



HM Prison &
Probation Service



**HM PRISON
SERVICE**

Public Sector Prisons

HMPPS Submission to the Prison Service Pay Review Body

HMPPS (England & Wales) Evidence

2027/28

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Introduction

Executive Summary

Government Evidence and PSPRB Remit

- a. This document sets out evidence from His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), provided to the Prison Service Pay Review Body (PSPRB) to inform the 2027/28 pay round. HMPPS is an Executive Agency of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) with responsibility for prisons and probation in England and Wales. HMPPS is also responsible for adult offender management services in the community and custody, and for youth custody across England and Wales, within the framework set by the Government.
- b. On 15 July 2026, the Minister for Prisons issued a remit letter to the PSPRB to commence the 2027/28 pay round. This emphasised the work that has been put in since the general election to accelerate the pay round timeline compared with the preceding years. The 2026/27 pay award was announced in March and the Government remains committed to delivering pay awards as close to the start of the pay year of 1 April as possible.
- c. HMPPS has asked that the PSPRB make affordability an important part of its consideration when making recommendations for the 2027/28 round, recognising the significant investment in pay in successive years. Our affordability position is set out in the below sections.

2027/28 Pay Proposals

- d. Our pay proposals for 2027/28 continues our objective to achieve a difficult balance between affordability and what HMPPS considers to be the best possible pay award for staff for the year ahead and to support recruitment and retention, in the context of the operational challenges for the Prison Service.
- e. Our proposals recommend a headline increase is applied to all Fair and Sustainable (F&S) staff. The increases set out in our pay proposals are mindful of the Department's overall affordability position and the need to

manage pay bill growth. HMPPS also recommends additional targeting to Band 2 Operational Support Grades (OSG) – our lowest paid staff – and, if required, will also apply an increase effective from 1 April 2027 to meet the National Living Wage.

- f. HMPPS considers the continued use of Market Supplements to be an effective tool for investing in a minority of localised sites that experience acute recruitment and retention challenges. The Market Supplement Framework introduced on 1 April 2025 established an evidence-based framework to support the targeted use of Market Supplements to ensure we remain responsive to local labour market conditions. The first annual review occurred in autumn 2025 and resulted in a decision to begin the erosion of the Market Supplement at four sites that had substantially improved their performance against staffing metrics. The second annual review will commence in autumn 2026 and we intend to update the PSPRB on its outcomes.

Content of the evidence

- g. This document sets out our detailed pay proposals for 2027/28, as well as a range of evidence and information to assist with the PSPRB's work. This includes the context on Government and Department affordability, strategic priorities, and details of operational and policy developments across the prison estate and priorities for prisons over the coming years.
- h. This document also provides the information requested by the PSPRB in its 2026/27 report. In some cases, where projects and policies are in development, HMPPS has committed to providing further information at oral evidence or later in the year. Where the data required needs to be shared on an Official-Sensitive basis, this will be done directly with the Office for Pay Review Bodies (OPRB).
- i. This document comprises two chapters:

Chapter 1: Pay Proposals 2027/28 – this chapter will set out our pay strategy and pay proposals for 2027/28.

- j. *Chapter 2: Evidence of key developments, priorities, and areas of investment for the coming year and beyond.*

The Remit Group

- k. The PSPRB remit group comprises all Prison Governors, Operational Managers, Prison Officers and Operational Support Grades (OSGs) in both Closed Grades and in F&S – the two pay structures that exist within the workforce. There is also read across to the vast majority of non-operational and semi-operational roles due to the common pay and grading structure within the Prison Service
- l. The costs presented in this evidence submission are for HMPPS. HMPPS is responsible for adult offender management services in the community and custody, and for youth custody across England and Wales, within the framework set by the Government. HMPPS is an Executive Agency of the MoJ.
- m. The Agency currently manages His Majesty's Prison Service (HMPS), Youth Custody Service (YCS) and the Probation Service. In addition, it oversees private sector provision for offenders, managing contracts for privately run prisons and youth custody facilities and prisoner escort services.
- n. HMPS works to protect the public and reduce reoffending by delivering the sentences and orders of the courts and by supporting rehabilitation and helping offenders to reform their lives, whilst ensuring best value for money from public resources within a custodial setting.

Affordability

- o. The Government accepted the 12 recommendations made by the PSPRB in their 2026/27 report, at a significant cost. HMPPS estimated that the 2026/27 recommendations will cost MoJ £98.5m. This was significantly higher than the £77.2m affordability proposals set out by HMPPS in our written evidence to PSPRB for 2026/27. Despite this, the recommendations were accepted in order to support the improvement of public services, continue to stabilise our

prison services and ensure prisons can recruit and retain the staff that they need. It recognised the unwavering commitment and dedication of prison staff who have continued to protect the public. However, to afford the award, tough decisions were made on spending and reprioritisation. No further central funding for the award was given, and MoJ/HMPPS made difficult decisions on funding by finding savings from elsewhere within budgets. It is hoped that the PSPRB's recommendations for 2027/28 will strike a balance between fair pay and value for money for the taxpayer.

- p. Following the PSPRB's 2026/27 recommendations, HMPPS uplifted the base salary of Band 3 Prison Officers (on the National rate, 39 hours with 20% unsocial hours) from £35,875 to £37,131. Our Band 2 OSGs received a 3.5% increase to the spot rate, in addition to the increase to the National Living Wage which was applied from 1 April 2026. OSGs who work unsocial hours also received a temporary increase to the Unsocial Hours allowance from 20% to 25%, until 31 March 2027. This amounted to an increase of up to 7.9% for OSGs.
- q. Although still important to our staff, exit interview data shows that when staff are asked what the primary reason for their departure is, Pay and Reward no longer consistently features in the top 5 causes cited having dropped out in May 2023, and currently ranking 9th. This reflects the high level of pay awards delivered in recent years, with above inflationary pay increases (3.5%, 4%, and 5% over the previous three years) awarded in successive years, recognised by the PSPRB in their intention to now maintain the improved market position of Prison Service pay. The overall funding and affordability picture remains challenging both for HMPPS and the Department, and future pay recommendations will be considered in that context.
- r. As set out in our remit letter to the PSPRB, the cost of future PSPRB recommendations will need to be balanced against other prison priorities including capacity through an increase to prison places, and to deliver reforms recommended through the Independent Sentencing Review, as well as wider pressures across MoJ/HMPPS including in the Probation Service.

Macroeconomic and Labour Market context

- s. 12-month CPI inflation was 3.1% in August 2026. This is lower than its recent peak of 3.8% in September 2025, but shows a rise from 2.6% in June 2026, as the energy price shock starts to feed through into household energy. Core CPI inflation (CPI excluding energy, food, alcohol and tobacco to give an indication of underlying inflationary pressure) was 2.6% in August 2026. The Bank of England's July MPR central projection expects inflation will rise further, before falling again from mid-2027, with projected CPI inflation to be 2.4% in 2027-28.
- t. The latest indicators suggest the labour market remains slack. HMRC Real Time Information data shows employee numbers have fallen on the year for 17 consecutive months to July 2026, while vacancies have continued to decline over the past twelve months. The unemployment rate has fallen back slightly, reaching 4.9% in the three months to July 2026.
- u. Whole economy total average weekly earnings growth was 3.9% in the three months to July 2026. Recent fluctuations in this series partly reflect the effect of bonus payments and the timing of public sector pay settlements. Private sector regular pay growth (which is unaffected by these factors) has continued to fall, reaching 2.9% in the three months to July 2026. Private sector regular wage growth has been below public sector regular pay growth for 17 months, which reached 6.3% in the three months to July 2026.
- v. Measures of average wage growth have historically been higher than median pay settlements, as they are affected by compositional changes in the labour force and factors such as changes to working hours. Settlement data are the most comparable data to PRB decisions, as they are a direct measure of consolidated pay awards, and are not directly affected by other factors such as changes to working hours or changes in the composition of employment. The Bank of England's Agents report that average pay settlements for 2026 are 3.6% and lower than the average settlement for 2025 (4.0%). The Brightmine survey shows that business are reporting average settlements of 3.0% for 2027.

1: Pay Proposals 2027/28

Key Strategic Objectives

1.1 This year's proposals focus on four clear strategic objectives:

- Support **recruitment and the retention of both experienced and newly recruited operational staff** across a challenging estate.
- Target investment to our **lower paid staff**.
- **Invest in Fair and Sustainable only** to erode the remaining pay differential between F&S and Closed Grades and offer incentives for staff to 'Opt-In'.
- Remain within the **Department's affordability envelope**.

Overview of Prison Service Pay Proposals 2027/28

1.2 HMPPS' proposals for 2027/28 are designed to support recruitment, retention and operational resilience whilst remaining within the Department's affordability envelope. The proposals focus on targeted investment where evidence demonstrates the greatest workforce need, whilst maintaining coherent pay structures, supporting progression and ensuring pay and reward arrangements remain aligned to operational requirements.

1.3 In summary, HMPPS proposes the following for 2027/28:

- A headline pay award for F&S staff, with additional targeted investment in Band 2 pay.
- Continued pay progression for eligible staff within existing F&S pay structures and maintenance of current pay band arrangements, including London pay differentials.
- Ongoing investment in F&S terms and conditions, including a non-consolidated award for the small number of Closed Grade staff who cannot

yet opt into F&S without financial detriment, whilst maintaining the policy of no pay award for Closed Grade staff who would benefit financially from opting in.

- The continuation of Market Supplements at their current monetary values of £2,000 for 'Red' sites and £3,500 for 'Red Plus' sites, supported by the existing evidence-based framework to manage usage.
- Targeted changes to operational allowances, including Payment Plus, OSG Unsocial Hours Working and the Care and Maintenance of Dogs allowance. These proposals also include the introduction of a specialist Band 4 Payment Plus rate and the withdrawal of the temporary Physical Education Instructor (PEI) recruitment and retention allowance, with any ongoing local operational workforce pressure managed through existing Recruitment and Retention Payment arrangements.
- No changes to OSG overtime rates, the wider Unsocial Hours allowance or Required Hours Addition arrangements.

1.4 Overall, the proposals are intended to target investment where evidence demonstrates the greatest workforce need, support recruitment and retention in key operational roles, preserve existing pay structures and ensure pay and reward arrangements remain aligned to operational requirements. Further detail on each proposal and the supporting evidence is set out in the sections that follow.

Summary of Pay Proposals 2027/28

Table 1: 2027/28 Proposals

Recruitment and Retention / Headline pay awards		
1	Band 2	2.8% increase to spot rate, including additional targeting.
2	Bands 3 to 12	Headline percentage increase of 2.3% for all staff.
Affordability and Targeted Investment in F&S		

3	Closed Grades	A non-consolidated award of 2.3% for staff who cannot opt into F&S.
Ensure Progression from Minima to Maxima within 3 years		
4	Bands 3 & 5	Progression of one pay point for those below maxima.
5	Bands 6 & 8 to 11	Progression of 3.33% (capped at maxima). No non-consolidated balance payments.
Affordability - other allowances		
6	Payment Plus	Increase rate from £23 to £26.
7	Payment Pus	Introduction of B4 rate at £29 per hour.
8	OSG unsocial hours	Extension of 5% uplift
9	Care and Maintenance of Dogs Allowance	Increase single rate by 2.3% and uplift multiple dogs rate to 50%

Detailed Pay Proposals

1.5 This section sets out the detail of the above proposals which are grouped around specific strategic headlines, as previously set out in paragraph 1.1.

Support Recruitment and Retention

We propose for F&S Bands 2-5 and Bands 6-12:

1.6 **Proposal 1:** Uplift the Band 2 spot rate by 2.8%.

1.7 **Proposal 2:** A headline increase for all staff (Bands 3 to 12) as a fixed percentage value of 2.3%.

1.8 The headline increase of 2.3% will be applied to all spot rates (Band 4, 7 and 12).

1.9 The headline increase of 2.3% will be applied to each pay point in Bands 3 and 5.

- 1.10 The headline increase of 2.3% will be applied to the pay band minimum and maximum in Bands 6, 8 and 11.

Additional rationale and key drivers

- 1.11 Applying the same percentage universally to all grades, alongside additional targeting at Band 2, maintains existing pay range lengths. The targeted investment at Band 2 will narrow the pay differential between Bands 2 and 3, while maintaining existing pay differentials between Bands 3 and 12. This supports the overall integrity of the pay structure, protects promotion incentives and avoids creating new overlaps between grades.
- 1.12 HMPPS views the OSG role as a gateway to becoming a Prison Officer and recognises that retention remains challenging for Band 2 OSGs compared with other operational grades. The proposed targeting provides additional investment to support recruitment and retention at Band 2, whilst retaining headroom above the NLW and supporting HMPPS' strategic objective of investing in the lowest paid staff. It is important to balance this targeted investment with maintaining a meaningful pay differential between Bands 2 and 3, particularly given the temporary increase to the OSG Unsocial Hours allowance following acceptance of Recommendation 11 in the PSPRB's 2025/26 report and HMPPS' proposal to extend this temporary arrangement into 2027/28. This approach balances investment in our lowest paid staff whilst maintaining pay coherence across the wider operational workforce.
- 1.13 Once the 2027 National Living Wage (NLW) rate has been confirmed, HMPPS will uplift the Band 2 spot rate (and any remaining Closed Grade salaries still in payment) from 1 April 2027 where necessary to ensure compliance. Subject to any contrary recommendation from the PSPRB being accepted, staff receiving an uplift solely to meet the NLW will not receive the full recommended pay award in addition to that increase. Instead, the NLW increase will count towards the overall pay award for that year.
- 1.14 HMPPS has invested significantly in Prison Service pay in recent years, to the point where salaries are now considered market aligned, and considers that a further round of substantial increases across all grades would not be

affordable or sustainable. Applying a higher headline increase to Band 3 than the grades above would reduce the financial incentive for promotion and risks reintroducing pay overlaps that previous pay reforms have sought to address. It remains particularly important that increases at Band 3 do not exceed the cash value of increases in the grades above, given the substantial investment made in Band 3 pay in recent years and the potential impact on progression to Band 4, particularly at sites receiving Market Supplements.

Structural Changes

- 1.15 **Proposal 3:** increase the existing National to London differentials in line with the headline pay award as set out in Table 2. The fixed cash pay differentials for the F&S Outer and Inner London zones will increase by 2.3% and continue to apply consistently across all bands. This will position the maxima at £3,511 and £5,338 respectively above the National 37 hour maxima.

Table 2: National to Outer London / Inner London Differentials

Available Band	Like for Like Weekly Hours Work Pattern	Differential on Maxima
		National / Inner London
2 to 5 & 7 to 11	37 hours base pay	5,338
2 to 5 & 7 to 11	37 hours Inc. 20% UHW* / RHA**	6,406
2	37 hours Inc. 25% UHW	6,673
3	38 hours Inc. ACH*** & 20% UHW	6,613
3	39 hour Inc. ACHP****	5,627
2 to 5	39 hours Inc. ACHP & 20% UHW	6,752
2	39 hours Inc. ACHP & 25% UHW	7,034
3	39 hours Inc. ACH & 20% UHW	6,821
3	40 hours Inc. ACH & 20% UHW	7,028
3	41 hours Inc. ACH & 20% UHW	7,236
		National / Outer London
2 to 5 & 7 to 9 & 11	37 hours base pay	3,511

2 to 5 & 7 to 9 & 11	37 hours Inc. 20% UHW / RHA	4,213
2	37 hours Inc. 25% UHW	4,389
3	38 hours Inc. ACH & 20% UHW	4,350
3	39 hour Inc. ACHP	3,701
2 to 5	39 hours Inc. ACHP & 20% UHW	4,441
2	39 hours Inc. ACHP & 25% UHW	4,626
3	39 hours Inc. ACH & 20% UHW	4,487
3	40 hours Inc. ACH & 20% UHW	4,624
3	41 hours Inc. ACH & 20% UHW	4,759

*Unsocial Hours Working

**Required Hours Addition

***Additional Committed Hours

****Additional Committed Hours Pensionable

Additional rationale and key drivers

- 1.16 HMPPS proposes increasing the London differentials in line with the headline pay award to maintain their relative value and preserve the existing differential between National, Outer London and Inner London pay rates.
- 1.17 Previous recommendations have introduced shorter pay ranges for Operational Manager grades, enabling progression from the minimum to the maximum of the pay range within three years. These changes have addressed historic pay range overlaps, strengthened pay differentials between grades and helped ensure that promotion continues to deliver a meaningful financial benefit.
- 1.18 HMPPS remains satisfied that the current pay range lengths provide an appropriate balance between recognising experience in role and maintaining reasonable progression opportunities. The existing structure supports the development and retention of operational leaders whilst preserving clear financial incentives for progression between grades.

Targeted Investment in F&S Only and Incentives for Staff to 'Opt-in'

- 1.19 **Proposal 4:** a non-consolidated award of 2.3% of base pay for Closed Grade staff who cannot opt into F&S.
- 1.20 There are 79 staff on Closed Grade terms for whom it was not financially beneficial to opt into F&S terms in 2026/27. This is driven by a mixture of some staff retaining higher FTE salaries and a small number of staff in receipt of Closed Grade allowances. For this exceptional group a non-consolidated and non-pensionable award is proposed. This award will be paid only to those who would still be unable to opt into F&S without financial detriment after the 2027 pay award has been calculated.
- 1.21 HMPPS wishes to maintain the PSPRB's approach in prior reports that no pay award be made to Closed Grade staff who would benefit financially from their F&S equivalent rate to incentivise more staff to opt into F&S.

Additional rationale and key drivers

- 1.22 The proposed increase to the F&S pay scale maximum in 2027/28 may enable more staff remaining on closed terms to opt into F&S, which will be identified following implementation of the 2027 pay award.
- 1.23 Enabling more Closed Grade staff to be in scope for being able to financially benefit from opting into F&S through an increase to F&S pay scales will also bring them into scope for future increases in F&S, removing the need for further investment in Closed Grades. HMPPS continues to have no plans to submit proposals to invest in Closed Grades in future years.

Closed Grades – Uniformed Staff and Phase One Operational Managers on Closed (Pre-F&S) Pay Arrangements

- 1.24 **Proposal 5:** no pay award for Uniformed staff and Phase One Operational Managers on closed (pre-F&S) terms who would benefit financially from opting into F&S.

- 1.25 This position supported the 2026/27 PSPRB recommendations for Closed Grade staff to be rewarded by opting into F&S terms which will enable them to receive a pay rise. HMPPS continues to only focus on investment for employees on F&S terms and will no longer consider investment in Closed Grades. Employees will not be compelled to move into F&S, but HMPPS will not be investing outside of the F&S pay framework. For those limited number of Closed Grades where it would not be financially beneficial to opt in, they will receive the non-consolidated award detailed in proposal 4.

Additional rationale and key drivers

- 1.26 HMPPS recognises the significant contribution of Closed Grades with their F&S colleagues in all custodial settings. However, by making pay awards available by joining the F&S pay scales, HMPPS is signalling its investment in F&S scales and encouraging staff who wish to receive consolidated awards to opt into F&S terms.
- 1.27 The PSPRB will be aware that all staff on closed terms and F&S work to the same job description. There is no difference in duties.
- 1.28 HMPPS will remain compliant where necessary with the Government's NLW in the Closed Grades. Any Closed Grade that falls below the NLW will be increased as necessary in April as required each year.

2026/27 opt-in exercise

- 1.29 The 2026/27 opt-in exercise took place during June and July 2026, alongside implementation of the 2026/27 pay award. There were 199 staff remaining in the Closed Grades at that time and, of these, 101 (50.75%) staff (both operational and non-operational) were identified as being able to financially benefit from opting into F&S in 2026. Only 30 (29.7%) of those staff accepted their offers to opt in. As the volume of staff opting in during the 2026/27 exercise was low, HMPPS will investigate whether there are any barriers or concerns that might be preventing staff from opting in.

2027/28 opt-in exercise

- 1.30 During the annual opt-in exercise, a discretionary non-pensionable lump sum, calculated using the difference between Closed Grade pay and F&S pay from 1 April 2027 and the date they opt into F&S, will be paid to those who gain financially as a result of opting in.
- 1.31 Our proposal not to invest in the Closed Grades in 2027 is to further the progress made in the last 3 years in enabling more Closed Grade staff to opt into F&S. However, HMPPS proposes the same approach of no further investment in the other Closed Grades, for whom opt-in may also be financially viable, but where staff, for whatever reason, have not yet chosen to do so.

Affordability – Pay Progression in F&S

- 1.32 **Proposal 6:** Eligible staff in Bands 3 and 5, who are not subject to formal poor performance measures, will progress to the next pay point following pay point uplifts effective 1 April 2026.
- 1.33 **Proposal 7:** Eligible staff in Bands 8 to 11, who are not subject to formal poor performance measures, will progress by increasing pay by a further 3.33% (subject to maxima) in addition to headline percentage increases.
- 1.34 There is no progression at Bands 2, 4, 7 or 12, as these pay bands are spot rates.
- 1.35 HMPPS proposes that staff who are subject to formal performance measures will not receive pay progression. This cohort of staff are those who have received a formal written warning in relation to their performance. This will have followed prior conversations and attempts by management to support improved performance.
- 1.36 Despite no longer having a system in which pay progression is linked to end of year performance markings, HMPPS remains of the belief that performance issues having escalated to this stage is a clear marker that these staff are not

meeting the expected standards and/or competence in their role to progress towards the maximum of the band.

Additional rationale and key drivers

- 1.37 3.33% progression supports HMPPS' aim for staff to reach the pay band maxima within three years, reflecting full competence within a role and mitigates any potential equal pay risk attached to paying staff below the maximum 'rate for the job' to which colleagues have already progressed.
- 1.38 HMPPS expects most staff to be fully competent within their role within three years. This is the same expectation at Bands 3 and 5 where a 3 pay point progression system already exists.

Maintaining a Targeted Approach to the Use of Market Supplements

- 1.39 **Proposal 8:** Maintain Market Supplements at their current levels of £2,000 for 'Red' sites and £3,500 for 'Red Plus' sites.

Additional rationale and key drivers

- 1.40 There remains a clear need for Market Supplements, given capacity pressures and staffing challenges at specific sites. Market Supplements are an effective tool for addressing acute recruitment and retention challenges at specific prisons, delivering targeted value for money. HMPPS intends to continue to use Market Supplements as a part of the long-term strategy for pay and does not support any national erosion of Market Supplements for the 2027/28 pay round.
- 1.41 As outlined to PSPRB in the 2026/27 evidence round, we have delivered an evidence-based framework from April 2025 to support the ongoing and long-term use of Market Supplements. Further detail regarding the operation of the Framework is at paragraph 2.320. As in 2026/27, we intend to update PSPRB on the outcomes of the next annual review of Market Supplements, which is expected to take place in autumn 2026 with results communicated in the new year.

Allowances

Payment Plus

- 1.42 **Proposal 9:** A £3 increase to the rate of Payment Plus from £23 to £26 and the introduction of a Band 4 specialist Payment Plus rate at £29.

Additional rationale and key drivers

- 1.43 Payment Plus remains a critical operational resourcing tool, enabling governors to respond to unplanned and unpredictable staffing demands and maintain essential prison activity. This is particularly important in the current operating environment, where staffing pressures and vacancies across parts of the estate can make it difficult for sites to absorb additional operational requirements within planned staffing levels.
- 1.44 HMPPS recognises that the value of Payment Plus has not kept pace with increases in base pay over time, reducing its relative attractiveness as a mechanism for securing additional staffing when operationally required. As part of the 2026/27 pay round, HMPPS proposed increasing the Payment Plus rate to £25 in recognition of this erosion. Whilst the rate was increased to £23, HMPPS considers that further action is required to ensure the payment remains a meaningful incentive for staff and continues to support operational resilience.
- 1.45 HMPPS continues to prioritise substantive recruitment and retention interventions to achieve target staffing levels across the prison estate. Whilst the long-term objective is to reduce reliance on temporary staffing measures, Payment Plus remains an important tool in managing short-term operational pressures, covering critical activity and responding to demand that cannot always be planned in advance.
- 1.46 HMPPS is therefore proposing a further increase to the Payment Plus rate for 2027/28. This would help maintain the effectiveness of the payment in encouraging staff to undertake additional duties, support governors in

addressing operational pressures and ensure Payment Plus remains fit for purpose as an operational resourcing mechanism.

- 1.47 HMPPS has also identified a requirement for greater flexibility in covering specialist Band 4 Prison Officer roles, particularly for PEI activity, where duties require additional training, qualifications and experience. Identifying and training appropriate staff to fill vacancies takes an average of 12 months, resulting in longer periods with gaps that are challenging to backfill (see Chapter 2, paragraph 2.309). These specialist functions are critical to regime delivery and prisoner outcomes but can be challenging to cover at short notice.
- 1.48 Existing Payment Plus arrangements cannot be used to provide critical cover for these specialist responsibilities, and temporary promotion is not an appropriate mechanism for short-term or ad hoc cover arrangements. As a result, there are limited options for maintaining delivery of this critical activity when staffing gaps arise.
- 1.49 HMPPS therefore proposes the introduction of a dedicated Band 4 specialist Payment Plus rate at £29 per hour. This would provide a more effective means of securing cover for these critical functions, supporting regime continuity and delivery, and operational resilience whilst recognising the additional skills, qualifications and expertise required to undertake specialist duties.
- 1.50 The proposal would apply only to defined specialist Band 4 activities, where there is a clear requirement for specialist duties to be covered, and we are keen to work with the POA this autumn to further discuss agreed uses for a Band 4 rate. HMPPS will monitor uptake and effectiveness as part of its wider review of Payment Plus policy and usage.
- 1.51 HMPPS intends to undertake a wider review of Payment Plus policy and usage during 2027/28, including consideration of operational requirements, take-up rates and effectiveness. Introduction of any new Payment Plus rate would form part of this review, and we would engage closely with the POA to consult on scope, usage, and associated policy guidance.

- 1.52 Following completion of this work, HMPPS intends to introduce a three-year periodic review of Payment Plus rates, to ensure rates remain appropriate, proportionate and aligned to operational need. We intend to move towards more regular reviews to reduce the risk of future erosion in value and support the continued effectiveness of Payment Plus in supporting operational delivery.

Background

- 1.53 Payment Plus was introduced in 2008 to replace all other additional hours and ex gratia payment schemes. It recognises that specific demands made on staff time in a prison can be unpredictable and required at short notice, outside of planned shifts.
- 1.54 According to policy, the Payment Plus rate will only be paid for additional hours working in the following circumstances:
- To staff a bedwatch
 - To staff a constant observation
 - To staff a Category A escort over and above the profiled staffing level
 - To staff new accommodation and to cover temporary staff in post vacancies against the Target Staffing figure, where authorised by the Area Manager.
- 1.55 Payment Plus is intended only to be utilised in accordance with the criteria set out above. Volunteers will always be sought in the first instance, but where insufficient volunteers are available, Bulletin 8 procedures will apply. Bulletin 8 arrangements (Bulletin 8, paragraph 17) remain in place whereby staff may be asked on occasion to work more than their average weekly hours.
- 1.56 In August 2016 the rate of Payment Plus was increased from £17 per hour to £22 per hour. This increase was introduced to encourage more staff volunteers and, therefore, improve staff availability in support of prison stability and safety. In 2026/27, HMPPS accepted the PSPRB

recommendation to increase the rate of Payment Plus from £22 per hour to £23 per hour.

OSG Overtime

1.57 **Proposal 10:** No changes to the rate of OSG overtime.

Additional rationale and key drivers

1.58 OSG overtime rates continue to provide appropriate compensation for additional hours worked, with rates increasing automatically in line with annual pay awards as they are linked to base pay. There is no current evidence that the enhanced rates are insufficient to attract volunteers and HMPPS continues to see a strong supply of staff willing to work overtime. HMPPS has not identified any significant concerns regarding either the level of the payment or the extent of overtime worked by OSGs.

1.59 Whilst no changes are proposed, HMPPS recognises the relationship between OSG overtime and Payment Plus as mechanisms to support operational resilience and address temporary staffing pressures. We therefore intend to review OSG overtime in parallel with the intended three-year periodic review of Payment Plus, ensuring both payments remain proportionate, fit for purpose and aligned to operational need.

Background

1.60 Overtime for OSGs is 1.33 times the standard hourly base pay rate for weekday working (between 07:00 and 19:00) and 1.75 times the standard hourly base pay rate for weekend and public holiday working between 19:00 and 07:00. Since 2016, a £5 per hour addition is also paid on top of both overtime rates. HMPPS considers that the levels of OSG overtime provide a competitive level of compensation for additional hours worked.

1.61 As overtime rates are calculated as a multiplier of base pay, the cash value of OSG overtime increases automatically each year as headline awards are applied. In addition, recent NLW investment and targeted increases for lower-paid staff have further increased the value of OSG overtime payments.

OSG Unsocial Hours working

- 1.62 **Proposal 11:** Extending the temporary 25% unsocial hours working allowance for Band 2 OSGs for a further two years. This recognises that many OSGs continue to work a disproportionately high proportion of their hours unsocially, and that work to test the feasibility and impact of operational changes arising from the Nights Review is ongoing.

Additional rationale and key drivers

- 1.63 The temporary increase from 20% to 25%, introduced from 1 April 2025 following acceptance of Recommendation 11 in the PSPRB's 2025/26 report, reflected evidence that OSGs were regularly working more than 20% to 30% of their hours unsocially. HMPPS considers that the underlying factors which supported this recommendation remain in place.
- 1.64 HMPPS is currently undertaking a wider review of night working arrangements across the prison estate. This work has identified opportunities to rebalance night shift responsibilities across a broader workforce group, reducing the concentration of unsocial hours currently undertaken by OSGs in sites with the highest levels. However, implementation of these operational and workforce changes will take time and is dependent on wider workforce planning, consultation and operational delivery considerations. More information on this work is set out in paragraph 2.370.
- 1.65 Pending completion of this work, HMPPS considers it appropriate to continue the temporary 25% Unsocial Hours allowance for OSGs. Extending the arrangement for a further two years will provide continuity and appropriate recognition for staff who continue to work a disproportionately high proportion of their hours unsocially, whilst allowing sufficient time to assess the impact of proposed operational and workforce changes. This extension will also allow HMPPS to consider whether any further pay changes are required to support a sustainable approach to unsocial hours working.

Background

- 1.66 Working unsocial hours is remunerated through the Unsocial Hours payment for Bands 2 to 5.
- 1.67 Unsocial Hours was last reviewed in 2022 as part of the PSPRB's rolling review of allowances, when it was increased from 17% to 20% of base pay for all eligible bands and applied to all contracted hours.
- 1.68 With effect from 1 April 2025, following the acceptance of Recommendation 11 in the PSPRB's 2025/26 report, the Unsocial Hours working payment for Band 2 OSGs was temporarily increased from 20% to 25% for all contracted hours for a limited period of two years, on the basis that OSG staff were regularly working more than 20% to 30% of their hours unsocially.

Unsocial Hours Allowance and Required Hours Addition

- 1.69 **Proposal 12:** HMPPS proposes no increase to the Unsocial Hours allowance or Required Hours Addition (RHA) allowance in 2027/28.

Additional rationale and key drivers

- 1.70 Following the increases implemented in 2022/23, and the temporary increase to the Unsocial Hours allowance for Band 2 OSGs from April 2025, HMPPS has not identified new evidence that would support a wider increase to either allowance at this stage.
- 1.71 HMPPS remains mindful of equality considerations and the need to ensure that Unsocial Hours payments continue to provide a proportionate and evidence-based level of recompense for the pattern and volume of unsocial working undertaken by eligible staff.
- 1.72 HMPPS is currently undertaking wider work in response to Recommendation 14 and through the Nights Review to consider how unsocial hours working is distributed across operational staff groups and whether operational changes can reduce concentrations of unsocial working in specific roles. As this work is

ongoing, HMPPS considers it appropriate to maintain the current arrangements pending the outcome of the review.

- 1.73 Following completion of this work, HMPPS will consider whether any wider changes to Unsocial Hours allowances and subsequently RHA are necessary to ensure the overall approach remains fair, proportionate and aligned to operational requirements.

Background

- 1.74 Unsocial Hours allowance is paid in recognition that some staff are expected to regularly work unsocial hours as part of their rostered shift pattern. It is calculated at 20% of contracted hours worked and is pensionable.
- 1.75 Payment of RHA is for roles in Bands 6 to 11, where the role requires the incumbent to regularly work unpredictable and unsocial hours, and be on call to attend their office or establishment at any time, when required. Band 12 roles are not eligible for the RHA payment as the Band 12 spot rate is considered to be inclusive of RHA. It is calculated at 20% of base pay and is pensionable.

Physical Education Instructor (PEI) allowance

- 1.76 **Proposal 13:** Cease the temporary two-year £1,500 recruitment and retention allowance for qualified PEIs, effective from 1 April/when the next PSPRB report is published.

Additional rationale and key drivers

- 1.77 The PEI role combines operational custodial responsibilities with the delivery of physical activity, wellbeing and rehabilitative interventions. Workforce pressures (including vacancies) are influenced not only by pay, but also by training availability, local workforce planning, progression routes and the ability of establishments to release and backfill staff while specialist training is undertaken.

- 1.78 The temporary £1,500 allowance was introduced to support recruitment and retention of qualified PEIs during a period of significant vacancy pressures and recruitment challenges. Available workforce evidence shows an improved vacancy picture for PEIs over the last year. The temporary £1,500 allowance is likely to have helped maintain attraction into the Band 4 role, but other factors have also contributed, including improved workforce planning, stronger local leadership and more effective deployment. Establishments that have introduced the Band 5 Physical Education Custodial Manager (PECM) are better able to plan succession, support release for training and maintain workforce stability.
- 1.79 HMPPS also recognises the importance of considering PEI reward arrangements alongside the wider Physical Education (PE) career structure, including the relationship between Band 4, Band 5 and Band 6 specialist roles. It is important that pay arrangements should support the whole PE workforce model. The current allowance has reduced the gap between Band 4 PEIs, the Band 5 PECM and Band 6 National PE and Activity Trainer roles, with evidence suggesting that the temporary allowance may be affecting progression into roles that are critical for local leadership, training capacity and workforce stability. HMPPS will continue to monitor recruitment, retention and workforce data, and will consider any further changes as part of ongoing work to support a sustainable PE workforce.
- 1.80 Where recruitment and retention challenges persist at individual establishments, HMPPS considers that Recruitment and Retention Payments (RRPs) provide a more appropriate mechanism for targeted intervention than a national allowance applied to all qualified PEIs, regardless of local labour market conditions. This allows support to be targeted where evidence demonstrates a business need, while ensuring reward arrangements continue to support progression across the wider PE structure. Our proposed introduction of a new rate of Payment Plus for Band 4 specialist tasks will also provide a mechanism for addressing short-term vacancies and maintaining consistent delivery of PEI functions.

Background

- 1.81 Following acceptance of Recommendation 12 in the PSPRB's 2025/26 report, HMPPS introduced a temporary Recruitment and Retention Allowance of £1,500 for qualified Physical Education Instructors (PEIs) for a period of two years. The allowance was intended to support recruitment and retention in a specialist role where establishments had experienced sustained vacancy pressures and recruitment challenges.
- 1.82 RRP's form part of HMPPS's Pay Manual and can be used to address recruitment and retention challenges in specific roles, locations or labour markets where existing pay arrangements are insufficient to secure or retain the required workforce. The use of RRP's is subject to appropriate governance and review, ensuring decisions are evidence-based, proportionate, affordable and consistent with wider public sector pay policy principles.
- 1.83 Since the introduction of the temporary PEI allowance, HMPPS has expanded the application of its RRP policy to allow targeted interventions for existing operational staff as well as new recruits. This has increased the flexibility available to establishments in responding to local workforce pressures.
- 1.84 The expanded availability of RRP's provides establishments with an established mechanism for addressing local recruitment and retention pressures where there is clear evidence of business need. HMPPS therefore considers that RRP's reduce the need for a permanent national PEI-specific recruitment and retention allowance, enabling support to be targeted where workforce pressures exist rather than applied uniformly across all qualified PEIs. Our proposed introduction of a new rate of Payment Plus for Band 4 specialist tasks will also provide a mechanism for addressing short-term vacancies and maintaining consistent delivery of PEI functions.

Care and Maintenance of Dogs Allowance

- 1.85 **Proposal 14:** An increase to the Care and Maintenance of Dogs allowance in line with headline pay award and increasing the allowance payable for multiple dogs from 25% to 50% of the base allowance.

Additional rationale and key drivers

- 1.86 HMPPS currently provides an allowance of £2,945 for a single operational dog and an additional 25% payment for multiple dogs. Whilst the single dog allowance is considered to be proportionate and remains broadly aligned with external comparators, HMPPS considers that the current uplift for multiple dogs does not adequately reflect the additional responsibilities, time commitment and costs associated with managing multiple operational dogs.
- 1.87 Benchmarking with the police shows that dog handlers with multiple dogs attract an additional 50% allowance to the single rate. We consider this to provide an appropriate external benchmark and recognise that current HMPPS rates for multiple dogs are less generous than these comparable rates.
- 1.88 Operational evidence indicates that the assignment of a second dog (or more) represents a material increase in the demands placed upon handlers. This includes additional exercise and husbandry requirements, increased kennel capacity, greater responsibility for welfare and control, and higher recurring costs associated with maintaining appropriate accommodation and welfare standards.
- 1.89 Increasing the multiple dog allowance to 50% would better recognise the practical realities of managing multiple dogs and align HMPPS more closely with external comparators.

Background

- 1.90 The Care and Maintenance of Dogs allowance is paid to operational dog handlers in recognition of the requirement to care for and maintain operational dogs outside working hours. The allowance supports the costs and responsibilities associated with housing dogs within a domestic setting, providing appropriate kennel facilities and maintaining required welfare standards.

Update on Joint Evidence with the Prison Governors' Association (PGA)

- 1.91 **Temporary cover policy:** HMPPS and the PGA remain jointly committed to resolving the longstanding issue associated with temporary cover arrangements. In some circumstances, the current policy can result in outcomes that are not aligned with the intended operation of the pay framework, including cases where staff undertaking temporary cover receive higher remuneration than substantive postholders in the grade being covered. Further work is underway to develop a more coherent and sustainable approach that supports workforce flexibility while protecting the integrity of the pay framework, reinforcing the incentive for substantive promotion and ensuring allowances are applied appropriately to the duties being undertaken. This is a complex policy issue, and any proposed changes will require careful consideration of implementation, affordability and workforce impacts, alongside engagement with recognised trade unions. HMPPS and the PGA will continue to work together to develop options and will keep the PSPRB updated as this work progresses.
- 1.92 **Individualised contracts:** HMPPS and the PGA have continued discussions on the potential use of individualised contractual arrangements for a small number of defined high-risk or highly complex roles. A set of guiding principles has been agreed, and work is underway to develop and assess options, including appropriate governance arrangements, transparency for staff, fixed-term tenure and alignment with wider Civil Service pay policy. This work remains at a formative stage, and any proposals would require further development and engagement before implementation. HMPPS and the PGA will continue to explore options and keep the PSPRB updated as this work progresses.
- 1.93 **Accreditation utilisation payments:** HMPPS and the PGA have begun exploratory discussions regarding accreditation utilisation payments and broader approaches to recognising professional expertise and specialist skills. These discussions remain at an early stage and are likely to form part of a wider programme of longer-term pay reform rather than proposals for the

2027/28 pay round. Further engagement is planned over the coming months to consider the issue in more detail and assess potential options.

Forward Look

1.94 HMPPS intends to review a number of areas within its pay and reward framework, subject to consultation with recognised trade unions, which impact staff in both the remit and non-remit groups. HMPPS wishes to inform the PSPRB of this planned programme of work, which may help shape future policy development and evidence submissions.

- **Payment Plus policy and operational guidance review:** HMPPS intends to undertake a wider review of the Payment Plus policy and associated operational guidance, as part of our review of non-salary payments, which we expect to report to the Government Internal Audit Agency (GIAA) in September 2027. This will consider the effectiveness, consistency and governance of existing arrangements, including how Payment Plus is used to support operational delivery and whether any policy changes are required to ensure the scheme remains fair, affordable and aligned with business need.
- **Payment Plus part-time worker arrangements:** As part of this review, HMPPS will consider the current policy position whereby part-time staff may become eligible for Payment Plus before working their full-time equivalent hours. The aim will be to ensure that policy arrangements remain fair, consistent and aligned with the intended purpose of Payment Plus.
- **Enhanced Payment Plus rates:** HMPPS also intends to explore the potential use of enhanced Payment Plus rates for a limited number of specialist Band 5 duties where there is evidence of particular operational pressures, skills requirements or recruitment and retention challenges. Any proposals will be subject to further evidence gathering, affordability considerations and trade union consultation.
- **Pay reform:** HMPPS intends to progress longer-term discussions on pay reform. This work will consider the sustainability, coherence and effectiveness of the current pay framework, including opportunities to simplify pay

arrangements and ensure reward structures continue to support recruitment, retention and workforce development objectives. HMPPS will continue to engage with recognised trade unions and the PSPRB as this work develops.

Summary

- 1.95 In closing this chapter, HMPPS considers that the proposals set out above represent a balanced and proportionate approach to addressing identified workforce challenges while maintaining affordability, supporting wider departmental strategic objectives and preserving the coherence of the overall pay framework. HMPPS asks the PSPRB to take these considerations into account when formulating its recommendations for the 2027/28 pay round.

2: Evidence of key developments, priorities and areas of investment for the coming year and beyond

Introduction

- 2.1 Significant investment in pay in recent years means that the starting salary for an entry-level prison officer (national rate, 39-hour week with unsocial hours) is now market aligned at £37,131. Exit-interview data shows that the primary drivers for resignation ranks pay and reward as ninth overall.
- 2.2 However, recruitment and retention challenges remain. As of June 2026, there are currently 22,001 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Band 3 to 5 Prison Officers in post, which is a decrease of 701 FTE (3.1%) since June 2025. Though the overall resourcing picture is broadly stable, HMPPS is operating in a challenging labour market. Nationally across establishments we are at 92% of our Target Staffing Figure, and there are challenges with staff experience at a national level given recruitment drives in recent years, as well as acute challenges in certain areas of the country and parts of the estate such as increasing levels of violence against staff in the LTHSE.
- 2.3 We remain committed to ensuring prisons are sufficiently resourced with work to prioritise onboarding, through vetting and online assessment centre places, at prisons with the greatest operational need taking place alongside targeted recruitment and retention interventions. It is essential that we recruit good quality staff who are aligned with HMPPS' organisational values of *Purpose, Humanity, Openness and Together*, and adapt to the evolving needs of the changing prisoner population. To help support this, in April 2026, we introduced a 'Values Based Assessment' as part of the assessment for prison officers, which will provide candidates with a realistic view of HMPPS expectations and seek to support retention. These changes have been informed by Jennifer Rademaker's review into professional standards and an

Independent Review of Prison Officer Training and are aligned with HMPPS' wider ambitions for workforce transformation and training being taken forward through the 'Enable Programme'. It is also important we retain and build levels of experience, both of which are fundamental to delivering quality outcomes in prisons.

2.4 A fair pay settlement continues to be a priority for the Department, and this section of the written evidence outlines wider key developments, priorities and investment for 2027/28 and into the future. This builds on progress set out in HMPPS' previous written evidence and updates on:

- The prison environment, including safety and security;
- Challenges in the Long-Term and High Security Estate;
- Delivery of purposeful activity;
- Improving technology;
- Wider updates in relation to the prison workforce, including changes to the Skilled Worker visa requirements, support available to staff and localised interventions;
- Diversity and equality in recruitment outcomes, allowances and pay gaps;
- Allowances;
- Responding to Recommendation 14;
- Escort, Bedwatch and Constant Supervision Review;
- Workforce Culture and the Rademaker Review;
- Other major areas of workplace investment including non-salary-based investments from throughout 2026/27.

2.5 HMPPS has made significant progress over the past year in addressing some of the most urgent operational pressures facing the prison estate. The Sentencing Act 2026 came into effect this year and is expected to ease

demand for prison places. This sits alongside the 10-Year Prison Capacity Strategy, through which HMPPS remains committed to delivering an additional 14,000 prison places by 2031, supported by substantial investment over the Spending Review period (2026/27-2029/30). To expand capacity further, our prison building programme saw HMP Millsike open in spring 2025 and work start on HMP Welland Oaks in November 2025. These measures alongside other key investments have helped build a more resilient estate to avoid a future capacity crisis.

- 2.6 Targeted investments have also been made to improve the security and safety of staff and prisoners across the estate. HMPPS has invested around £15m in protective equipment and operational capability to better manage risk and respond to serious incidents. HMPPS recently announced that 17 priority sites will share a £35m investment to improve physical security against drones delivering the contraband which drives instability and violence. Safety statistics have also shown signs of improvement, including a fall in the rate of self-harm incidents and assaults on staff in the last year - but we know that violence, assaults on staff, and self-harm remain at high levels.
- 2.7 HMPPS has taken steps to continue to improve staff recruitment through programmes such as the Prison Officer Alumni Scheme, Advance into Justice targeting the Armed Forces family, the Operational Support Grade to Prison Officer Fast Track scheme, the 'Extraordinary Jobs' campaign, which seeks to maintain and grow the talent pipeline for HMPPS, both in the short and long term. HMPPS has also continued to strengthen capability and career development through programmes such as the Enable Programme, which has included the development of Core Capability Packages and the Operational Delivery Professional Capability Package, as well as improving our talent attraction approach through the Future Prison Leaders Programme and wider leadership and mentoring offers.
- 2.8 HMPPS has also made improvements to staff wellbeing and workplace culture by accepting of all 12 recommendations of the Rademaker Review, including the establishment of an independent channel outside of line

management for dealing with Bullying, Harassment, Discrimination and Victimisation (BHDV) complaints.

- 2.9 Significant progress has also been made in responding to Recommendation 14 (from the 2024/25 PSPRB report) concerning Payment Plus, OSG overtime, and unsocial hours, and we continue to explore opportunities for reform including through the ongoing Nights Review. Our proposals regarding Payment Plus and OSG overtime are set out in Chapter 1, and further detail on our response to Recommendation 14 is set out in this chapter.
- 2.10 Work has commenced on the Independent Review of the Prison System and will conclude by December this year.

Prison Environment

Independent Review

- 2.11 On 1 July, we launched an Independent Review of the Prison System, led by The Rt Hon Amber Rudd. As per the Terms of Reference, the review will provide a strategic, risk-based assessment of the current, emerging and future risks and opportunities facing the prison system, to identify the reforms needed to build a prison system fit for the future. It will look specifically at security, safety, decency, capacity and staffing. The Review will report to the Lord Chancellor by December 2026.

Prison Capacity and Expansion

- 2.12 To put prison capacity on a sustainable footing, we introduced the Sentencing Act 2026 which takes forward many of the recommendations from the Rt Hon David Gauke's Independent Review into Sentencing. Key reforms include a presumption to suspend short custodial sentences of up to 12 months, which has already been implemented, and a new 'progression model' for standard determinate sentences and the expansion of tough community-based sentences, which are to be implemented across the rest of year and into 2027. The Prime Minister and Lord Chancellor announced changes to the implementation of the Sentencing Act to exclude sentences of rape, serious

child sex offences, grooming offences, offences related to unlawful killing and the offence of indecent assault from the progression model.

- 2.13 The Annual Statement on Prison Capacity 2025 showed that these reforms were expected to ease demand by around 7,800 prison places in May 2028 under the central demand scenario. However, these projections do not take into account the recently announced changes to the progression model or other measures to improve prison capacity. We will set out an updated prison capacity position in the Annual Statement on Prison Capacity later this year.
- 2.14 The 10-Year Prison Capacity Strategy, published in December 2024, outlines the steps the Government is taking on the future of the prison estate. We are committed to delivering an additional 14,000 prison places and aim to do so by 2031. We have committed a further investment of £4.7bn over the spending review period (2026/27-2029/30) to deliver these places. The Government has already added c.3,300 places since coming into office.
- 2.15 Our build programme consists of the construction of four new prisons, including HMP Millsike which opened in spring 2025 and HMP Welland Oaks, where we broke ground in November 2025. We are also continuing to increase capacity across the prison estate through the delivery of both permanent and temporary prison places, while also refurbishing existing prisons to improve and maintain the estate.
- 2.16 We announced on 1 September 2026 £110m of funding from within existing budgets to convert existing spaces in prisons to deliver much needed capacity – including through unused office space, laundry rooms, and storage areas.
- 2.17 Following the release of the 10-Year Capacity Strategy, we have been actively engaging with key stakeholders to identify and acquire suitable land to build full-sized prisons. This search is primarily located in the North West and South East of England where forecasted demand is deemed highest. A long-term approach to prison builds will allow us to create more certainty in our prison pipeline, driving both cost and time savings, as well as significantly increasing our resilience and ability to plan for long-term population growth.

This approach also allows for increased headroom to make key improvements to the estate such as reducing crowding to enable a rehabilitative regime.

- 2.18 The Government is also committed to upholding high standards of transparency in relation to prison capacity, ensuring that information is clear and accessible to the public. The second Annual Statement on Prison Capacity was published in January 2026, delivering on that commitment. The statement sets out prison population projections and the department's plan for supply including the delivery of 14,000 additional places.
- 2.19 To guarantee that this additional transparency is upheld in the future, the Government has legislated, through the Sentencing Act 2026, to make it a statutory requirement to publish this statement each year. This ensures the current and future governments are held to account on long-term planning, and decisions on prison demand and supply are balanced.

Maintenance, Fire Safety and Crowding

- 2.110 The prison estate is aging and dilapidated and requires major repair and replacement. 58% of prisons were opened more than 50 years ago, of which over 25% opened in the Victorian era or earlier. General maintenance projects were paused by the previous Government due to the increased prison population. This meant that only essential maintenance work took place.
- 2.111 We have increased our maintenance allocations in recent financial years, rising from £225m in 2024/25 to c.£300m in 2025/26 and c.£275m fire safety improvement funding is already scheduled for 2026/27. This increase in spending has supported essential repairs, ongoing maintenance, and efforts to minimise future cell losses.
- 2.112 We take the safety of our prisons extremely seriously, and we are carrying out our plans to meet fire safety standards across the estate as fast as possible, removing as much capacity as the system can safely spare to enable fire safety improvement works.

- 2.113 HMPPS introduced the Safer Vape Pen programme in November 2025 to prevent vape pens being used as an ignition source and to reduce their potential for use as a delivery mechanism for illicit substances. Since the introduction of the Safer Vape Pen, there has been a significant reduction in fires nationally, with no fires attributed to the new design. The project has now concluded and has transitioned into business-as-usual operations.
- 2.114 We recognise that addressing crowding in prisons is a priority as it can make it harder to deliver safe and stable regimes and places additional pressure on staff. In the 12 months to March 2026, the crowding rate at establishments across England and Wales was 23.9%, down from 24.7% in the previous 12-month period. This marginal reduction is due to the opening of new uncrowded accommodation and the removal of crowded accommodation for maintenance (including fire safety improvement works). Analysis published by the Department shows that prisoners in crowded cells are more likely to be involved in assaults than those not in crowded conditions. That is why we continually monitor prison conditions and take places on and offline depending on safety, stability, staffing levels and maintenance needs.
- 2.115 The Prison Estate Condition Survey Programme enables us to now have a better understanding of the quality of our current estate so we can better target our funding.

Prison Safety

- 2.116 Safety in prisons is a key priority, and HMPPS is working to ensure prisons are safe and stable environments for prisoners and staff. Safe conditions are essential to enable engagement in rehabilitative activity and to support effective progression. Poor safety outcomes undermine staff wellbeing and retention, as well as stability, order, and rehabilitation across the estate. Internal analysis has identified that greater levels of workforce experience are positively correlated with safety and staff-prisoner relationships. The proportion of band 3-5 prison officers with less than 3 years' service as of 30 June 2026 fell to 30.2% compared with 37.3% as of 30 June 2025.

2.117 Every death in custody is a tragedy, and HMPPS continues to prioritise prisoner safety. Prisoners at risk of suicide and self-harm are supported through individualised case management (known as “ACCT”), which focusses on identifying personal risks, triggers and protective factors, and developing meaningful support plans to reduce and manage those risks. Particular attention is given to high-risk periods such as early days in custody and following a transfer. HMPPS has introduced a quality assurance tool to help establishments assess how effectively they deliver the ACCT case management process, identify learning opportunities and good practice, and ensure effective support for people at risk of self-harm/suicide and the staff providing this. Other work to improve safety includes expanding ligature-resistant cells, with around 50 cells being installed across 12 sites. The majority of cells have now been installed and completion of the remaining cells is expected by the end of September 2026, and further investment confirmed for 2026/27 for additional cells to be installed.

2.118 Self-harm and violence are driven by factors including a history of violence or self-harm, substance use, trauma and poor mental health, which have become more prevalent in the wider community. While there have been recent reductions in the rate of self-harm and assaults on staff, levels remain high and continue to place sustained pressure across the estate.

2.119 Prison safety is also shaped by the environment, in particular:

- **Prison capacity:** analysis published in June 2025 identified a relationship between crowding and increased violence. Prisoners in crowded cells are 19% more likely to be involved in an assault in a one-year period than those not in crowded cells. Disruptive behaviour can also take cells out of use, creating further pressure.
- **Prison security:** where criminality is allowed to continue in prisons it undermines our efforts to rehabilitate prisoners. The availability of drugs poses a risk to the stability of prisons, exacerbates violence and self-harm and is directly linked to prison debt and serious and organised crime.

- **Prison healthcare:** prisoners are more likely to experience mental ill health, substance use, and self-harm than the general population.

Measures to Tackle Violence

- 2.120 Staff safety is critical. Assaults on staff remain unacceptably high despite a recent decrease. Action is being taken to strengthen staff protection and response.
- 2.121 HMPPS is investing c.£15m in protective equipment and operational capability to better manage risk and respond to serious incidents, including the rollout of Protective Body Armour in the Long-Term High Security Estate (LTHSE).
- 2.122 The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 increased the maximum penalty for assaulting emergency workers, including Prison Officers, to two years' imprisonment, with higher penalties for more serious offences such as ABH, GBH, and sexual assault.
- 2.123 We currently have no evidence to suggest that violence directed towards staff outside of prisons is a widespread issue. However, we acknowledge that there are serious isolated incidents and we continue to take such incidents seriously. Staff can access support from their local Governor, prison security team, and HR Business Partner on request, and any serious isolated incidents are referred to the police. We will remain alert to any indications that this issue is becoming more prevalent across the estate and will consider whether any further action is required.
- 2.124 HMPPS supports prisoners at a raised risk of being violent through the Challenge, Support and Intervention Plan (CSIP), a case management approach that is centred around the individual and addressing the underlying causes of their violence, including specific risk factors and needs, to help them manage and move away from violent behaviours.

Updated Safety Statistics

2.125 The below figures show signs of progress we are beginning to see across the estate – but recognise that violence, assaults on staff, and self-harm remain at high levels.

Self-inflicted deaths

2.126 In the 12 months to June 2026, there were 359 deaths in prison custody, a decrease of 10% from 401 deaths in the previous 12 months. Of these, 71 deaths were self-inflicted, a decrease of 18% from the 87 self-inflicted deaths in the previous 12 months. The rate of self-inflicted deaths has remained broadly stable at around 1.0 per 1,000 prisoners since the 12 months to June 2017.

Self-harm

2.127 In the 12 months to March 2026, the rate of self-harm was 812 incidents per 1,000 prisoners (70,632 incidents), a 10% decrease from the 12 months to March 2025, with an 11% decrease in male establishments and a 4.5% decrease in female establishments. The rate of self-harm incidents is over nine times higher in female establishments than male establishments.

Assaults

2.128 Total assaults: In the 12 months to March 2026, the rate of assaults was 354 assaults per 1,000 prisoners (30,820 assaults), down 0.5% from the 12 months to March 2025. While assault rates remain below the pre-pandemic peak, they reflect sustained pressure across the estate.

2.129 Serious assaults: In the 12 months to March 2026, the rate of serious assaults was 39 serious assaults per 1,000 prisoners (3,419 incidents), unchanged from the previous 12 months.

2.130 Assaults on staff: In the 12 months to March 2026, the rate of assaults on staff was 113 assaults per 1,000 prisoners (9,833 assaults on staff), down 7% from

the 12 months to March 2025. However, levels remain unacceptably high, and we are working hard to address this.

- 2.131 Longer-term trends: In the 12 months to March 2026, the number of assault incidents is higher than in the 12 months to March 2020 (immediately pre-pandemic), but still lower than the peak in the 12 months to March 2019. The rate of assaults per 1,000 prisoners has remained lower than pre-pandemic levels of the 12 months to March 2019 and was similar (0.3% lower) to the rate in the year to March 2020.

Homicides

- 2.132 In the 12 months to June 2026, there were 8 homicides, an increase from 7 homicides in the previous 12 months and a new peak in the time series. In the six years prior to the 12 months to June 2025, there were between 0 and 3 total homicides per year.

Use of Force and Personal Safety Training

- 2.133 HMPPS policy sets out the powers and authority for staff to use force to maintain safety, control, and good order, and to protect individuals from harm.
- 2.134 HMPPS Use of Force training equips staff with the knowledge, skills, and professional judgement required to manage behaviour effectively. Within this framework, force is applied only as an end-stage technique, forming part of a broader behaviour management approach. Any use of force must be lawful, proportionate, necessary, and used only as a last resort.
- 2.135 Staff receive Use of Force training as part of their initial entry training, followed by an annual refresher. This refresher consists of an 8-hour practical session and 4 hours of theory delivered via eLearning. Training includes Control and Restraint, SPEAR – a personal safety, communication and de-escalation training package for prison staff, Rigid Bar Handcuffs (RBH), Batons and PAVA spray.
- 2.136 Use of force is subject to robust governance and oversight arrangements, including mandatory reporting and structured review processes. These ensure

accountability, support organisational learning, and drive continuous improvement in practice.

- 2.137 Use of Force data indicates an increase in reported incidents, rising from 63,229 incidents between January 2024 and December 2024, to 70,102 incidents between January 2025 and December 2025 (a 10% increase). A total of 214,528 Use of Force statements were completed in 2025 by 21,544 staff.
- 2.138 HMPPS places significant emphasis on the quality of staff–prisoner relationships. Five Minute Intervention (FMI) training supports this by strengthening communication skills, enabling effective conflict resolution, and promoting positive engagement, thereby reducing the likelihood that force will be required.

Body Worn Video Cameras

- 2.139 Body Worn Video Cameras are available in all adult public sector prisons, which equates to over 13,000 cameras in total. This means that every Band 3 to 5 Prison Officer has access to a camera whilst on shift. These aid the de-escalation of violent incidents and provide high-quality evidence to support prosecutions against prisoners who commit assaults and help to ensure that challenging situations are dealt with in a fair and just way. All cameras have pre-recording capabilities which helps capture events preceding the incident.

Alternatives to Wet-Shave Razors

- 2.140 HMPPS has supplied electric razors to all public sector prisons in the adult male closed estate, replacing wet shave razors due to their potential use as weapons.

Suicide Prevention – Postvention Support and Cluster Deaths

- 2.141 HMPPS funds the Samaritans Listener Scheme, training selected prisoners to support other prisoners in crisis, and a postvention service, offering additional support to prisons experiencing a self-inflicted death in order to reduce the risk of further deaths.

2.142 HMPPS is providing additional support to establishments that have had a cluster of self-inflicted deaths. Based on Public Health England guidance, a cluster is defined as: two self-inflicted deaths within eight weeks; and/or three self-inflicted deaths within twelve months. HMPPS' wellbeing support offer also includes a 24-hour helpline, confidential counselling, and online wellbeing services.

Training and Staff Support

2.143 All new members of staff with prisoner contact receive training on suicide and self-harm prevention. We also have specific training for all staff who undertake roles relating to risk assessment and case management.

2.144 HMPPS continues to support staff wellbeing through established peer support approaches, including Trauma Risk Management (TRiM), which provides early intervention by trained peers following exposure to traumatic incidents and helps mitigate longer-term psychological harm. As of June 2026, there are 1,755 TRiM trained staff of which 341 are TRiM Managers in Prisons.

2.145 Reception Officer training is currently under review to place a significantly stronger emphasis on safety, with a clear focus on identifying, recording, and escalating risks. This includes strengthened guidance on managing vulnerable cohorts during their early days in custody, alongside effective information sharing between Reception, Residential staff, Healthcare, and safety teams. The updated training will also ensure full alignment with current policy, procedures, and Early Days in Custody expectations. An interim update to the existing training has been completed to ensure that, while the full review is underway, staff receive up-to-date training that provides accurate information and provides them with the knowledge and skills required for the role.

Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) and Key Work

2.146 Delivery and quality of key work remains a priority for HMPPS. All male closed prisons and women's prisons have been resourced to deliver one key work session per week to eligible prisoners. Any reduction of the resourced delivery

of one session per week should only be considered in line with existing policy as part of the local Regime Management Planning process and balanced alongside other local risks and priorities. Where prisons are balancing priorities in this way, Governors are encouraged wherever possible to deliver at least two key work sessions per prisoner over the course of a four-week period.

2.147 A national quality performance measure for key work quality is in place and is part of the Prison Performance Framework. The measure uses a machine learning algorithm, developed by the Ministry of Justice Prisons Data Science Team. This is used to assess the quality of each key work session case note to determine the case note's quality score. The new measure will improve consistency in scoring case notes and means that all case notes will be scored rather than just a sample. In addition, key work quality scores will be statistically valid on a monthly basis, rather than only being statistically viable over a 12 month period. There is also an OMiC Key Work Audit in place that assesses compliance with a prison's agreed Regime Plan and quality of Key Work delivery.

2.148 The Sentencing Act 2026 makes changes to the release framework for standard determinate sentences. To support the new release framework, a number of changes were introduced to OMiC Case Management and Pre-Release Team processes from 1 September 2026. These changes will apply to both the male and female custodial estate. They are intended to simplify existing processes, reduce duplication, increase capacity, and strengthen information sharing and pre-release planning. These changes are an interim framework while a long-term new Custodial Sentence Management (CSM) model is developed for implementation in 2027.

Improving Safety and Security for Staff and Prisoners in the Long-Term and High Security Estate (LTHSE)

2.149 Reducing risk in the LTHSE remains a top priority for HMPPS. Through our LTHSE Taskforce, additional measures have been introduced to strengthen safety and security for staff and prisoners. These measures include additional

search teams, General Purpose Dogs in the five Category B prisons, safety floorwalkers, and a permanently funded Crime in Prison Co-ordinator in each of the 13 LTHSE prisons. Protective body armour (PBA) has been mandated in the highest risk units in the LTHSE, with an additional 5,000 units being rolled out across the estate. LTHSE Prison Officer grades will be required to wear PBA throughout their daily duties. Up to 500 staff are also being trained in the use of tasers. LTHSE prisons will benefit from the recently announced £35m investment to improve physical security, including installation of window grilles to prevent drone deliveries directly to cells. These measures are having a positive impact on staff safety, with overall levels of violence reducing. Evaluations for these measures are scheduled for the coming months.

Prison Security

2.150 Prison staff play a key role in protecting the public and ensuring that prisons are safe and stable environments that enable rehabilitation. HMPPS also recognises that staff are looking for development opportunities to build a long, successful career. Investing in capability building for staff, equipping them with the best possible security skills and practices is a priority.

2.151 The security challenges faced by prison staff are increasingly complex with criminals constantly seeking novel opportunities to undermine our countermeasures and destabilise prisons. Prison staff work closely with our partners in law enforcement to uphold prison security and seek prosecution for those involved in orchestrating crime from within the prison walls that affects prisons and also extends into the community.

Contraband in prison

2.152 In the 12 months to March 2026:

- Incidents where mobile phones were found decreased by 2%;
- Incidents of drug finds increased by 1%;
- Psychoactive Substances (PS) were included in 29% of drug find incidents.

- 2.153 Changes to the incidences of finds should not be assumed to indicate differences in the prevalence of contraband. The efficacy of searching is another important factor, and so e.g. an increase in find incidents may indicate improved searching rather than higher levels of contraband being present.
- 2.154 We have specialist staff and equipment to combat the smuggling of contraband such as drugs, weapons and mobile phones, all of which can fuel violence and create instability.
- 2.155 Drugs pose one of the most serious challenges to prison security due to the risks they pose to prisoners' safety. HMPPS knows that there are unacceptable levels of drugs in our prisons, highlighted by recent HM Inspectorate of Prisons reporting.
- 2.156 We have expanded the use of physical security measures to tackle the smuggling of contraband such as mobile phones and drugs. This includes X-ray body scanners, airport-style Enhanced Gate Security, and X-ray baggage scanners.

Serious and Organised Crime (SOC)

- 2.157 HMPPS takes the threat of SOC seriously and we are working across Government to bear down on organised criminals running their networks from within the prison estate, as well as managing their risk when released into the community.
- 2.158 We assess that c.9% of the total prison population have connections to SOC. This figure is c.6% for those managed by probation in the community.
- 2.159 We have a range of capabilities and tactical services aimed at disrupting SOC in prisons and probation, including:
- The SOC Co-ordination Centre, which develops tools to understand where the SOC risk sits across the custodial estate and probation regions;
 - SOC Operations, who work closely with law enforcement partners to pursue and prevent serious criminality by those serving in prison or on probation. This

effective collaboration has enabled multiple multi-agency operations with successful criminal justice outcomes;

- The National Intelligence Unit, which collects and analyses intelligence on SOC threats, including through data extracted from seized devices.

Drones

2.160 In the 12 months to March 2026, the number of recorded drone incidents decreased by 13%. By comparison, in the year to March 2025 the number of drone incidents in prisons increased by 43%.

2.161 A large-scale joint operation between the police and HMPPS has already resulted in over 200 arrests linked to drones smuggling contraband into our prisons and disrupted the activity of serious and organised crime networks.

Incident response

2.162 Prison staff are responding to an increasing number of serious incidents across the estate. The Operational Response and Resilience Unit (ORRU) is deployed nationally to handle complex situations that local prison staff are not trained for, including hostage situations and working at height.

2.163 Across the two reporting periods of 12 months from 2024/25 and 2025/26, reported incidents at height decreased by 15%, barricade incidents fell by 11%, and hostage incidents reduced by 21%, indicating an overall downward trend in several categories.

2.164 However, concerted indiscipline decreased by 5%, highlighting a rise in incidents of the most serious nature.

2.165 While reductions have been achieved in some areas, the increase in more serious incident types remains a key concern.

Key developments

2.166 We are investing an extra £35m this year on improving security across 17 of our most at-risk prisons. Up to 13,000 new heavy-duty window grilles will be

delivered by spring 2027, stopping drone deliveries direct to cell windows. This builds on over £40m already invested in prison security.

Improving the Delivery of Purposeful Activity

- 2.167 The delivery of purposeful activity in prisons contributes to effective rehabilitation and reduces the chance of future offending. Alongside this, purposeful activity is a significant enabler of broader positive outcomes for prisons, such as a reduction in prisoner violence and self-harm.
- 2.168 Improving our purposeful activity offer is one of the most transformative things we could do to reduce reoffending, and this remains an HMPPS priority.
- 2.169 Delivering on this ambition depends fundamentally on the capability, capacity, and day-to-day actions of prison staff. Staff are the key enablers of purposeful activity: they unlock access, sustain participation, motivate engagement, and shape the environment – all of which need to be in place to ensure that our investment in activity has the desired impact.
- 2.170 In 2025, HMPPS introduced the Prisoner Education Service, including new Core Education contracts and new Careers Information, Advice and Guidance contracts which set clearer and higher standards for service quality. Alongside this, we rolled out a new national digital education platform that enables enhanced IT-based learning across the prison estate. The infrastructure allows for more flexibility and security, which in turn opens up new digital opportunities for learners to engage with which have not been possible previously. Prisoners continue to have access to education and skills provision through a range of services alongside the Core Education and Careers Information Advice and Guidance contracts, including through library services, distance learning, and locally commissioned services through the Prison Education Dynamic Purchasing System.
- 2.171 However, Prisons continue to face persistent barriers to delivery, including competing operational pressures, resource constraints, and physical infrastructure limitations.

2.172 HMPPS is taking forward a range of actions to address these challenges and improve both the quality and quantity of purposeful activity. These efforts include:

- Maximising use of existing provision by increasing attendance in education and workshops;
- Expanding capacity through infrastructure investment and growth in prison industries;
- Extending working hours through the Working Week prototype (c.31 hours), increasing activity levels, productivity and employment outcomes;
- Improving access and allocation to ensure fair and consistent participation;
- Strengthening regime stability through clear leadership, accountability and delivery against agreed plans;
- Enhancing digital systems and data to improve oversight and performance;
- Prototyping more digitally enabled education, skills and work provision with an aim to increase prisoner access to opportunities;
- Continuing the Future Skills Programme, which provides skills training aligned to labour market needs to prisoners approaching release, and provides a guaranteed interview to those who complete the course;
- Cohering and strengthening delivery approaches to deliver good quality activity, including through peers, third sector organisations, and volunteers;
- Aligning performance frameworks to drive participation and rehabilitative outcomes.

2.173 While these measures are essential, they will only deliver their full value if supported by a skilled, confident and engaged workforce. The role of prison staff goes beyond supervision or facilitation of activity; they are central to creating the rehabilitative culture needed for purposeful activity to succeed.

2.174 The evidence is clear that *how* activity is delivered is as important as *what* is delivered. The quality of interactions between staff and prisoners - characterised by respect, consistency, and pro-social modelling, is critical to supporting engagement, building motivation, and enabling desistance from crime. Every interaction presents an opportunity to reinforce positive behaviours and support progression.

2.175 For this reason, HMPPS is investing in strengthening staff capability through initiatives such as the Enable Programme. This programme is designed to equip frontline staff with the skills, confidence and tools needed to deliver rehabilitative, meaningful and purposeful interactions alongside the structured activity offer (see paragraph 2.236).

2.176 Ultimately, improving purposeful activity is reliant on our workforce. Staff must have the time, training and support to deliver it effectively. Without this, there is a significant risk that our investment in improving purposeful activity will not be realised.

Improving Technology

2.177 Digital tools and technology are transformational for our staff, regimes, and people in our care across prisons. Over the last year, HMPPS has continued to invest in digital services and technology across the estate to improve:

- Productivity: by ensuring our systems and services meet the needs of frontline staff, streamline administrative processes, reduce paperwork, and automate routine tasks, allowing staff to focus their time and resources more effectively;
- Data-driven decision-making: by connecting data across systems, making vital information more accessible to staff to support decision-making;
- Offender outcomes: by providing tools to aid rehabilitation, resettlement, and safety.

2.178 HMPPS will continue to invest in digital services and infrastructure and build on the opportunities to go further.

Digital Prison Services (DPS)

2.179 Digital and data underpin improvements to productivity and operational outcomes. Investment is focused on replacing fragmented legacy systems and paper-based processes with a modern, integrated digital ecosystem that provides staff with timely information for safe, effective decision-making. At the centre of this is Digital Prison Services (DPS), which is becoming the single platform for prisoner management.

2.180 DPS is a multi-year transformation that replaces NOMIS and a range of manual processes with a unified system through which staff can manage core operational activity as the foundation for a modern prison service. Around 60% of NOMIS functionality has already been replaced, with 45 services live or in development, providing a single access point for information and tools covering areas such as sentence management, case notes, movements, and release planning. DPS is: 1) bringing all information onto one platform; 2) ensuring data is captured once at the right point; and, 3) creating a system that is increasingly intelligent in how it supports staff workflows.

2.181 Over the next few years, DPS will support the transformation of core prison operations, including lawful detention, prison safety and offender management, while enabling new digital services that reduce administrative burden and strengthen public protection. It is already providing a more intuitive user experience, streamlining processes and improving the consistency and quality of data captured across the estate. User research continues to show strong levels of satisfaction and confidence in the new system.

Offender Management Units (OMUs)

2.182 In November 2025, the government announced a five-point action plan to reduce releases in error across the prison and court system. This included investment in new tactical AI-enabled tools for frontline staff to support sentence calculation accuracy and accelerate the move away from paper-based processes. These tools automatically triage key information and ensure it reaches the correct prison promptly, as well as linking data to

prevent offenders from concealing information by using multiple aliases.

These tools have been delivered to provide immediate support whilst longer-term strategic work continues.

2.183 The risk of releases in error and unlawful detentions is currently significantly heightened due to the outcome of the review of the progression model as part of the Sentencing Act. The increased policy complexity (including exemptions), reliance on manual sentence calculations, and compressed implementation timelines all increase the risk of error as staff work at pace to re-calculate a large volume of release dates ahead of the new tranche date. Operational analysis shows that incident rates are higher at times of peak change, HMPPS have put in place mitigations where possible including detailed communications and briefing to staff, centralised support and assurance but these cannot remove the risk entirely.

2.184 Strategic work is increasing data join-up between prisons and courts, marking the first step to greater data sharing between HMPPS and HMCTS, supporting release dates to be calculated more accurately and efficiently by replacing email warrants from courts with these being viewed directly in DPS. Work is also progressing to allow structured data to begin flowing from the court systems into the prison systems. Overall, these improvements are helping OMU staff by reducing manual workload and ensuring they have the information they need to do their work effectively.

Launchpad & Wi-Fi

2.185 Our Launchpad programme has now delivered in-cell technology to 21 public sector prisons and Young Offender Institutions (YOIs). The laptops give prisoners and children greater autonomy through the ability to self-transact basic administrative processes, which helps both to reduce frustrations and to save staff time, with estimated time savings for Residential Wing Officers of 5-10%. This allows staff to better invest their time into more meaningful activities and engaging with the people in their care. The laptops also provide prisoners with access to recreational, rehabilitative, and educational content so that they can utilise their time and to help maintain relationships.

2.186 Launchpad is also modernising working practices within prisons through the introduction of Wi-Fi. Staff Wi-Fi networks have been extended to the residential areas of all Launchpad sites, improving the flexibility by which digital services, including communication, training, information can be accessed within the establishment. Additionally, access to Wi-Fi for NHS staff is being rolled out, supporting efficient and flexible access to critical systems to support better service delivery for prisoners, and improve collaboration between prison and healthcare staff. It is anticipated that Launchpad will be live in 22 public sector prisons by the end of 2026/27, reaching up to around 15,500 people in custody.

Prison Workforce

Overview of Outlook and Headline Staffing Position

2.187 As set out in the introduction, HMPPS is operating in a challenging labour market. Ensuring sufficient staffing levels remains a significant priority for HMPPS and there are significant internal efforts to bolster staffing levels, in order to improve performance and rehabilitative outcomes in prisons.

2.188 Starting in January 2026, HMPPS established the Prisons Resourcing Taskforce, to drive forward activity that will improve staffing, particularly in those sites where we have concerns about, safety, stability and operational capacity in prisons. This forum has been taking forward activity in line with support and insights from one of our Non-Executive Directors, Jennifer Rademaker.

2.189 Alongside progressing site-specific support, the Prison Resourcing Taskforce has dedicated efforts to develop an evidence-based understanding of the challenges, and solutions to staffing issues at a national level. Nationally, HMPPS is seeing a high number of applications to prison officer roles. However, the volume of applications working their way through the recruitment pipeline has been exceeding capacity which is putting pressure on the system, particularly with processing timelines across pre-employment checks and vetting. Alongside a fall in pass rates at Online Assessment

Centre (OAC), this is contributing to low overall conversion rates from application received to successful hires. These issues differ from the critical recruitment and retention challenge HMPPS experienced in late 2022, driven by lower applications and a high number of resignations.

2.190 Recognising the current issues facing the system, the Prison Resourcing Taskforce has prioritised the following mitigations to improve the efficiency of the recruitment pipeline (which are operating alongside the additional interventions under the *Recruitment* and *Retention* sections further below):

- We are investing in additional OAC availability to maximise use of capacity and reviewing the OAC to see if there are improvements that can be made in the selection process;
- We have increased the first stage sift pass mark in the assessment process, with the aim of increasing success at OAC and retention of good candidates in the process, which was embedded into the system from August 2026;
- We introduced the Values Based Assessment sift in April 2026 (as expanded on below), to seek to improve pass rates at OAC, as well as new starter retention and engagement;
- We are improving timelines for pre-employment checks through additional resource, data improvement, process improvements and better candidate engagement;
- We are prioritising applications for sites with the greatest need for OAC places and through vetting.

Recruitment

2.191 HMPPS remains committed to ensuring prisons are sufficiently resourced with work to prioritise onboarding, through vetting and OAC places, at prisons with the greatest operational need taking place alongside targeted recruitment and retention interventions.

- 2.192 The time-limited exemption agreed with the Home Office on the Skilled Worker Visa has supported retention, with attrition rates reducing in the last 12 months and averted the risk of losing staff members whose right to work was due to expire in 2026 and therefore could have had to resign or be dismissed.
- 2.193 The exemption has meant that we have seen sustained applications from non-UK nationals. It is not known what proportion of non-UK nationals will be seeking sponsorship and whilst some individuals will have the right to work through alternative routes beyond the exemption, the pressures on the recruitment pipeline and current onboarding times mean that we are beyond the point at which individuals could apply and be sponsored for a Skilled Worker Visa by HMPPS.
- 2.194 As set out above, our focus is on improving the efficiency of the national recruitment pipeline and ensuring we are attracting applications which are likely to be successful rather than driving higher volumes of applications. Alongside this, support continues to be provided to sites with acute recruitment challenges through focused recruitment activity, campaigns and market supplements.
- 2.195 Despite challenges in recruitment, we are in a strong position from a retention perspective. There have been recent improvements in retention rates with the national resignation rate among Band 3-5 prison officers at the end of June 2026 being 5.6%, the lowest that it has been since the pandemic-affected year ending March 2021.

Streamlining recruitment and onboarding

- 2.196 HMPPS continues to enhance the recruitment process by ensuring that those we attract and recruit have the relevant skills and attributes needed to meet the demands and expectations of the Prison Officer role, aligning to the work of the Enable Programme. This includes ensuring our assessment tools wherever possible provide a realistic job preview and remove unsuitable applicants at the earliest stage to allow only the most suitable applicants to progress to the latter stages.

2.197 Demand for vetting of applicants has increased significantly with volumes and complexity rising due to recruitment activity and greater use of non-directly employed staff. Alongside the Prison Resourcing Taskforce, HMPPS have established a dedicated group to address onboarding timeliness, including increased resourcing, process improvements and wider reforms to streamline and digitise vetting, including a new onboarding portal launching in June 2026 to improve transparency for candidates. We are also prioritising genuinely critical cases, while continuing to focus on reducing backlogs overall, and have started to see progress recently.

Introduction of the values-based assessment

2.198 As introduced above, on 29 April 2026, a new values-based assessment was introduced for OSG and prison officer recruitment. This new assessment tool is underpinned by the HMPPS organisational values (Purpose, Humanity, Openness and Together) and is expected to support new starter retention through improved 'person organisation fit' and increased candidate engagement by providing a realistic view of what the organisation expects.

2.199 The assessment replaces the previous task-based assessment and is completed by candidates early in the recruitment process. Introducing the values-based assessment earlier in the process is intended to provide a more realistic preview of the role and to identify candidates whose judgement and decision-making align with HMPPS values before later selection stages.

Introduction of the Avature on-boarding platform

2.200 A new on-boarding platform was introduced on 20 July 2026. It is designed to streamline the recruitment process and keep candidates informed of their progress throughout. The platform welcomes applicants to the organisation, provides day one information, allows them to pre-book annual leave and have access to key policies and Civil Service learning.

2.201 The platform enables vacancy managers to see candidates at each stage of the process, track when tasks are completed and engage with the candidate at every stage.

Recruitment and expansion

2.202 HMPPS continues to recruit across all prisons where vacancies exist or are anticipated, including those undergoing expansion. Staffing requirements for these expansion projects whether new builds or smaller-scale developments are assessed and incorporated into workforce planning up to 18 months in advance. This ensures timely recruitment, and the development of experience needed to sustain safe and secure regimes.

2.203 In parallel, HMPPS works closely with partner organisations to ensure sufficient capacity across other key workforce groups within prisons, including education and healthcare roles.

Initiatives to bolster recruitment

2.204 HMPPS has several interventions in place to bolster the recruitment pipeline at national and individual prison level to improve the staffing position:

- The **Prison Officer Alumni Scheme** fast-tracks former officers back into front line prison roles and bolsters levels of experience – we are currently running an Alumni Scheme specific to the Long-Term High Security Estate, East of England, and South Central. Through the Prison Officer Alumni scheme, as of May 2026, 299 prison officers have returned to the service from 2023-2026. The majority of those have been Band 3 officers. Approximately 40% of returners returned to their previous establishment, with the average length of service of returners at 4.8 years. This makes the total length of service returned to HMPPS through the Prison Officer Alumni scheme just over 1,400 years;
- The **Advance into Justice scheme** is an initiative designed to support and target former Armed Forces service leavers in their transition period. Veterans and their civil partners or spouses can apply for a second career in HMPPS front line prison roles outside of fair and open competition;
- The **Operational Support Grade to Prison Officer Fast-Track scheme** gives OSGs the opportunity to use their previous experience in prisons and

take the next step in their career through a streamlined recruitment process. We have increased the frequency of the scheme to twice per year, with the latest round launching on 13 May 2026;

- HMPPS is working with DWP to try and direct more of their customers towards opportunities to work in prisons. This started with a small number of prisons and focused on OSG recruitment and more recently Band 3 catering roles.

Recruitment marketing and increasing candidate engagement

2.205 As noted in previous evidence submissions, the lack of awareness of the Prison Officer role, coupled with largely negative perceptions around it, has led to challenges with recruiting into the Service.

2.206 “An extraordinary job. Done by someone like you” is the employer brand and campaign driving recruitment of prison staff, roles that are critical to public safety and the functioning of the justice system.

2.207 HMPPS has established this as a strategic national platform (Extraordinary Jobs), representing a shift from short-term campaigns to a long-term investment in how these careers are positioned and understood. It plays a critical role in reframing perceptions, strengthening the employer proposition, and enabling scalable recruitment across the estate.

2.208 Recent activity (January-March 2026) delivered a 280% uplift in search interest for prison roles and increased application volumes. Since 2023, the campaign has also generated over 900 positive media stories about frontline prison staff.

2.209 This brand and campaign is essential to deliver sufficient and suitable hires, ensuring continuity of service and resilience across the system.

2.210 HMPPS believes that the campaign will encourage more people to consider a career in the Service. A review was recently completed to ensure the Extraordinary Jobs campaign continues to deliver for HMPPS today and in the

future. Any proposed amendments will be considered for implementation in the 2026/27 campaign.

Local outreach in recruitment

2.211 We are looking at opportunities to help prospective candidates understand the realities of working in a prison – including supporting Governors to offer increased familiarisation visits as part of the recruitment process, which we rolled out in June 2026. By offering a realistic preview of the role, this approach is aimed at reducing early attrition and providing new recruits with an insight into the operational realities of working in a prison. It also allows prisons to have greater ownership of their applicant pipelines.

2.212 Establishments already retain final decision-making authority for all roles excluding prison officer¹, and the role of Governors in prison officer recruitment is under active review.

2.213 Governors are routinely involved in helping with the design of recruitment methods, via the Governor Reference Group and through engagement with the HMPPS Assessment Director, for which responsibility is currently assigned to the Director of Prisons Operations.

2.214 Significant changes are being introduced to the prison officer recruitment process which address immediate concerns raised by Governors, including assessing candidate values and the right level of English language standards.

Retention

2.215 Despite challenges in recruitment, we have seen improvements in retention rates – the resignation rate among Band 3-5 prison officers is the lowest that it has been for five years.

2.216 HMPPS continues to monitor why staff are leaving through our exit interview process, tracking, and targeting the drivers of attrition.

¹ Some elements of the recruitment process for OSGs are managed centrally, but prisons will conduct the final interview element.

Retention framework

- 2.217 Central to our efforts to make further improvements is the Retention Framework, which sets out how data, research and insight should be used to understand local and national drivers of attrition, guide targeted interventions, and embed retention as a core, ongoing workforce priority. This includes a growing emphasis on thematic retention research, enabling us to identify underlying cultural and systemic issues that impact employee experience and influence attrition across the organisation.
- 2.218 Complementing the framework is a retention toolkit informed by research into the drivers of attrition. This toolkit supports local, regional, and national interventions and is used alongside structured exit interviews to gather feedback and shape future actions. Insights from retention research and exit interview data are actively fed into key stakeholders, including policy, strategy, and operational leads, to shape future workforce policy, refine processes, and inform strategic decision-making.
- 2.219 A retention oversight process targets high-attrition sites and includes 'deep dives' led by occupational psychologists to uncover root causes and share best practices. Coordination of national interventions is managed through the Retention Delivery Committee, ensuring strategic alignment and minimal disruption to operational sites.

Career Pathways Framework

- 2.220 HMPPS supports retention by continuing to provide colleagues with a clear 'Career Pathways Framework' and development opportunities helping staff understand progression routes and build long term careers. This equips staff with information on career options and the variety of job roles available in HMPPS, as well as learning and development programmes.

Challenges in the Long-Term High Security Estate

- 2.221 Overall, the LTHSE is the most affected part of the prison estate in terms of projected staff shortages. LTHSE prisons have a disproportionate number of

prisons with the lowest percentage of staff in post across the whole prison estate. This is attributed in part to poor transport links to rural locations and the increased media reporting of high-profile assaults. Given the heightened risk of the population within the LTHSE estate, staffing challenges of this scale present particularly acute risks. That is why, in addition to national recruitment interventions, we are currently employing a comprehensive programme of further, targeted interventions to bolster staff numbers, capability and experience in the LTHSE specifically:

- Targeted efforts to bring more staff into the LTHSE through our Prison Officer Returners Scheme and Prison Officer Level Transfer Scheme;
- Prioritisation in various parts of the recruitment process for parts of the LTHSE, along with selected other sites, to get people through the pipeline more quickly and reduce the likelihood of candidate attrition;
- First Deployment Scheme, through which we recruit new applicants directly to difficult-to-recruit to prisons, with additional financial incentives, for the first two years of their Service;
- Frontloading, where HMPPS recruits above required staffing levels in certain prisons or regions to give greater, system-wide resilience through the use of our long-standing practice of national detached duty, which redeploys staff based in one prison to another.

2.222 We will continue to engage with trade unions regarding any LTHSE-specific recruitment and retention pressures.

Additional interventions to support retention and flexible working

2.223 HMPPS remains committed to fostering modern, inclusive workplaces that support flexible working arrangements where compatible with operational requirements. Following legislative changes in 2024, all employees are entitled to request flexible working from day one of employment and may submit up to two statutory requests within a 12-month period. Flexible working supports employee wellbeing, work-life balance, recruitment, and retention.

- 2.224 While HMPPS does not currently hold comprehensive centralised data on flexible working arrangements, planned improvements to workforce systems and technology (i.e. Synergy) will strengthen our ability to monitor uptake, understand emerging trends, and inform future workforce planning.
- 2.225 HMPPS continues to support working parents through a comprehensive package of parental leave policies, including maternity, adoption, shared parental and paternity leave. In line with legislative changes introduced in 2026, relevant policies have been reviewed and updated to ensure compliance and to continue supporting employees in balancing their work and family responsibilities.

Changes to Skilled Worker visa requirements and visa exemption

- 2.226 On 22 July 2025, the Government introduced changes to UK Immigration Rules aimed at reducing net migration. The MoJ maintains the visa sponsorship licence in-line with the Immigration Rules. Processes are in place to ensure activity complies with relevant laws and policies applied in the UK and Civil Service.
- 2.227 The Immigration White Paper set out the Government's approach to legal migration and reforms to the Skilled Worker route, with a greater focus on developing the domestic workforce. The first phase of the reforms was implemented on 22 July 2025; this included an increase to the skills threshold to graduate level roles (RQF 6+) and the General Salary Threshold to £41,700. These changes rendered a significant number of occupations ineligible for sponsorship.
- 2.228 Crucially, the reforms had a significant impact on the prison officer role which had gained Skilled Worker role status in October 2023. Following the July 2025 changes, HMPPS assessed that, due to the number of foreign national staff whose continued legal employment might rely on sponsorship, there could have been approximately 2,000–2,500 prison officer vacancies by March 2026. In addition, there was insufficient applications from UK nationals to fill existing and forecasted vacancies.

- 2.229 Ensuring that our prisons can continue to run safely with the right level of experienced staff remains a priority. For that reason, we worked with the Home Office and obtained a specific, time-limited exemption to certain aspects of the immigration rules for the prison officer role. The exemption includes a lower skills threshold which will remain in place up to 31 December 2026, and a lower salary threshold of £31,600 (subject to updates) in place until 31 December 2027.
- 2.230 Sponsored staff make up a small proportion of new hires and the operational workforce. The data on sponsored employees is maintained by the MoJ Resourcing Management Office in order to maintain compliance with immigration and employment law. As the data is not handled by analytical colleagues through formal Quality Assurance processes, it is not published.
- 2.231 All visa sponsorship requests are assessed against the Skilled Worker visa framework set by the Home Office. Whilst the Department can consider visa sponsorship, it is not guaranteed, and maintaining valid legal right to work is an individual responsibility and a condition of employment.
- 2.232 In addition to the agreed exemption, HMPPS was commissioned to undertake a review of the recruitment initiatives in place to attract candidates from the domestic workforce. The Department has a range of interventions focused on targeting the domestic labour market and continues to review where further action can be taken.
- 2.233 All recruitment campaigns are posted via UK job boards only and delivered in line with the Civil Service Recruitment Principles. All appointees to the MoJ and its agencies must meet the Civil Service Nationality Rules. The MoJ does not seek and has never sought to recruit overseas.
- 2.234 The Department remains committed to strengthening our marketing and recruitment strategies with a focus on the resident labour market. This work includes engagement with the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department for Health and Social Care.

Enhancing Learning and Development

2.235 There are a range of learning offers available for staff focused on building and enhancing core skills, developing effective leaders and supporting career progression.

The Enable Programme

2.236 The Enable Programme is a psychologically and operationally informed workforce transformation programme for prisons. Its aim is to change how HMPPS trains, develops, leads, and supports prison staff. Through a series of workforce and regime changes delivered over the medium term, the programme will help staff feel safe, supported, valued, and confident in their skills and their ability to make a difference. Subsequently supporting the creation of conditions for positive change in prisons.

2.237 The Enable Programme has four thematic areas of focus:

- Building Capability – Considering what and how prison officers learn from the start of their career and develop throughout it. Through the activities of the programme, we will enhance the skills of our prison staff by improving the offer of continuous professional development from the time they join and throughout their careers.
- Supporting Our People – Exploring ways to enhance support for our staff by introducing peer support initiatives and developing new frameworks for structured reflection and assistance.
- Strengthening Leadership – Enhancing leadership across the Prison Service by setting clearer expectations for leaders and improving development pathways and succession planning for key leadership roles.
- Improving Working Environments – Transforming the environment our staff work within and their sense of purpose by creating more opportunities for staff-led activities within improved and personalised regimes and supporting the development of enabling environments within prisons.

2.238 The Enable Programme is in Year 2, of a scheduled 5-year delivery programme. When the Programme concludes in 2030 the following will have been achieved:

- All staff will feel safer, valued and empowered, with the confidence and judgement to make a positive impact every day;
- Every new Band 3 operational starter will receive a consistent, high-quality induction and structured first-year Foundation Training;
- Prison staff at all grades will have access to a clear, role specific development pathway and ongoing continuous personal development;
- Leadership capability will be strengthened at every level, from first line managers to senior leaders, so that all are better prepared and more effective in their role;
- There will be multiple pathways to senior leadership roles;
- Standards of practice are clear, consistent and professionally assured across the estate;
- Wellbeing, retention and pride in professional identity are prioritised.

2.239 The Enable Programme is being implemented in a phased approach. Testing and refinement of initial products has begun in a small number of sites such that learning can be collated and products refined before being scaled nationally. Some initial products have now been made nationally available, and testing of a regional delivery model began at the end of 2025.

2.240 A Curriculum and Capability Oversight function will be a new central infrastructure to assure the quality of training products, create a training performance measure, and support prisons with the quantity and quality of training delivery. This will be tested alongside a regional delivery model which is being piloted in the London prison group (October 2025 to March 2027), to test the viability of a regional approach to developing capability. Expansion will be dependent on testing outcomes and affordability.

Building and enhancing core skills

- 2.241 The **Core Capability Packages** are a package of learning intended primarily for prison officers between 6 and 18 months into service who have already completed foundation training and induction. These will enhance opportunities to learn, develop, build confidence and capability, and feel valued; ultimately developing the core skills required in the prison officer role. The first 6 of the 16 packages developed by the Enable Programme have been available to prisons since the end of 2025.
- 2.242 **Foundation Training** is being redeveloped to create a modular, 12-month training journey that integrates classroom learning with practical experience in establishments. The revised training aims to produce compassionate, competent and confident prison officers, able to deliver a wide range of operational and interpersonal skills underpinned by relational practice and rehabilitative working.
- 2.243 The **Generic Induction** will be a standardised onboarding programme developed to ensure all new staff joining HMPPS, regardless of role or location, receive a consistent and high-quality introduction to the organisation. It will include an overall framework which will define new roles and responsibilities. The key topics will cover safety and security, professional standards, equality and inclusion, and an overview of the justice system. It aims to build early confidence, improve staff engagement, and reduce early attrition by equipping individuals with the knowledge and context they need to begin their roles effectively. It will serve as a platform to embed cultural and behavioural expectations at the beginning.
- 2.244 The **Operational Delivery Professional (ODP) Induction Package** is being introduced for all roles classified as ODP and is intended to complement the Generic Induction Package. It provides learning materials for new-to-service individuals that are not included in Generic Induction, for example, role-specific task inductions and key contacts for specific workstreams. The ODP Induction Package will support colleagues to settle into their hubs and roles.

- 2.245 The **ODP Capability Package** is being introduced for all roles classified as ODP and is intended to follow the induction process. It is a series of learning packages co-designed with non-operational staff and built around relational practice principles. This will help ODP colleagues increase their confidence and capability in their current roles whilst guiding career progression or change. The final element will formalise the national learning and development offer whereby colleagues have a 'licence to operate'.
- 2.246 The **Reflective Skills Framework (RSF)** is a peer led reflective learning tool that has been designed to support Band 3 officers build their confidence and capability. The framework offers newly qualified Band 3 officers time away from the residential unit, providing a psychologically safe space to explore ideas, problems, issues, mistakes, and strengths that may aid future learning, problem solving and professional interaction within custodial environments. Delivered by Band 4 RSF facilitators who will progress through 18 months of continuous learning across three stages of an RSF training lifecycle.

Developing effective leaders

- 2.247 The **Future Prison Leaders Programme** launched on 4 April 2025 aims to recruit and train the next generation of prison leaders. The three-year programme aspires to recruit 35 talented individuals from diverse backgrounds, including successful graduates and career changers, and offers a clear career pathway to a senior leadership position in prisons. The first cohort went live in December 2025, and 22 successful candidates are now serving as prison officers learning the full range of operational duties on the wings, before progressing to Custodial Manager in year two. In their third year they will undertake a Head of Function management role with responsibility in areas such as security, operations, drug strategy, residency and staffing. Upon completion, participants will be prepared to undertake assessments to become Deputy Governors with accountability for providing leadership and direction, strategic decisions and managing risks. We are due to begin recruitment of a second cohort in October 2026 for a start date in September 2027.

- 2.248 The **Custodial Manager Learning Portfolio** has been created to build aspiring and established Custodial Managers confidence, capability and relational leadership skills. The learning materials are practical and tailored specifically to the challenges and responsibilities of the role.
- 2.249 The **Head of Function Learning Portfolio** will build their confidence and increase their leadership capability. All current and aspiring Heads of Function will be able to access essential learning materials, covering the core responsibilities and specific content tailored to their function.
- 2.250 A **Governor Development Scheme** is being created to provide a targeted leadership development programme for serving prison governors who are identified as having the potential to lead the most complex and challenging prisons. This will strengthen governors' leadership and management capability with a strong emphasis on relational leadership. Testing delivery of the first elements of the scheme commenced in April 2026.
- 2.251 A **targeted 1:1 executive coaching offer for Prison Governors** is being developed, recognising the significant operational accountability and sustained pressure carried by these roles. The offer will provide confidential, practical support focused on live leadership challenges, including leading people, strengthening culture and professional standards, sustaining performance, making effective decisions under pressure and building resilience. This targeted investment in senior operational leadership is planned for launch in autumn 2026. The offer will be evaluated to assess uptake, impact, value for money, and its contribution to strengthening leadership effectiveness and sustainability.
- 2.252 Launched in October 2025, the refreshed **Leadership Code** is designed to support all employees to develop the capabilities we need to meet the challenge of leading the MoJ. It provides a common language and consistency in expectations for all leaders. It is a simple, shared framework built around three areas of focus: *Leading me*, *Leading others* and *Leading the organisation*. It was shaped by input from colleagues across the Department and reflects what great leadership looks like wherever you work

and whatever your grade or role. It works alongside our values of Purpose, Humanity, Openness and Together, translating them into nine clear leadership practices that will help contribute to the delivery of our priorities.

- 2.253 Each October, MoJ delivers its flagship **Leadership School**, designed to inspire and develop employees through exposure to leading-edge thinking and reflective practice. The 2025 School on *Leading with Purpose* was open to HMPPS Prison Band 7 and above, and Probation Bands 6 and above, who manage managers, while the 2026 School will focus on collaboration: *Delivering Outcomes Together* and be open to all employee grades. Approximately 200 participants attend annually, with around 32%-46% from HMPPS. The programme combines input from internal and external leadership experts with dedicated time for participants to reflect on their leadership style, strengths and impact, and to identify areas for further development. Although the School is for four days, participants are supported over a comprehensive 10-month journey, encompassing pre-programme preparation, the residential experience, and post-programme embedding of learning, followed by ongoing engagement through the Alumni network.
- 2.254 Based on the successful Leadership School format, **Leadership School Presents** is a new one-day event which strengthens leadership capability across the MoJ by bringing leaders together, in-person, around priority themes and turning strategic intent into practical action. Each event will be based on a pressing MoJ priority ensuring the content is always relevant and aligned to the organisation's needs. They provide timely learning, practical insight, and space for leaders to connect, reflect, and grow. In 2026 there will be two Leadership School Presents events. In addition, **Leadership School Rewind** is a new initiative that brings Leadership School and Leadership School Presents content to everyone via online learning.
- 2.255 The MoJ **Line Manager Capability Approach (LMCA)** was formally launched across all business areas in 2025. It sets out a clear and practical framework to support line managers in reflecting on their strengths, developing core skills, and building their effectiveness in role. The LMCA brings together Civil Service wide development products, such as the Line

Manager Induction, Line Management Standards, and the Line Manager Development Tool, with existing MoJ resources, including Line Manager Handbooks and People Management Essentials modules. This creates a single, coherent approach to line management across the organisation. Through its combined components, the LMCA supports improvements in three key areas: capability – strengthening the skills, knowledge and behaviours required for effective people management, confidence – enabling managers to make decisions, address challenges and lead their teams effectively, and consistency – promoting alignment with shared expectations for managing people, leading change and delivering outcomes. The LMCA will continue to evolve, with further developments planned for 2026 – including the introduction of a Line Manager Capability Dashboard to support monitoring of engagement and completion across the LMCA.

Supporting career progression

- 2.256 Launched in June 2024, the **MoJ Coaching and Mentoring Platform** provides all employees with access to a high-quality, inclusive, and professionally delivered coaching and mentoring offer that complements existing local provision. It has incrementally developed over the past two years and enables a consistent, scalable approach to talent and capability development across HMPPS. Currently 992 HMPPS employees are registered on the Hub as coaches/mentees, and 240 accredited coaches and mentors, supporting both individual development and organisational effectiveness.
- 2.257 **Spark Custodial** is an internal, two-year, fast-track programme focused on identifying talented individuals and developing them to become senior operational leaders of the future. Through structured development and practical experience, individuals will gain the skills, confidence and operational expertise needed to step into leadership roles and apply for Band 7 positions upon completion. It is open to operational staff (Bands 3 and 4), non-operational staff (up to and including Band 6), and OSGs, and is designed for individuals with high potential to progress to operational Head of Function roles within three years. Since its launch in 2021, the scheme has

enrolled multiple cohorts of up to 16 participants. The scheme is part of a broader effort to strengthen the leadership pipeline and improve workforce diversity within HMPPS with an aim for at least 40% of participants to come from underrepresented group.

- 2.258 **Spark Advance** provides more development routes for non-operational colleagues at other Bands. The scheme is an innovative 12-month pilot internal conversion scheme designed to support non-op Band 7 and 8 staff to become high-quality operational Heads of Functions at the same level. Over 12 months, individuals will receive operational training, placements, and ongoing support to develop the skills needed for this demanding, but highly rewarding role. Elements of the programme include Foundation Training, exposure to critical prison roles and a Head of Function placement and will be tailored to participants' individual backgrounds and needs where possible. The first pilot cohort is due to start in September 2026.
- 2.259 The **Custodial Manager Accreditation Process** (known as CMAC) is the internal, centralised national accreditation process used to assess whether operational staff are suitable to become Custodial Managers, ensuring consistent leadership standards across prisons. Following review, a new process (the **Custodial Manager Pathway**) has been approved for implementation in 2027, following a transitional period beginning in July 2026. This new process is a two-stage accreditation model that combines a witnessed portfolio with a shorter and more focused half day online assessment centre. It has been designed to strengthen development, improve assessment of readiness, and ensure a consistent national standard.
- 2.260 The **Catapult Mentoring Programme** is a targeted talent initiative within MoJ that supports the progression of staff, particularly those from under-represented groups. It pairs participants with senior leaders to build confidence, capability and career readiness, while strengthening inclusive leadership. The scheme aims to improve access to development, boost engagement and retention, and support a more diverse pipeline of future prison service leaders.

2.261 The **Civil Service Accelerated Development Schemes (ADS)** provide structured, cross-government routes to identify and develop high-potential talent and build leadership capability within HMPPS. Key programmes such as the Future Leaders Scheme and Senior Leaders Scheme focus on leadership potential, equipping participants with the skills, networks and experience needed to progress into critical senior roles. Development is delivered through a blend of residential and virtual learning, executive coaching and action learning.

Workforce Delivery

Staffing - non-effective rates

2.262 The Workforce Delivery Project has been successful in changing the non-effective rate for Band 3 Prison Officers. We are working towards an additional 4% specifically to cover training. Changes in Prison Officer non-effective rates will be introduced alongside Workforce Delivery Model implementation across the adult public sector estate and are due to be completed by April 2029.

Workforce Delivery Model (WDM)

2.263 The Workforce Delivery Project has developed a new Staffing Resource Model for approximately 38,000 staff and £1.6 billion of resource nationally across 107 adult public sector prisons. We have undertaken a rigorous exercise to develop this methodology, which accounts for the differences between prisons when calculating target staffing, and has buy-in from prison governors. The project aims to ensure that every prison has the right number of people, funded in the right places, to deliver priority services, manage operational risks, and ensure public money is used efficiently.

2.264 The model breaks down staffing requirements across more than 50 task and service areas into WDMs, enabling detailed analysis of how resources are used to deliver minimum service standards for safety, security, public protection, and regimes. Target staffing is calculated on a consistent set of assumptions and agreed data to calculate a baseline staffing budget for each

prison, taking account of factors such as capacity, prison function, prisoner cohort, infrastructure, specialist roles, and population churn. This standardised model will improve transparency, ensuring staffing budgets across the estate align to agreed business priorities and delivery expectations.

- 2.265 The project also enables a clear understanding of the irreducible minimum cost of running prisons safely, alongside evidence of system pressures such as staff absence, unfunded work, and limitations in management oversight. We will be able to prioritise existing funding to where it is needed most and build a strong evidence-based case for investment. The model will also support future reform, through scenario planning the impact of changes and providing clear evidence of the consequences of funding decisions.
- 2.266 Introduction of the new WDMs across the estate will drive a net increase in Custodial Manager numbers and ensure that a minimum 1:15 span of control ratio is provided against the operational Band 2-4 target staffing figure. This is an improvement from the historic 1:18 benchmark.
- 2.267 HMPPS is also undertaking a joint Prison and Probation Line Management Review to build an evidence-based understanding of the generic line management activities undertaken across both services and how these align with expectations. The review is engaging with frontline staff and findings will be considered later this year. This will help inform future consideration of how line management responsibilities are delivered and supported.
- 2.268 Around 40 prisons are already in scope for model implementation, beginning with sites that are having capacity expansions. Over the 2026/27 financial year, we will also be implementing the model at a number of sites chosen by Area Executive Directors to prioritise investment, with roll out across the wider estate planned over the next 2-3 financial years and subject to funding. We have provided tools to support governors to manage their staffing and budgets more effectively.

Operational managers

- 2.269 Operational manager roles often require these staff to be available to attend for duty during unsocial hours, on an on-call basis as required. Staff whose role requires this are paid the RHA of 20% of base pay (pensionable), to compensate for this requirement, and the guideline is that unsocial hours would make up approximately 17% of such an individual's working hours.
- 2.270 As requirements are changeable and are not scheduled by rota in the same way as officer grades and OSGs, there is no central recording of operational manager working hours. However, we recognise that the pressures facing the entire prison system are reflected in high levels of demand on operational managers, and the concerns raised by the Prison Governors' Association in their evidence submission for 2026/27 about the impact of this on staff.
- 2.271 HMPPS has considered staffing levels and workloads of operational managers through a number of prior programmes and interventions, including a review of workloads, revision of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) staffing level minimums (July 2021) and the Reducing Reoffending Accelerator Programme, which added a Head of Education, Skills and Work (HoESW) Band 7 or Band 8 into every prison, to relieve the workload of the Head of Reducing Reoffending.
- 2.272 In addition, Governors retain the ability to design their own staffing model, though we recognise that budgets can limit opportunities for substantial change.
- 2.273 Introduction of new WDMs across the estate will drive a net increase in SLT numbers and ensure that prisons are funded above the minimum Job Evaluation Scheme (JES) requirements. The project has also improved accounting for, and inclusion of specialist roles required to manage site specific functional responsibilities such as Specialist Units or Public Protection over and above core numbers.
- 2.274 As part of the roll out of new models JES are undertaking a light touch review in conjunction with the PGA. The review aims to improve flexibility for

Governors when designing their structures, ensuring the best utilisation of any additional funding.

2.275 Governance for the roll out of new models includes a challenge panel process which enables Governors to identify and challenge where model outputs do not resolve or create localised pressures. Where successful these challenges will lead to additional funding and where unsuccessful issues raised will form part of longer-term workforce review to support future iterations of models and spending review bids.

Workplace Wellbeing

2.276 HMPPS continues to strengthen its commitment to workplace wellbeing across the prison estate by building a more consistent, visible and proactive offer for staff. This includes expanding interventions, strengthening peer support programmes, and embedding volunteer-led initiatives within a clearer, more coordinated model of delivery.

2.277 The Area Staff Support and Wellbeing Model, launched on 1 October 2024, is now fully embedded across all regions. It has improved the consistency, visibility and coordination of targeted wellbeing support for prison-based staff, supported by nine full-time Staff Support and Wellbeing Leads (SSWLs) aligned to each Assistant Area Executive Director team.

2.278 These leads play a key role in:

- Coordinating and promoting wellbeing services tailored to frontline staff, increasing awareness and uptake;
- Supporting the development and delivery of area-level wellbeing strategies, reflecting local operational pressures;
- Strengthening awareness of support and building line manager confidence and capability to support staff wellbeing;
- Feeding local insight into national priorities to ensure services remain responsive and relevant;

- Working with HR and operational colleagues to embed wellbeing as a shared organisational priority.

- 2.279 A key feature of the model has been the introduction of three-year Area Wellbeing Plans, now one year into delivery. These plans set out locally driven priorities aligned to national wellbeing objectives, enabling a more strategic and sustained approach to improving workplace wellbeing. Early implementation is showing positive signs of progress.
- 2.280 The 2025 People Survey showed a 3% increase in staff agreeing there is good support for employee health, wellbeing and resilience. In addition, the 2025 Wellbeing Survey showed a 2% increase in awareness of support services and a 1% increase in staff agreeing that their manager has the capability to support their wellbeing. These early improvements indicate growing visibility of the offer and strengthening confidence in local support.
- 2.281 At a national level, the central HMPPS Wellbeing Team continues to provide strategic oversight, ensuring alignment with HMPPS Wellbeing Priorities. Building on the 2024-26 framework, the next phase (2026–28) will further strengthen the focus on workplace wellbeing, including: improving working environments, building leadership and line manager capability, expanding early intervention and preventative support, and ensuring consistent access to high-quality services.
- 2.282 This reflects a continued shift away from a narrow focus on individual “wellness” towards embedding wellbeing within the everyday working environment. It recognises the importance of leadership, workload, relationships and organisational culture, alongside access to support services. Grounded in the five evidence-based drivers of workplace wellbeing, this approach supports improved retention, reduced sickness absence, and greater staff engagement and pride in working for HMPPS.
- 2.283 Alongside this, the Peer Support Programme Refresh is being progressed across the prison estate. Developed following a service review and in response to increasing trauma exposure and violence, the programme aims to

strengthen and align peer support under a trauma-informed framework, while improving the training, supervision and support available to peer supporters.

Occupational health

2.284 HMPPS' Occupational Health (OH) provision offers a range of proactive easy access services for employees:

- The OH Provider has a dedicated neurodiversity assessment team. Following a line manager referral via the OH portal, a triage call will lead to neurodiversity cases being assessed timely for support and workplace adjustments;
- Fast-track referrals are available for workplace trauma-related cases, ensuring timely access to support;
- The OH provider employs dedicated Mental Health Advisors to manage referrals linked to mental ill-health;
- HMPPS' OH provider offers a self-service technology-based musculoskeletal health intervention. The tool enables employees to gain fast track virtual physiotherapy intervention, which bridges the gap between the onset of musculoskeletal symptoms and the need for face-to-face physiotherapy;
- In 2026 HMPPS put in place a post-exposure Tuberculosis screening service via the OH provider. This communicable disease management intervention was previously provided by the NHS which ceased due to their resource constraints;
- OH continues to provide prisons with on-site Hepatitis B and seasonal flu vaccination clinics. Work is ongoing with KPMG to develop a simple to use app to enable and promote uptake of the Hepatitis B vaccine by eligible staff;
- The OH National Lead (MoJ) continues to deliver and enhance training for prison Immunisation Coordinators to ensure the safe handling and storage of vaccines and managing staff attendance for on-site clinics;

- For HMPPS staff who require blood tests as a follow-up to body fluid exposure, HMPPS has collaborated with our OH provider to extend the number of clinical sites using NHS Open Spaces to offer additional appointments over a larger geographical space;
- Monthly OH Line Manager training is to be continued so that line manager capability is built and sustained in making OH referrals, particularly because mental ill health accounts for the most common reason for referrals. Attendance rates continue to be high, averaging around 100 attendees per session;
- MoJ OH clinical and HR Services team are now also delivering 15-minute individual OH Support Sessions fortnightly for line managers who require *additional advice*.

Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

2.285 Staff continue to have access to the 24-hour/365 days a year confidential counselling telephone helpline EAP and, where clinically indicated, online Computerised Cognitive Behavioural Therapy.

2.286 EAP counselling sessions are contractually capped at 6 sessions per 12-month period. An additional 6 sessions are available during the 12-month period for cases related to workplace bullying and harassment. Since 2026, this is now extended to 12 sessions for bereavement.

2.287 Since 2026, the EAP free and confidential service can also be accessed by HMPPS employees' immediate family members (defined as their spouse/partner and children, in their care, aged 16 to 24, in full time education, and residing at the same house).

2.288 Trauma and Critical Incident Support – Group or one-to-one Trauma debriefing delivered by qualified counsellors to provide emotional support in the aftermath of violent or traumatic incidents across the prison and probation estate.

2.289 The EAP Clinical Lead (MoJ) has been delivering *Supporting Psychological Awareness in Leadership* training to new prison governors on the Enable Programme.

2.290 Reflective sessions are a preventative and proactive mental ill health intervention available to all HMPPS employees to prevent adverse mental health experiences. In Q4 2025, attendance was consistently higher than in 2024. At each quarterly contract review, prisons with the lowest utilisation are identified. The contractor then engages those sites to promote uptake.

MoJ Workplace Adjustment Service (MoJWAS)

2.291 MoJWAS is a specialist HR service that provides tailored advice and guidance on workplace adjustments to help remove barriers at work for colleagues with disabilities, long term conditions, or for short term illnesses or injuries at work.

2.292 MoJ WAS provides advice and guidance for managers, employees and others involved in the implementation of workplace adjustments. The service is available to staff of all grades in MoJ, CICA, HMCTS, HMPPS, LAA, OPG and MoJ ALBs.

2.293 The service is confidential and does not require permission to use so personal and sensitive information will not be shared with others without express consent.

2.294 MoJWAS can assess and award funding for the additional cost of Workplace Adjustments over £1000.

2.295 Use of the service has:

- Improved retention of experienced staff;
- Reduced sickness absence duration;
- Increased engagement and productivity;
- Ensured compliance with Equality Act duties.

Diversity and Equality in Recruitment Outcomes, Allowances and Pay Gaps

- 2.296 In accordance with the economically active working population of ethnic minorities identified in the Labour Force Survey, HMPPS is committed to achieving the benchmark of 15.8% of all staff recruited being from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Background (BAME).
- 2.297 To support HMPPS, MoJ Inclusive Recruitment guidance is available for vacancy managers to support them in embedding all elements of inclusion through each step of their recruitment campaigns. MoJ have published Diverse Interview Panel Guidance to support vacancy managers to ensure an inclusive sifting and interview process. To increase understanding of the Equality Act 2010 and the impact it has on recruitment, all Vacancy Managers are being encouraged to attend Inclusive Recruitment workshops and a separate one-day training on “Making Fair and Effective Decisions in Recruitment”.
- 2.298 Steps include blind sifting, structured interviews facilitated by diverse interview panels and publishing salary ranges. This helps mitigate bias, increase transparency and levels the playing field for those from ethnic backgrounds or those with disabilities. This practice in turn allows candidates to make informed decisions and discourages pay disparities arising from negotiations.
- 2.299 To support HMPPS, MoJ People Services are continuing to work with a cross section of key HMPPS stakeholders and staff who have lived experience to work through next steps including any communications, and establishing a working group focused on supporting employees’ cultural awareness.
- 2.300 To improve ethnic minority representation, HMPPS uses an enhanced recruitment approach in prisons where there is a disparity between the ethnic minority workforce and the local working-age population. This includes targeted advertising through LinkedIn, X, and online newsletters, engagement with diverse communities to raise awareness of HMPPS careers, recruitment attraction events, and a buddy scheme to support ethnic minority candidates through the recruitment process.

2.301 HMPPS is a Disability Confident Leader (Level 3) and continues to engage proactively with disabled applicants, offering workplace adjustments throughout the recruitment process and wider employee journey. The Department also continues to improve its processes to better support disabled candidates and staff.

Wider Total Reward and Pensions

2.302 HMPPS seeks to ensure that all staff are aware of their total pay and reward package.

2.303 The Civil Service Pension Scheme remains a key element of this offer and continues to be one of the most competitive public sector schemes. The career average scheme (“alpha”) has the highest accrual percentage rate and lowest employee contribution rates set across the public sector schemes. Accrual in the scheme is based on the monthly pensionable pay received multiplied by the accrual rate and members have the option to make additional contributions to boost their pension.

2.304 The MoJ-wide Reward and Recognition (R&R) policy, which covers HMPPS, supports the Performance Management policy by enabling recognition of exceptional behaviours aligned with MoJ values. Awards are intended to be based on the impact of delivery rather than grade, working pattern or personal characteristics, and can be made throughout the year to provide timely recognition.

2.305 Quarterly Reviews form part of the performance management cycle and act as a governance mechanism for the R&R policy. They provide senior leaders with oversight of how performance is assessed and recognised across the business, helping to ensure consistency and alignment with MoJ values.

2.306 HMPPS has strengthened this quarterly assurance process by ensuring that senior leaders regularly review R&R diversity and inclusion data. This supports effective oversight of award distribution and timely identification of any emerging trends or disparities.

2.307 Diversity and inclusion data is also shared regularly with Trade Unions and senior business leaders to support transparency, accountability, and assurance. These discussions are supported by HR colleagues, who facilitate analysis and challenge where appropriate to help identify and address any disparities in a timely and consistent way.

2.308 Overall oversight of R&R activity and emerging trends is provided through the HMPPS People Board.

Physical Education Instructors (PEIs)

Recruitment and attraction

2.309 As described in Chapter 1 (paragraph 1.77), the Physical Education Instructor (PEI) role combines operational custodial responsibilities with the delivery of physical activity, wellbeing and rehabilitative interventions. As it is a specialist Band 4 prison officer position requiring operational experience, technical expertise, and enhanced fitness, this limits the available labour pool. Vacancies are affected not only by pay, but also establishments' ability to release staff, training availability, local workforce planning, progression routes and the process to backfill posts while staff complete specialist training.

2.310 HMPPS has taken steps to improve attraction, including clearer messaging about the role and career offer, building on 2025 activity. HMPPS is due to consult with the POA on a revised PE Selection Assessment process to improve candidate experience, ensure consistency and expand the applicant pool while maintaining operational standards.

Recruitment progress

2.311 Recruitment activity continues across the estate with mixed results. Some establishments have reduced vacancies, while others still face challenges due to local labour markets and specialist entry requirements. Nationally, vacancy levels have improved but remain uneven, with ongoing pressures in certain locations. Training pipeline data is reviewed quarterly with HR leads to prioritise PE selection and training places.

£1,500 PEI allowance and Payment Plus rate for Band 4 prison officers

2.312 The £1,500 temporary Band 4 PEI allowance was introduced to support recruitment and retention during high vacancy levels and increased demand. As set out in Chapter 1, whilst the vacancy picture for PEIs has improved in the last year, this is likely to result from a number of factors, including the allowance but also improved workforce planning, stronger local leadership and more effective deployment, in particular where Band 5 PECM roles are in place.

2.313 The introduction of the Band 5 PECM role, in the time since the introduction of the temporary allowance, has strengthened local leadership capacity, improved workforce oversight and helped establishments move from reactive vacancy management towards more sustainable succession planning.

2.314 Where recruitment and retention challenges persist within PEI workforces, establishments may consider the use of RRP in accordance with the HMPPS RRP policy and associated approval processes, as set out in Chapter 1.

2.315 The proposed introduction of a Band 4 specialist Payment Plus rate will also provide a mechanism for addressing short-term vacancies and preventing gaps in delivery.

Retention

2.316 PEI retention reflects wider workforce trends but is affected by the role's specialist nature and external job opportunities. An ageing workforce and local succession planning, as well as progression opportunities and the broader PE career structure, also influence stability. HMPPS monitors retention through workforce data to inform planning.

Training developments

2.317 The PEI training programme has been revised to improve access and better align with operational needs. Foundation Training has been modularised to increase flexibility and preparation, while CPD has been strengthened to support capability and retention. Integrating PE learning and development

function into HMPPS has enabled a more joined-up approach to training, workforce planning and curriculum development, with ongoing focus on sustainable career pathways.

Workforce data

2.318 HMPPS holds data on PEI staffing against targets, including establishment-level positions and protected characteristics. Performance varies, with many sites meeting targets and others below, particularly in competitive or hard-to-recruit areas. Detailed establishment level data will be shared separately in-line with governance requirements.

Future expansion risks

2.319 As described above (paragraph 1.79), recruitment and retention risks must be considered across the whole PEI pathway from Band 4 to 6. In the context of the prison expansion programme and forecast growth in PEI numbers, sufficient Band 6 training capacity will be critical. If HMPPS cannot recruit and retain specialist trainers, the number of PEIs that can be trained each year will be constrained, limiting the service's ability to meet future operational demand.

Market Supplements

Market Supplements Framework

2.320 The Market Supplement Framework was introduced in April 2025 to manage our ongoing use of Market Supplements, recognising the importance of retaining a targeted application of Market Supplements to sites with the most challenging recruitment and retention positions. HMPPS intends to continue to use Market Supplements in a targeted way, as part of the long-term strategy for pay, and does not support any national erosion of Market Supplements for the 2027/28 pay round.

2.321 The framework established an evidence-based annual review process of ongoing Market Supplement use, to provide greater transparency, and an effective mechanism for their gradual erosion in the case of improved

recruitment and retention in specific prisons. A form of Market Supplements have been used since 2017 to support recruitment and retention in a small number of prisons with acute staffing challenges. They are non-consolidated payments made exclusively to Band 3 Prison Officers. Similar measures to uplift pay for roles where staffing challenges exist are normal practice in many workforces across other sectors.

2.322 HMPPS agrees with the PSPRB's assessment that Band 3 Prison Officer pay is now market aligned. This follows significant investment in salaries in recent years. However, we recognise that some sites continue to face localised staffing challenges and HMPPS assesses that continued targeting of Market Supplements is a more effective way of supporting localised staffing challenging. Market Supplements are currently paid to staff across 18 prisons, including to four sites currently being downgraded or eroded following decisions arising from the first annual review (more detail on this is provided in paragraph 2.332). In addition, staff previously employed at HMYOI Cookham Wood are currently experiencing erosion of their Market Supplement following the prison's reroll into part of HMP Rochester in June 2024.

2.323 Prior to 2025, the use of Market Supplements had not routinely been subject to evidence-based reviews, and we did not have a robust mechanism to remove a supplement when it was assessed that recruitment and retention had improved locally to the point that it was no longer required.

2.324 The Market Supplement Framework manages the assessment of prisons to identify where Market Supplements should be implemented, increased, reduced, or removed to support both local and wider recruitment and retention challenges. It does so through evidence-based decision-making which blends qualitative and quantitative data to ensure decisions are evidence-led and feed into a longer-term strategy for the use of Market Supplements in HMPPS. It also improves communication regarding Market Supplement use with staff and trade unions.

2.325 The Framework operates under the following key principles:

- An annual review process led by HMPPS official-level governance to make data-led decisions regarding turning on and off, and amending the level, of Market Supplements at specific prisons. This replaces the previous annual cross-government approval process needed to continue Market Supplement payments;
- A tiering system for all prisons measuring performance based on National Staffing Projection Data, Retention, and Stability metrics to inform decisions regarding turning on;
- A dashboard incorporating the above metrics to inform decisions regarding turning off;
- Qualitative data assurances and operational leader inputs to allow informed evidence-based decisions regarding Market Supplements;
- A gradual erosion process to withdraw Market Supplements, with no drop in take-home pay. Market Supplements will be eroded gradually following payment of the annual pay award to offset.

2.326 There are three categories of data used in the criteria-based assessment to identify prisons where current Market Supplement arrangements will be subject to review through the annual review process. These are:

- Staffing Forecasts – the forecast percentage of staff in post (SiP) compared to the Target Staffing Figure (TSF) by prison over a 6-month period. Planned expansions to establishments are also factored into this data;
- Staff Retention – the metric is departmental turnover which includes prison officer resignations and transfers. This replaces the previous Wastage Rate metric which was used for the first annual review. This was informed by Prison Officer attrition to due resignation, retirement, transfer or death;
- Stability – considers Detached Duty Provision at the Prison; an assessment of current stability of the prison rated low/medium/high based on internal monthly reporting; and regime delivery as rated through monthly internal reporting.

2.327 During the review process, qualitative local data insights are also considered in decision making to ensure operational reality and potential impact on recruitment and retention performance is considered. These insights include:

- Safety and security insights;
- Scrutiny body insights (including Urgent Notifications);
- Other staffing interventions in use at the prison;
- Market Supplement use at prisons locally;
- Local insights and labour market information.

2.328 Where a Market Supplement is implemented or increased, it will be maintained for a minimum of two years to allow time for the intervention to deliver the necessary impact to recruitment and retention, and avoid the adverse effects associated with frequent staff pay fluctuations. This minimum period of application also helps mitigate against Market Supplements being implemented to address short-term staffing challenges where other interventions may be more appropriate.

2.329 Where a Market Supplement is removed or reduced from a specific prison, the value of the Market Supplement payable will be eroded each year by a portion of the pay increase delivered through that year's pay award. The amount by which Market Supplements are eroded will be dependent on the outcomes of future pay awards made in light of PSPRB recommendations. For that reason, the amount by which the Market Supplement is to be eroded in any year may vary, as may the length of time which it takes for the Market Supplement to be fully eroded and consolidated into base pay.

2.330 In years which see lower pay growth, the erosion process may be paused to ensure that staff continue to receive some form of pay increase to mitigate against a reignition of staffing challenges.

2.331 In eroding a Market Supplement, HMPPS will adopt the following approach:

- In setting the amount by which the Market Supplement will be eroded each year HMPPS will ensure that staff do not experience a decrease in take home pay;
- The amount by which the Market Supplement will be eroded each year will be dependent on the terms of the pay award introduced following recommendations made by the PSPRB;
- New Band 3 Prison Officers joining the prison during the erosion process will be treated the same as existing staff and are entitled to a consistent rate of Market Supplement as the wider Band 3 Prison Officer group;
- The Market Supplement will no longer be paid to an individual if they move to a non-qualifying prison or if they change roles to a role which does not attract the Market Supplement.

First annual review of Market Supplements

2.332 The first annual review of Market Supplements use occurred in autumn 2025. It was determined that HMP Aylesbury will have its Market Supplement downgraded from 'Red Plus' to 'Red', with the intention for this to take place over a period of three years. Three prisons including HMP Grendon, HMP Huntercombe, and HMP Stanford Hill will have their 'Red' Market Supplement fully eroded, with the intention for this to take place over a period of four years. This was on the basis that their scores against the framework assessment criteria were assessed as relatively stable, and that operational leaders agreed that we could safely withdraw the supplement without adversely affecting recruitment and retention. Prison staff were notified about this change via a letter sent out on 12 January 2026, and PSPRB were notified of the changes later that month. These changes were reflected in June payroll onwards for impacted staff. Following these changes to Market Supplements and noting the challenging national staffing position, HMPPS will closely monitor the impact on recruitment, retention, staffing stability, and relevant operational factors at affected sites at regular intervals throughout the

year and via the annual review process to ensure decisions are appropriately targeted to continue to support local workforce pressures.

Second annual review of Market Supplements

2.333 We intend to commence the second annual review of Market Supplement use in the autumn. Any decisions will be communicated to impacted staff, prisons, and trade union stakeholders by mid-January 2027, with any changes implemented from April 2027 to align with the annual pay award. We will also update the PSPRB on the outcome of the review, with the intention to do this in similar timeframes to last year.

2.334 The annual review enables us to monitor staffing levels and recruitment and retention performance across the estate and, should there be deterioration, provides an evidence base to introduce supplements at additional sites. The framework therefore enables the continued targeted use of Market Supplements to support recruitment and retention and help maintain operational capacity.

Recommendation 14

2.335 The PSPRB made Recommendation 14 in its 2024/25 report. To date we have answered the first two parts of the recommendation, relating to pilot scheme initiatives on Payment Plus and data on unsocial hours. The final part asked HMPPS to provide: *"[...] information in its written evidence on discussions with the unions it has had on Payment Plus, Operational Support Grade overtime and Operational Support Grade unsocial hours, along with a clear rationale for what it is proposing, even if no changes are being requested."*

2.336 The PSPRB subsequently made Recommendation 11 in their 2025/26 report, temporarily increasing the unsocial hours allowance to 25% for OSGs, for a period of 2 years.

- 2.337 HMPPS recognises the concerns raised by PSPRB in the 2024/25 and subsequent reports, and by the POA in its evidence submissions and engagement with us, on the issues raised by Recommendation 14.
- 2.338 We have taken a comprehensive approach to reviewing and developing proposals, recognising the complexity of the issues concerned. In light of the PSPRB's request that we work with the unions on these issues, throughout this process we have engaged openly with relevant trade unions, particularly the POA. We have held a number of meetings to discuss priorities and invite ideas, views and challenge on proposed solutions. This engagement has been valuable in refining proposals and identifying areas where further work is required.
- 2.339 As the project developed, we have split it into two workstreams. First, work to develop options regarding Payment Plus and OSG overtime, and secondly an operational review of night working in prisons, with a focus on the volume of hours being worked unsocially by OSGs and other operational staff. This work has been challenging, and as we have outlined to the PSPRB in recent years' evidence submissions it has not been possible to deliver 'quick fix' solutions to unsocial hours working, and usage of Payment Plus and OSG overtime.
- 2.340 In particular, we have considered that solutions to high volumes of unsocial hours working should be operational, rather than purely pay-focused solutions. With that in mind, our operational review of night working has considered the distribution of unsocial hours between OSGs and prison officers, and whether specific sites wish to offer designated night working groups.
- 2.341 Our key findings and proposals regarding the unsocial hours allowance, Payment Plus, and OSG overtime are summarised in Chapter 1. They are set out again here with expanded detail on the non-pay proposals.

Payment Plus and OSG overtime

- 2.342 Payment Plus was introduced in 2008 to replace all other additional hours and ex-gratia payment schemes. It recognises that specific demands made on

staff time in a prison can be unpredictable and required at short notice, outside of planned shifts.

2.343 According to policy, the Payment Plus rate will only be paid for additional hours working in the following circumstances:

- To staff a bedwatch;
- To staff a constant observation;
- To staff a Category A escort over and above the profiled staffing level;
- To staff new accommodation and to cover temporary staff in post vacancies against the Target Staffing figure, where authorised by the Area Manager.

2.344 Payment Plus and OSG overtime are a necessary and important part of how we deliver in prisons, enabling governors to deliver critical activity that can be unplanned and unpredictable. This is particularly true in the present context of a challenging staffing picture, where sites can struggle to absorb extra pressures within their planned staffing. Escort and Bedwatch is a significant driver of Payment Plus usage, and further information on the review of Escort, Bedwatch and Constant Supervision (EBCS review) is at paragraph 2.381. This review has considered options to reduce usage of Payment Plus for Escort, Bedwatch, and Constant Supervision, as well as to reconsider the balance of how Payment Plus for these functions is funded between HMPPS and NHS England.

2.345 There are higher levels of vacancies across the estate than in recent years and HMPPS are prioritising recruitment and retention interventions to address staffing challenges, both at specific sites and across the estate. Whilst our clear aim is to focus on substantive recruitment and retention to ensure sufficient staffing across the estate, we see Payment Plus as a tool within this to meet unpredictable demand and it remains a critical tool for temporary cover of vacancies. Meeting our target staffing levels is a priority and will contribute to lower usage of Payment Plus, alongside measures such as reviewing use of Payment Plus for travel time (arising from the EBCS review),

but we recognise that the current staffing levels mean that we are likely to see higher levels of Payment Plus and overtime usage this year than last year.

2.346 Since December 2025, we have held regular engagement with POA in which we have presented a range of options regarding Payment Plus. These options were developed considering the spirit of Recommendation 14; to reduce reliance and usage of Payment Plus, and also as an opportunity to explore potential areas of agreement with the POA on areas to reform and improve Payment Plus. Ultimately, we have been unable to reach agreement with POA on the headline rate of Payment Plus, and the proposed frequency at which the rate is reviewed. However, we hope to continue working closely with the POA on these issues, including our commitment to review the scope and usage of Payment Plus policy and operational guidance to improve consistency, and to explore the arrangements regarding additional hours worked by part-time staff. Our proposals regarding Payment Plus and OSG overtime are set out in Chapter 1 and are expanded in the below sections.

Usage and Operation of Payment Plus

Review of Payment Plus policy and operational guidance

2.347 HMPPS will be undertaking a review on the policy and operational guidance around the use of Payment Plus. As part of the review, we will review both the overall policy and the operational implementation and oversight, including the governance structures we use to manage ongoing use. This should provide greater clarity for staff, ensuring that policy and practice are in alignment, and Payment Plus is operated consistently across the business. It will also ensure that Payment Plus as a tool is serving the operational needs of the business. This review will take place over the coming year, as part of the wider review of non-salary payments underway in response to a GIAA audit. This review aims to consolidate and provide greater clarity surrounding governance and operational implementation of a number of non-salary payments into one operational guidance document, improving consistency and accessibility of information. We welcome the opportunity to work closely with the POA on this review.

2.348 This review will mean that our evidence submissions for 2028/29 will provide a further view on the future use of Payment Plus, and what we assess to be an optimal level of use across the organisation, considering business needs for covering unplanned tasks, staffing levels, and forecasts.

Reviewing Payment Plus arrangements for part-time staff

2.349 Alongside the review, we will be working to standardise our approach to overtime payments for part-time staff across officer and OSG grades. Current policy enables part-time officers to work additional hours through Payment Plus, paid at the premium rate. This differs from the position for part-time OSGs, whose additional hours up to whole-time equivalent are paid at plain time and are pensionable.

2.350 We recognise that these differing arrangements may create unintended incentives and could be contributing to current usage levels of Payment Plus. We therefore intend to review our policy to ensure that policy arrangements remain fair, consistent and aligned with the intended purpose of Payment Plus.

Introducing a higher rate of PP for certain B4 Prison Officer Specialist roles

2.351 There are also opportunities where Payment Plus usage could contribute more to effective operational delivery. Payment Plus is available to all officer grades (Bands 3 to 5), but its use is limited in policy to certain specified tasks. It cannot therefore legitimately be used to enable cover of Band 4 specific tasks, where there are vacancies that cannot be covered through temporary promotion due to the specialist training and expertise required. This includes PEI and dog handler roles, with the PEI staff group in particular facing a challenging staffing picture at present.

2.352 PEI recruitment is slower than general officer recruitment because it is a specialist Band 4 role requiring custodial experience, enhanced fitness and technical competence. Although PE Foundation Training has been streamlined and modularised, the full route from readiness for selection to graduation still averages 12 months.

- 2.353 PEI activity plays a hugely important role in prisons, contributing to purposeful activity with benefits for prisoner health and wellbeing. It is therefore important that prisons are able to deliver this activity reliably, particularly in sites with PEI staffing challenges. The ability to use Payment Plus to do so would be of operational benefit.
- 2.354 We therefore propose introducing a targeted higher rate of Payment Plus which will be payable to Band 4 Officer Specialist staff, when those staff are carrying out those Band 4 tasks only. As set out in Chapter 1, this new rate, alongside the availability of the HMPPS RRP system, should enable flexible and targeted support to sites facing PEI staffing challenges, in place of the more generalised national PEI allowance. Introducing this rate would form part of the wider review of non-salary payments and involve engagement with the POA on uses and associated policy guidance for a Band 4 rate.
- 2.355 Recruiting and retaining staff in this important role remains a priority, and we have set out our work on this at paragraph 2.309. Use of Payment Plus to cover vacancies should remain a temporary measure, not replacing activity to recruit and train substantive staff to fill vacancies. This rate would, however, enable prisons to cover temporary staffing shortfalls legitimately through Payment Plus and appropriately compensate staff for that work, ensuring that critical Physical Education delivery is not impacted by staffing shortages.
- 2.356 As part of our engagement with POA on this issue, they have raised the question of an additional enhanced rate of Payment Plus for Band 5 staff. This is not currently proposed by MoJ/HMPPS, and we will work with the POA to explore this issue further and scope the feasibility of any future pay proposals for a targeted Payment Plus rate for specific Band 5 specialist tasks, where there is an operational need which cannot be met through existing cover arrangements.

Rate of Payment Plus

- 2.357 We recognise the importance of setting Payment Plus at the right level. Any overtime payment should be sufficiently high as to incentivise uptake and to recognise the additional commitment made by staff who take on extra hours,

whilst balancing against the overall cost to the business and other financial priorities. The value of Payment Plus has eroded relative to hourly pay over time, reducing its attractiveness to staff. In a challenging staffing context, adequate incentivisation of Payment Plus becomes even more important alongside the work to improve the staffing picture overall.

Uplifting Payment Plus to £26

2.358 The Payment Plus rate is currently £23, as recommended by PSPRB in their 2026 report in order to maintain a value higher than hourly pay whilst further work was carried out to respond to Recommendation 14 and whilst affordability constraints required prioritisation of investment.

2.359 This year, we propose increasing the rate of Payment Plus by £3 to £26. Further detail on the proposal is at paragraph 1.42 in Chapter 1. We recognise the POA's position and their ambition to increase Payment Plus to £35 per hour. Our proposal of £26 strikes a balance between the need to uplift Payment Plus, and affordability at the present time. We are open to continuing to work with the POA on appropriate uplifts over the coming years, recognising that the cost of any increase to Payment Plus must be considered as part of the overall pay award package.

Ongoing review of Payment Plus value

2.360 We recognise that the long period of time without uplifts to Payment Plus has led to erosion of its value, and concerns over this issue have been raised by the POA. Whilst the value of Payment Plus has not impacted on uptake of Payment Plus hours, we wish to avoid a position where the Payment Plus value becomes eroded against base pay in the future.

2.361 We therefore intend to conduct an internal review of the value of Payment Plus on a 3-yearly basis, ensuring that rates are set at an appropriate level and remain fit for purpose. The first of these reviews will follow completion of the committed review of Payment Plus policy.

Ongoing efforts to reduce Payment Plus usage and cost

2.362 We will continue to explore areas of opportunity for reducing Payment Plus usage. However, the current staffing picture is challenging and whilst we continue work to address recruitment and retention challenges, we anticipate that levels of Payment Plus usage will remain relatively high for the foreseeable future. PSPRB have asked that we set out the levels of usage and cost that we deem acceptable, and this will become more viable as we develop our review of operational policy on Payment Plus, including reviewing sanctioned tasks for which Payment Plus can be paid, and assess this against staffing levels and forecasts.

2.363 The review of Escort, Bedwatch and Constant Supervision, as set out below (paragraph 2.381), also provides some opportunity for reducing Payment Plus usage, though impacts will depend upon staffing levels.

OSG overtime

2.364 OSG overtime is paid at the rate of Single time x 1.33 on weekdays and Single time x 1.75 on weekends, along with a supplement of £5/hr (introduced in 2017). We assess that this rate provides appropriate compensation. As the rate is linked to base pay, it increases yearly along with headline pay awards.

2.365 No major concerns about the rate or usage of OSG overtime were identified. However, recognising the relationship with Payment Plus, we will also review OSG overtime alongside Payment Plus at regular intervals, ensuring alignment between the two.

Unsocial hours

2.366 Prisons are a 24/7 service, and it is critical that we maintain safety and security, and preparedness to respond to any incidents, overnight and at weekends. The nature of this operational demand, and the changing picture of challenges faced by prisons, means that demand for staffing during unsocial hours has outstripped our current policy guidance, and this burden has fallen predominantly on our OSG staff group as the main resource pool for night staffing.

- 2.367 Our review of night working (set out in further detail below), which has included engagement from PGA and POA, has found that addressing this imbalance will require substantial workforce delivery reform. Our proposed changes seek to rebalance the burden of night working whilst retaining flexibility for staff to work in line with their preferences as much as possible, and for prisons to be able to respond to their operational demands.
- 2.368 Whilst we explore this reform, we propose an extension for 2 years of the temporary 5% uplift that recognises the current disproportionate burden on our OSG staff. Our intention is to target the sites with the highest levels of unsocial working for OSG staff. The extension will also provide time to assess the effectiveness of these operational changes and inform any consideration of wider pay solutions.
- 2.369 At the same time, we will reassess and align our expectations for unsocial hours working, ensuring that this is fit for purpose in the modern and changing operational context.

Nights Working as a Key Driver of Unsocial Hours

- 2.370 In July 2025 we shared data on unsocial hours, which showed this was concentrated among OSGs (c.46% of profiled OSG hours). Early scoping of the issues around OSG unsocial hours identified that night working was a significant driver of high levels of unsocial hours. Most prisons rely heavily on OSGs for night staffing, meaning this group carries a disproportionate burden of night shifts.
- 2.371 Therefore, in our 2026/27 written evidence, we outlined that HMPPS was commencing a comprehensive review of night working in prisons to identify the drivers behind the current distribution of unsocial and nights working, and to consider whether alternative approaches could meet our nights commitment.
- 2.372 HMPPS concluded that there is limited scope to reduce staffing demand on Nights, as current operations already represent a minimum staffing level necessary to ensure safety and security. Analysis showed that variation in

demand was largely driven by establishments with lots of smaller units requiring more night patrols. Sites with larger staffing groups are also able to distribute duties more widely.

- 2.373 Therefore, we intend to explore the impact of redistributing nights among staff groups. At a number of establishments, some staff voluntarily choose to be on a permanent Nights shift pattern, with seven days of night shifts followed by seven rest days, which reduces the frequency of night shifts of other staff at that establishment. We are proposing that arrangements at site-level stay in place, but HMPPS will not mandate this targeted approach (e.g. x% permanent Nights staff per establishment), given the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) advice against permanent Nights groups due to long-term health risks.
- 2.374 Given that night working is currently disproportionately delivered by OSGs, HMPPS plans to implement a more even distribution between OSG and Band 3 Prison Officers, targeting sites where OSG unsocial hours are particularly high. We have modelled the future state of this redistribution using the new WDMs. Current operational delivery of Nights may vary from our modelling, and we will work with prisons to ensure local delivery preferences are considered.
- 2.375 Any redistribution will increase recruitment demand for Band 3 Officers, which will need to be managed along with current need. This adds further demand to the staffing increases needed to deliver prison expansion over the next few years. To enable sustainable delivery, we are scoping which prisons may feasibly be able to implement the nights redistribution model over the next two years, while prioritising recruitment activity at expansion sites. We aim to target sites with the highest levels of USH where possible, working with prisons to assess their local operational requirements, and where sites have permanent nights groups in place. We will review progress after a year and assess next steps to ensure the work is aligned with wider workforce planning.

- 2.376 This redistribution has support in principle from the POA, though details are to be worked through and we will continue to engage with them on this.
- 2.377 Analysis indicates that even with redistribution staff in some establishments will continue to exceed the 20-30% unsocial hours working set out in policy. As set out in the Pay Manual, the guideline is intended to promote a reasonable balance within working patterns, whilst recognising that local operational requirements may sometimes require some variation. The 20-30% is not a fixed cap, but a policy intended to support sustainable working arrangements.
- 2.378 We recognise that, in some sites, operational demand may require numbers of staff continue to work unsocial hours above this level. While opportunities to reduce this demand are limited without staff voluntarily undertaking additional night working, we do not consider it desirable for significant numbers of staff to remain outside the guideline on a sustained basis.
- 2.379 We will therefore continue to review our policies and expectations relating to unsocial and night working to ensure they remain aligned with operational requirements and workforce needs. As part of this work, we will continue to engage closely with the POA and consider whether further changes to policy are required to support a sustainable approach to staffing. This will include consideration of whether wider pay-related measures are required alongside operational reforms where evidence demonstrates an ongoing disproportionate level of unsocial hours worked.
- 2.380 We also have work underway to bolster assurance of appropriate oversight and support for staff working night shifts, including strengthening HR systems to prompt and centrally monitor offers of health assessments.

Escort, Bedwatch and Constant Supervision Review

- 2.381 A review of Escort, Bedwatch and Constant Supervision (EBCS) was commissioned by the Health, Social Care and Justice Operational Delivery Board in 2024 as a joint HMPs / NHS England (NHSE) venture and was largely completed by April 2026. The main ambitions were to:

- Improve prisoner access to health services;
- Reduce the demand for medical escorts and bedwatches where possible;
- Develop sustainable cross-charging tariffs between HMPPS and NHSE.

2.382 In relation to reducing expenditure on Payment Plus, it is important to note that, in principle, the vast majority of Payment Plus associated with covering bedwatches (for prisons in England) should be funded by NHSE. The initial cost should be met by HMPPS, with this cost then being recovered by way of cross-charging between the agencies. The cross-charging tariffs for escorts or bedwatches have not been reviewed or uplifted, however, since 2014, and a gap between actual cost and cost-recovery has been steadily growing during that time.

2.383 Recommendations for addressing this issue will include a renegotiation of the tariff rates between HMPPS and NHSE/DHSC.

2.384 The main EBCS project activity has concluded, with several workstreams being taken forward by permanent teams, and a final recommendations paper presented to the Health, Social Care and Justice Operational Delivery Board in September.

2.385 One of the workstreams is considering how the use of digital and technical innovation can support better on-site health delivery and reduce the reliance on external escorts for routine or follow up appointments in some cases. In the short term this is unlikely to reduce the overall demand for external appointments. However, it has the potential to improve efficiency and maximise prisoner access to external appointments and may lead to reducing or slowing individual health deterioration resulting in unplanned escorts and bedwatches. Additionally, activity to reduce levels of self-harm, intoxication and violence is expected to reduce demand for emergency and unplanned external hospital escorts. The inherent health inequality within the prisoner population, alongside the ageing population is expected to continue to drive demand for external hospital appointments and in some cases long term stays in hospital or care homes.

- 2.386 Another workstream is seeking to improve access to adapted accommodation within the prison estate. The initial focus is on establishing a national allocation process to improve access to adapted cells in the privately managed estate. The workstream is also reviewing the availability of specialist health and social care accommodation within the prison estate for prisoners with higher levels of health and social care need. Such accommodation would be expected to reduce the number of delayed discharges from hospital, whereby prisoners continue to be located in outside hospitals due to a lack of appropriate provision (accommodation and health and care) in custody.
- 2.387 The approach to delivering the Escort, Bedwatch and Constant Supervision review had been to develop workstreams that address pre-established and documented problems, responding to recommendations or observations from internal reviews, research, or scrutiny bodies. Each workstream was lodged within a group or directorate that had the expertise, prerogative, and influence to deliver the work successfully.
- 2.388 The final recommendations paper reflects the core project ambitions but also proposes ways to reduce the reliance on Payment Plus and reduce the opportunity to work excessively long hours on bedwatch duty.
- 2.389 Recommendations will be agreed (or not) via joint HMPPS / NHS governance mechanisms, but then separately via department-specific governance.
- 2.390 Timeline / milestones:
- September 2026 - EBCS Recommendations paper was shared with senior stakeholders, in readiness for being presented to the Health Social Care and Justice Operational Delivery Board in November 2026;
 - The discrete Constant Supervision paper (originally an ambition of the EBCS review) has been deprioritised, to allow focus on escorts and bedwatches.

The Staff Experience

Sickness absence

- 2.391 HMPPS is committed to supporting employee wellbeing and attendance through a supportive and work-focused approach. The Supporting Attendance policy sets out how short-term and long-term sickness absence should be managed, with an emphasis on early intervention, appropriate support and helping employees remain in, or return to, work wherever possible.
- 2.392 Average Working Days Lost (AWDL) improved from 14.46 in September 2022 to 11.2 in December 2023 but has since risen to 12.4 by March 2026. Frontline operational staff remain the primary driver of overall absence levels, as expected.
- 2.393 While HQ and Frontline Support areas have lower absolute absence, both show a gradual upward trend, suggesting broader systemic pressures rather than issues specific to particular roles. Mental ill health accounts for 42.91% of all sickness absence and remains the single largest driver across HMPPS. Musculoskeletal conditions are the second largest contributor at 17.7%. Together, these two categories account for 60.6% of total working days lost.
- 2.394 Overall, sickness absence across HMPPS has improved since 2022; however, this progress has slowed and partially reversed since late 2023, driven mainly by increases in long-term sickness and mental ill health. Absence management practices vary across the organisation, with Prisons and Youth Custody demonstrating stronger grip than non-operational areas. Although a range of interventions are in place, including training, specialist casework support, HR Business Partner-led deep dives, and enhanced senior leadership oversight, further work is required to address long-term absence and strengthen manager capability in managing attendance effectively.

Workforce culture and the Rademaker review and Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination

2.395 Jennifer Rademaker's report into 'HMPPS Professional Standards & Behaviour Review – bullying, harassment & discrimination' was published in May 2025. HMPPS accepted all 12 recommendations and has made significant progress to deliver work which addresses the findings set out in the review. This includes establishing an independent channel outside of line management structure for reporting, investigating and making decisions about Bullying, Harassment, Discrimination and Victimisation (BHDV) complaints.

2.396 The Independent Review, Resolution and Investigation Service (IRRIS), which supersedes the Tackling Unacceptable Behaviour Unit (TUBU), was launched on 26 January 2026. In addition to continued delivery of TUBU services: helpline, mediation, investigation support and Climate Assessments, IRRIS operates the Interim Grievance Process (IGP). IGP is a step towards the independent channel and is an opt-in process which allows BHDV complaints to be handled by an independent Decision Maker outside of the complainant's management line. We are expanding IRRIS's investigations capacity through role restructure and recruitment to enable the team to deliver the independent channel's strengthened remit. In addition to IRRIS, we are also delivering the other recommendations from the Rademaker Review:

- **Recruiting with our values in mind** – the values-based assessments have been introduced as part of frontline recruitment, ensuring candidates' values are considered as part of the assessment process, strengthening how HMPPS recruits people who can contribute to safe, respectful and professional workplaces. Professional standards are shaped from the start of someone's career. By assessing values and behaviours during the recruitment process, we are making clear what we expect of colleagues joining prisons and probation, and reinforcing the importance of respect, accountability and inclusion from day one;
- **Better insight through data** – Using new dashboards and quarterly reporting, HMPPS now has a clearer view of conduct, discipline,

investigations and grievance data. This gives senior leaders better insight into themes, trends and areas of concern, helping to move from responding to individual cases towards learning, prevention and earlier intervention. Better data supports greater transparency and accountability. This helps leaders understand where support is needed, where patterns may be emerging, and how improvements can be targeted effectively;

- **Stronger Sexual Harassment Guidance** – The new guidance has been expanded to include sexual assault, including rape, and includes clear formal definitions, reporting routes, separate guidance and support for complainants, respondents, witnesses and managers. A new dedicated section outlines pastoral support available across HMPPS and MoJ, with clarity on what each service offers;
- **Strengthening our Discrimination Incident Reporting Process (DIRF)** – A DIRF Steering Group has been established to provide prison-wide oversight of DIRF compliance, identify risks and drive improvement. Each Area Executive Director and specialist directorate has appointed a DIRF lead to act on their behalf. We have developed a new training package on DIRFs for prison staff and training will be delivered to each area by Disparities Unit representatives from July 2026. Work is also underway to improve data collection and raise awareness among people in prison, children, staff, and visitors.
- **Workplace Adjustments** – a new Departmental workplace adjustments policy will be introduced this year, and we will ensure this is effectively communicated across HMPPS. We will explore the implementation of an escalation route for Workplace Adjustments that are denied, responding to Jennifer Rademaker’s recommendation to address inconsistencies in managerial discretion and the appropriateness of disregarding OH Referrals. We will also address the Agency position in relation to workload adjustments, as referenced in the Rademaker report, to ensure decisions are made fairly and consistently.
- **Showcasing Meaningful Change** – We have established consistent celebratory leadership communications across a range of channels and

audiences since publication in May 2025. This includes several intranet articles providing regular progress updates, announcing the interim grievance policy and launching IRRIS. A new brand and accompanying promotional products were developed to launch IRRIS, particularly on the front line. We have now developed a bank of case studies to capture and better communicate across the Agency.

- 2.397 We also continue to expand and enhance existing services, and the format of Climate Assessments has already been streamlined so that individual site reports are delivered to HMPPS Senior Leaders within 9 weeks of full data collection, less than half the time taken previously. The Climate Assessment Survey will be rationalised further to avoid duplication of questions contained within the People Survey and provide increased focus on staff experience of BHDV, including sexual harassment. The streamlined approach will enable a greater volume of Climate Assessments to be undertaken, meaning increased delivery to individual sites. The resultant data, based on the lived experience of thousands of HMPPS staff, will enable IRRIS to provide HMPPS with thematic analysis reports identifying issues, themes and emerging trends.
- 2.398 We continue to develop the work of the IRRIS to demonstrate that action is taken when staff report unacceptable behaviour. During 2025/26 TUBU's confidential helpline supported 719 members of staff, an increase of 39% on the previous year. IRRIS's mediation service continues to provide support to colleagues who have been involved in workplace conflict and expertise to managers across the service to respond effectively to conflict when it arises. IRRIS completed 145 mediations in 2025/26 with 93% of mediations reaching full or partial agreement. IRRIS's qualified investigators led or supported 303 (BHDV) investigations, an increase of 60% on the previous year.
- 2.399 IRRIS sits in Professional Standards and Behaviour Group alongside the HMPPS Disparities Unit and Behavioural Interventions and Practical Support team (BIPS).
- 2.400 BIPS exists to help HMPPS strengthen professional standards and foster a healthy, constructive workplace culture. BIPS operates in a complex system

where behaviour, culture and leadership interact. Improving professional standards requires more than guidance or training: it depends on psychological safety, clarity, consistent leadership modelling, fair processes, motivation, and an environment that supports people to speak up and act early.

- 2.401 The BIPS approach draws on the best available evidence from behaviour change theory, culture development, implementation science and organisational readiness and by combining these elements, it seeks to support leaders across HMPPS to deliver meaningful, lasting change. It provides practical, evidence-informed support to prisons, probation, youth custody service and headquarters teams where urgent or complex challenges arise, helping them address unacceptable behaviour, embed positive standards, and build the capability, confidence, and conditions required for sustained change.

The People Survey and core themes, motivation, and morale

- 2.402 Following a period of review, the Cabinet Office has decided to redesign the Survey before it next launches, as a result, the next Survey will now launch in mid-January (2027) at the earliest, with exact dates to be confirmed. The Pay Award was implemented in June 2026. with the People Survey planned to begin in January 2027. This timeline limits the opportunity to assess the award's impact before the publication of written evidence. Furthermore, due to the publication timings of the written evidence for 2027/28, and the decision to delay the survey, the People Survey results for 2026 will not yet be available.
- 2.403 Once these results become available, a comprehensive overview report will be submitted to PSPRB on an Official – Sensitive basis.
- 2.404 In addition, HMPPS are currently implementing pulse surveys but due to the 2026 People Survey continuing in its current format we have not scheduled a standalone survey on Pay (as it is covered in the national survey). We are waiting for guidance on what the national pulse surveys will look like this year, considering the new contract for facilitation of the People Survey and this will feed into our planned engagement across HMPPS.

Performance management

- 2.405 Building a high-performing organisation is a key priority for HMPPS. Regular, open and constructive conversations between managers and employees are central to supporting high performance, continuous improvement and professional development. Performance and development discussions are expected to take place every eight weeks (with flexibility where appropriate), supported by quarterly reviews to promote consistency, fairness and accountability. While there are no formal performance ratings, managers are expected to set clear expectations, recognise strong performance and support individuals to deliver their best. Where performance concerns arise, managers are expected to provide timely feedback, support, and development opportunities to help employees improve. Where performance does not improve despite appropriate support, the Managing Poor Performance policy may be applied.
- 2.406 HMPPS is developing a structured programme to strengthen line management capability and improve the consistency and effectiveness of performance management across the organisation. This includes building the capability of the HR support to line managers through the development of a HR Guide to performance management. This will ensure the consistent application of HR processes and enable HR Business Partners to support line managers to have high-quality performance and development conversations, support the early identification of issues and encourage timely intervention where performance concerns arise.
- 2.407 The Ministry of Justice is developing a single Department-wide Managing Poor Performance Policy and a separate Probation Period Policy, supported by updated guidance, toolkits and templates designed to simplify processes and encourage earlier informal intervention. Together, these measures seek to strengthen both accountability and support, helping to foster a culture of high performance across HMPPS.

Prison complexity

- 2.408 HMPPS conducts systematic reviews of complexity levels across the prison estate, applying one of four standardised categories: Standard, Standard Plus, Complex, and Complex and Diverse. Each level is underpinned by defined minimum senior operational staffing requirements, ensuring appropriate leadership capacity is maintained in line with the complexity of the establishment.
- 2.409 An impact assessment of the complexity levels for all prisons was carried out in 2024/25, as the scoring mechanism was reviewed. Those prisons which were impacted by the review were considered at panels during 2025/26. Seven panels considering 27 prisons were convened during the financial year.
- 2.410 The schedule for 2026/27 consists mainly of those prisons identified for capacity expansion programme, changes to prisoner population type/categorisation or a commitment to revisit a previous panel decision following one of these adjustments. Additionally urgent reviews may be requested where operational circumstances warrant immediate reassessment.
- 2.411 Reviews are conducted in alignment with the financial year and follow a standardised scoring mechanism and criteria. This structured approach ensures consistency, transparency, and responsiveness to operational developments across the prison estate.
- 2.412 MoJ continues to provide 'Fair and Sustainable' guidance on how to operate the job evaluation scheme (JES) and associated processes.

Job evaluation process

- 2.413 The prison service JES is an analytical approach to assessing the relative size and weight of different jobs within, based on which, a pay and grading system has been developed. The scheme is customised to meet the distinctive requirements and characteristics of the Prison Service.

- 2.414 The Factor Plan (the job evaluation framework) lies at the core of JES and describes the key job demands of work across the prison service. It contains the nine factors against which all jobs will be evaluated. Each Job is scored against each of the 9 factors, and this creates an overall 'JES score' which then determines which pay band the job fits into.
- 2.415 Job descriptions are created as part of the continuation and development of the JES; each one is created following an evaluation process. This is a reliable way to capture the relative weight of jobs and ensure it is applied consistently.
- 2.416 The Evaluation Process involves all jobs/roles which must be evaluated and placed on a single scoring structure. Jobs which attract a similar score have been and will continue to be grouped together in bands, even though they may come from different occupational groupings. This gives a way of ensuring fairness in pay across our organisation, through a transparent process.

Annex A: Additional Evidence Requests

Index of evidence requested by PSPRB in its 2026 report:

Evidence requests from PSPRB 2026 report:	Page reference / Response
Professionalisation of prison officers and technology to improve productivity "We would like to receive for their next report a statement of what the [Enable] programme is covering, how long it is intended to last and what its key success measures are. HMPPS has also told us that the adoption of improved technology in prisons is increasing productivity, so we would welcome evidence on these initiatives and how the benefits are being realised and measured."	We have provided information on the Enable programme from para 2.236 to 2.240 We have provided information on the adoption of improved technology in prisons from para 2.177 to 2.186
Staff resourcing plan "For our next report, we would like HMPPS to provide us with its resourcing plan or model, along with what it believes are the key challenges and targets it faces, for the next three to five years, including how it plans to deal with the issues caused by the changes to skilled worker visas. We would like to know how many staff it expects to need to recruit each year, how the move from 20% to 24% non-effectives and the changes to Band 5 spans of control are progressing. This should include any milestones, along with an analysis of the impact of any initiatives to improve recruitment and retention, such as an evaluation of the 'Extraordinary Jobs' recruitment campaign."	Key staffing challenges and solutions are covered throughout the Prison Workforce section. Information on the Workforce Delivery Model, staffing non-effective rates and Band 5 spans of control can be found under 'Workforce delivery', from para 2.262 Recruitment target figures for 2026/27 have been shared directly with PSPRB earlier in 2026. Targets for 2027/28 are due to be developed early in 2027 and can be shared with the PSPRB in due course. An update on the 'Extraordinary Jobs' campaign is provided from para 2.205
Sickness absence "We would like to understand what HMPPS is doing to reduce the level of sickness absence amongst operational staff and what it sees as a manageable level."	Our measures to reduce the level of sickness absence can be found at para 2.391 to 2.394
Data on allowances and payments broken down by protected characteristics "This year we were pleased to receive a far more detailed breakdown of allowances and payments by protected characteristics;	This data will be provided to PSPRB directly.

however, this was received too late for us to consider for this report. Therefore, we would like to receive this data for our 2027 Report in good time for this to be fully considered, preferably at the same time as we receive our usual data pack from HMPPS."	
Bonus system "We would like to hear from HMPPS on what steps it is taking to ensure that the bonus arrangements are operated on a fair and appropriate basis."	A discussion of reward and recognition can be found in the 'Wider total reward and pensions' section (paras 2.302 – 2.308).
Rademaker Report The PSPRB asked to be kept up to date on the progress being made.	An update on the Rademaker Review and workplace culture is provided at para 2.395 to 2.401
Flexible working "We would [...] like to hear from HMPPS how it plans to introduce flexible working arrangements for operational staff, including how it will ensure there is a consistent approach across prisons when dealing with requests. If there is a national policy with guidelines, then we would like to see this. We would like to understand how HMPPS plans to monitor this issue centrally and what the timescales for such monitoring would be. We would also like to understand what discussions have taken place with the unions on improving access to flexible working."	Flexible working is covered from para 2.223 to 2.225. The internal flexible working policy will be shared separately with PSPRB.
Rolling review of allowances "We would like to receive the following information from the parties: the intended purposes of the allowances and payments (Care and Maintenance of Dogs allowances and unsocial hours payments for Bands 2 to 5 and 7 to 11 in F&S); information on any recruitment and retention difficulties, including any plans for improvement; impact on family life (in the case of unsocial hours) and in particular on those with caring responsibilities; and finally, any external comparator information that may be available." [PSPRB] will be considering the temporary increase from 20% to 25% to the UWH payment for Band 2 in their 2027 report, including UWH for Bands 3-5. [They] want information in the same format on UWH for Bands 3 to 5 as they received for Band 2 last year and updated information in relation to Band 2.	HMPPS' proposals on the allowances are provided in Chapter 1. • Care and Maintenance of Dogs – para 1.85 • Unsocial hours – para 1.62 Further background on our approach to unsocial hours is covered under Recommendation 14 in Chapter 2, para 2.335 onwards. Data on unsocial hours working for Bands 2 to 5 will be shared directly with PSPRB and the Trade Unions.

They have asked that “data collected by HMPPS are in a format that is shareable with the trade unions.”.	
Working hours of operational managers “We [...] request evidence from HMPPS and the PGA on the hours worked by operational managers and proposals on whether changes need to be made.”	Information on operational managers is provided at para 2.269 to 2.275
Escort, Bedwatch and Constant Supervision Review “We note that HMPPS and NHS England (NHSE) are undertaking an ‘Escort, Bedwatch and Constant Supervision Review’, which is due to be completed in April 2026. This aims to improve prisoner access to health services, reduce the demand for medical escorts and bedwatches, and implement sustainable and equitable cross-charging tariffs between HMPPS and NHSE. Our 2026 Report will be submitted before this review concludes and we would like an update on the review for the 2027 Report.”	An update on the EBCS Review is provided in para 2.381 to 2.390
Payment Plus “We previously asked HMPPS to provide information on initiatives for reducing Payment Plus. We would still like to hear how HMPPS is intending to further reduce Payment Plus and also what Payment Plus annual costs it considers to be acceptable. We would also like to hear the views of the POA on these issues and the outcome of discussions between the parties.”	Payment Plus is covered under Recommendation 14, from para 2.335.
Physical Education Instructor recruitment and retention payment - “We would like to receive from HMPPS and the POA in written evidence the following: initiatives to attract new applicants as PEIs; the progress being made on the recruitment of PEIs, along with information on retention; changes to the training programme; shareable and publishable data on the number of PEIs in post versus the target, broken down by establishment and protected characteristics; and information on any individual prisons or areas that are having particular difficulties in recruiting to the PEI role.”	HMPPS’ proposals on the PEI temporary allowance are provided in Chapter 1, para 1.76 Further background information on Physical Education Instructors is provided in para 2.309 to 2.319 PEI staffing figures will be shared with PSPRB directly.

Operation Tornado payments

"We would like to receive data on the number of Tornado trained staff broken down by establishment and the target for each prison, along with the numbers currently in the training pipeline."

Op Tornado staffing figures will be shared directly with PSPRB.

Annex B: Exit Interview Methodology and Data Overview

Methodology

The exit interview process, introduced in August 2021, supports HMPPS to better understand the factors influencing both operational and non-operational staff to leave the organisation. HR Business Partners (HRBPs) conduct structured interviews using a consistent set of questions aligned to the 10 defined drivers of attrition.

These discussions are designed to:

- Gain a clear understanding of the individual's reasons for leaving, linked to the attrition drivers
- Explore whether any interventions may have changed their decision
- Identify emerging trends or patterns across different groups of leavers
- Capture feedback on positive aspects of the workplace experience
- Highlight opportunities for improvement based on constructive feedback
- Provide leavers with the opportunity to share their views and leave on a constructive note
- Contribute to a broader national understanding of workforce attrition

Following each interview, anonymised responses are uploaded by HRBPs into a central database. This aggregated data is used to generate insight at local, regional and national levels, supporting the identification of trends and informing targeted retention activity.

While all departing staff are invited to take part, participation is voluntary. As such, the data presented below reflects the views of those who chose to engage with the process rather than the entire leaver population.

The analysis that follows summarises the primary attrition driver identified by respondents as the main factor in their decision to leave.

Data Overview – Primary Driver for Leaving All Staff

Prisons	Jul 24 - Jun 25	Aug 24 - Jul 25	Sep 24 - Aug 25	Oct 24 - Sep 25	Nov 24 - Oct 25	Dec 24 - Nov 25	Jan 25- Dec 25	Feb 25 - Jan 26	Mar 25 - Feb 26	Apr 25 - Mar 26	May 25 - Apr 26	Jun 25- May 26
Career Progression	23.53%	22.98%	22.88%	22.62%	22.22%	22.42%	22.63%	24.13%	24.52%	24.01%	25.06%	27.32%
Environment	2.45%	3.43%	3.60%	3.61%	3.97%	3.77%	3.64%	3.27%	3.87%	4.20%	3.72%	3.51%
Health & Wellbeing	15.03%	14.58%	14.59%	14.07%	14.48%	13.29%	12.53%	12.47%	12.69%	12.12%	11.91%	10.78%
Induction	0.16%	0.00%	0.00%	0.19%	0.20%	0.20%	0.20%	0.20%	0.22%	0.23%	0.25%	0.25%
Leadership	16.83%	17.84%	18.02%	18.63%	17.86%	18.85%	18.59%	18.00%	16.99%	17.95%	17.37%	18.30%
Learning & Development	1.31%	1.20%	0.90%	0.95%	0.60%	0.60%	0.81%	0.82%	0.86%	1.17%	1.24%	1.75%
Pay & Reward	3.92%	3.43%	3.24%	2.66%	2.38%	2.18%	1.82%	1.64%	2.15%	1.86%	1.49%	1.50%
Retirement	17.65%	17.32%	17.12%	16.92%	17.66%	18.06%	18.38%	18.00%	17.63%	17.48%	18.86%	16.54%
Role & Responsibility	2.29%	2.23%	2.52%	2.66%	2.38%	2.58%	2.42%	2.66%	2.80%	3.26%	2.98%	3.26%
Staffing	3.43%	3.43%	3.24%	3.61%	3.77%	3.77%	4.24%	4.50%	4.73%	4.66%	4.22%	4.26%
Ways of Working	13.40%	13.55%	13.87%	14.07%	14.48%	14.29%	14.75%	14.31%	13.55%	13.05%	12.90%	12.53%
Number of interviews	732	699	657	634	606	601	592	590	563	528	505	499
Leavers	3736	3601	3530	3476	3441	3441	3344	3264	3195	3108	3017	2963
Transfers	698	676	686	659	637	644	664	705	778	852	969	1033
Leavers & Transfers	4434	4277	4216	4135	4078	4085	4008	3969	3973	3960	3986	3996
Response Rate	16.51%	16.34%	15.58%	15.33%	14.86%	14.71%	14.77%	14.87%	14.17%	13.33%	12.67%	12.49%

Prisoner Officer Band 3 to 5 – Primary Driver for Leaving

Prisons	Jul 24 - Jun 25	Aug 24 - Jul 25	Sep 24 - Aug 25	Oct 24 - Sep 25	Nov 24 - Oct 25	Dec 24 - Nov 25	Jan 25- Dec 25	Feb 25 - Jan 26	Mar 25 - Feb 26	Apr 25 - Mar 26	May 25 - Apr 26	Jun 25- May 26
Career Progression	18.31%	18.71%	19.70%	19.37%	19.67%	19.17%	18.80%	20.35%	20.83%	20.30%	20.54%	24.23%
Environment	2.82%	3.96%	4.55%	4.74%	5.44%	5.00%	4.70%	3.98%	4.63%	5.45%	4.86%	4.64%
Health & Wellbeing	17.96%	16.55%	17.05%	16.21%	14.23%	12.92%	11.97%	12.39%	12.04%	12.87%	14.05%	12.37%
Induction	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Leadership	19.01%	19.78%	18.94%	20.16%	20.50%	22.50%	22.65%	21.68%	21.30%	22.77%	22.70%	24.23%
Learning & Development	1.41%	1.44%	1.14%	1.19%	0.42%	0.42%	0.43%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Pay & Reward	3.52%	2.88%	2.65%	1.98%	1.67%	1.67%	0.85%	0.88%	0.93%	0.50%	0.54%	0.52%
Retirement	10.92%	11.15%	11.36%	11.46%	12.13%	12.50%	13.25%	13.72%	13.43%	12.87%	12.97%	9.28%
Role & Responsibility	1.76%	1.80%	1.52%	1.58%	1.26%	1.25%	1.28%	1.33%	1.85%	1.98%	1.62%	2.06%
Staffing	6.34%	6.12%	5.68%	6.32%	7.11%	7.50%	8.12%	7.96%	8.33%	7.43%	6.49%	6.19%
Ways of Working	17.96%	17.63%	17.42%	17.00%	17.57%	17.08%	17.95%	17.70%	16.67%	15.84%	16.22%	16.49%
Number of interviews	348	340	320	312	296	296	290	284	271	257	238	246
Leavers	2197	2095	2039	2003	1993	1995	1926	1852	1804	1729	1678	1639
Transfers	383	381	397	390	386	393	409	442	468	508	588	637
Leavers & Transfers	2580	2476	2436	2393	2379	2388	2335	2294	2272	2237	2266	2276
Response Rate	13.49%	13.73%	13.14%	13.04%	12.44%	12.40%	12.42%	12.38%	11.93%	11.49%	10.50%	10.81%

Prisoner Officer – Operational Support Grade – Primary Driver for Leaving

Prisons	Jul 24 - Jun 25	Aug 24 - Jul 25	Sep 24 - Aug 25	Oct 24 - Sep 25	Nov 24 - Oct 25	Dec 24 - Nov 25	Jan 25- Dec 25	Feb 25 - Jan 26	Mar 25 - Feb 26	Apr 25 - Mar 26	May 25 - Apr 26	Jun 25- May 26
Career Progression	24.66%	27.14%	30.88%	32.79%	33.90%	33.93%	32.20%	36.36%	36.73%	34.15%	35.00%	34.21%
Environment	4.11%	4.29%	2.94%	1.64%	1.69%	1.79%	3.39%	3.64%	4.08%	2.44%	2.50%	2.63%
Health & Wellbeing	12.33%	12.86%	13.24%	11.48%	13.56%	8.93%	8.47%	9.09%	8.16%	7.32%	5.00%	5.26%
Induction	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Leadership	5.48%	5.71%	5.88%	6.56%	5.08%	5.36%	5.08%	3.64%	4.08%	4.88%	5.00%	5.26%
Learning & Development	4.11%	2.86%	1.47%	1.64%	1.69%	1.79%	1.69%	1.82%	2.04%	2.44%	2.50%	5.26%
Pay & Reward	4.11%	4.29%	4.41%	3.28%	3.39%	3.57%	5.08%	3.64%	4.08%	2.44%	2.50%	2.63%
Retirement	23.29%	21.43%	20.59%	21.31%	20.34%	25.00%	25.42%	23.64%	22.45%	26.83%	30.00%	28.95%
Role & Responsibility	2.74%	2.86%	2.94%	3.28%	3.39%	3.57%	1.69%	1.82%	2.04%	2.44%	2.50%	2.63%
Staffing	4.11%	4.29%	4.41%	4.92%	3.39%	1.79%	1.69%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Ways of Working	15.07%	14.29%	13.24%	13.11%	13.56%	14.29%	15.25%	16.36%	16.33%	17.07%	15.00%	13.16%
Number of interviews	91	104	82	77	74	68	70	66	60	56	55	54
Leavers	702	685	669	656	639	634	624	617	603	587	566	559
Transfers	29	31	32	34	32	37	38	43	46	50	53	55
Leavers & Transfers	731	716	701	690	671	671	662	660	649	637	619	614
Response Rate	12.45%	14.53%	11.70%	11.16%	11.03%	10.13%	10.57%	10.00%	9.24%	8.79%	8.89%	8.79%

Band 7 – 11 Managers (Op & Non-Op) – Primary Driver for Leaving

Prisons	Jul 24 - Jun 25	Aug 24 - Jul 25	Sep 24 - Aug 25	Oct 24 - Sep 25	Nov 24 - Oct 25	Dec 24 - Nov 25	Jan 25 - Dec 25	Feb 25 - Jan 26	Mar 25 - Feb 26	Apr 25 - Mar 26	May 25 - Apr 26	Jun 25 - May 26
Career Progression	26.67%	23.33%	17.24%	21.43%	20.69%	20.69%	25.00%	28.13%	27.59%	27.59%	28.57%	36.36%
Environment	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Health & Wellbeing	13.33%	13.33%	17.24%	10.71%	13.79%	13.79%	12.50%	12.50%	17.24%	13.79%	14.29%	18.18%
Induction	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Leadership	3.33%	6.67%	6.90%	7.14%	6.90%	6.90%	6.25%	6.25%	6.90%	3.45%	3.57%	4.55%
Learning & Development	3.33%	3.33%	3.45%	3.57%	3.45%	3.45%	3.13%	3.13%	3.45%	3.45%	3.57%	4.55%
Pay & Reward	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Retirement	36.67%	36.67%	34.48%	32.14%	31.03%	31.03%	31.25%	28.13%	27.59%	27.59%	25.00%	18.18%
Role & Responsibility	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	3.45%	3.57%	4.55%
Staffing	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	3.45%	3.57%	4.55%
Ways of Working	16.67%	16.67%	20.69%	25.00%	24.14%	24.14%	21.88%	21.88%	17.24%	17.24%	17.86%	9.09%
Number of interviews	35	34	37	33	33	33	37	38	36	34	35	30
Leavers	69	66	66	64	61	60	58	55	50	49	49	49
Transfers	109	102	99	87	82	81	82	82	83	84	88	89
Leavers & Transfers	178	168	165	151	143	141	140	137	133	133	137	138
Response Rate	19.66%	20.24%	22.42%	21.85%	23.08%	23.40%	26.43%	27.74%	27.07%	25.56%	25.55%	21.74%

Band 2 – 6 Non-Op Staff – Primary Driver for Leaving

Prisons	Jul 24 - Jun 25	Aug 24 - Jul 25	Sep 24 - Aug 25	Oct 24 - Sep 25	Nov 24 - Oct 25	Dec 24 - Nov 25	Jan 25- Dec 25	Feb 25 - Jan 26	Mar 25 - Feb 26	Apr 25 - Mar 26	May 25 - Apr 26	Jun 25- May 26
Career Progression	29.02%	27.32%	25.26%	23.91%	22.16%	23.16%	23.81%	24.14%	24.85%	25.16%	27.03%	27.97%
Environment	1.79%	2.93%	3.09%	3.26%	3.41%	3.39%	2.98%	2.87%	3.55%	3.87%	3.38%	2.80%
Health & Wellbeing	12.50%	12.68%	11.34%	12.50%	14.77%	14.69%	14.29%	13.22%	13.61%	11.61%	10.14%	8.39%
Induction	0.45%	0.00%	0.00%	0.54%	0.57%	0.56%	0.60%	0.57%	0.59%	0.65%	0.68%	0.70%
Leadership	19.64%	20.98%	22.68%	22.28%	20.45%	20.34%	20.24%	20.11%	17.16%	18.06%	16.89%	16.08%
Learning & Development	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.60%	1.15%	1.18%	1.94%	2.03%	2.80%
Pay & Reward	4.91%	4.39%	4.12%	3.80%	3.41%	2.82%	2.38%	2.30%	3.55%	3.87%	2.70%	2.80%
Retirement	21.88%	21.46%	21.13%	20.65%	22.16%	21.47%	20.83%	20.11%	20.12%	19.35%	22.30%	23.08%
Role & Responsibility	3.13%	2.93%	4.12%	4.35%	3.98%	4.52%	4.76%	5.17%	4.73%	5.16%	4.73%	4.90%
Staffing	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.60%	2.30%	2.37%	2.58%	2.70%	2.80%
Ways of Working	6.70%	7.32%	8.25%	8.70%	9.09%	9.04%	8.93%	8.05%	8.28%	7.74%	7.43%	7.69%
Number of interviews	257	239	222	212	202	202	193	200	194	179	175	167
Leavers	768	755	756	753	748	752	736	740	738	743	724	716
Transfers	177	162	158	148	137	133	135	138	181	210	240	252
Leavers & Transfers	945	917	914	901	885	885	871	878	919	953	964	968
Response Rate	27.20%	26.06%	24.29%	23.53%	22.82%	22.82%	22.16%	22.78%	21.11%	18.78%	18.15%	17.25%

Annex C: Pay Tables

F&S Band pay ranges 2026/27 and proposed 2027/28

			Pay Effective 1 April 2026		Pay Effective 1 April 2027	
			Pay Points / Range: 01 Apr 26 - 31 Mar 27		Pay Points / Range: 01 Apr 27 - 31 Mar 28	
BAND 2	National	37 Hour Base Pay	Spot		Spot	
			£25,409		£26,120	
		39 hour inc ACHP	£26,782		£27,532	
		37 hour inc 20% Unsocial	£30,491		£31,344	
		37 hour inc 25% Unsocial	£31,761		£32,650	
		39 hour inc ACHP and 20% Unsocial	£32,138		£33,038	
		39 hour inc ACHP and 25% Unsocial	£33,478		£34,415	
	Outer London	37 Hour base pay	£28,841		£29,631	
		39 hour inc ACHP	£30,400		£31,233	
		37 hour inc 20% Unsocial	£34,609		£35,557	
		37 hour inc 25% Unsocial	£36,051		£37,039	
		39 hour inc ACHP and 20% Unsocial	£36,480		£37,479	
		39 hour inc ACHP and 25% Unsocial	£38,000		£39,041	
	Inner London	37 Hour base pay	£30,627		£31,458	
		39 hour inc ACHP	£32,283		£33,158	
		37 hour inc 20% Unsocial	£36,752		£37,750	
		37 hour inc 25% Unsocial	£38,284		£39,323	
		39 hour inc ACHP and 20% Unsocial	£38,739		£39,790	
		39 hour inc ACHP and 25% Unsocial	£40,354		£41,448	

F&S Band pay ranges 2026/27 and proposed 2027/28

			Pay Effective 1 April 2026			Pay Effective 1 April 2027		
			Pay Points / Range: 01 Apr 26 - 31 Mar 27			Pay Points / Range: 01 Apr 27 - 31 Mar 28		
			1	2	3	1	2	3
BAND 3	National	37 hour Base Pay	£29,107	£30,125	£30,648	£29,776	£30,818	£31,353
		39 hour inc ACHP	£30,680	£31,753	£32,305	£31,386	£32,484	£33,048
		37 hour inc 20% unsocial	£34,928	£36,150	£36,778	£35,731	£36,982	£37,624
		38 hour inc ACH & 20% unsocial	£36,030	£37,290	£37,937	£36,858	£38,148	£38,810
		39 hour inc ACHP & 20% unsocial	£36,816	£38,104	£38,766	£37,663	£38,981	£39,657
		39 hour inc ACH & 20% unsocial	£37,131	£38,430	£39,097	£37,985	£39,314	£39,996
		40 hour inc ACH & 20% unsocial	£38,232	£39,570	£40,257	£39,111	£40,480	£41,183
		41 hour inc ACH & 20% unsocial	£39,334	£40,710	£41,417	£40,238	£41,646	£42,369
	Outer London	37 hour Base Pay	£32,367	£33,499	£34,080	£33,287	£34,329	£34,864
		39 hour inc ACHP	£34,117	£35,310	£35,922	£35,086	£36,185	£36,748
		37 hour inc 20% unsocial	£38,840	£40,199	£40,896	£39,944	£41,195	£41,837
		38 hour inc ACH & 20% unsocial	£40,065	£41,466	£42,186	£41,204	£42,494	£43,156
		39 hour inc ACHP & 20% unsocial	£40,940	£42,372	£43,107	£42,103	£43,421	£44,098
		39 hour inc ACH & 20% unsocial	£41,290	£42,734	£43,475	£42,463	£43,793	£44,475
		40 hour inc ACH & 20% unsocial	£42,514	£44,001	£44,765	£43,723	£45,092	£45,794
		41 hour inc ACH & 20% unsocial	£43,739	£45,269	£46,054	£44,982	£46,390	£47,113
	Inner London	37 hour Base Pay	£34,063	£35,254	£35,866	£35,114	£36,156	£36,691
		39 hour inc ACHP	£35,904	£37,160	£37,805	£37,012	£38,110	£38,674
		37 hour inc 20% unsocial	£40,876	£42,305	£43,039	£42,137	£43,387	£44,029
		38 hour inc ACH & 20% unsocial	£42,164	£43,639	£44,396	£43,465	£44,755	£45,418
		39 hour inc ACHP & 20% unsocial	£43,085	£44,592	£45,366	£44,414	£45,732	£46,409
		39 hour inc ACH & 20% unsocial	£43,453	£44,973	£45,753	£44,794	£46,123	£46,806
		40 hour inc ACH & 20% unsocial	£44,742	£46,307	£47,110	£46,123	£47,491	£48,194
		41 hour inc ACH & 20% unsocial	£46,031	£47,641	£48,468	£47,451	£48,859	£49,582

F&S Band pay ranges 2026/27 and proposed 2027/28

BAND 4			Pay Effective 1 April 2026			Pay Effective 1 April 2027		
			Pay Points / Range: 01 Apr 26 - 31 Mar 27			Pay Points / Range: 01 Apr 27 - 31 Mar 28		
BAND 4	National	37 Hour Base Pay	Spot			Spot		
		39 hour inc ACHP	£34,440			£35,232		
		37 hour inc 20% Unsocial	£36,302			£37,136		
		39 hour inc ACHP and 20% Unsocial	£41,328			£42,278		
	Outer London	37 Hour base pay	£43,562			£44,564		
		39 hour inc ACHP	£37,872			£38,743		
		37 hour inc 20% Unsocial	£39,919			£40,837		
		39 hour inc ACHP and 20% Unsocial	£45,446			£46,492		
	Inner London	37 Hour base pay	£47,903			£49,005		
		39 hour inc ACHP	£39,658			£40,570		
		37 hour inc 20% Unsocial	£41,802			£42,763		
		39 hour inc ACHP and 20% Unsocial	£47,590			£48,684		
			£50,162			£51,316		
			1	2	3			
BAND 5	National	37 Hour Base Pay	£37,417	£38,305	£39,214	£38,278	£39,186	£40,116
		39 hour inc ACHP	£39,440	£40,376	£41,334	£40,347	£41,304	£42,284
		37 hour inc 20% Unsocial	£44,900	£45,966	£47,057	£45,934	£47,023	£48,139
		39 hour inc ACHP and 20% Unsocial	£47,327	£48,451	£49,600	£48,416	£49,565	£50,741
	Outer London	37 Hour base pay	£40,693	£41,658	£42,646	£41,789	£42,697	£43,627
		39 hour inc ACHP	£42,893	£43,910	£44,951	£44,048	£45,005	£45,985
		37 hour inc 20% Unsocial	£48,832	£49,990	£51,175	£50,147	£51,236	£52,352
		39 hour inc ACHP and 20% Unsocial	£51,471	£52,692	£53,941	£52,857	£54,006	£55,182
	Inner London	37 Hour base pay	£42,397	£43,403	£44,432	£43,616	£44,524	£45,454
		39 hour inc ACHP	£44,689	£45,749	£46,834	£45,794	£46,931	£47,911
		37 hour inc 20% Unsocial	£50,876	£52,084	£53,318	£52,339	£53,429	£54,545
		39 hour inc ACHP and 20% Unsocial	£53,626	£54,899	£56,200	£55,168	£56,317	£57,493

F&S Band pay ranges 2026/27 and proposed 2027/28

			Pay Effective 1 April 2026		Pay Effective 1 April 2027	
			Pay Range: 01 Apr 26 - 31 Mar 27		Pay Range: 01 Apr 27 - 31 Mar 28	
			Minimum	Maximum	Minimum	Maximum
BAND 6	National	37 hour base pay	£41,197	£45,316	£42,145	£46,359
		37 hour inc RHA	£49,436	£54,379	£50,574	£55,631
	Outer London	37 hour base pay	£44,629	£48,748	£45,656	£49,870
		37 hour inc RHA	£53,555	£58,498	£54,787	£59,844
	Inner London	37 hour base pay	£46,415	£50,534	£47,483	£51,697
		37 hour inc RHA	£55,698	£60,641	£56,980	£62,036
BAND 7	National	37 hour base pay		Spot		Spot
		37 hour inc RHA		£54,148		£55,394
				£64,978		£66,473
	Outer London	37 hour base pay		£57,580		£58,905
		37 hour inc RHA		£69,096		£70,686
	Inner London	37 hour base pay		£59,366		£60,372
		37 hour inc RHA		£71,239		£72,878
			Minimum	Maximum	Minimum	Maximum
BAND 8	National	37 hour base pay	£57,398	£63,139	£58,719	£64,592
		37 hour inc RHA	£68,878	£75,767	£70,463	£77,510
	Outer London	37 hour base pay	£60,518	£66,571	£62,230	£68,103
		37 hour inc RHA	£72,622	£79,885	£74,676	£81,724
	Inner London	37 hour base pay	£62,142	£68,357	£64,057	£69,930
		37 hour inc RHA	£74,570	£82,028	£76,868	£83,916

F&S Band pay ranges 2026/27 and proposed 2027/28

			Pay Effective 1 April 2026		Pay Effective 1 April 2027	
			Pay Range: 01 Apr 26 - 31 Mar 27		Pay Range: 01 Apr 27 - 31 Mar 28	
			Minimum	Maximum	Minimum	Maximum
BAND 9	National	37 hour base pay	£73,513	£80,864	£75,204	£82,724
		37 hour inc RHA	£88,216	£97,037	£90,245	£99,269
	Outer London	37 hour base pay	£76,634	£84,296	£78,715	£86,235
		37 hour inc RHA	£91,961	£101,155	£94,458	£103,482
	Inner London	37 hour base pay	£78,257	£86,082	£80,542	£88,062
		37 hour inc RHA	£93,908	£103,298	£96,650	£105,674
BAND 10	National	37 hour base pay	£81,338	£89,472	£83,209	£91,530
		37 hour inc RHA	£97,606	£107,366	£99,851	£109,836
	Outer London	37 hour base pay	£84,458	£92,904	£86,720	£95,041
		37 hour inc RHA	£101,350	£111,485	£104,064	£114,049
	Inner London	37 hour base pay	£86,082	£94,690	£88,547	£96,868
		37 hour inc RHA	£103,298	£113,628	£106,256	£116,242
BAND 11	National	37 hour base pay	£91,540	£100,694	£93,646	£103,010
		37 hour inc RHA	£109,848	£120,833	£112,375	£123,612
	Outer London	37 hour base pay	£94,660	£104,126	£97,157	£106,521
		37 hour inc RHA	£113,592	£124,951	£116,588	£127,825
	Inner London	37 hour base pay	£96,284	£105,912	£98,984	£108,348
		37 hour inc RHA	£115,541	£127,094	£118,781	£130,018
BAND 12			Spot		Spot	
	National	37 hour base pay inc RHA	£125,902		£128,798	
	Outer London	37 hour base pay inc RHA	£129,334		£132,309	
	Inner London	37 hour base pay inc RHA	£131,120		£134,136	

Closed Uniformed Grades pay scales 2026/27 and proposed 2027/28²

Grade	Pay Point	2026	2027
Principal Officer	Single Rate	£38,087	£38,087
Senior Officer	Single Rate	£35,429	£35,429

Grade	Pay Point	2026	2027 ³
Prison Officer	Single Rate	£32,915	£32,915
OSG	Single Rate	£25,875	£25,875

² All Closed Grade staff are now at maximum.

³ 2027 figure for OSG is subject to any increase to the 2027 National Living Wage.

Closed Operational Phase One Manager pay scales 2026/27 and proposed 2027/28⁴

Effective From	Including RHA			Excluding RHA	
	01-Apr-26	01-Apr-27		01-Apr-26	01-Apr-27
Senior Manager A	£94,896	£94,896	Senior Manager D	£70,003	£70,003
Senior Manager B	£92,110	£92,110	From 23 July 2009		
Senior Manager C	£82,953	£82,953	Manager E	£52,691	£52,691
Senior Manager D	£76,209	£76,209	Manager F	£44,697	£44,697
Senior Manager D	£70,003 *	£70,003 *	Manager G	£36,794	£36,794
(Inc RHA closed 22 July 2009)			RHA	£6,206	£6,206

* The 2009 maximum value on the all-inclusive RHA Senior Manager D pay scale was retained as an additional pay point. This is the maximum available for those individuals in non-qualifying roles who chose to remain on this closed scale.

⁴ All Closed Grade staff are now at maximum

Annex D: Prison Officer Recruitment Process

Prison Officer/YJW Recruitment Process

