme House

- 6.13 To equip staff with the skills and confidence to do the job, they need good quality training and support. New officers often tell us that their initial training does not adequately prepare them for the reality of working in a busy prison.

- 6.14 In too many of our inspections, we find an absence of consistent first line management for new officers, and sometimes they are not adequately supported and mentored to develop the skills they need. New staff are often on duty with other new officers and have too few experienced and positive role models. To exacerbate this, a lack of sufficient purposeful activity means prisoners are often locked up, and with less time out of cells on traditional association periods (see glossary) there is little opportunity for new staff to develop their skills and form more constructive relationships with them.
- 6.15 Despite the importance of line management, the CMs we spoke to described the challenges of mentoring new staff while completing other administrative tasks they were responsible for. Many echoed the concerns we heard from newer staff that the gap between the training provided to new recruits and the reality of the job was significant and needed to be addressed.
- 6.16 In contrast to this, some of the most challenging prisons we have inspected offer placements to the Unlocked Graduates scheme (see glossary). Officer recruitment, development and support for Unlocked Graduates is rigorous. After their initial training, and for the two years they are on the scheme, they benefit from mentoring and peer-led supervision. They are trained to deal with difficult prisoners and staff, and are given a platform to discuss the impact of traumatic experiences in the job. They also receive training sessions from ex-prisoners to help them understand what it is like to live in prison.

'They listen to prisoners... they see things from a different viewpoint... The Unlocked [Graduates] people are good at talking to people. They have good communication skills. And those skills have rubbed off on other members of staff. When Unlocked are redeployed onto other wings – they take more time with prisoners, and people usually on that wing realise prisoners aren't coming out shouting and swearing because someone spoke politely to them and given them the time of day – told them they will sort out their problem instead of just shutting their flap.'

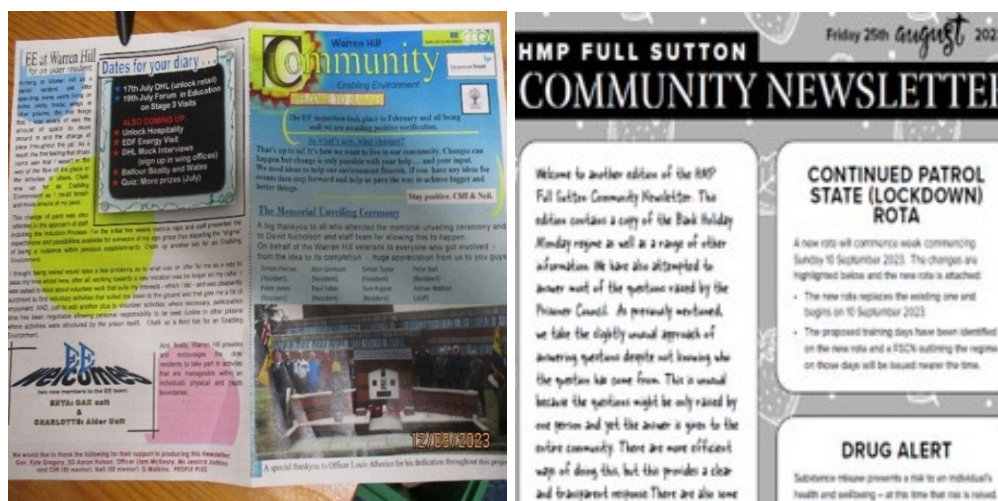
Prison CM

- 6.17 Leaders at Rye Hill recognised the importance of looking after staff, holding regular staff recognition events, including an annual ceremony to celebrate staff achievement. Every new starter at the prison was enrolled on an apprenticeship with an experienced member of staff as a buddy; both received £1,500 when the new staff member qualified.

Section 7 Communication

Clear communication promotes positive behaviour

- 7.1 Many creative activities and opportunities we find in prisons are not directly linked to the incentive framework, and too often they are not well promoted or used. At Drake Hall, there were numerous attractive incentives, including a coffee shop, but access was too limited. The open unit located outside the perimeter of the fence should also have acted as a powerful incentive, but leaders had not exploited it to motivate the women in the closed prison.
- 7.2 Clear communication was a key feature at some of our fieldwork sites, contributing to transparency, confidence and trust in prison leaders. Good communication was being used to inform prisoners about outcomes from consultation, regime changes and upcoming events. It was also used to showcase prisoners' work and celebrate their achievements which motivated them and others.
- 7.3 While many prisons issue standard formal notices to prisoners and staff, which often go unnoticed, Warren Hill and Full Sutton produced appealing and interesting community newsletters, which most prisoners knew about and read. They contained colourful articles informing prisoners what was happening in the prison, which encouraged greater engagement in community events. The governor at Full Sutton invited prisoners to submit anonymous questions which he then answered in the monthly newsletter.



Community newsletters at Warren Hill (left) and Full Sutton

- 7.4 Rye Hill and Oakwood had created impressive media suites which enabled them to produce some of the best communications we have seen in prisons. The costs were not prohibitive; at Rye Hill the biggest outlay was the cost of a portable cabin, although the director started out by filming short presentations from his office with a handheld camera and a USB stick.

- 7.5 The media hubs allowed prisoners, overseen by managers, to produce high-quality written, audio and visual communications which were shared through in-cell television and radio channels or were visible throughout the prison on noticeboards. Leaders communicated their key messages and celebrated successful events such as course completions and fundraising efforts. They promoted the various opportunities available to prisoners, reinforced the benefits of engaging in the positive aspects of the regime, and celebrated the achievements of the prison community. Prisoners valued the regular and accessible updates and were well informed about what was happening in the prison. Many spoke about being motivated to engage in various activities because they had seen them promoted on the prison TV and radio.



Induction room and wing notice board at Rye Hill

- 7.6 The hubs provided prisoners with important ICT skills, opening up opportunities for potential work on release. Furthermore, the prisons made good use of the hubs to increase transparency and confidence in the leadership team. Prisoner council meetings were filmed and available to watch on prisoners' televisions. Leaders, including the governor, filmed regular features (see Section 1: The role of leaders) to keep prisoners informed about the things that were important to them, which made prisoners feel valued and encouraged them to see the prison as a community.



The media hub at Rye Hill

- 7.7 Similar initiatives are being rolled out in 15 other prisons across the prison estate using the 'contact hub', a digital platform that gives users access to local and national content supporting their progression. This includes documentaries, prison radio, data on prisoners' rights, governors' updates, exercise videos and more. Although a positive development, it remains underdeveloped in comparison with the functionality of the media hubs at Rye Hill and Oakwood.

Appendix I Methodology

Scoping

A number of activities were conducted to inform the fieldwork site selection and methodology:

- Consultation group with recently released prisoners organised on our behalf by the Prison Reform Trust. This provided us with valuable insight and information about what motivates prisoners to behave and engage in prison. It also helped to inform our selection of fieldwork sites.
- A series of forums with a selection of prison governors and one-to-one meetings with senior leaders to discuss the opportunities and barriers to developing positive, motivating cultures in prisons.
- Discussion group with a panel of prison academics and practitioners to discuss common themes in research relating to behaviour in prisons.

Fieldwork

The fieldwork for this thematic review took place between August and October 2023. Establishments were selected to meet the following criteria:

- A range of functional types, for example high secure, local or reception prisons, as well as training prisons and one establishment holding women.
- Private and public sector establishments.
- Geographical location, ensuring a spread of prisons across England and Wales.

In addition, we used the following sources of information to identify establishments we had previously found to be notable in their work to promote positive behaviour:

- Feedback and observations from colleagues, prisoners and ex-prisoners.
- HMI Prisons survey data, Measuring the Quality of Prison Life (MQPL) analysis, and HMPPS prison management information.

| Prison | Type | Operator | Location |
|--------------|--|----------|------------|
| Buckley Hall | Category C training prison | HMPPS | North West |
| Drake Hall | Women's training and resettlement prison | HMPPS | Midlands |
| Full Sutton | High security dispersal prison | HMPPS | Yorkshire |
| Holme House | Category C and resettlement prison | HMPPS | North East |

| Prison | Type | Operator | Location |
|-------------|-----------------------------|----------|-----------------|
| Oakwood | Category C training prison | Private | Midlands |
| Rye Hill* | Category B training prison | Private | West Midlands |
| Swansea | Category B reception prison | HMPPS | Wales |
| Warren Hill | Category C training prison | HMPPS | East of England |

An abridged version of the fieldwork methodology was piloted during a one-day visit to Rye Hill, with the intention of identifying the strengths and weaknesses in the methodology before the main fieldwork started. It was decided to include evidence gathered from this pilot in this review due to the rich and detailed information gathered and the minimal changes made to the methodology following the visit. Fieldwork at all other establishments took place over two days and included two prisoner discussion groups, four one-to-one interviews with prisoners, discussions with staff and prisoners, and general observations.

Prisoners to be included in the group discussions and one-to-one interviews were selected to offer as diverse a group as possible. The following characteristics were used to ensure this diversity: age, ethnicity, disability, legal status, offence type, incentives scheme level, length of time on their current incentives level and length of time in their current establishment.

Prospective participants were informed of the purpose of the thematic and were invited to either take part in the group discussions or the interviews. A reserve list was also drawn up should anyone in our initial selection decline to participate.

The group discussions and interviews covered the following areas:

- supporting positive behaviour
- promoting positive relationships and support within the prison
- living in the prison community
- relationships with children, family and other significant people.

A semi-structured methodology enabled prisoners to describe their experiences in their own words and allowed them to focus on the topics that were of most importance to them. Interviewers were also able to ask follow-up questions to obtain more detail about specific experiences and concerns.

We conducted 27 individual interviews and met with over 70 prisoners in groups across the fieldwork sites.

With the consent of prisoners, the interviews and groups were recorded as audio. Having a full audio recording of the interview, rather than relying on interviewer notes, allowed for a more rigorous approach to analysis, and the inclusion of verbatim quotes throughout this report. These audio recordings and

notes were summarised to facilitate thematic analysis, and direct quotations were also included in these summaries.

A thematic analysis was undertaken to identify key themes from both the interactions with prisoners and the observations of inspectors. For the prisoner interactions there was a focus on retaining the voices of the participants throughout the process of analysis. Verbatim quotes and case studies have also been used to illustrate themes and provide more detailed information on the specific experiences of prisoners and staff.

The review was conducted in line with HMI Prisons' ethical principles for research activities (see <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprisons/aboutourinspections/research/ethical-principles-for-research>).

Inspectors paid particular attention to the well-being of the detainees we spoke to, reporting any safeguarding concerns to prison staff, and adhered to the Inspectorate's safeguarding protocol for adults (see <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprisons/wpcontent/uploads/sites/4/2019/12/HMIP-Safeguarding-Adults-Protocol-Nov-2019.pdf>).

Other sources of information

In addition to information collected as part of the fieldwork for this review the following other sources of information have been incorporated where relevant.

- Visits to two specialist schools to explore how leaders motivate positive behaviour in education settings catering for students with different needs.
- Findings from an event that HM Chief Inspector of Prisons convened with custodial managers (CMs) from across a number of establishments. We found that CMs played a critical role in translating the aims and objectives of senior leaders to staff on the wings. They had a significant influence on the culture within the prison. CMs highlighted the challenges of balancing effective leadership with the weight of administrative and line management work they were also responsible for.

Appendix II Glossary

Broken window theory

The theory that visible signs of crime and civil disorder, such as broken windows, create an urban environment that promotes further crime and disorder (Wilson & Kelling, 1982).

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. Some prisons also use the CSIP framework to support victims of violence.

Custodial managers (CMs)

First line managers in prisons.

Enhanced behaviour monitoring (EBM)

A national intervention to reduce risk. EBM requires prisoners to identify and demonstrate how they are reducing the risks they pose. It is structured in three stages, with increasing levels of freedom, personal responsibility, and access to additional incentives. Progress through these levels is monitored at regular EBM boards chaired by a governor. Although the reduction of risk in preparation for release is at the core of EBM, successful delivery of the intervention can have a positive effect on behaviour and safety.

Enabling environment (EEs)

Awarded by the Royal College of Psychiatrists, Enabling Environments are recognised as places where there is a focus on creating a positive and effective social environment and where healthy relationships are seen as the key to success.

Imprisonment for public protection (IPP)

A type of sentence which was designed to protect the public from serious offenders whose crimes did not merit a life sentence. Offenders sentenced to an IPP are set a minimum term which they must spend in prison – only after that can they apply to the Parole Board for release. IPP prisoners are only released if the Parole Board is satisfied that their imprisonment it is no longer necessary for the protection of the public.

Nepacs

Nepacs is a charity in the North-East of England which aims to support a positive future for individuals impacted by involvement in the criminal justice or care systems.

Offender personality disorder (OPD) pathway

The OPD pathway is a set of psychologically-informed services operating across criminal justice and health, underpinned by a set of principles and quality standards. It aims to reduce risk associated with serious reoffending and improve mental health within a high-risk, high-harm cohort likely to meet the clinical threshold for a diagnosis of personality disorder.

PACT (Prison Advice and Care Trust)

A national charity that supports prisoners, people with convictions, and their children and families. <https://www.prisonadvice.org.uk/>

Parkrun

A non-profit organisation that supports almost 800 communities across the country to coordinate free volunteer-led events for walkers and runners.

Peer-led initiative (PLI)

Initiatives designed and run by prisoners themselves, with the support of prison leaders.

Pets as therapy (PAT)

A national charity whose volunteers and temperament-assessed pets visit establishments such as care homes, hospitals, hospices, schools and prisons.

Prison offender managers (POMs)

POMs are part of the offender management unit (OMU). They work with prisoners and community offender managers to help prisoners complete the goals in their sentence plan.

Protected characteristics

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

Psychologically informed planned environments (PIPEs)

An intervention offered as part of the OPD pathway in prisons and in probation approved premises in the community. They are designed to support the transition and progression of prisoners and people on probation at significant stages of their sentence and beyond. Staff who work in PIPEs are trained and supported to work in an evidence-based, psychologically informed way.

Release on temporary licence (ROTL)

Enables prisoners who meet certain criteria to leave the prison for a short time. ROTL can be granted for prisoners to take part in paid or unpaid work; to see their children; because a family member is seriously ill; or to help them to settle back into the community before they are released.

Therapeutic communities (TCs)

Therapeutic communities provide group-based therapy within a social climate that promotes positive relationships, personal responsibility and social participation. TCs address a range of prisoner needs, including interpersonal relationships, emotional regulation, self-management and psychological well-being.

Unlocked Graduates

Programme established in 2016 with the aim of attracting high-calibre graduate talent to work in the UK prison service and inject new ideas, insights, and energy into the rehabilitation of prisoners.

Appendix III Acknowledgments

This report was written by Deborah Butler (Inspection Team Leader) and Alice Oddy (Inspector). The project fieldwork team included Deborah Butler, Ian Dickens, David Foot, Martin Kettle, Alice Oddy, Kellie Reeve (inspectors), Helen Ranns (Senior Research Officer) and Alexander Scragg (Research Officer). Lindsay Jones (Inspector), Elizabeth Renard (Head of Policy), Elizabeth Barker (Head of Communications) and Tamsin Williamson (Publications Manager) provided additional support.

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