



Prison Service
Pay Review Body

Prison Service Pay Review Body

Twenty-Fourth Report on
England and Wales 2025

Chair: Tim Flesher CB



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On

England and Wales

2025

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**Presented to Parliament by the
Prime Minister and the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice
by Command of His Majesty
May 2025**



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Prison Service Pay Review Body

Standing terms of reference

The role of the Prison Service Pay Review Body is to provide independent advice on the remuneration of governing governors and operational managers, prison officers and support grades in the England and Wales Prison Service. The Review Body will also provide independent advice on the remuneration of prison governors, prison officers and support grades in the Northern Ireland Prison Service.

In reaching its recommendations the Review Body is to take into account the following:

- The need to recruit, retain and motivate suitably able and qualified staff taking into account the specific needs of the Prison Service in England and Wales and the Northern Ireland Prison Service;
- Regional/local variations in labour markets and their effects on the recruitment and retention of staff;
- Relevant legal obligations on the Prison Service in England and Wales and the Northern Ireland Prison Service, including anti-discrimination legislation regarding age, gender, race, sexual orientation, religion and belief and disability;
- Government policies for improving the public services, including the requirement to meet Prison Service output targets for the delivery of services;
- The funds available to the Prison Service in England and Wales and the Northern Ireland Prison Service as set out in the Government's departmental expenditure limits; and
- The Government's inflation target.

The Review Body shall also take account of the competitiveness of the Prison Service in England and Wales with the private sector, and any differences in terms and conditions of employment between the public and private sectors taking account of the broad employment package including relative job security.

The Review Body may also be asked to consider other specific issues.

The Review Body is also required to take careful account of the economic and other evidence submitted by the Government, staff and professional representatives and others.

Reports and recommendations for the Prison Service in England and Wales should be submitted to the Prime Minister and the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice. Reports and recommendations for the Northern Ireland Prison Service will be submitted to the Minister of Justice, Northern Ireland.

The members of the Prison Service Pay Review Body (PSPRB) are:

Tim Flesher CB (*Chair*)

Mary Carter

Luke Corkill

Nigel Cotgrove

Peter Dawson

Judith Gillespie CBE

Roy Grant

Raj Jethwa

Ken Mayhew

The secretariat is provided by the Office for the Pay Review Bodies.

The International Labour Organization 336th Report of the Committee on Freedom of Association

The POAⁱ took a complaint to the International Labour Organization (ILO) in August 2004, alleging that legislation deprived Prison Officers of the right to take industrial action and that they did not enjoy adequate compensation guarantees to protect their interests in the absence of the right to strike. In its 336th Report of the Committee on Freedom of Association (March 2005) the ILO noted that the POA saw the PSPRB as an inadequate compensatory mechanism because it had no powers to make binding recommendations, only to report and recommend, and there was no duty on the Minister to implement the award promptly or at all.

The Government stated that the establishment of the PSPRB in England and Wales, and Northern Ireland was inextricably linked to the introduction of voluntary agreements in that the Prison Service gave up the right to set pay increases in exchange for the POA's agreement not to organise industrial action. The Government stated that recommendations of the PSPRB are not binding in law, but in practice they would only be departed from in exceptional circumstances and are complied with in practice.

The Committee recommended that the Government continued to ensure that the awards of the PSPRB are binding on the parties and may be departed from only in exceptional circumstances.

ⁱ The Professional Trade Union for Prison, Correctional and Public and Private Mental Health Trust Service Providers.

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Glossary of terms

| | |
|----------|---|
| ACH | Additional Committed Hours |
| ACHP | Pensionable Additional Committed Hours |
| ASHE | Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings |
| AWDL | Average Working Days Lost |
| Covid-19 | Coronavirus |
| CPI | Consumer Prices Index |
| CPIH | Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs |
| CPO | Custody Prison Officer (Northern Ireland) |
| EEI | Employee Engagement Index |
| FTE | Full-time equivalent |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| HMIP | His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons |
| HMP | His Majesty's Prison |
| HMPPS | His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (or the Prison Service) |
| HMPS | His Majesty's Prison Service |
| HMT | His Majesty's Treasury |
| IDR | Incomes Data Research |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| JES | Job Evaluation Scheme |
| LFS | Labour Force Survey |
| LPA | Locality Pay Allowance |
| MoJ | Ministry of Justice |
| NDTSG | National Dog and Technical Support Group |
| NHS | National Health Service |
| NIPS | Northern Ireland Prison Service |
| NLW | National Living Wage |
| NTRG | National Tactical Response Group |
| OBR | Office for Budget Responsibility |
| ONS | Office for National Statistics |
| OPRB | Office for the Pay Review Bodies |
| ORRU | Operational Response and Resilience Unit |
| OSG | Operational Support Grade |
| PCS | Public and Commercial Services Union |
| PEI | Physical Education Instructor |
| PGA | Prison Governors' Association |
| POA | The Professional Trades Union for Prison, Correctional and Public and Private Mental Health Service Providers |
| PSPRB | Prison Service Pay Review Body |
| RHA | Required Hours Addition/Allowance |
| SANEO | Shaping a New Employee Offer |
| SPS | Scottish Prison Service |
| SRA | Supplementary Risk Allowance (Northern Ireland) |

| | |
|------|--|
| TOIL | Time off in lieu |
| TUPE | Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 |
| UWH | Unsocial Working Hours allowance |
| YCS | Youth Custody Service |
| YOI | Young Offender Institution |

His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service in England and Wales and our remit group

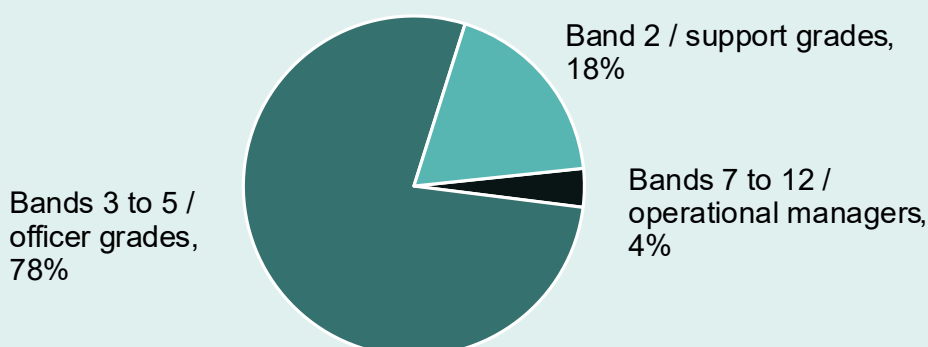
His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is responsible for adult and young offender management services for England and Wales within the framework set by the Government. It is an Executive Agency of the Ministry of Justice. The agency currently manages His Majesty's Prison Service and the Probation Service. In addition, it oversees privately run prisons and services such as the prisoner escort service and electronic tagging. Its role is to commission and provide offender management services in the community and in custody, ensuring best value for money from public resources. It works to protect the public and reduce reoffending by delivering the sentences and orders of the courts and supporting rehabilitation by helping offenders to reform their lives.

At 17 March 2025, the prison population across the public and private sector was 87,556, a 0.6% decrease from the previous year.ⁱⁱ

HMPPS's paybill costs relating to the remit group were approximately £1.54 billion for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 (including employer National Insurance and pension costs).

At the end of September 2024 there were 30,272 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff in our remit group, a 2.3% increase from the previous year. The composition is below.

Our remit group (FTE staff) in England and Wales, at 30 September 2024ⁱⁱⁱ



| Grade | FTE staff | % of remit |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Bands 7 to 12 / operational managers | 1,109 | 4% |
| Bands 3 to 5 / officer grades | 23,571 | 78% |
| Band 2 / support grades | 5,592 | 18% |

ⁱⁱ MoJ, (2025). *Prison population: weekly estate figures 2025. Population bulletin: weekly 17 March 2025.* (online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prison-population-weekly-estate-figures-2025> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

ⁱⁱⁱ OPRB analysis of unpublished HMPPS data.

Prison Service Pay Review Body 2025 report on England and Wales

Executive Summary

This report sets out our recommendations on pay and allowances for operational prison staff. Our recommendations for 2025 are:

Recommendation 1: We recommend that from 1 April 2025, the Fair and Sustainable National Bands 3 to 12 base pay points and spot rates are increased by 4%, as set out in Appendix D. This award to be consolidated and pensionable.

Recommendation 2: We recommend that from 1 April 2025 the Fair and Sustainable National Band 2 base pay spot rate be increased by 4% as set out in Appendix D. This should be in addition to the National Living Wage increase that Band 2 staff received on 1 April 2025. This award to be consolidated and pensionable.

Recommendation 3: We recommend that from 1 April 2025, those closed grade staff who would not financially benefit from opting in to their equivalent Fair and Sustainable grade receive a non-consolidated, non-pensionable payment of 4% of base pay.

Recommendation 4: From 1 April 2025, we recommend that that all closed grade pay rates are compliant with the National Living Wage.

Recommendation 5: We recommend that from 1 April 2025 all closed grade staff who choose to opt in this year be moved to the maximum of their respective Fair and Sustainable grade pay range or scale. The opt in process should be expedited to start as close as possible to the publication date of this report.

Recommendation 6: We recommend that all staff (except those subject to formal poor performance procedures) on Fair and Sustainable Bands 3 and 5 who are in post on 31 March 2025 progress by one pay point, effective from 1 April 2025.

Recommendation 7: We recommend that all staff (except those subject to formal poor performance procedures) on Fair and Sustainable Bands 8 to 11 who are in post on 31 March 2025 receive a consolidated and pensionable progression increase of 3⅓%, capped at the 1 April 2025 band maximum.

Recommendation 8: We recommend that the Band 10 Fair and Sustainable National maximum should increase to ensure there is 10% between the Band 9 and 10 maxima when the Inner and Outer London pay differentials are added.

Recommendation 9: We recommend that from 1 April 2025, the fixed cash pay differentials for the Fair and Sustainable Inner and Outer London zones be increased by 4% and continue to be applied consistently across all bands, positioning maxima at £5,041 and £3,315 respectively above the 37 hour National maxima. We also recommend adjusting minima and intermediate points so that progression steps are the same percentage as on the National bands. The increases to be consolidated and pensionable.

Recommendation 10: We recommend that from 1 April 2025 the Operational Response and Resilience Unit on-call allowance be increased from £6,670 to £8,000 a year.

Recommendation 11: We recommend that from 1 April 2025 the Unsocial Working Hours payment for Fair and Sustainable Band 2 Operational Support Grades be temporarily increased from 20% to 25% of base pay for all contracted hours. Subject to review in our next report on the basis of the evidence we are expecting to receive on scheduled unsocial hours working by Operational Support Grades, this increase to be in effect for two years, until our next full review of unsocial hours payments for all grades in our 2027 Report.

Recommendation 12: We recommend from 1 April 2025 the introduction, on a temporary, two-year basis, of a non-consolidated and non-pensionable payment of £1,500 a year for qualified Physical Education Instructors, working in a recognised Physical Education Instructor role. We will review this payment in our 2027 Report.

Recommendation 13: We recommend that from 1 April 2025, the Care and Maintenance of Dogs allowance be increased by 4% to £2,845 a year to those with responsibility for a single dog. We further recommend that the rate for multiple dogs is set at 25% above the single dog allowance rate.

Introduction

- i. The Prison Service plays a critical role in keeping communities safe and, in undertaking this important work, operational staff have continued to face significant challenges, particularly regarding prison population pressures and rising levels of violence. While on balance a more positive staffing picture is gradually emerging for our remit group, we still have concerns over recruitment and retention in general as well as in some specific areas. We believe the recommendations in this report will contribute to improving staff retention, particularly for more experienced staff, while consolidating progress made in recent years.

2025 headline pay award

- ii. Our headline pay recommendation is for an **increase of 4%**. The main factors driving this recommendation are:
 - Although data may indicate the promise of an improvement in the staffing situation, there are still significant issues. Retention in particular remains fragile, with considerable numbers leaving the Service within their first two years of joining;
 - Staff morale at all levels is, at best, mixed;
 - His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) continues to use market supplements at some sites and in recent years the Service has had to use significant numbers of staff on costly detached duty to ensure that establishments are able to function. Expenditure on Payment Plus also remains at a high level;

- We want, as a minimum, to maintain the relative market position of all staff in our remit group;
 - All staff have faced high cost of living pressures in recent years;
 - Our need to balance the aim of maintaining progress in the pay of our remit group with the constraints of affordability in difficult economic circumstances; and
 - Unlike the remit groups for most other Pay Review Bodies and the labour market more widely, the majority of our remit group cannot take industrial action.
- iii. In our 2024 Report, we noted that recruitment and retention for Band 2 was a particular problem and this remains the case. Given their key responsibilities and the critical role they play in the safe and effective running of prisons, we again recommend that the increase for Band 2 staff should be applied after the National Living Wage (NLW) increase.

Closed grades

- iv. At the time of writing, some 98% of our remit group were on the Fair and Sustainable pay structure. Our recommendation should mean that all but a handful of the remaining closed grade staff would be able to benefit financially from opting in to Fair and Sustainable. For the increasingly small group of staff who would not benefit financially from opting in, we continue with our previous approach and recommend a non-consolidated payment of 4% of base pay.

Pay progression

- v. We make recommendations on progression for staff in Fair and Sustainable Bands 3 and 5 and 8 to 11 as they do not have contractual pay progression. We recommend one pay point progression for staff in Bands 3 and 5 and a progression increase of 3⅓% for staff moving through Bands 8 to 11 who are not subject to formal poor performance procedures. This is in line with HMPPS's objective that sees staff progress to the maximum within three years as they become fully competent in that grade.

Locality pay

- vi. As in previous years, we make no recommendations on the legacy Local Pay Allowance rates and we conclude that the Inner and Outer London cash differentials should be increased by the headline award as in previous years. The only exception to this is our recommendation that the Band 10 Fair and Sustainable National maximum should increase to ensure there is 10% between the Band 9 and 10 maxima when the Inner and Outer London pay differentials are added.

Allowances and payments

- vii. For this report, we committed to considering the Operational Response and Resilience Unit (ORRU) on-call allowance as part of our rolling review of allowances. We also considered Payment Plus, Operational Support Grade (OSG) overtime and Unsocial Working Hours (UWH) for Band 2 following postponement of these issues in earlier years.
- viii. We heard from staff that workloads across the ORRU had grown substantially in recent years, due to the significant increase in the number of call-outs to

establishments. This has an increasingly disruptive and restrictive impact on officers' lives and on their families. After reflecting on all of the evidence from HMPPS, the POA and our visits, we recommend that the **ORRU on-call allowance** should be increased to £8,000 a year.

- ix. We note that the rate of **Payment Plus** has not been changed since 2016 and so its real value has been eroded. The rate also appears relatively low against other comparators. However, HMPPS has undertaken to bring forward proposals on this issue for our 2026 Report. Therefore, we have decided that we will not make a recommendation on Payment Plus this year.
- x. We are mindful that HMPPS asked us not to make a recommendation to increase the rate of **unsocial hours payments**. However, we consider that the available evidence supports an uplift of the rate of UWH for Band 2 staff to 25%. We have consistently heard and been provided with evidence that OSG staff are working significantly more than 20% to 30% of their hours unsocially. Our recommendation is for a temporary uplift, for two years from 1 April 2025. We will, however, keep this under review and will reassess in our 2026 Report, when we expect to have received the evidence that HMPPS promised to provide on the unsocial hours worked by Band 2 OSG staff. We will review unsocial hours payments for the whole remit group in two years' time, in our 2027 Report, as scheduled under our rolling review of allowances.
- xi. In our 2024 Report, we noted that we had received written and oral evidence on the difficulties HMPPS was having with the recruitment and retention of Band 4 Physical Education Instructors (PEIs). While we do not think it is appropriate to recommend blanket payments for all staff who undertake additional or specialist duties, we consider that compelling evidence in relation to the recruitment and retention of PEIs was provided by the POA and this was supported by what we heard on our visits. In the absence of evidence from HMPPS that the issue is being resolved without any additional payments, we have therefore decided to recommend a temporary recruitment and retention payment for PEIs.

Cost of our recommendations

- xii. We estimate that our recommendations will result in an increase of approximately £73 million to the total paybill for our remit group, excluding pay progression and the statutory requirement to pay the NLW. This equates to around 1% of HMPPS's £6.9 billion annual budget for operating expenditure as of 2023-24. This estimate does not include the cost of closed grade staff opting in to Fair and Sustainable, because we cannot know precisely which staff on other pay/allowance arrangements would financially benefit from opting in.

Looking ahead

- xiii. We welcome the earlier remit letter and submission of evidence this year, allowing us to submit our 2025 Report in mid-April, eight weeks earlier than last year. We hope that we can get the round fully back on track for our 2026 Report so that our remit group will receive their pay award on time in 2026.

Conclusion

- xiv. A professional and committed workforce is vital to the long-term resolution of the current crisis in prisons and we hope that the Government will regard this as an equal priority to the issue of managing demand and supply in the prison estate.

Having seen a number of measures introduced to alleviate pressures in the short-term, we look forward to seeing more sustainable solutions for the longer-term.

Tim Flesher CB (*Chair*)

Mary Carter

Luke Corkill

Nigel Cotgrove

Peter Dawson

Judith Gillespie CBE

Roy Grant

Raj Jethwa

Ken Mayhew

9 April 2025

Chapter 1: Introduction

Our role

- 1.1 The Prison Service Pay Review Body (PSPRB) was established under statute¹ in 2001, with a remit to examine and report on matters relating to the rates of pay and allowances to be applied in the public sector prison services in England and Wales and in Northern Ireland. The staff in our remit group perform an extremely important and sometimes dangerous role.
- 1.2 The PSPRB was created as a compensatory mechanism for our remit group's loss of the right to take industrial action of any form. This was outlined in the 336th report² (2005) of the International Labour Organization (ILO), in which the Government gave a clear and unequivocal commitment only to depart from our recommendations in "exceptional circumstances" and agreed that our recommendations would be complied with in practice.
- 1.3 As we have noted in our previous reports, Ministers of State for Justice have routinely reaffirmed the Government's pledge to the ILO in oral evidence to us. This places a particular responsibility on the PSPRB, and it is one that we take very seriously when formulating our recommendations. We therefore expect the remit group to receive a full explanation of the "exceptional circumstances" involved should the Government reject any of our recommendations.
- 1.4 We have standing terms of reference which outline that we should provide independent advice based on the relevant evidence available to us. We have taken account of these terms of reference in making our recommendations to Government, including:
 - Recruitment and retention factors. For example, whether the Prison Service can recruit and retain the numbers of suitably able staff that it requires;
 - Remit group morale;
 - Labour market issues, including regional and local data, and their effects on recruitment and retention;
 - The legal obligations placed on the Prison Service, including anti-discrimination legislation;
 - Affordability of our proposals and the funds available to the Prison Service;
 - The Government's inflation target;
 - The competitiveness of the Prison Service with the private sector, taking account of differences in terms and conditions and the broader employment package; and

¹ The Prison Service (Pay Review Body) Regulations 2001 (SI 2001 No. 1161). (online) Available at: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2001/1161/pdfs/ukxi_20011161_en.pdf [accessed on 3 April 2025]. The PSPRB covers England and Wales, and Northern Ireland; the Scottish Prison Service is outside our remit.

² The ILO, (2005). *336th Report of the Committee on Freedom of Association*. (online) Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/P/09604/09604\(2005-88-series-B\).pdf](https://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/P/09604/09604(2005-88-series-B).pdf) [accessed on 3 April 2025].

- The economic and other evidence submitted by the Government, trade unions, staff, professional associations, and others.

Outcome of our last report

- 1.5 In our 2024 Report for England and Wales, we recommended a 5% increase for Fair and Sustainable Bands 2 to 5 and 7 to 12 (for Band 2 this was in addition to the increase to the National Living Wage). As in our 2023 Report, we again chose not to recommend a pay award for those closed grade staff who would financially benefit from opting in to their equivalent Fair and Sustainable grade. We did however recommend that those closed grades who would not financially benefit from opting in were paid a non-consolidated award of 5% of base pay. We also made recommendations covering: pay progression; shortening of pay ranges for Bands 8 to 11; increases to several allowances – Care and Maintenance of Dogs allowance, Operation Tornado payments and dirty protest payments (the latter two as part of our rolling review of allowances). We also made additional evidence and data requests which we deemed necessary to perform our function.
- 1.6 We submitted our report on 6 June 2024 and the Government accepted all of our recommendations in full, confirming this by Written Ministerial Statement³ in Parliament on 29 July 2024. The recommendations were backdated to 1 April 2024 following implementation in autumn 2024.

Our remit this year

- 1.7 Following the July 2024 General Election, the new Government outlined its position on public sector pay as part of its 2024 Autumn Budget.⁴ The Government stated that it was committed to delivering fair and timely pay awards for public sector workforces in 2025-26 although, over the medium term, above inflation pay awards were only affordable if funded from improved productivity. The Budget further noted that the Government expected inflation, as forecast by the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) to be 2.6% in 2025. In His Majesty's Treasury's (HMT) economic evidence⁵ to all eight public sector Pay Review Bodies in December 2024, it noted that the spending envelope for departmental budgets for 2025-26 had been fixed and the Government was committed to living within this spending envelope. Reiterating that pay awards needed to be affordable within departmental budgets, the Government stated that it would not be providing departments with additional funding for 2025-26 pay awards should recommendations exceed what it considered to be affordable.
- 1.8 On 30 September 2024, we were asked to commence our work for the 2025-26 pay round following correspondence from Lord Timpson, Minister of State for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending. The letter (transcript at Appendix A) contained no restrictions but drew our attention to the Government's objective of providing mission led public services that are equipped to deliver vital, high-quality services efficiently, whilst ensuring value for money for taxpayers. The letter also noted the

³ UK Parliament, (2024). *Prison Workforce and Judiciary Update. Statement made on 29 July 2024.* (online) Available at: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2024-07-29/hcws38> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

⁴ HMT, (2024). *Autumn Budget 2024.* (online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/autumn-budget-2024> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

⁵ HMT, (2024). *Economic Evidence to the Pay Review Bodies: 2025-26 Pay Round.* (online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/economic-evidence-to-the-pay-review-bodies-2025-26-pay-round> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

funds available to the Ministry of Justice and the challenging financial position the Government faced. Our response confirming our timetable for submission of this report is at Appendix B.

Our timetable

- 1.9 A perennial source of irritation both for us and for our remit group has been the late running of the timetable for our reports since 2016. This has resulted in the unacceptable consequence of staff receiving their pay awards well after the 1 April implementation date and has been a frequent issue raised on our visits. Therefore, we welcome the commitment of the new Government and the Minister to rectify this issue, with the aim that our timetable would be fully reset for the 2026-27 pay round. We were therefore pleased to receive the Government's written evidence to us on 10 December 2024, some two and a half months earlier than for last year's 2024 Report. Whilst this will not yet allow us to report in time for staff to receive their pay award in April 2025, we hope decisions are taken earlier to allow staff to be paid before September as has recently been the case. Additionally, we would like the evidence for the 2026-27 pay round to arrive in time for us to make our recommendations early enough for staff to be paid their award in April when it is due.

Our evidence base

- 1.10 All the parties representing staff in our remit group were invited to submit evidence following receipt of the Minister's activation letter, and we received written submissions from them all. We also heard representations in oral evidence from:
- Lord Timpson, the Minister of State for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending, and His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) officials led by its Director General Operations, Phil Copple;
 - The POA, represented by Mark Fairhurst, National Chair, Steve Gillan, General Secretary and Dave Todd, Vice National Chair;
 - The Prison Governors' Association (PGA), led by Tom Wheatley, PGA President, Carl Davies and Mark Icke, PGA Vice Presidents; and
 - The Public and Commercial Services (PCS) Union, represented by Susan Webb and Nigel Wharrier, PCS HMPPS Joint Branch Vice Chairs and Sheila Pevely, PCS Full-Time Officer.
- 1.11 Each year we base our recommendations on evidence from a range of sources. These include:
- Written and oral evidence from the parties (as above);
 - Economic data from a number of sources, including the Office for National Statistics, HMT and the OBR;
 - Statistical data provided by HMPPS on the composition of our remit group and its pay, which we shared with all the parties, along with publicly available data published on its website;
 - Annually updated pay comparability data based on the methodology of a 2019 report commissioned from Incomes Data Research;

- The 2024 Civil Service People Survey results for HMPPS along with a departmental readout for the Prison Service;
- Information gathered during our 2024 prison visits (see below);
- Information on recruitment and retention from HMPPS; and
- His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) inspection reports and the HMIP 2023-24 Annual Report.

Visits

- 1.12 Through September to November 2024, we visited seven public sector prisons, one private sector prison and the Operational Response and Resilience Unit based in Kidlington (the full list is at Appendix C). These visits gave us a valuable opportunity to meet the remit group in a number of different locations and at all grades. We heard key themes relating to: reaction to the main pay award for each of the different grade groups; the impact of the cost of living increases over the last two to three years; challenges around recruitment and retention, particularly the latter at certain sites and at Bands 2 and 3; the mixed picture around morale and motivation; and feedback on those allowances we are considering this year as part of our rolling review. A summary of the main points from our discussions with staff can be found in Chapter 3.
- 1.13 Engaging with staff in their working environment is an important part of our annual visit process which allows us direct access to those most affected by our recommendations. This helps us to better understand the challenges which staff face and the concerns that they may have. We use our visits in part as a way of testing the evidence that is provided to us by the parties, and in part to hear at first-hand about those issues that concern staff most. We would like to thank all those staff who worked hard to make the practical arrangements for our visits and the staff who volunteered to speak to us, some of whom did so in their own, off-duty time.

Our 2025 Report

- 1.14 This year we have made some format changes to Chapters 2 and 3. In Chapter 2 we look at the context and environmental evidence, along with staffing data, and in Chapter 3 we cover the parties' submissions and proposals. Our analysis of the evidence and 2025 recommendations remain in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5 we comment on those areas to which we think the parties should give greatest attention for our 2026 Report, along with a number of additional information and data requests.

Chapter 2: Context and evidence

Introduction

- 2.1 This chapter sets out the context for our recommendations and the evidence that underpins them. It provides information on the economic situation and the composition of our remit group, together with the picture on recruitment, retention, morale and motivation, which are fundamental to inform our deliberations.

Context

Current policy/operations

- 2.2 Since our last report, the Prison Service and our remit group have continued to face significant challenges, particularly regarding prison population pressures. We were told that between February 2023 and September 2024, the adult male prison estate operated at over 99% of capacity, bringing the criminal justice system dangerously close to being unable to accommodate people judged by the courts to require incarceration in summer 2024. A number of schemes were introduced to try to manage the situation, many of which increased the burdens on prison staff. While some measures, such as changing the automatic release point for some offenders from 50% to 40% of sentence, eased pressure in the short-term allowing the prison estate to continue operating, they offer only a partial solution and the Government believes that further measures will be needed in the medium term before the outcomes of the sentencing review can be implemented. These measures include changes to the recall mechanism, extension of home detention curfew and accelerating removals of foreign national offenders. His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is also continuing with its prison build programme which should see HMP Millsike, opposite HMP Full Sutton, become operational for around 1,500 adult male prisoners in spring 2025, along with a number of new houseblocks and quick build units at existing prisons.
- 2.3 The Independent Sentencing Review was launched in October 2024, tasked with undertaking a comprehensive re-evaluation of the sentencing framework.⁶ In launching the review's call for evidence,⁷ the Chair, The Rt Hon David Gauke, noted that the prison population in England and Wales had doubled over the last 30 years and was projected to continue to rise by four and a half thousand offenders a year. Supply of new prison places had not kept up with the increase in demand. The review is expected to submit its final report in spring 2025, although it may take up to a further year for its recommendations to be implemented, particularly if they require legislation. The review published part one of its report on 18 February 2025. This provided an explanation of why and how the prison population has increased in recent decades and is expected to continue to grow. It advocated an approach that is rooted in the principles of sentencing and public service reform, where resources could be more effectively deployed to prevent and reduce crime, reoffending and the number of victims.

⁶ MoJ, (2024). *Independent Sentencing Review 2024 to 2025*. (online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/independent-sentencing-review-2024-to-2025> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

⁷ MoJ, (2024). *Independent Sentencing Review 2024 to 2025: Call for Evidence*. (online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/calls-for-evidence/independent-sentencing-review-2024-to-2025/independent-sentencing-review-2024-to-2025-call-for-evidence> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

Prison population

- 2.4 The prison population across the public and private sector at 30 December 2024,⁸ was 85,618, 1.8% lower than the previous year. On 17 March 2025 it was 87,556, an increase of 2.3%.⁹ The useable operational capacity¹⁰ across the estate in England and Wales at 30 December 2024 was 88,688, 0.3% lower than 12 months earlier.¹¹ The useable operational capacity on 17 March 2025 was 88,771, an increase of 0.1%.¹² This figure is substantially in excess of the prison estate's certified prisoner accommodation. It reflects a requirement on staff to care for more prisoners than prisons are designed to hold. In the 12-months to March 2024, the crowding rate¹³ at establishments across England and Wales was 23.6%, up from 22.9% in the previous 12-month period.¹⁴
- 2.5 Each year, HMPPS publishes five-year prison population projections for England and Wales. The most recent projections for 2024 to 2029¹⁵ show that the prison population is projected to increase to between 95,700 and 105,200 by March 2029. Should HMPPS's upper end projections materialise, then this would see the prison population increase by around 22% between February 2025 and March 2029. HMPPS notes however, there are uncertainties around these projections, notably around the impact of police charging activity. The Government is also considering future sentencing policy and any potential changes to the timing of prisoner release on licence/parole may also result in variation from these projections.
- 2.6 HMPPS data indicate there was an average of 2.90 prisoners per full-time equivalent (FTE) remit group staff member at the end of March 2024, down slightly from 2.94 the previous year. The data also show that there was an average of 4.01 prisoners per full-time equivalent Band 3 to 5 officer, up slightly from 3.79 the previous year.¹⁶ By way of comparison, for the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS), there were approximately 1.42 prisoners per FTE staff member (all staff across establishments) at April 2024. The ratio is 1.65 for NIPS prison-based officers and support grade staff.¹⁷ The Scottish Prison Service (SPS) has an approximate ratio of 1.68 prisoners

⁸ MoJ, (2024). *Prison population: weekly estate figure 2024. Population bulletin: weekly 30 December 2024.* (online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prison-population-figures-2024> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

⁹ MoJ, (2025). *Prison population: weekly estate figures 2025. Population bulletin: weekly 17 March 2025.* (online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prison-population-weekly-estate-figures-2025> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

¹⁰ Useable Operational Capacity of the estate is the sum of all establishments' operational capacity less 2,000 places.

¹¹ MoJ, (2024). *Prison population: weekly estate figure 2024. Population bulletin: weekly 30 December 2024.* (online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prison-population-figures-2024> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

¹² MoJ, (2025). *Prison population: weekly estate figures 2025. Population bulletin: weekly 17 March 2025.* (online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prison-population-weekly-estate-figures-2025> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

¹³ Crowding is measured as the number of prisoners who, on the last day of the month, are held in a cell, room or dormitory where the number of occupants exceeds the baseline certified normal accommodation of the cell, room, or dormitory.

¹⁴ MoJ, (2024). *Official Statistics – HMPPS Annual Digest 2023 to 2024: Prison Crowding.* (online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hmpps-annual-digest-april-2023-to-march-2024/hmpps-annual-digest-2023-to-2024#prison-crowding> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

¹⁵ MoJ, (2024). *Prison Population Projections: 2024 to 2029.* (online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/prison-population-projections-2024-to-2029> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

¹⁶ OPRB analysis of unpublished HMPPS data.

¹⁷ OPRB analysis of unpublished NIPS data.

per FTE across all roles and an estimated ratio of 2.62 prisoners per uniformed FTE.¹⁸

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons Annual Report

- 2.7 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) is an independent inspectorate which scrutinises the conditions for and treatment of prisoners and other detainees. It aims to help to make sure that detention in England and Wales is humane, safe, respectful and helps to prepare people for release. In 2023-24, HMIP published 79 individual reports of inspections, independent review of progress visits and thematic reports.
- 2.8 The 2023-24 Annual Report¹⁹ was published in September 2024 and the Chief Inspector noted that the dominating backdrop was the increase in the prison population and the lack of available space. He said that population pressures had been caused by a substantial increase in the number of remanded prisoners, the length of time it took for cases to come to trial due to backlogs in the court system and the ongoing trend to increase the length of prison sentences. Increases in prisoner numbers affected every part of the estate, with more churn in reception prisons placing staff under huge pressure to keep the regime running. Relationships between officers and prisoners as a result were often transactional and there remained the risk that vulnerable prisoners were not noticed or given adequate support. He also noted that prisoners are still spending too much time locked in their cells and that the lack of meaningful rehabilitation activities being undertaken was in part due to staff shortages.
- 2.9 The Chief Inspector noted that recruitment continued to be a struggle in some parts of the country and that even where there were enough officers, they were often very inexperienced. The number of staff who left within the first two years continued to be worryingly high. He also said that key indicators of how safe prisons were, such as the rates of assaults, self-harm and self-inflicted deaths, all remained high or had increased over the past year, which might have been expected given the levels of overcrowding and shortage of experienced staff.
- 2.10 The Chief Inspector considered that good leadership was central to the success of the best prisons in which governors walked the wings, listened to prisoners and staff, used data effectively, set clear priorities, monitored progress and dealt with poor performance. However, it appeared that they operated within a system that often seemed to work against them. Governors had described the long hours they spent dealing with labyrinthine processes, while frequent demands from the centre for information were another drag on their time. While large sums of money were being spent on building new jails or cells in existing prisons, HMIP's reports consistently found problems with prison infrastructure and an estate that was becoming increasingly dilapidated. The Chief Inspector also expressed concern about the pipeline of new governors, with some of the most challenging prisons getting very few applicants.

¹⁸ Estimated ratios calculated from published figures. SPS, (2024). *SPS Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24 published*. (online) Available at: <https://www.sps.gov.uk/about-us/our-latest-news/sp-s-annual-report-and-accounts-2023-24-published> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

¹⁹ HMIP, (2024). *Annual Report 2023-24*. (online) Available at: <https://hmi-prisons.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmipris-reports/annual-report/> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

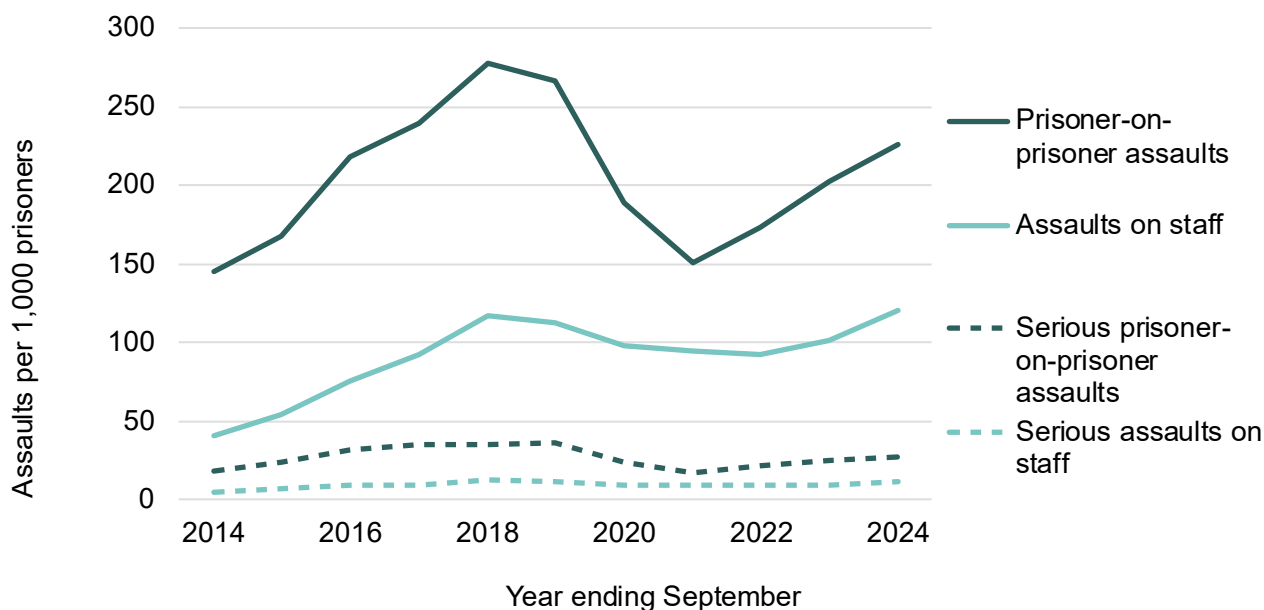
Safety in custody

- 2.11 Prison safety can be affected by capacity, workforce, security and healthcare. Staff in our remit group have to deal with prisoners self-harming, with assaults between prisoners, and on staff by prisoners. While the rate of self-inflicted deaths has remained broadly stable since 2018, both the number and rate of self-harm incidents are at an all-time high. The total number of self-harm incidents reached 77,869 in the 12 months to September 2024. This was 11% higher than the peak in the 12 months to September 2023. However, this figure masks some variation between the male and female estates, with male incidents of self-harm increasing by 14% to a new peak and with female incidents of self-harm decreasing by 2% over the same period.
- 2.12 Of great concern is the increase in assaults over the last year. HMPPS data show that violence had been increasing from 2013, reaching its highest level on record in 2018 when there were 32,736 assault incidents in the 12 months to September 2018, at a rate of 390 incidents per 1,000 prisoners.²⁰ There was then a fall in all reported assault incidents during the Covid-19 pandemic due to locked down regimes, but levels started to increase again from 2021 as regimes normalised, although they have not yet reached those seen in 2018. In the 12 months to September 2024, there were 29,881 assault incidents, an 18% increase from the previous 12 months. Rates of assault increased by 14% to 342 incidents per 1,000 prisoners. There were 10,496 assaults on staff in the 12 months to September 2024, a 23% increase from the previous 12 months, marking a new all-time high. The rate of assaults on staff increased by 19% to 120 incidents per 1,000 prisoners when compared with the previous 12 months (see Figure 2.1).²¹

²⁰ We note that from April 2018 the methodology for collating assault statistics changed to no longer include those establishments within the Youth Custody Service.

²¹ HMPPS, (2025). *Safety in custody: quarterly update to September 2024*. (online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/safety-in-custody-quarterly-update-to-september-2024> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

Figure 2.1: Annual assaults in custody, 12 months to 30 September 2014 to 2024²²



- 2.13 HMPPS has a number of initiatives in place aimed at improving prison safety. These include: the Challenge, Support and Intervention Plan; PAVA and personal training; body worn video cameras; use of force²³ and rigid bar handcuffs; alternatives to wet-shave razors; suicide prevention; other training and staff support; and Offender Management in Custody and key worker scheme.²⁴
- 2.14 The security challenges faced by prison staff are complex with organised crime gangs both inside and outside of the prison estate constantly seeking novel opportunities to exploit structural and human vulnerability, undermine countermeasures and destabilise prisons. Key challenges include: contraband, particularly drugs and mobile phones; serious and organised crime; and the use of drones. Staff have had to respond to an increasing number of incidents, with concerted indiscipline and incidents at height each increasing by at least 50% in the 12 months to March 2024. HMPPS reported that staff shortages and training gaps were a barrier to greater use of security technology and processes being used consistently or effectively. To help improve security, HMPPS has introduced restricted fly zones around all closed prisons and ensured all public sector prisons have trace detection systems.
- 2.15 The POA asserted that the working environment for its members remained the most hostile and violent workplace of anywhere or any other occupation in the world. Officers were going to work in an environment where there are 88 assaults a day across the service, and 28 of those were assaults on staff. It said that against this

²² OPRB analysis of HMPPS data. HMPPS, (2025). *Safety in custody: quarterly update to September 2024*. (online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/safety-in-custody-quarterly-update-to-september-2024> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

²³ A professional standard for use of force has been implemented, which equips staff to make use of interpersonal skills, apply judgement in decision making and use physical restraint techniques when necessary.

²⁴ HMPPS's key worker scheme is based on prison officers managing around five to six prisoners on a one-to-one basis with weekly support aimed at rehabilitation.

operational backdrop and increasing levels of self-harm and overcrowding, staff were striving to deliver the best service possible for those in their care.

- 2.16 The evidence points to a particularly challenging combination of significantly overcrowded prisons, a lack of meaningful engagement with prisoners due to staff shortages, a lack of training in and consistent use of existing security technology, a significant rise in violence and an inexperienced frontline staff cadre.

Economic context

- 2.17 Our deliberations and recommendations are informed by the latest available data on key economic indicators including inflation, economic activity and employment. In its October 2024 Economic and Fiscal Outlook,²⁵ the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) reported that real household disposable income grew by 2.0% in 2023-24. This followed a fall of 2.1% in 2022-23 – the largest year-on-year drop since records began in 1956-57, demonstrating the volatility of the economic context. The OBR expected real household disposable income to continue its rebound and grow on average by 0.6% a year over the six-year forecast period. We note that, since the publication of the OBR's October 2024 forecast, upon which the Treasury based its evidence, the monthly outturns of several critical indicators have been less favourable than anticipated. This was reflected in the OBR's March 2025 outlook²⁶ which included forecasts of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) annual growth in 2025 of 1.0% (rather than 2.0%), Consumer Prices Index (CPI) inflation of 3.2% (instead of 2.6%) and average earnings growth of 4.3% (instead of 3.6%).

Economic activity

- 2.18 UK monthly GDP was estimated to have fallen by 0.1% in January 2025, following growth of 0.4% in December 2024 and 0.1% in November 2024.²⁷ In October 2024, the OBR forecast GDP growth to pick up from close to zero in 2023, to 1.1% in 2024, 2.0% in 2025, and 1.8% in 2026, before falling back to around 1.5% thereafter. In March 2025 the OBR updated its forecast, with GDP growth forecast to be 1.0% in 2025, 1.9% in 2026 and 1.8% in 2027.

Inflation

- 2.19 The annual change in the CPI rate was 2.8% in February 2025, down from 3.0% in January 2025 and from 3.4% in February 2024.²⁸ The CPI including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH) rose by 3.7% in the 12 months to February 2025. In its October forecast, the OBR expected CPI inflation to pick up to an average of 2.6% in 2025, peaking at 2.7% in the second and third quarters. This would be driven by higher gas and electricity prices, the effect of policies announced in the Budget, and the effect of a small positive output gap on domestically generated inflation. CPI inflation was then expected to gradually fall back to the 2.0% target in 2029 as the positive output gap closed and energy price growth normalised. In

²⁵ OBR, (2024). *Economic and fiscal outlook – October 2024*. (online) Available at: <https://obr.uk/efo/economic-and-fiscal-outlook-october-2024/> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

²⁶ OBR, (2025). *Economic and fiscal outlook – March 2025*. (online) Available at: <https://obr.uk/efo/economic-and-fiscal-outlook-march-2025/> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

²⁷ ONS, (2025). *GDP monthly estimate, UK: January 2025*. (online) Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp/bulletins/gdpmonthlyestimateuk/january2025> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

²⁸ ONS, (2025). *Consumer price inflation, UK: February 2025*. (online) Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/consumerpriceinflation/february2025> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

March 2025, the OBR updated its forecast, with CPI inflation expected to average 3.2% in 2025, peaking at 3.7% in the third quarter.

Employment and earnings

- 2.20 The UK unemployment rate was estimated at 4.4% in the three months to January 2025, up from 4.1% a year earlier.²⁹ The level of unemployment was estimated to have increased by 132,000 over the year, to 1.55 million.
- 2.21 The Labour Force Survey (LFS) shows improved employment growth over the last year. According to the LFS, the overall level of employment was 33.9 million in the three months to January 2025, up 608,000 over the preceding 12 months and 741,000 higher than the peak in the three months to February 2020.³⁰
- 2.22 Economic inactivity fell slightly over the last year, to 21.5% (9.27 million) in the three months to January 2025, compared to 22.1% (9.44 million) a year earlier.³¹ This is up from 20.3% (8.45 million) just before the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 2.23 There were 816,000 job vacancies in the three months to February 2025, a fall from the peak at 1.30 million in May 2022, and in line with the pre-pandemic level.³²
- 2.24 According to the Average Weekly Earnings series, annual growth in average total pay (including bonuses) was 5.8% for the whole economy in November 2024 to January 2025 (see Table 2.1). Private sector average earnings growth (including bonus payments) was at 5.9% in the three months to January 2025, with regular earnings growth at 6.1%. Total earnings growth was at 5.3% in the public sector with regular average earnings growth also at 5.3% in the three months to January 2025.

²⁹ ONS, (2025). *Employment in the UK: March 2025*. (online) Available at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/employmentintheuk/march2025> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

³⁰ ONS, (2025). *Number of People in Employment: March 2025*. (online) Available at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/timeseries/mgrz/lms> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

³¹ ONS, (2025). *Employment in the UK: March 2025*. (online) Available at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/employmentintheuk/march2025> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

³² ONS, (2025). *Vacancies and jobs in the UK: March 2025*. (online) Available at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/jobsandvacanciesintheuk/march2025> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

Table 2.1: Average Weekly Earnings annual growth rates, seasonally adjusted, November 2024 to January 2025^{33,34}

| Average Weekly Earnings | Whole Economy (%) | Private Sector (%) | Public Sector (%) |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Total pay (including bonuses) | 5.8 | 5.9 | 5.3 |
| Regular pay (excluding bonuses) | 5.9 | 6.1 | 5.3 |
| Real total pay (including bonuses) | 3.1 | - | - |
| Real regular pay (excluding bonuses) | 3.2 | - | - |

2.25 From a 30-year peak of nearly 7% in 2023, the OBR projected whole-economy average earnings growth of 3.6% over 2025, and 3.0% over the 2025-26 financial year in its October 2024 forecast. In its March 2025 forecast, the OBR revised its estimates, with whole-economy average earnings growth of 4.3% over 2025, and 3.7% over the 2025-26 financial year.

2.26 Pay settlement medians were at 3.3% to 4.0% in the final quarter of 2024. An initial analysis of pay awards for the three months to February 2025 by Incomes Data Research (IDR) showed a median of 3.2%. Research by Brightmine gave a median of 3.0%. It said that nearly three-quarters of pay deals were worth less than the award given to the same employee group a year ago. For the three months to February 2025, it reported an inter-quartile range of 2.5% (lower quartile) to 4.0% (upper quartile).³⁵

National Living Wage

2.27 The National Living Wage increased from £11.44 to £12.21 an hour from 1 April 2025, an increase of 6.7%. This means some of the lower paid staff in our remit will see their pay increase from 1 April 2025, to ensure that HMPPS remains compliant. The following grades in our remit will see their full-time equivalent (FTE) base pay increase prior to any recommendations that we make being implemented:

- Closed grade Operational Support Grade (OSG), Prison Auxiliary and G4S Security Officer from £23,290 to £24,858, a 6.7% increase;
- Closed grade Night Patrol from £26,276 to £28,044 a 6.7% increase; and
- National Fair and Sustainable Band 2 OSG 37 hour base pay spot rate from £23,200 to £23,583 a 1.7% increase.

³³ ONS, (2025) *Average weekly earnings in Great Britain: March 2025*. (online) Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/averageweeklyearningsingreatbritain/march2025> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

³⁴ ONS, (2025). *Dataset X09: Real average weekly earnings using consumer price inflation (seasonally adjusted)*. (online) Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/datasets/x09realaverageweeklyearningsusingconsumerpriceinflationseasonallyadjusted> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

³⁵ OPRB analysis of Brightmine data – March 2025. Available to Brightmine subscribers.

Industrial disputes

2.28 The Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported that there were around 50,000 working days lost to industrial disputes in the UK during January 2025, lower than in January 2024 (165,000) and well below the recent peak of 830,000 in December 2022.³⁶ We note that the majority of our remit group does not have the right to take industrial action.

Financial context

2.29 In Chapter 1 we noted that the Government set out its position on public sector pay in the 2024 Autumn Budget,³⁷ stating that above inflation pay awards were only affordable if funded from improved productivity. The Government also said that it would not provide departments with additional funding for 2025-26 pay awards should recommendations be considered unaffordable.

Affordability

2.30 As has been the case for many years, affordability remains key to HMPPS and one of its four strategic objectives for this round was to remain within its affordability envelope. HMPPS noted that the Government accepted, in full, all 14 recommendations in our 2024 Report. In total, HMPPS estimated that these recommendations cost the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) £141m and delivered an increase of at least 5% to all Fair and Sustainable frontline prison staff. The submission asked that our proposals for 2025-26 strike a balance between fair pay and value for money for the taxpayer.

The composition of our remit group

Staff numbers

2.31 At 30 September 2024 there were 30,272 staff on a FTE basis in the remit group, a 6.0% increase from March 2023 (see Figure 2.2 and Table 2.2). This is the highest staffing level since 2012. Between 30 September 2023 and 2024, the number of Bands 3 to 5 prison officers (including specialists) increased by 2.2%.^{38,39}

2.32 At 30 September 2024, 1,109 FTE staff (4%) were operational managers; 23,571 (78%) were Band 3 to 5 prison officer grades and 5,592 (18%) were OSGs. Around 95% of remit group staff were based in establishments, 4% in the Youth Custody Service (YCS) with the remaining 1% shared between area services and HMPPS headquarters.⁴⁰

³⁶ ONS, (2025). *LABD: Labour disputes in the UK*. (online) Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/workplacedisputesandworkingconditions/datasets/labdlabourdisputesintheuk> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

³⁷ HMT, (2024). *Autumn Budget 2024*. (online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/autumn-budget-2024> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

³⁸ Band 6 is not within the remit of the PSPRB; however, we have maintained consistency with the categories in the underlying data throughout the chapter.

³⁹ On a headcount basis there were 31,769 staff in our remit group at 30 September 2024. OPRB analysis of unpublished HMPPS data.

⁴⁰ OPRB analysis of unpublished HMPPS data.

Figure 2.2: Remit group size, 31 March 2013 to 2024 and 30 September 2024⁴¹

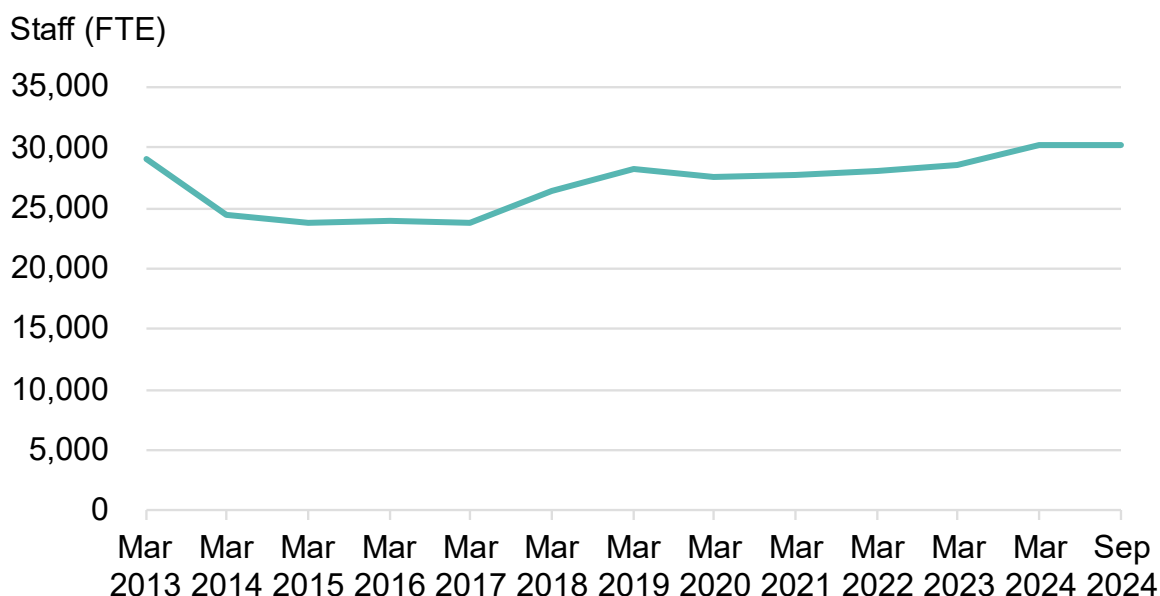


Table 2.2: Remit group staff (FTE) by grade, 31 March 2021 to 2024 and 30 September 2024⁴²

| Broad staff group | Mar 2021 | Mar 2022 | Mar 2023 | Mar 2024 | Sep 2024 | Change Mar 2023 to Sep 2024 | Change Mar 2023 to Sep 2024 (%) |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Bands 9-12 / Senior Managers | 218 | 234 | 243 | 232 | 227 | -16 | -6% |
| Bands 6-8 / Managers | 764 | 795 | 816 | 880 | 882 | 66 | 8% |
| Band 5 / Custodial Managers | 1,711 | 1,819 | 1,741 | 1,757 | 1,780 | 39 | 2% |
| Band 4 / Supervising Officer | 1,864 | 1,775 | 1,643 | 1,632 | 1,655 | 12 | 1% |
| Bands 3-4 / Prison Officer (incl. specialists) | 18,304 | 18,340 | 18,834 | 20,225 | 20,136 | 1,302 | 7% |
| Band 2 / Operational Support | 4,951 | 5,055 | 5,290 | 5,542 | 5,592 | 302 | 6% |
| Total (remit group) | 27,812 | 28,019 | 28,566 | 29,586 | 30,272 | 1,706 | 6% |

⁴¹ The data includes Band 12 staff from 2022. OPRB analysis of unpublished HMPPS data. HMPPS, (2024). *HM Prison & Probation Service workforce statistics quarterly: September 2024*. (online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hm-prison-probation-service-workforce-quarterly-september-2024> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

⁴² Ibid.

2.33 Overall, 98% of the remit group were in the Fair and Sustainable grades at 30 September 2024 (on an FTE basis), an increase from 89% in September 2023.⁴³

Staff characteristics

2.34 Our terms of reference require us to consider the relevant legal obligations on the Prison Service with regard to equality and diversity. However, the lack of data prevents us from fulfilling our remit in relation to disability, other than for recruitment. The MoJ publishes annual gender pay gap statistics, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017. The gender pay gap shows the difference in the average (mean or median) pay between male and female staff in a workforce. The latest reporting period was 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, which we refer to as 2023-24. We note that separate data for our remit group are not published, but we continue to request this information from HMPPS. We are mindful that the requirement to publish employee data will be extended in future to include ethnicity and disability pay gaps.

- For the MoJ overall, the mean gender pay gap was 5.7% in 2023-24, 0.2 percentage points lower than in 2022-23, 2021-22 and 2020-21 (5.9% in each year). The median gender pay gap was 5.0% and has decreased from 6.3% in 2023 and 11.4% in 2022.
- The mean gender bonus gap was 3.7% in 2023-24, 8 percentage points lower than in 2022-23 (11.7%). The median gender bonus gap was -10.9% for 2023-24, compared to -19.5% in 2022-23 and 0.0% in 2021-22.⁴⁴
- The gender bonus gap is typically subject to greater year-on-year variation in award amounts and frequency. Negative values (-%) indicate that the median or middle-ranked female received a higher bonus payment than the middle-ranked male staff member, although the MoJ have indicated that this is based on awards that are relatively small in value.
- Across the Civil Service as a whole, the mean gender pay gap was 7.4% in 2023-24 and the median was 8.5%.⁴⁵

2.35 At 30 September 2024, 35.2% of the remit group were female, down 0.4 percentage points from 2023. The gender splits by grade groups, remained broadly unchanged from 2023, and were as follows:⁴⁶

- 50.6% of OSGs were female;
- 31.1% of Band 3 to 5 officers were female; and
- 41.1% of operational managers were female.

⁴³ OPRB analysis of unpublished HMPPS data.

⁴⁴ MoJ, (2024). *Ministry of Justice gender pay gap report: 2024*. (online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ministry-of-justice-gender-pay-gap-report-2024/ministry-of-justice-gender-pay-gap-report-2024> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

⁴⁵ Cabinet Office, (2024). *Statistical bulletin - Civil Service Statistics: 2024*. (online) Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/civil-service-statistics-2024/statistical-bulletin-civil-service-statistics-2024> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

⁴⁶ OPRB analysis of unpublished HMPPS data.

2.36 When looking at the age profile of our remit group:⁴⁷

- At 30 September 2024, around 43% of OSGs were aged 50 or over. This age group accounted for around 40% of OSGs in 2011;
- The OSG group also had the largest proportion of staff aged 60 or over, compared to other grade groups, at 19% in September 2024;
- The average age of Band 3 to 5 staff has been decreasing over time, with there being proportionally more younger staff. At 30 September 2024, 25% of Band 3 to 5 officers were aged under 30, whereas the proportion was 11% in 2011; and
- At 30 September 2024, 52% of operational managers were aged 50 or over. The proportion of operational managers aged over 50 has increased since 2011, when 33% were aged 50 or over.

2.37 At 30 September 2024, 14.8% of the remit group were from ethnic minority backgrounds.⁴⁸ This is an increase of 3.9 percentage points from September 2023 and an increase of 8.4 percentage points from 2017. The corresponding proportion in the wider England and Wales population of working age people between 16 and 64 years old was 19.3%, as reported in the ONS's 2021 Census data.⁴⁹ As in previous years, the percentage of staff from an ethnic minority background decreases as seniority increases. In September 2024:

- 15.6% of OSGs were from an ethnic minority background, up 3.2 percentage points from 2023;
- 15.0% of Band 3 to 5 officers were from an ethnic minority background, up 4.2 percentage points from 2023; and
- 6.5% of operational managers were from an ethnic minority background, up 0.2 percentage points from 2023.

Two-tier pay structure

2.38 Since the introduction of Fair and Sustainable in 2012, staff have occupied both the Fair and Sustainable and the closed grade pay structures, with the latter including a number of TUPE transferred-in grades. In 2023, our recommendations saw, for the first time, the basic pay for nearly all Fair and Sustainable grades overtake that of the closed grades, most notably at the most populous Band 3 level. We achieved this by taking a difficult, but what we saw as necessary, decision to recommend that the closed grade pay structure be frozen, encouraging the majority of closed grades to opt in to Fair and Sustainable to obtain a pay increase. We continued with this approach last year, not making recommendations on awards for those in the closed grade pay structure, except for those who are unable to benefit financially from opting in. These staff would receive non-consolidated, non-pensionable payments.

2.39 Our recommendations appeared to have advanced the longer-term goal of removing pay differentials between the two groups, meaning that as at 30 September 2024,

⁴⁷ OPRB analysis of unpublished HMPPS data.

⁴⁸ OPRB analysis of unpublished HMPPS data.

⁴⁹ ONS, (2022). *Ethnic group, England and Wales: Census 2021*. (online) Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/bulletins/ethnicgroupenglandandwales/census2021> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

just 1.3% of our remit group remained on the closed grade pay structure. There is still a small number of staff, around 26 FTEs at 30 September 2024, with legacy Locality Pay Allowances (LPA), closed grade specialist allowances or marked time payments who currently do not financially benefit from opting in to Fair and Sustainable, but we expect this number to continue to reduce in future years.

Allowances

- 2.40 Allowances are paid for a variety of reasons including working unsocial hours, hours in excess of contractual hours or standing in for other staff who may be unavailable. Allowances remain a significant cost to HMPPS and represented 19% of the remit group paybill in 2023-24, the same as in 2022-23. A large proportion, 10% of the paybill, is due to the feature of the unsocial hours allowances being paid as a separate element in Fair and Sustainable, whereas in the closed structure payment for unsocial hours was built into base pay. Unsocial hours allowances for our remit group accounted for £148 million of the paybill in 2023-24, an increase of over £34 million (30.2%) compared to 2022-23. Much of this increase was due to closed grade staff opting in to Fair and Sustainable and becoming eligible for unsocial hours allowances. HMPPS also spends significant amounts on other allowances. Total expenditure on allowances increased by around 7.2% between 2022-23 and 2023-24, from £268 million to just over £287 million, largely driven by the increase in the rate of unsocial hours payments from 17% to 20%.
- 2.41 Payment Plus is another significant cost to the Service, which decreased from around £62 million in 2022-23 to around £48 million in 2023-24. When factoring in bedwatch and constant watch, which are also paid at the Payment Plus rate, this figure increases to just under £79 million. HMPPS data also showed decreases in OSG overtime of around 12.5%, a 20% increase in the cost of dirty protest (the highest total we have seen) and a 23% increase in Operation Tornado payments.
- 2.42 As we noted in our previous reports, time off in lieu (TOIL) is a debt HMPPS accrues of time owed to staff who have carried out additional, unpaid hours of work. This needs to be repaid in the future by allowing the relevant staff time off. Working longer hours for indefinite periods can have a detrimental impact on health, motivation and morale. At 31 March 2024, the total number of TOIL hours owed to officers and support grades was 353,424 hours, a 4.4% increase from 31 March 2023 (338,674 hours). By September 2024 this had increased by a further 4.4% to 368,790 hours, reflecting continued staffing pressures. We consider that HMPPS should aim to reduce this, allowing staff to take the time off to which they are entitled and in order to prevent longer term negative outcomes for staff health, motivation and morale.
- 2.43 From 31 March 2023 to 31 March 2024, the total number of staff receiving temporary promotion payments increased slightly to around 1,765. In previous years we have had concerns about the upward trend in the use of temporary cover, and the prolonged periods for which temporary cover was used. Therefore, it is positive that this trend seems to have flattened, although we would like to see this reduce in future years, both in terms of numbers and time.
- 2.44 We are also aware that there are additional costs associated with detached duty. Detached duty is where prison officers work at a different prison to their home prison for operational reasons. Although these costs vary, HMPPS estimates an assumed average cost per person, per week of around £942 for a member of staff to be on

detached duty. In response to a Parliamentary Question,⁵⁰ the Rt Hon Edward Argar MP, former Prisons Minister, indicated that from week commencing 13 November 2022 to 5 November 2023, there was an average of 308 staff a week on detached duty at a cost of £15.1 million for that 12 month period. However, HMPPS told us that the numbers on detached duty had started to reduce by February and March 2024.

- 2.45 We are continuing with our rolling programme of reviewing allowances, which aims to ensure that all allowances are subject to a thorough review at least once every five years (see Appendix G). We were scheduled to review unsocial hours payments, Payment Plus and OSG overtime for our 2022 Report. However, we were disappointed at the lack of evidence received from HMPPS for that report. Given that we had signalled our intention to return to these allowances in our 2023 Report, we were particularly disappointed at the lack of evidence from HMPPS for that report as well, which led to us making Recommendation 14 in our 2024 Report (see Appendix H, paragraph H14). We return to this issue in Chapter 4. This year, we also committed to reviewing the Operational Response and Resilience Unit on-call allowance. We were pleased to receive evidence and proposals from both HMPPS and the POA on this allowance and we present our recommendation in Chapter 4.

Recruitment and retention

- 2.46 When making our recommendations, our terms of reference require us to take account of the Prison Service's ability to recruit, retain and motivate suitably able and qualified staff. In its written submission, HMPPS stated that there had not been enough time to assess the impact on staffing of the last pay award, but it expected to see a positive impact on recruitment and retention. HMPPS said that there was an improved and more stable national staffing picture, although acute staffing issues remain at some sites, and the loss of staff post-Covid-19 left a relatively inexperienced staffing group. Over 40% of Band 3 to 5 prison officers have less than three years' experience. The issue of retention of staff was emphasised at many of the oral evidence sessions.

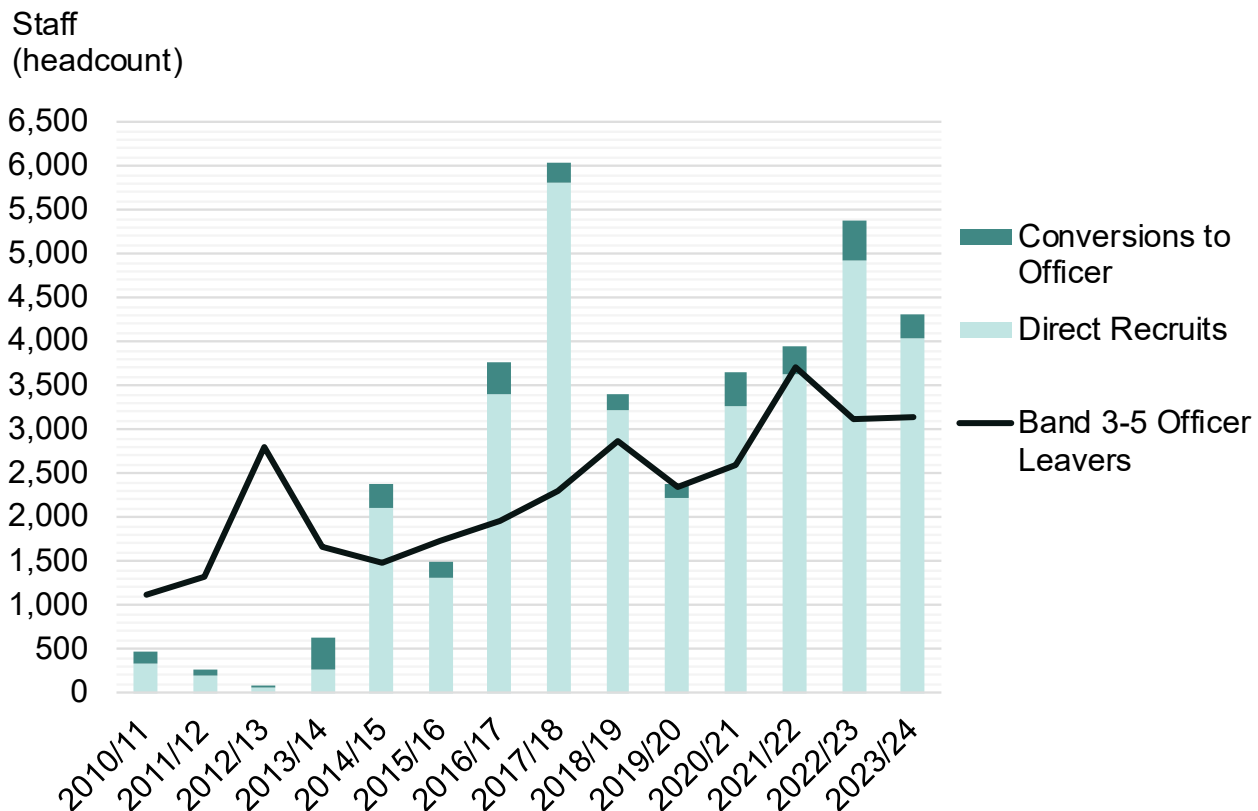
Recruits and conversions to officer

- 2.47 Following the Covid-19 related decline in both officer leavers and joiners, the numbers of joiners and leavers have since increased:

- There were 4,306 new Band 3 to 5 officers in the year to 30 September 2024 (see Figure 2.3). This represents a 20% decrease in new officers from the previous year;
- Of these new officers, 4,044 (93.9%) were new recruits;
- The number of Band 3 to 5 leavers was 3,149, a 0.9% increase from the previous year; and
- Overall, in the year to September 2024, there was a net increase of 581 FTE Band 3 to 5 officers, representing a total increase of 2.5%.

⁵⁰ UK Parliament, (2023). *Prison Officers: Questions for Ministry of Justice*, UIN162, tabled on 7 November 2023. (online) Available at: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-07/162> [Accessed on 3 April 2025].

Figure 2.3: Staff headcount of direct recruits into Band 3, conversions to Band 3 officers from existing staff, and Band 3 to 5 officer leavers, year to September 2011 to 2024⁵¹



2.48 HMPPS publishes statistics on recruitment diversity.⁵² These statistics are based on self-declared ethnicity and declaration rates were typically high, at above 98%:

- Between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2024, ethnic minority candidates made up 39.6% of all prison officer applicants and 26.8% of formal offers accepted;
- Over the same two-year period, ethnic minority candidates made up 34.9% of OSG applicants and 17.8% of formal offers accepted; and
- These rates are above HMPPS's commitment, in accordance with recommendation 28 of the 2017 Lammy Review,⁵³ of 15.8%.

2.49 Among prison officer and OSG applicants, there was evidence of a continuing disparity in outcomes when comparing ethnic minority candidates with white candidates, showing that a higher proportion of white applicants progressed through the process compared to ethnic minority applicants. The stage that saw the largest disparity was between being invited to assessment and being made a provisional offer. There was also evidence of a continuing disparity in outcomes when comparing female applicants to male applicants for prison officer roles, suggesting

⁵¹ OPRB analysis of unpublished HMPPS data.

⁵² These statistics are classified as experimental and the statistics within the release should be treated as estimates. HMPPS, (2024). *Recruitment Diversity Statistics: June 2024*. (online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hm-prison-and-probation-service-workforce-quarterly-june-2024/recruitment-diversity-statistics-june-2024> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

⁵³ GOV.uk, (2023). *Lammy review: final report*. (online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/lammy-review-final-report> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

that male applicants had a higher success rate. Conversely, there was evidence of an ongoing disparity in outcomes when comparing female applicants to male applicants for OSG roles with the suggestion that female applicants had a higher success rate.

- 2.50 Candidates with a disability made up 4.5% of all prison officer applicants between July 2022 and June 2024. There was evidence of relatively poorer outcomes for prison officer roles but not for OSG roles. This is probably influenced by the fitness test for prison officer roles which takes place between the provisional and final offer.⁵⁴ We heard that once an officer is appointed the fitness test is no longer repeated except for certain specialist roles.

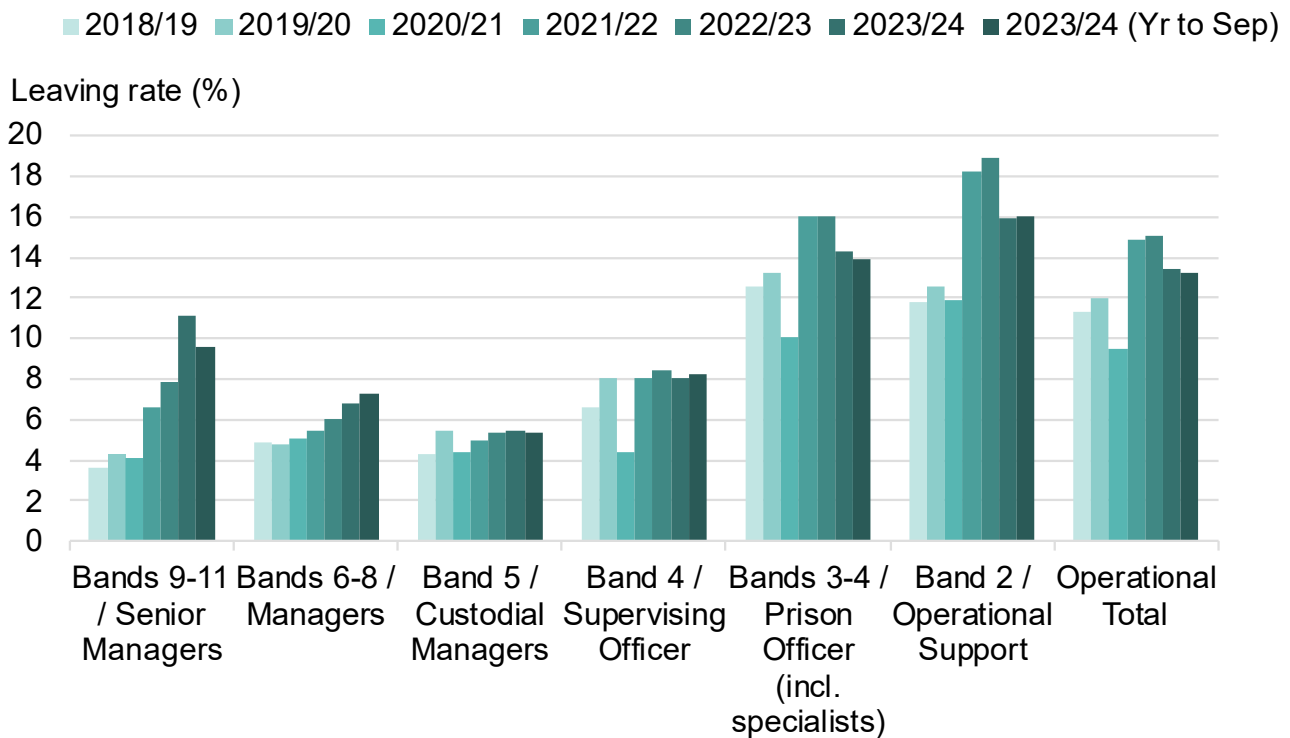
Leaving rates

- 2.51 Figure 2.4 shows the leaving rate by grade for the years ending 31 March 2019 to 31 March 2024 and to 30 September 2024 (the latest data we have). The overall leaving rate decreased during the Covid-19 pandemic but subsequently increased and remained above pre-Covid-19 levels. The 12 months to 31 March 2024 and 30 September 2024 saw overall decreases to 13.5% and 13.3%.

- Leaving rates for Band 2 / operational support staff increased from 15.9% to 16.0%. Leaving rates for Bands 3 and 4 prison officers (including specialists) decreased, from 14.3% to 13.9%.
- Leaving rates increased for Band 4 staff, from 8.0% to 8.2% whilst seeing no change (5.4%) for Band 5 staff.
- Leaving rates for Bands 7 and 8 continued a well-established upward trend.
- Leaving rates for Bands 9 to 11 / senior managers decreased from 11.1% to 9.6%.

⁵⁴ HMPPS, (2024). *Recruitment Diversity Statistics: June 2024*. (online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hm-prison-and-probation-service-workforce-quarterly-june-2024/recruitment-diversity-statistics-june-2024> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

Figure 2.4: Annual leaving rate of permanent operational staff by grade, 12 months to 31 March 2019 to 2024 and 12 months to 30 September 2024⁵⁵



Reasons for leaving

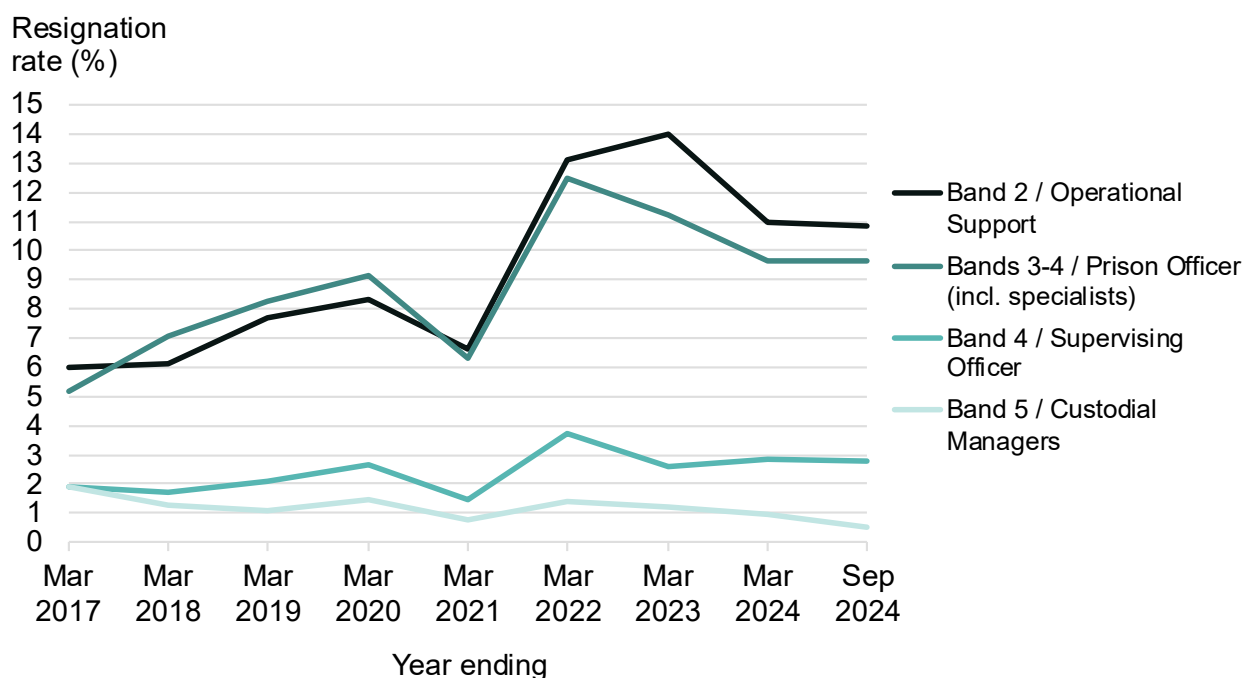
2.52 The main reason for leaving across grades in Prison Service establishments was resignation. In the year to 30 September 2024, resignations accounted for 62.6% of all leavers from establishments, down from 63.3% in the previous year. After resignation, dismissal and retirement were the next most likely reasons for leaving. Exit interviews provide valuable information relating to leavers. We would encourage the completion of exit interviews and the utilisation and analysis of this data.

Resignation rates

2.53 Resignation rates have generally decreased for Bands 2 to 5 in recent years. Band 2 resignation rates remain above those for other grades but have decreased from historically high levels seen in the financial year 2021-22. However, resignation rates for Band 2 and 3 remain above pre-Covid-19 levels (see Figure 2.5).

⁵⁵ OPRB analysis of HMPPS data. HMPPS, (2024). *HM Prison & Probation Service workforce quarterly: September 2024*. (online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hm-prison-probation-service-workforce-quarterly-september-2024> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

Figure 2.5: Annual resignation rate of permanent operational staff by grade, 12 months to 31 March 2017 to 2024 and 12 months to 30 September 2024⁵⁶

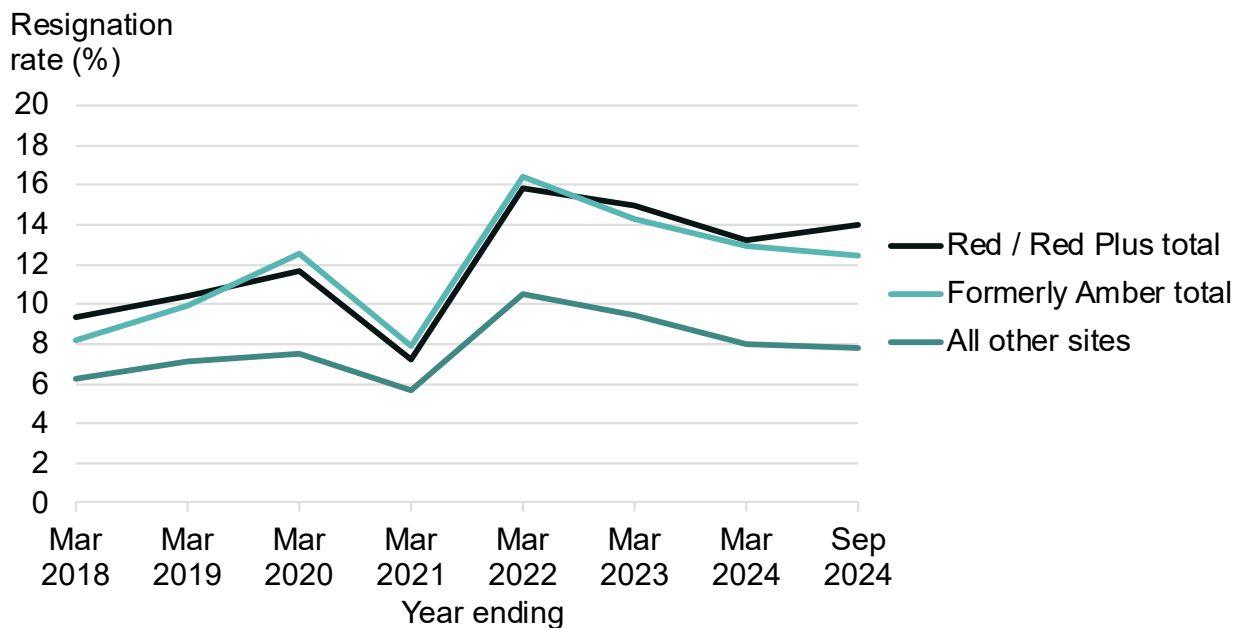


2.54 Figure 2.6 shows Band 3 and 4 resignation rates split by market supplement type. Data for the year to 30 September 2024 show a continued decrease in the overall resignation rates from a recent peak in the year to 31 March 2022, although there has been an increase since the year to 31 March 2024 for red / red plus sites. The overall resignation rate for Bands 3 and 4 was 9.7% in the year to 30 September 2024. Resignation rates for Bands 4 and 5 tend to be lower than for Bands 3 and 4 (including specialists). In the year to 30 September 2024, the resignation rate was 2.8% for Band 4 Supervising Officer and 0.5% for Band 5 Custodial Manager.

2.55 We note, however, that some prisons, which have never had a market supplement, have higher leaving rates than red and red plus sites. This indicates that there continues to be variability in leaving rates and that some non-market supplement sites may face similar retention issues compared to those which pay a supplement.

⁵⁶ OPRB analysis of HMPPS data. HMPPS, (2024). *HM Prison & Probation Service workforce quarterly: September 2024*. (online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hm-prison-probation-service-workforce-quarterly-september-2024> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

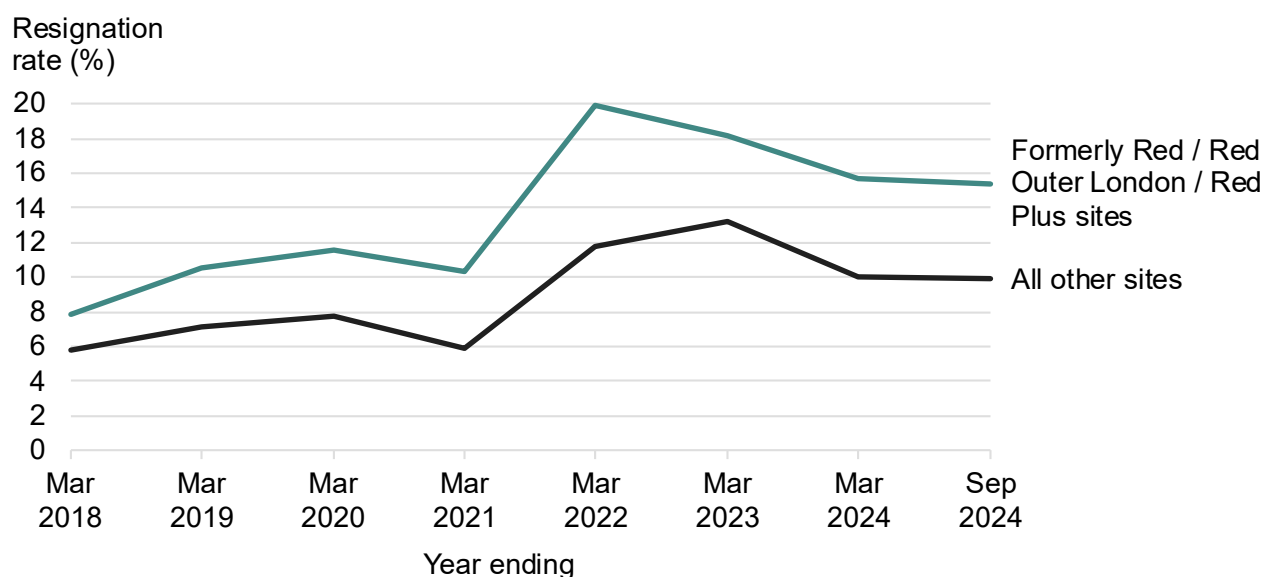
Figure 2.6: Bands 3 and 4 (including specialists) resignation rates split by market supplement type, 12 months to 31 March 2018-2024 and 12 months to 30 September 2024⁵⁷



2.56 Figure 2.7 shows Band 2 resignation rates split by prisons that had a market supplement and those that did not. Data for the year to 30 September 2024 show a decrease in resignation rates for both site types from the year to 31 March 2023, and a fairly similar picture from the year to 31 March 2024. Resignation rates in the year to 30 September 2024 were 15.4% and 9.9% respectively for former red sites and non-market supplement sites. The overall resignation rate for Band 2 was 10.8% in the year to 30 September 2024.

⁵⁷ OPRB analysis of unpublished HMPPS data.

Figure 2.7: Band 2 resignation rates split by market supplement type, 12 months to 31 March 2018-2024 and 12 months to 30 September 2024⁵⁸



Leavers by length of service

2.57 Figures 2.8 and 2.9 show Bands 3 to 5 and Band 2 leavers in recent years by length of service. In the year to 30 September 2024, the number of Bands 3 to 5 leavers with 2 to 4 years of service decreased sharply, compared with the years to 31 March 2022 and 31 March 2023. The number of leavers with five or more years of service decreased slightly. Leavers with 0 to 1 years of service accounted for the greatest number of leavers in the year to 30 September 2024. For Band 2 / OSGs the number of leavers across all experience lengths decreased between the year to 31 March 2023 and the year to 30 September 2024.

2.58 HMPPS previously told us, for our 2020 Report (paragraph 3.35), that each new recruit costs the Service around £13,000,⁵⁹ a figure it has not updated since. The 2020 Report also noted that the Band 3 to 5 turnover for new recruits with less than 2 years' service cost HMPPS at least £30million a year. Bearing in mind inflation over the intervening five-year period, we anticipate that the cost per recruit and staff turnover costs are likely to have increased over that period.

⁵⁸ Relevant Band 2 staff were formerly eligible to receive one of three types of market supplement: red, red Outer London and red plus. Following our recommendation from 1 April 2023, all three market supplements for Band 2 staff ceased to be payable as they were consolidated into base pay. OPRB analysis of unpublished HMPPS data.

⁵⁹ This figure includes recruitment, training and salary costs.

Figure 2.8: Bands 3 to 5 leavers by length of service, 12 months to 31 March 2017 to 2024 and 12 months to 30 September 2024⁶⁰

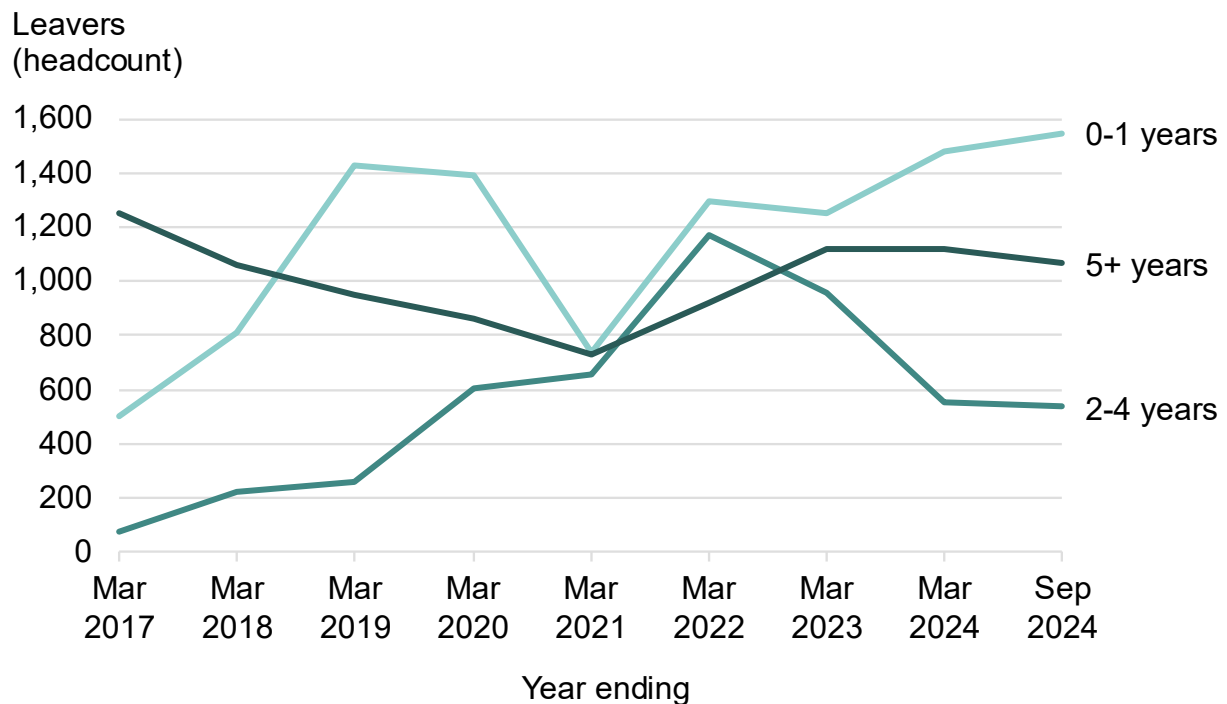
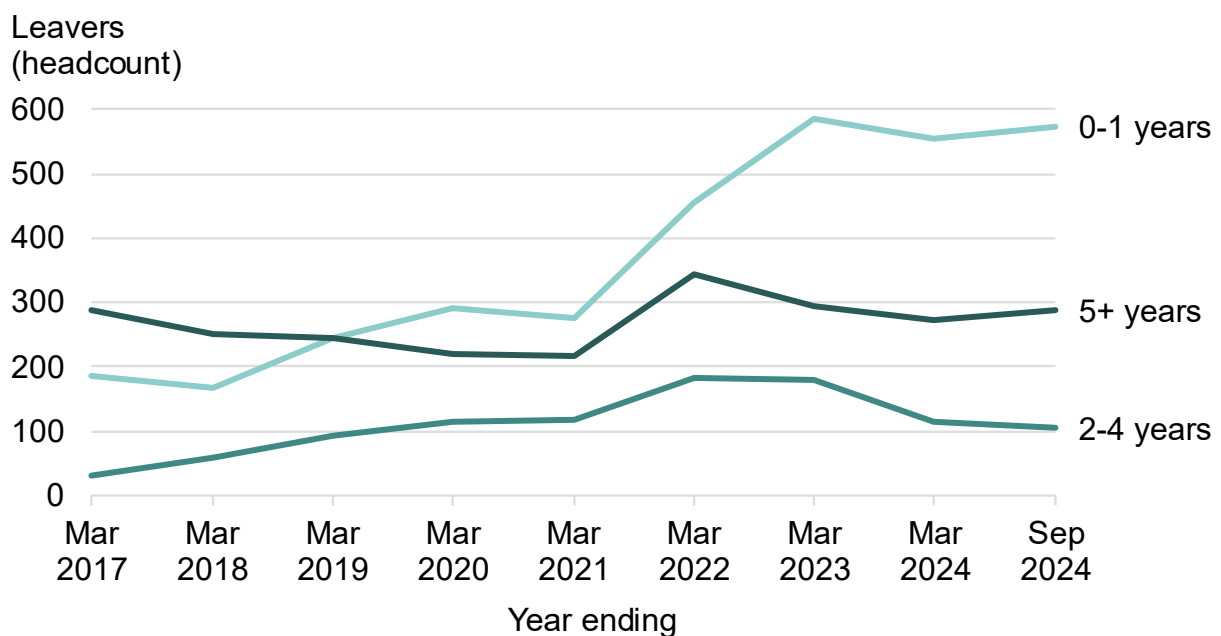


Figure 2.9: Band 2 leavers by length of service, 12 months to 31 March 2017 to 2024 and 12 months to 30 September 2024⁶¹



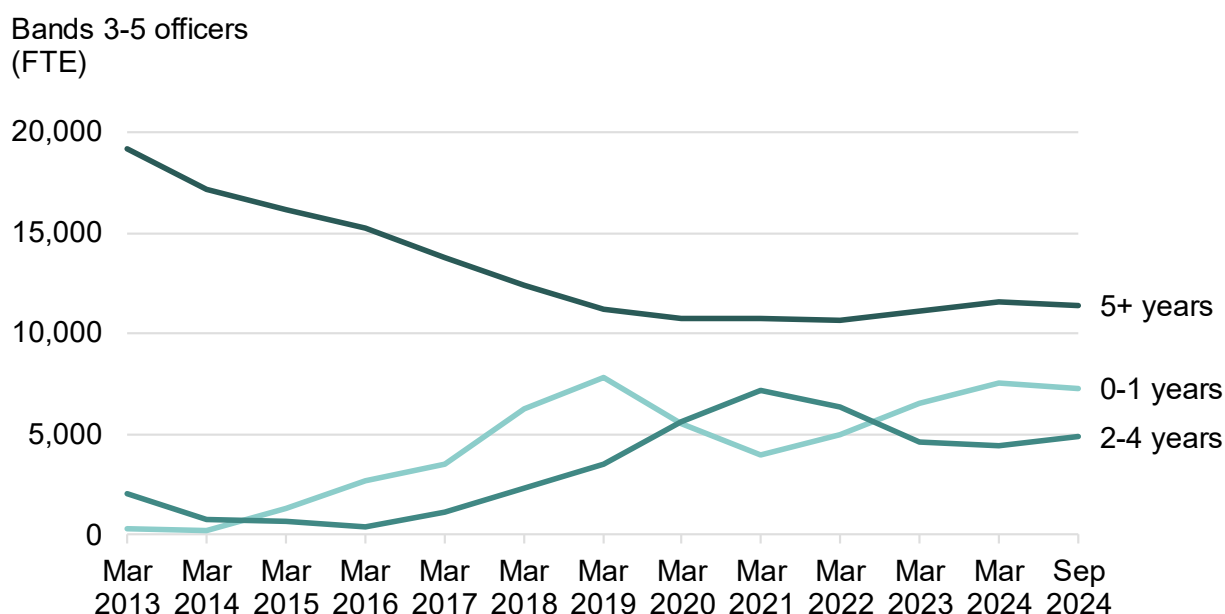
⁶⁰ OPRB analysis of HMPPS data. HMPPS, (2024). *HM Prison & Probation Service workforce quarterly: September 2024*. (online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hm-prison-probation-service-workforce-quarterly-september-2024> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

⁶¹ Ibid.

Staff by length of service

2.59 The composition of our remit group in terms of time served has changed over time. Figure 2.10 shows that the number of Bands 3 to 5 staff with more than five years' service has decreased since 31 March 2013. At 30 September 2024, 48.4% of Bands 3 to 5 staff had more than five years' service, compared with 89.1% at 31 March 2013. We note however, that since March 2022 there has been a small increase in the number of Bands 3 to 5 officers with more than five years' service. The proportion of staff with 0 to 1 years of service has increased over recent years, standing at 30.9% for Bands 3 to 5 and 41.6% for Band 2 in September 2024 (compared with 18.1% and 28.3% in March 2021). There has been a stabilisation since March 2023.

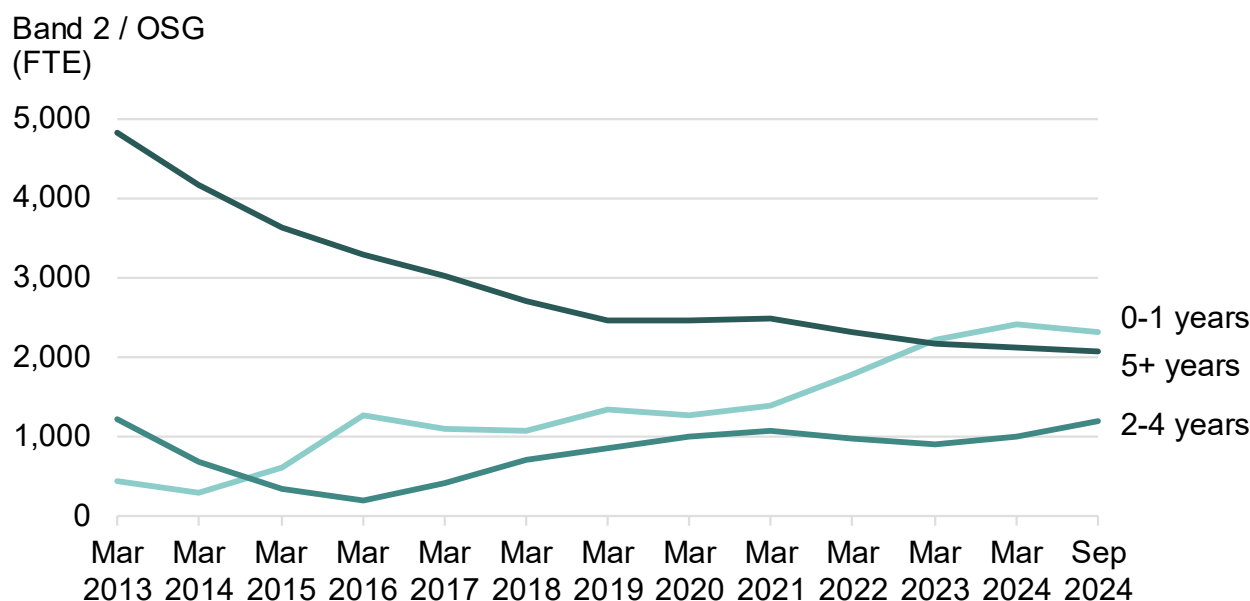
Figure 2.10: Bands 3 to 5 officers in post (FTE) by length of service, at 31 March 2013 to 2024 and at 30 September 2024⁶²



2.60 There is a broadly similar pattern for Band 2 / operational support staff. At 30 September 2024, 37.0% of these staff had more than five years' experience, a decrease from 74.4% as at 31 March 2013. The proportion with less than two years' experience stood at 41.6% as at 30 September 2024, as seen in Figure 2.11.

⁶² OPRB analysis of HMPPS data. HMPPS, (2024). *HM Prison & Probation Service workforce quarterly: September 2024*. (online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hm-prison-probation-service-workforce-quarterly-september-2024> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

Figure 2.11: Band 2 staff in post (FTE) by length of service, at 31 March 2013 to 2024 and at 30 September 2024⁶³



Locality pay and market supplements

- 2.61 Two different sets of locality pay arrangements apply to staff in our remit group. Staff in the closed grades at certain establishments continue to qualify for one of six rates of legacy LPAs ranging from £250 to £4,250 a year (see Appendix E). Under these legacy arrangements, the relevant rate of LPA was paid to all staff at each eligible location, irrespective of the extent of recruitment and retention difficulties for their particular grade at that location. With the introduction of Fair and Sustainable in 2012, LPAs were replaced with three pay zones: a basic National pay range and enhanced ranges for those working in Inner and Outer London establishments and headquarters.
- 2.62 In February 2017, HMPPS introduced market supplements for 31 sites across England and Wales for an initial period of four years, which was later extended and further sites were added. The amber market supplements were completely removed following the recommendations in our 2022 Report, being consolidated into base pay, leaving the balance of red (£2,000) and red plus (£3,500) market supplements, paid at 19 sites at the time of writing. As at 30 September 2024 there were 3,289 FTE Band 3 staff eligible to receive a market supplement, around 530 FTE more when compared with 31 October 2023. This is likely to have been driven by closed grade Prison Officers opting in to Band 3 and becoming eligible to receive the market supplements at those prisons. Market supplements do not form part of pensionable pay.

Fair and Sustainable analysis

- 2.63 Each year, we consider a range of pay comparability data to examine the state of the labour market for Fair and Sustainable grades. We place a particular emphasis on Band 3 Prison Officers. Our analysis of the relative position of Prison Service pay in

⁶³ OPRB analysis of HMPPS data. HMPPS, (2024). *HM Prison & Probation Service workforce quarterly: September 2024*. (online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hm-prison-probation-service-workforce-quarterly-september-2024> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

England and Wales is based on comparing gross annual earnings, recorded in the ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) data. We have also included updated comparator analysis based on the approach used by IDR in its 2019 Prison Pay Comparability Study.⁶⁴

ASHE analysis

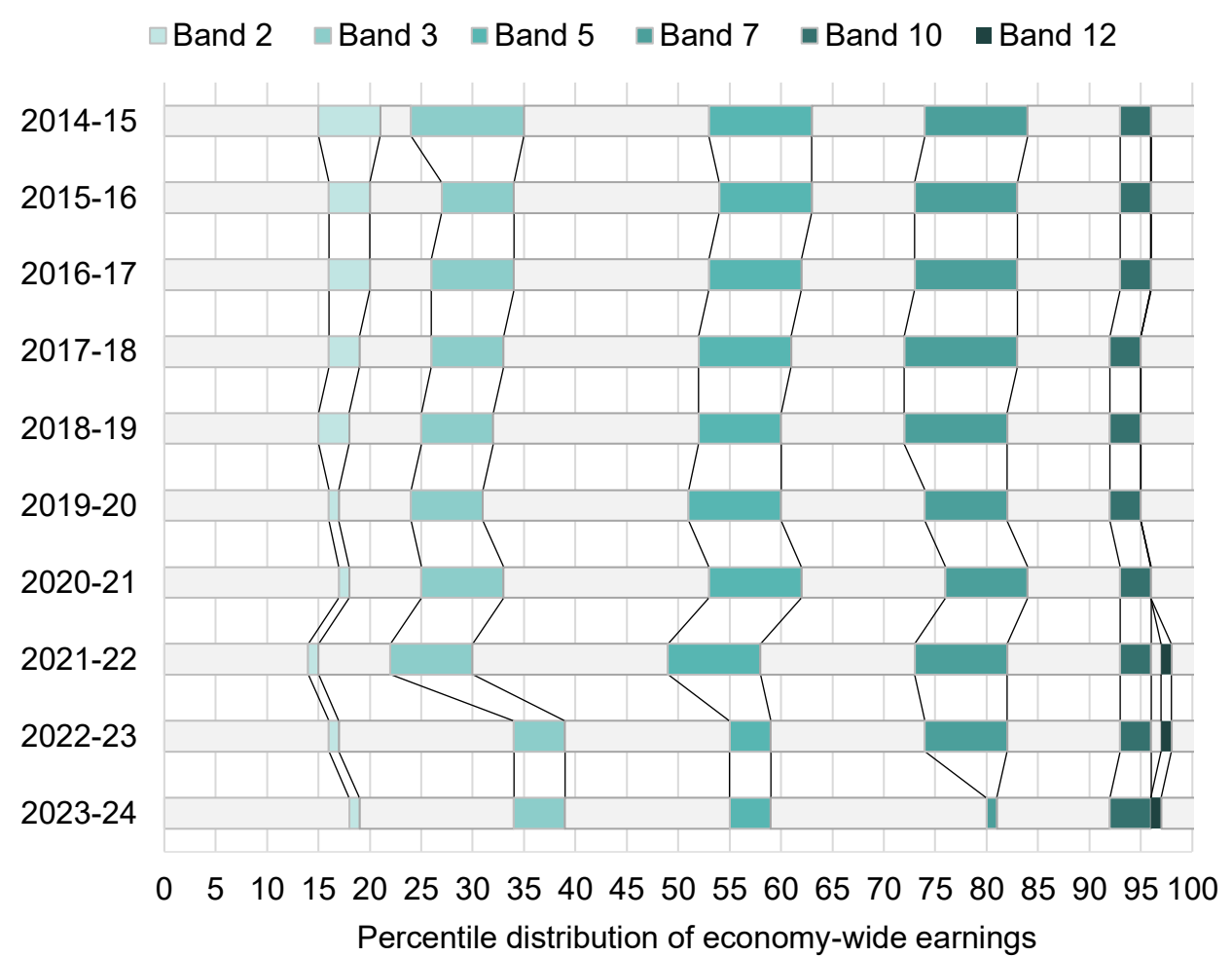
- 2.64 Our ASHE analysis compares Fair and Sustainable pay bands with gross annual earnings across the economy, recorded in the ONS ASHE data. The latest ASHE data relate to the financial year 2023-24.⁶⁵
- 2.65 Figures 2.12 and 2.13 show where the Fair and Sustainable pay bands fall in the economy-wide distribution of earnings over time, from financial years 2014-15 to 2023-24. Pay bands have been split over the two charts below to present a clearer picture. Over this period, Bands 2 and 4 both changed to a spot rate. These spot rates now sit both above their previous respective minima and below their respective maxima, when compared to the relative position within economy-wide earnings. Band 7 moved to a spot rate, set at the previous maximum, in April 2023. The relative position of the Band 3 minimum and maximum both improved over the period compared to economy-wide earnings. Band 5 has become narrower, where the minimum has increased and the maximum has decreased. For Band 7 and grades above, the relative positions of the pay scales remained stable when compared to economy-wide earnings. From 2021-22 to 2023-24, the relative positions of Bands 2 to 5 pay improved, particularly for Band 3. This is likely due to restructuring and the pay award linked to the consolidation of the amber market supplement following our 2022 Report. We have also made recommendations in recent years that have aimed to improve the relative market position of, in particular, Band 3 with the aim of improving recruitment and retention. The Band 2 spot rate remains below the position of the 2015 scale maximum and remains below the 20th percentile, while the gap between Band 2 and Band 3 was nearly 15 percentile points in 2023-24.

⁶⁴ IDR, (2019). *Prison Pay Comparability Study*. (online) Available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prison-pay-comparability-study>: [accessed on 3 April 2025].

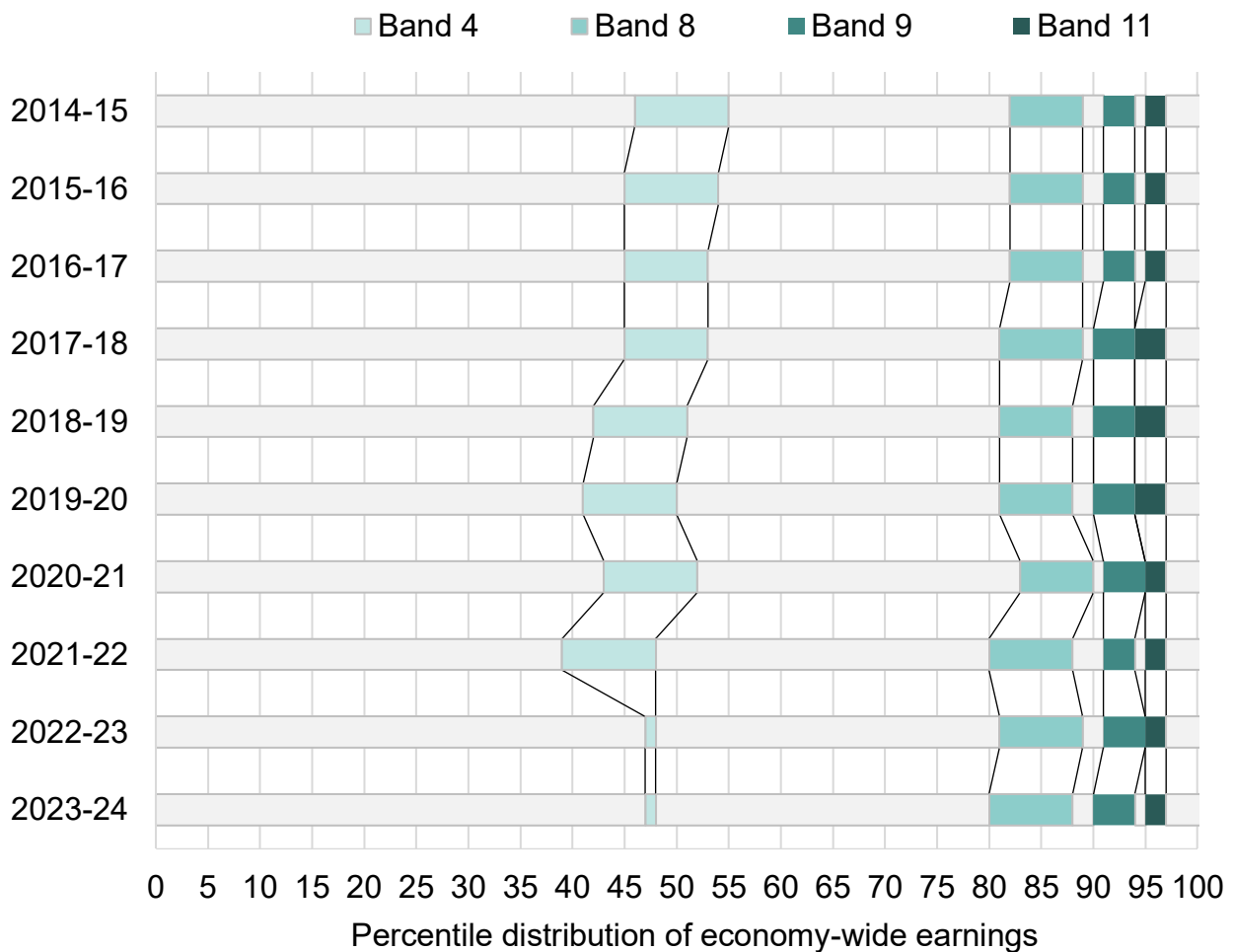
⁶⁵ The latest ASHE data is provisional and is subject to change. The ONS introduced improvements to the methodology for processing returns to their survey for 2024 provisional data and 2023 revised data which has resulted in more high earners in each profession being counted in the final data. This has increased the achieved sample size and improved the quality of ASHE estimates, however the ONS advises caution against comparing 2023 and 2024 with 2022 and earlier years.

Figure 2.12: Position of National Fair and Sustainable Bands 2, 3, 5, 7, 10 and 12 in the percentile distribution of economy-wide earnings, England, and Wales, 2014-15 to 2023-24⁶⁶



⁶⁶ OPRB analysis of unpublished ASHE data. The 2021-22 and 2022-23 data has been revised, and 2023-24 data is provisional.

Figure 2.13: Position of National Fair and Sustainable Bands 4, 8, 9 and 11 in the percentile distribution of economy-wide earnings, England, and Wales, 2014-15 to 2023-24⁶⁷



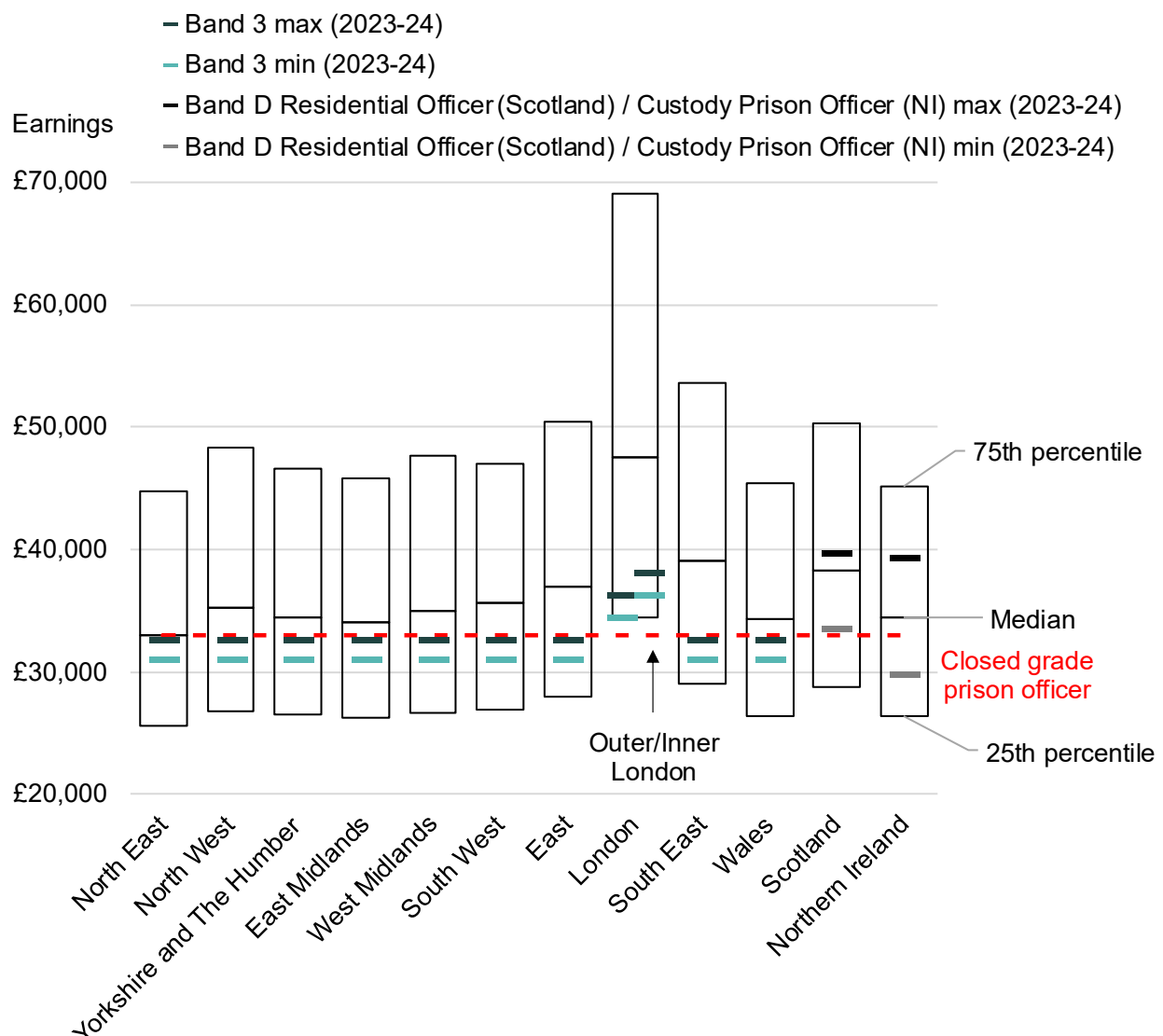
2.66 Figure 2.14 compares the Fair and Sustainable Band 3 pay range (minimum and maximum) to the 25th, 50th (median) and 75th percentiles of gross regional earnings for 2023-24 and includes Scotland and Northern Ireland. Pay for Band 3 is for 37 hours plus 20% unsocial. It shows:

- In the financial year 2023-24, the Band 3 maximum was below median earnings in all regions, as had been the case for several years. The largest differentials are in London, followed by the South East and East;
- Compared to 2022-23, in absolute terms, the gap between the Band 3 maximum and median pay has decreased for the North East, West Midlands & Wales and increased for Yorkshire and the Humber, East Midlands & London, whilst remaining broadly similar or the same for the North West, South West, East & South East. Pay range minima again exceeded the 25th percentiles for all regions, apart from London which now sees it matching. This is again likely to be due to restructuring and the pay award linked to the erosion of the amber market supplement as part of the 2022 Report;

⁶⁷ OPRB analysis of unpublished ASHE data. The 2021-22 and 2022-23 data has been revised, and 2023-24 data is provisional.

- In 2023-24, the closed grade Prison Officer maximum of £32,915, shown by the red dashed line in the chart, is below all regional median earnings, where it had previously been above the median in most regions. The closed grade Prison Officer maximum remained slightly above the National Band 3 maximum in 2023-24 (£376), however the 2024 pay award has taken the 2024-25 National Band 3 maximum pay point above the closed grade maximum (£1,251 above). Closed grade locality pay, where relevant, may increase the maximum salary by £250 to £4,250, dependent on the establishment;
- When market supplements (£2,000 and £3,500, paid at red and red plus sites respectively) are factored in for the regions to which they apply, they markedly improve the relative position of Band 3 pay. However, the enhanced maxima were still below median earnings for all regions apart from the East Midlands (HMP Stocken);
- Scotland and Northern Ireland have wider pay ranges for their respective grades, the Residential Officer in Scotland and the Custody Prison Officer (CPO) in Northern Ireland. In absolute terms, the difference between the National Band 3 maximum and minimum was £1,637 in 2023-24. For Scotland the difference was £6,179 and for Northern Ireland, £9,500; and
- In both Scotland and Northern Ireland, the minima of the pay scales were above the 25th percentile of earnings and the maxima also exceeded respective median earnings. This contrasts with the Band 3 pay scale maximum in England and Wales, which did not exceed median earnings in any region. We note that the CPO in Northern Ireland is eligible to receive the Supplementary Risk Allowance (SRA), which was £3,924 from 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024. When this allowance is included, the position of the pay scales markedly improves relative to economy-wide earnings.

Figure 2.14: Comparison of Band 3 pay (37 hours plus 20% unsocial) with regional earnings, 2023-24. The 2023-24 closed grade Prison Officer (39-hour week) max, excluding locality pay, Scottish Band D Residential Officer and Northern Ireland Prison Custody Officer rates are also shown, financial year, 2023-24^{68,69}



Comparator analysis

2.67 The 2019 IDR study provided pay comparisons for operational Prison Service staff against other occupations judged by IDR as being suitable comparators. Figure 2.15 sets out, for Band 3 staff outside London, the values for base pay including unsocial hours from 1 April 2024, against the pay of the comparators. The chart seeks to demonstrate the range of pay available in similar roles, compared with the Band 3 Prison Officer pay range. The data were retrieved in December 2024 and use the latest available salaries.

⁶⁸ OPRB analysis of unpublished ASHE data. ASHE data for 2023-24 is provisional.

⁶⁹ Note that y-axis does not start at zero.

2.68 The Band 3 salary including unsocial hours and 2 x Additional Committed Hours (ACH) has also been included. This black bar is most comparable with the private sector prison officer salary figures. We note that as at 30 September 2024:⁷⁰

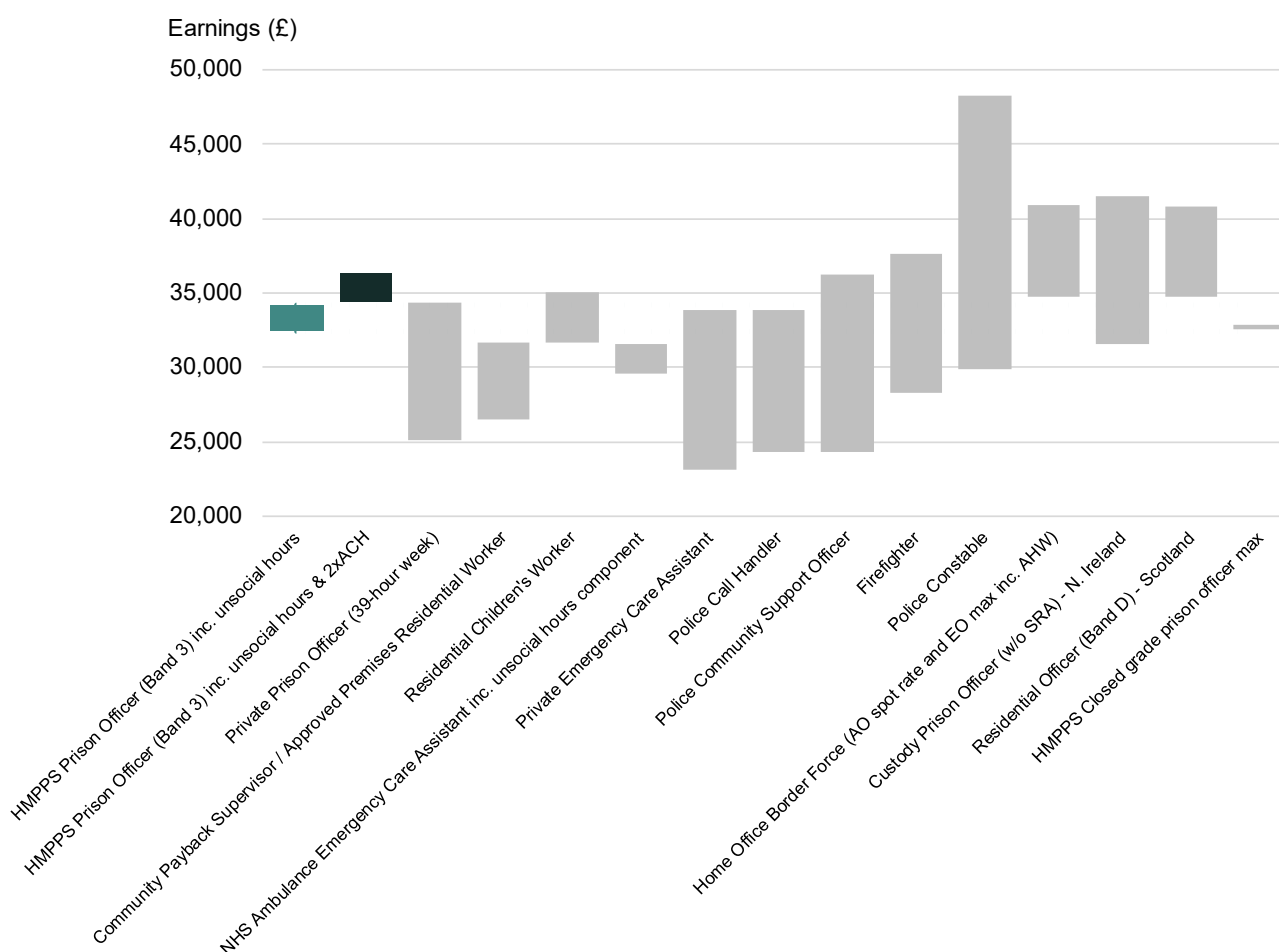
- 48% of Band 3 staff worked a 37 hour week;
- 29% worked 2 x ACH (or a 39 hour week);
- 13% worked 4 x ACH (or a 41 hour week);
- 10% worked 2 X ACHP; and
- ≤1% worked 1 x ACH or 3 x ACH.

2.69 Figure 2.15 shows that:

- The Band 3 pay range including unsocial hours overlaps with nine of the thirteen comparators. Most comparators have larger ranges;
- Band 3 pay range including unsocial hours is completely above pay for the Community Payback Supervisor / Approved Premises Residential Worker and NHS Ambulance Emergency Care assistant (including unsocial hours);
- It overlaps at the top end with Private Prison Officer (39-hour week), Private Emergency Care Assistant, Police Call Handler and Police Community Support Officer, the middle with Residential Children's Worker and Firefighter and the bottom end of Police Constable. The relative position of Band 3 has deteriorated against CPO (without SRA) in Northern Ireland;
- Band 3 pay remains entirely beneath that of the SPS Residential Officer (this was driven by restructuring by SPS of the Residential Officer pay scale, removing the first point of the SPS pay scale (a move from a four point pay scale to three)) and is now completely below the Home Office Border Force (Administrative Officer spot rate and Executive Officer maximum including Annualised Hours Worked); and
- Compared with the sample of prison officers in the private prison sector, the Band 3 minimum (from 1 April 2024) including unsocial hours and 2 x ACH was in line with the top end of private sector prison officer pay. The private sector prison pay range overlaps at the lower end when compared against the other comparators, with a lower range minimum than most other roles.

⁷⁰ OPRB analysis of unpublished HMPPS data.

Figure 2.15: Band 3 National pay and closed grade Prison Officer pay (from 1 April 2024) compared to selected IDR-based comparators^{71,72,73}



⁷¹ Note y-axis does not start at zero. Adapted from IDR (2019). *Prison Pay Comparability Study*. (online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prison-pay-comparability-study> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

⁷² Data from multiple sources. Band 3 and closed grade Prison Officer pay values – unpublished HMPPS payroll data from 1 April 2024. Community Payback Supervisor / Approved Premises Residential Worker – Probation Service (Band 3) – based on unpublished data from HMPPS. Private Prison Officer (n=5), Residential Children's Worker (n=6), Police Call Handler (n=7), Private Emergency Care Assistant (n=4), Police Community Support Officer (n=13) – OPRB analyses of publicly advertised roles, sourced in December 2024. NHS Ambulance Emergency care assistant – NHS Employers– Pay scales for 2024/25 (online) Available at: <https://www.nhsemployers.org/articles/pay-scales-202425> [accessed on 3 April 2025]. Firefighter – Fire Brigades Union, Pay settlement 2024 (online) Available at: <https://www.fbu.org.uk/pay-rates/pay-settlement-2024> [accessed on 4 April 2025]. Police constable – Police Federation, Constable pay scale from 1 September 2024 (online) Available at: <https://www.polfed.org/resources/pay-scales/constable-pay-scales/> [accessed on 3 April 2025]. Northern Ireland Custody Prison Officer – based on PSPRB 2024 report on Northern Ireland. Scottish Residential Officer – based on unpublished Scottish Prison Service data from 1 April 2024. Home Office Border Force – unpublished Home Office payroll data from 1 July 2024.

⁷³ The salary points for NHS Ambulance Emergency Care Assistant and Border Force both include an estimate of unsocial hours. These estimates were based on IDR's calculations in the 2019 report. Firefighter assumes no overtime. IDR only included pay points 2 to 4 for Police Constable, all pay points have been included here. Community Payback Supervisor was privatised at time of IDR report and is now again part of the Probation Service (Band 3). Private Prison Officer, Residential Children's Worker, Police Call Handler, Private Emergency Care Assistant, Police Community Support Officer pay values may include/attract shift and/or unsocial and/or other allowances and may be based on annual or hourly pay.

Motivation and morale

Civil Service People Survey

- 2.70 The annual Civil Service People Survey began in 2009 and aims to gauge attitudes and experiences of those working in government departments. The 2024 survey ran from 10 September to 8 October (online) and received a total of 26,245 responses from HMPPS staff, including 10,627 responses from staff in His Majesty's Prison Service (HMPS) and the YCS, both lower than the previous year. The results cover both remit group and non-remit group staff. Due to the relatively low response rates for the Prison Service and the factors affecting selection bias, it is important to treat results from this survey with caution. The POA advises its members not to fill in the survey and has requested that HMPPS works together with it on a new survey covering only the remit group.
- 2.71 The Employee Engagement Index (EEI) is a workplace approach designed to ensure that employees are committed to their organisation's goals and values and are motivated to contribute to organisational success. The EEI score is calculated from responses to five specific questions; the scale ranges from very disengaged (0%) through to very engaged (100%). The EEI for HMPPS as a whole was the same in 2024 as it was in the previous two years, at 60%. For HMPS and the YCS the EEI rose from 58% in 2023 to 60% in 2024.
- 2.72 On the pay and benefits theme, of the Bands 2 to 11 operational grades in HMPS and the YCS who responded, 51% were dissatisfied with the total benefits package. Only 27% thought their pay adequately reflects their performance, and 56% did not feel that their pay was reasonable compared to people doing a similar job. Relating to future intentions, 60% of all respondents in HMPS and the YCS said that they want to stay working for the organisation for at least the next three years, up one percentage point from 2023. In 2024, 18% said they want to leave their organisation within the next 12 months or sooner, two percentage points lower than in 2023. HMPPS did not share the reasons for wanting to leave HMPS and the YCS from the 2024 survey. In recent years there have been differences in the results from this survey compared with the reasons staff who were actually leaving gave in their exit interviews.
- 2.73 In HMPS and the YCS, 62% of respondents said they could access support to cope with the emotional demands of their work, two percentage points higher than in 2023. 69% felt safe in their working environment in 2024, up one percentage point from 2023. Reported levels of discrimination remained at the same level in HMPS and the YCS in 2024 as 2023, at 15%. Bullying and harassment decreased by one percentage point to 14%. In 2024, of those who indicated that they had been bullied and/or harassed at work, 44% said they had reported it but only 20% said they saw appropriate action being taken to address the behaviour. In 2023, 42% of people said they had reported the bullying and/or harassment and 23% said appropriate action was taken to address the behaviour.

POA survey

- 2.74 The POA again this year undertook a survey of its members, with around 1,700 completing it. Some of the main points noted were:
- Pay – 83% said they felt that their salary did not reflect the role and responsibilities of their job. Around 88% felt their salary was too low considering

the work they undertook and the risks involved. 39% said they were not satisfied with the benefits package they received and 68% said their salary was not in line with other similar public sector jobs;

- Recruitment – around 40% of respondents felt that they did not get regular training relevant to their role, with a similar number considering that their job training was not fit for purpose. 45% reported that their initial officer training had not prepared them for life on the landings. Roughly 50% of reported activities being curtailed were said to be due to staff shortages;
- Retention – around 26% said they intended to leave the Prison Service in two to five years, 11% in less than a year and 18% in over 10 years. When asked where they would leave their current role to go, 15% said they would retire and 11% would want to get promoted to the next band;
- Motivation and morale – 70% of respondents felt that morale was not good in the prison that they worked at. A similar number also stated that they had been stressed a few times a week or more. 41% said they had never been assaulted at their workplace, with 44% saying they had been assaulted more than once. 90% reported being verbally abused or threatened more than once by a prisoner;
- Other issues – 56% felt that there were not enough staff on duty in their work area to supervise prisoners safely, with 40% believing too many prisoners were being unlocked for association;
- Of the 23% of staff who had requested a flexible working pattern, 42% said they had their proposed shift pattern accepted;
- 78% felt staff complaints were not taken seriously with 80% having no confidence in the staff grievance procedure;
- 70% reported that they did not have meaningful face to face conversations with their line manager every eight weeks about their performance; and
- 95% considered the retirement age to be too high.

Sickness absence

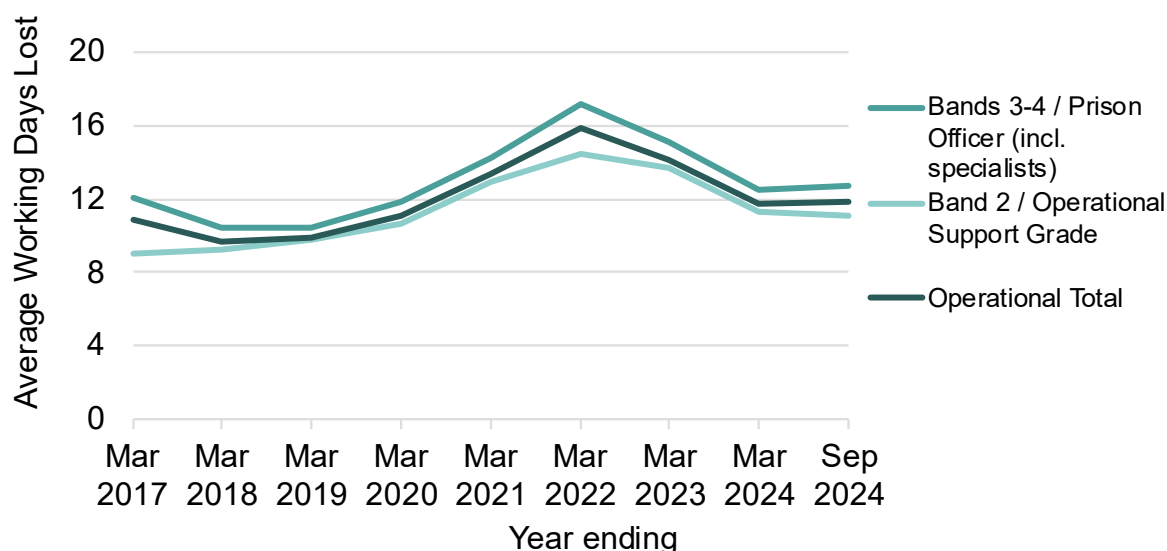
2.75 High levels of sickness absence are often a sign of low morale and motivation. They also significantly affect staffing levels and operational decisions.

2.76 In the year to 30 September 2024, operational staff in HMPS, YCS and HMPPS headquarters had 11.9 average working days lost (AWDL) due to sickness absence.⁷⁴ This is down from 14.2 in the 12 months to 31 March 2023 and down from 15.9 in the 12 months to 31 March 2022. By grade, in the year to 30 September 2024, Band 3 and 4 prison officers (including specialists) had the highest AWDL, at 12.7, followed by Band 4 / Supervising Officer (12.5) and Band 2 / OSG (11.1). Operational manager grades had lower AWDL compared with Band 4 staff and below. AWDL decreased for all grades during the year to 30 September 2024

⁷⁴ OPRB analysis of HMPPS data. HMPPS, (2024). *HM Prison and Probation Service workforce quarterly: September 2024*. (online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hm-prison-probation-service-workforce-quarterly-september-2024> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

compared to the year ending 31 March 2023. High levels of overtime, TOIL and temporary promotion might have a direct relationship with the level of absenteeism, and an analysis of this might be beneficial.

Figure 2.16: Average Working Days Lost for Band 3-4 Prison Officers, Band 2 / Operational Support grades and total operational staff, 12 months to 31 March 2017 to 2024 and 12 months to 30 September 2024⁷⁵



- 2.77 In the year to 30 September 2024, the most common reason for sickness absence for Band 3 to 5 officers was 'mental ill health', accounting for 35.8% of known sickness absence reasons. This was higher than in the year to 31 March 2023 (27.0%). 'musculoskeletal system' was the second-most common reason (21.5%) in the year to 30 September 2024. Unsurprisingly, since March 2022, the category of sickness absence with the greatest change was 'epidemic/pandemic' which has fallen from 26.6% to 1.4% in the year to 30 September 2024.
- 2.78 For Band 2 / OSG, 'mental ill health' was also the most common reason for absence in the year to 30 September 2024, accounting for 25.1% of known sickness absence reasons. This was followed by 'musculoskeletal system' at 22.9%.
- 2.79 Across HMPPS grades in aggregate, 'mental ill health' was the most reported known reason for sickness absence in the year to 30 September 2024 (39.9% of known reasons). Over the same period, 'musculoskeletal system' accounted for 17.5% of all known reasons.

⁷⁵ OPRB analysis of unpublished HMPPS data.

Chapter 3: The parties' submissions and proposals

Introduction

- 3.1 This chapter covers the parties' proposals made to us in written submissions. We received these from all parties: His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS); the POA; the Prison Governors' Association (PGA); and the Public and Commercial Services (PCS) Union. We received the Government's economic evidence to the Pay Review Bodies from His Majesty's Treasury (HMT). We also received a written submission from the Community Union covering those TUPE transferred staff from HMP Lowdham Grange, who now form part of our closed grade remit group.
- 3.2 We have collated the main points made by the parties in both their written and oral evidence, relating to: the working environment; issues around recruitment and retention; motivation and morale; and affordability of the pay proposals. All of these are important parts of our terms of reference.

His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service

- 3.3 HMPPS published⁷⁶ its evidence for the 2025-26 pay round in December 2024. As we note in Chapter 1, this was a couple of weeks later than we requested but was significantly earlier than in previous years for which we are grateful. HMPPS attended oral evidence on 16 January along with Lord Timpson, the Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending.
- 3.4 HMPPS noted that from February 2023 until September 2024 the adult male estate had operated at more than 99% capacity, which had increased the burden on prison staff. In summer 2024, HMPPS said that the issues associated with the prison population had become so acute, that on one day it had recorded fewer than 100 places remaining. This had led to Operation Early Dawn which controlled the number of prisoners being sent from the courts. To date, HMPPS said it had provided 6,500 of the 20,000 extra places announced in 2021 and this had come through a mixture of new builds and opening new and/or formerly closed accommodation at existing prisons. HMPPS expected HMP Millsike to open in spring 2025, creating around 1,500 spaces, with a further three new prisons in the planning process.
- 3.5 In its evidence, HMPPS noted that it had experienced recruitment and retention challenges in recent years but, following significant investments in pay, it had seen an improved and more stable national staffing picture, although it recognised that there had been limited time to assess the impact of the 2024-25 pay award. HMPPS said that the number of staff in post was almost at the correct level according to its resource model. However, it accepted that this meant it had a staff group where significant numbers were inexperienced. Given recruitment was more stable, HMPPS believed that future pay awards should be competitive enough to ensure that new staff can continue to be recruited to maintain the current resourcing position. HMPPS said it no longer needs to attract the large numbers of applicants and hire at the rates of the last two years. HMPPS noted that as at 30 June 2024 there were 23,613 Band 3 to 5 officers in post, which was an increase of 1,254 (5.6%) on the 30 June 2023 data. In oral evidence the Minister was of the view that

⁷⁶ HMPPS, (2024). *HMPPS evidence to the Prison Service Pay Review Body: 2025*. (online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hmppps-evidence-to-prison-service-pay-review-body-2025> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

there needed to be changes to the recruitment and training processes, including the provision of longer training periods, in particular for new staff. The Minister said that he had previously led the review of prison officer training and development, and as Minister he was now charged with implementing its findings.

- 3.6 HMPPS stated that, following improvements in recruitment, its overall focus had shifted to retaining staff and extending staff training. HMPPS reported that its exit interviews indicated that lack of career progression was now the top driver of attrition. It was reported that the overall leaving rate had begun to plateau, reducing slightly from 13.1% in the 12 months ending September 2023 to 12.8% in the 12 months ending September 2024, although HMPPS said the most recent pay award had not yet fed into this data. Therefore, it believed that heavy investment in pay before the impact of last year's pay award was known would be premature. HMPPS stated that over 40% of its Band 3 to 5 prison officers had less than three years' experience and its focus organisationally was to increase the capability of these staff and increase experience by improving retention. Overall, the Service accepted that retention was still at an unsatisfactory level.
- 3.7 HMPPS said the Civil Service People Survey results for its staff suggested that morale and motivation had not changed significantly in the last 12 months, although it did note that the response rate of prison staff to that survey was low. HMPPS accepted that the increase in assaults on staff had an adverse effect on staff morale, particularly as many staff had joined the Service when levels of assaults had fallen during and following the Covid-19 pandemic. The increase in violence had started to filter through to higher sickness absence rates and HMPPS was aware that there needed to be more management and preventative work undertaken in relation to this. In oral evidence, HMPPS also said that it needed to do more in relation to its approach on bullying and harassment, particularly in dealing with racism, misogyny, sexism and homophobia and investigating related complaints. It said that fewer people were prepared to tolerate such discriminatory conduct, that complaints were higher than before and that an internal review had been commissioned prompted by these complaints. It said the Minister's focus on improving professional standards would also help to combat unhealthy cultures and behaviours in these and other areas.
- 3.8 On affordability, HMPPS noted that the Government had accepted last year's pay and related recommendations, but this had been at a significant cost. HMPPS stated that our recommendations this year should strike a balance between fair pay and value for money for the taxpayer, reiterating many of the points from the HMT evidence, summarised in the next section (paragraphs 3.13 to 3.16). HMPPS said one of its key strategic objectives was to remain within the Department's affordability envelope. It costed its proposals for the remit group at around £54.1 million, mainly consisting of £45.1 million for the headline pay award and £9.0 million for pay progression, with other smaller amounts on areas such as allowances.⁷⁷ In oral evidence it told us that HMT had been clear that there would be no additional funding for awards over 2.9% and that there was no tolerance in the HMPPS budget for a higher pay award. The Service said it had not identified any initiatives that it could cut to offset a higher pay award and there was little discretionary spending.

⁷⁷ We note that in its published evidence, HMPPS included the total cost of its pay proposals for all staff, however this also includes the non-remit group. The figures presented here have been provided separately by HMPPS and are just for those staff in our remit group. The figures include oncosts for employer pension and national insurance contributions.

There were no productivity initiatives that would “free up cash” and any savings from the use of technology would be used to deploy operational staff to other duties, for example key worker duties.

3.9 The following proposals were made by HMPPS:

- An uplift to the Band 2 spot rate of 3.0% (inclusive of the 1.7% increase to the National Living Wage (NLW));
- A headline increase for all staff in Bands 3 to 12 of a fixed cash value derived as a percentage of the National pay range maxima/spot rates of 2.9%;
- Maintain the existing National to London differentials;
- An additional increase to the Band 10 Inner (£431) and Outer (£260) London rates to ensure that staff receive the full 10% on promotion from the Band 9 maximum to Band 10 in Inner and Outer London;
- A non-consolidated award for closed grade staff who would suffer a financial disadvantage if they opted in to Fair and Sustainable with the value to be determined by the Prison Service Pay Review Body (PSPRB);
- No pay award for those staff on closed grade terms who would benefit financially if they opted in to Fair and Sustainable;
- Eligible staff in Bands 3 and 5, who were not subject to formal poor performance measures, should progress to the next pay point following pay point uplifts, effective 1 April 2025;
- Eligible staff in Bands 8 to 11, who were not subject to formal poor performance measures, progress by increasing pay by 3.33% (subject to the maxima) in addition to headline increases and/or any uplifts as a result of pay range shortening;
- Maintain market supplements at the current levels of £2,000 a year at red sites and £3,500 a year at red plus sites;
- Increase the Operational Response and Resilience Group (ORRU) on-call allowance by 7.8% (£520) from £6,670 to £7,190 a year;
- No increase to the Unsocial Working Hours (UWH) or Required Hours Addition/Allowance (RHA) payments in 2025-26; and
- No change to the rates of Payment Plus and Operational Support Grade (OSG) overtime whilst work continued on Recommendation 14 from the 2024 Report.

3.10 In oral evidence we questioned HMPPS on its proposals around applying the flat cash approach to all pay points and range minima, asking specifically whether it had concerns around compression of the scales and ranges. It stated that applying more in percentage terms to the bottom of the pay scales and ranges would not greatly impact on the current grade differentials and would help retention. HMPPS also said that it did not see compression of the scales and ranges as a significant issue and

the flat rate approach was not part of a longer term pay strategy. It would also look at the issue of compression following the next Spending Review.

- 3.11 HMPPS had in previous years told us it was committed to the eventual removal of market supplements. However, in 2024 that view changed and it now sees them as a continuing feature of the pay structure. As in recent years, HMPPS proposed that we do not recommend any further erosion of market supplements because, while there have been overall improvements to recruitment and retention nationally, capacity and staffing challenges remain at specific sites. HMPPS told us that it will introduce a new evidence-based framework from April 2025 to support the continued use of market supplements. HMPPS intends that this framework will make market supplements a clear, simple, and transparent targeted tool, and that decisions on implementation or erosion of market supplements would be data driven. If HMPPS considered that a market supplement was no longer required at a site, a gradual erosion process would be applied to withdraw it, using a portion of the annual pay award to offset any reduction to ensure that staff continue to receive a pay uplift each year with no drop in earnings. We welcome the intention of HMPPS to introduce a clearer, more consistent, evidence-based framework to explain their use. However, we remain concerned about the distortion to the pay structure and potential ripple effect that market supplements have on other prisons, particularly those close to market supplement sites and we continue to believe that they should be phased out.
- 3.12 HMPPS introduced the current performance management system in April 2022, intending to bring a focus on regular conversations about performance and development, moving away from end of year recognition to relatively small in-year awards. The PCS, PGA and POA have consistently argued that this MoJ system was not suitable for the Prison Service, but HMPPS said that it was working well.

His Majesty's Treasury

- 3.13 HMT published⁷⁸ its written economic evidence to all eight public sector Pay Review Bodies for the 2025-26 pay round on 10 December 2024. The evidence reiterated the Government's commitment to the independent Pay Review Body process as the means for setting pay for frontline public sector workers.
- 3.14 The written evidence noted that the spending envelope for departmental budgets in 2025-26 had been fixed and the Government was committed to living within them. Departments would not be provided with additional funding for 2025-26 pay awards should Pay Review Bodies exceed what departments had determined they could afford. Awards that came in above what had been budgeted for would require departments to consider carefully whether the additional costs could be borne either through offsetting savings on non-pay expenditure or through productivity gains. Departments would also need to consider the impact of recurring pay costs on budgets beyond 2025-26. The 2025-26 Government's Contingency Reserve would only be available for genuinely unforeseen, unavoidable and unabsorbable pressures.
- 3.15 HMT noted that whilst the recruitment and retention picture had generally worsened across the public sector between the early 2010s and early 2020s it had improved

⁷⁸ His Majesty's Treasury, (2024). *Economic Evidence to the Pay Review Bodies: 2025-26 Pay Round*. (online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/economic-evidence-to-the-pay-review-bodies-2025-26-pay-round> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

recently, although there remained some challenges for some workforces. This worsening of recruitment and retention had also been accompanied by a general deterioration in outcomes across public services. HMT also noted that there had been earlier provision of its evidence, and the evidence of relevant departments and other interested parties to Pay Review Bodies for the 2025-26 pay rounds. This was with the intention that pay awards could be made much closer to the start of the pay year than has been the case for some years. As a result, HMT considered that greater weight should be given to forecast earnings growth. The HMT evidence also noted that across the wider economy there had been a decline in earnings growth in 2024, with wage growth forecast to be around 3% in 2025-26 according to the Office for Budget Responsibility, with the Bank of England expecting settlements to fall back to between 2% and 4% in 2025.

- 3.16 The evidence concluded that accepting the 2024-25 pay recommendations had provided the first meaningful real terms pay increases for the remit group for several years and it was not a decision that the Government had taken lightly. The HMT evidence stated that real terms wage rises could only be sustained by productivity growth over the medium term which in turn could deliver sustained economic growth. HMT reiterated that wage growth was forecast to be moderate over the coming months and to be materially lower in 2025-26, at around 3%.

POA

- 3.17 This year we received the POA's written submissions⁷⁹ at the end of November 2024, holding oral evidence with officials on 23 January 2025. The union stated that the PSPRB was a compensatory mechanism for the loss of the right to strike by prison grades as set out by the International Labour Organization and the POA has an absolute objection to any form of government interference in the pay review process. This included being free to consider all the evidence, free from government interference via restrictive remit letters and guidance from HMT.
- 3.18 The union said the Prison Service was and is in "crisis", with staff shortages, overcrowding, unacceptable levels of violence and under resourcing at a time when HMPPS was seeking to increase the number of prison places. The POA said the working environment remains one of the most "hostile" and violent workplaces of any occupation in the world. The union noted that while staff were working in substandard conditions, they were also having to contend with a high cost of living and high inflation costs now built into most of the necessities of life they have no choice but to buy.
- 3.19 The POA also considered that the issues around recruitment and retention had been mitigated by a "massive" reliance on Payment Plus, but this had now started to lead to burn out of staff. The union believed the target staffing levels were too low but noted that HMPPS said it was at 99.5% of its target staffing level. There were still too many staff leaving the Service and detached duty levels remained high. There were also certain prisons that had extremely high leaving rates. For Bands 3 to 5 the leaving rate was 13.2% and for Band 2 it was 15.9% in March 2024. The POA reported that if everything was "as rosy as HMPPS suggested" then around 34% of Band 3 Prison Officers would not be leaving within their first year of service, with around 50% leaving within the first two years of service. Retention was still a

⁷⁹ POA UK, (2024). *CIRC 105: NATIONAL CHAIR UPDATE DECEMBER 2024*. (online) Available at: <https://www.poauk.org.uk/news-events/news-room/posts/2024/december/circ-105-national-chair-update-december-2024/> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

struggle for the Service and the union said officers left for jobs in: the Police; Fire and Rescue Service; Border Force; railway companies; logistics; and heavy goods vehicle driving.

- 3.20 According to the POA, morale was “through the floor” and if there was not a decent pay award this year then that would “sap” morale further. The Service now had an increasingly difficult issue of dealing with organised crime networks inside prisons, which could also see staff targeted outside work. The POA reported that the levels of assaults and self-harm had increased to beyond or just below pre-Covid-19 levels, which many officers, who had joined during or after Covid-19, had not previously experienced. The POA stated that self-harm in both the male and female estates, assaults on staff generally, serious assaults on staff and consequent prison staff hospital attendances were now at the highest levels recorded in the last ten years. These all adversely affected the wellbeing of staff. The union also noted that the Shaping A New Employee Offer programme had failed to secure funding from HMPPS to procure a new rostering tool which would have allowed staff greater flexibility in shift patterns. This would ultimately impact negatively on the motivation and morale of those who wanted to work more flexibly. The POA noted in oral evidence that 58% of staff reported that their request for flexible working had been turned down.
- 3.21 The POA costed its proposals at a total of around £173 million for Bands 2 to 5, consisting of £66.5 million for the headline award, £40 million for changes to UWH payments, £15 million for its proposals on incremental pay and the rest on changes to other allowances and payments, such as Payment Plus. The POA said that its proposals were affordable and measured and would help recruit and, importantly, retain more staff within the Service for longer periods because retention rates were still unacceptably low. The cost of recruiting staff and then losing significant numbers in the first two years was a “waste of money”. More competitive pay would result in the reduction in the use of costly Payment Plus and detached duty to those prisons that were struggling. The POA also stated that the Service had already made significant productivity savings as it now dealt with 86,000 prisoners with fewer staff than in the early 1990s when there were only 43,000 prisoners.
- 3.22 The POA made the following proposals:
- Staff in Fair and Sustainable Bands 2 to 5 should receive a consolidated 6.5% uplift to all pay points which included an element towards pay restoration following years of austerity;
 - A two year pay settlement for 2025-26 or 2026-27. If it was to start this year the POA claim would be for 6.5% for each year;
 - All staff remaining on the closed grade equivalents to Bands 2 to 5 should receive a consolidated 6.5% uplift to all pay points. Those with historical pay allowances should be given the opportunity to opt in to Fair and Sustainable;
 - The UWH allowance for Band 2 OSGs should be increased from 20% to 50% and for Bands 3 to 5 officer grades from 20% to 30% of base pay;
 - The ORRU on-call allowance to be increased by 30% from £6,670 to £8,673 a year;

- Payment Plus should be increased from £22 to £30 an hour;
- Band 2 OSG overtime should be increased to time and a half for green hours and double time for red hours;⁸⁰
- A £500 retainer payment to be paid to all staff who complete an initial Operation Tornado⁸¹ course and then paid annually after the successful completion of refresher training;
- A specialist consolidated allowance of £1,500 a year to be paid to Band 4 Physical Education Instructors;
- Introduction of a dog trainers allowance of £1,500 a year for those staff who are delivering initial training and a further allowance of £1,000 a year for those delivering continuation training;
- Those Band 2 to 5 staff undertaking additional and voluntary unpaid tasks⁸² to be paid £1,000 a year;
- Contractual incremental pay to be introduced for a five year period for all existing staff from 1 April 2025 (from 1 April 2026 for those recruited after 31 March 2025);
- Fair and Sustainable opt in lump sum payments should be made pensionable; and
- Band 2 OSGs should be removed from the PSPRB remit as they have the right to take industrial action.

3.23 The POA proposed that all market supplements should be consolidated into base pay because it believed that market supplements were divisive and ineffective. It provided examples of red plus sites with high leaving rates and low staff-in-post figures.

3.24 The POA stated that, in practice, the performance management system did not exist. Band 5 Custodial Managers had spans of management control that were too large, meaning that they did not have the time for quality discussions with staff. Some staff did not even know who their line manager was. The POA considered that Band 4 Supervising Officers should return as the first line manager grade so there could be smaller spans of control.

⁸⁰ Green hours are weekdays from 07:00-19:00, red hours are at all other times – weekdays (19:00-07:00), all day weekends and Public/Bank Holidays.

⁸¹ Operation Tornado teams consist of staff trained specifically to deal with serious incidents in prisons. Tornado units are used to support other establishments in the event of an operational emergency. These incidents include serious disturbances, hostage incidents, or any incident where the establishment does not have the resources to cope, such as a need to transfer large numbers of prisoners at short notice.

⁸² POA notes the following, but this is not exhaustive: Negotiator; ACCT Assessor; Control and Restraint Instructor; Control and Restraint Tornado/advanced course; First Aider; Mentor; Local Response Team; Care Team; Mental Health Allies (TRIM trained staff); OSG drivers (including Tornado and Category A/High Security); ECR/Control Room Operators; Separation Centres; Discreet HSE Units; Family Liaison Officers; Dog Trainers; and proposed Naloxone intervention staff.

Prison Governors' Association

- 3.25 The PGA submitted its written evidence at the end of November 2024 and attended oral evidence on 16 January 2025, providing evidence on a range of topics covering all aspects of our remit, along with some outside our remit. The union welcomed the Government bringing the pay review cycle back into line with previous expectations, noting that it should mean awards this year being paid as close to April as possible.
- 3.26 The union stated that prisons are unique and there are few workplaces that can easily be compared to them. It reported working conditions that were often unsafe, poorly maintained and unsuitable for providing the very basic functions. Prison numbers were at a record high, so much so that the union estimated around 23% of prisoners were being held in overcrowded conditions. Demands on prisons and staff were currently unprecedented and had led to the Government introducing early release schemes to relieve pressures on the system, something the PGA expected to continue into the coming years.
- 3.27 On recruitment and retention, the union noted that between 2009-10 and 2014-15 the Prison Service lost 26.6% (around 6,600) of its officer cadre and today the Service had at least 10% fewer prison officers than in the years prior to 2009-10. The union also noted that the number of staff on temporary promotion arrangements had increased and it was concerning to see so many operational manager roles being covered by "temporary leaders". There was a lack of financial reward that took account of the challenges of being a prison-based operational manager, coupled with a lack of workforce succession planning. The PGA provided data which showed the number of applicants for operational manager vacancies was far lower than equivalent non-operational manager vacancies. The union therefore had concerns about the talent pipeline for more senior operational managers as many of the current cadre approached retirement age.
- 3.28 The PGA said the safety in custody statistics published in October 2024 demonstrated the level of violence and trauma that its members and those they led faced on a daily basis. The union stated that levels of violence remained stubbornly high and were increasing, noting that there were 3,530 assaults on staff in 2006 and that this had risen to 9,204 in 2023. Staff were also more likely to suffer attacks involving weapons. These factors adversely affected staff morale. The PGA reported that its members generally felt overworked and unsupported, having to deal with the compound effect of trauma over many years. Sickness absence was also increasing in Bands 7 to 11, which further reduced morale.
- 3.29 It was acknowledged that HMPPS was not a protected department and therefore the union said much of the financial savings burdens had been placed on the Prison Service. The union noted that HMPPS was likely to need to find money to fund the pay award and that the Prison Service had not invested properly in pay since "Fresh Start" in 1989. The PGA said it was not its place to indicate where productivity savings could or should be made. The union said its proposals were affordable given the operational manager group made up just 2.5% of the total HMPPS workforce, noting that Fair and Sustainable Band 3 Prison Officers had recently seen significant pay increases.
- 3.30 The PGA made the following proposals:

- The percentage differential between the Band 7 spot rate and the Band 11 maximum be reinstated to the original Fair and Sustainable level (in 2012) as per the 2013 England and Wales PSPRB Report;
- The base pay maxima for Bands 7 to 11 be reset to 2012 levels, with inflation increases then applied. The same should apply to Band 12. This reset of pay ranges alone implied increases of up to 18.9% for some grades;
- There should be a gap of at least 10% between each pay band;
- There should be a minimum of at least 10% progression between pay bands;
- RHA currently incorporated into the Band 12 spot rate should be removed and applied as a separate element to those Band 12 roles that formed part of the original Band 12 agreement;
- RHA should be paid at an enhanced rate of 25% to operational managers who are allocated to prisons or have other specific job descriptions;
- A headline pay increase of 5% to the minima, maxima and spot rates, following pay scale reset to 2012 levels, with a progression rate of one third of the relevant pay band. Progression should remain linked to performance and those at the top of their respective pay range should receive a corresponding one third, fully consolidated payment;
- The PGA said that there was no evidence to suggest that operational managers were able to work flexibly. Therefore, they should be compensated for this loss of benefit, equivalent to two days average daily commuting costs each week;
- Accreditation or utilisation payments for Head of Function, Deputy Governor, Governor and Prison Group Director appointment. Starting at 10% and then increasing by an additional 5% for each higher grade promoted to, up to a maximum of 25% of base pay for Band 12 Prison Group Directors;
- The Fair and Sustainable Inner and Outer London differentials be redefined to aid staff recruitment in these high cost of living areas of the country. These should also extend to other difficult to recruit areas of the country where there is a high cost of living;
- Funded healthcare for operational managers with a minimum provision of 24 hour General Practitioner access and enhanced occupational and wellbeing support;
- Commitment to the introduction of a meaningful workplace salary sacrifice scheme, in line with many other organisations that promote the use of electric vehicles and tax incentivised salary sacrifice schemes;
- Implementation of a funded performance bonus system; and
- The union said it had, in addition to the proposals above, a standing conference manifesto that included additional remuneration for Band 8 Deputy Governor roles and the principle of 60 years as the retirement age for operational managers.

- 3.31 The PGA stated in its written evidence that there was a concern around the performance bonus system and the localised approach, which it thought produced inconsistencies and unfairness. It considered that the current system lacked transparency and uniformity, leading to disparities in how bonuses were awarded in different regions. The PGA called for a fully funded, properly functioning performance bonus system, which would boost morale.

Public and Commercial Services Union

- 3.32 At the end of November 2024, the PCS submitted its written submission and proposals to us, attending oral evidence on 23 January 2025. The union noted that the state of the Service was “appalling”, with crumbling infrastructure and a £1.8 billion backlog in repairs. The prison population pressures had placed a significant burden on all staff as the number of spare cells reduced and release schemes took place. The Service was not fulfilling one of its fundamental functions, that is to rehabilitate prisoners.
- 3.33 The union considered that the poor conditions staff were working in meant that competitive pay and terms and conditions would remain an important recruitment and retention aid, otherwise the Service could “easily drift back into crisis”. One of the top five reasons for leaving remained the inability to work flexibly without detriment and that HMPPS often refused requests for flexible working due to “operational needs”, despite recruitment literature referring to flexible working availability. PCS stated that HMPPS had no data on the application of the flexible working policy and considered that there was no flexible working in prison establishments.
- 3.34 Morale and motivation were described by PCS as being “low”. Staff were affected by increased levels of violence and prisoner drug use. The union also stated that staff were expecting a decent and fair pay rise that built on the previous two years. Anything less would be “devastating” for morale. Many staff were described as being exhausted because of the extra work and hours they had undertaken and this was on top of additional pressures due to the number of early releases, which had also affected non-operational staff.
- 3.35 The union noted that wage growth predictions were between 3.5% to 4.0% for 2025 and anything less for prison staff would reduce HMPPS’s competitiveness in the wider labour market. HMPPS could not afford to have the progress made by recent pay awards undone and continuing to strengthen pay was important. PCS stated that it believed that productivity in the Service had increased faster than pay in the last decade, with staff working over and above their defined job roles.
- 3.36 PCS made the following proposals to the PSPRB:
- A 10% pay increase, to demonstrate an immediate step towards a significant element of pay restoration following a decade of pay restraint. Base pay increases must be consolidated and pensionable and applied to minima, maxima and spot rates backdated to 1 April 2025;
 - For Band 2 staff the consolidated and pensionable award should be in addition to any legally required increase in the NLW;
 - The PCS believes that the NLW should be set at £15 an hour;

- Those closed grades who do not benefit financially from opting in to Fair and Sustainable should receive a payment that matches the headline pay recommendation;
- The PCS endorsed the HMPPS proposal of staff receiving the full 10% on promotion to Band 10 from the Band 9 maximum in Inner and Outer London;
- Those undertaking additional voluntary duties⁸³ should be financially compensated for the emotional and psychological demands of these, along with the additional workload. The PSPRB should ask HMPPS to undertake a full review of current practices with a view to exploring a range of options, such as a consolidated payment, standalone posts with agreed job descriptions or one-off hourly payments;
- Band 4 staff who are fully qualified in their speciality should receive an annual retention bonus;
- Progression up the pay scale/range should not be withheld from those staff subject to poor performance procedures;
- Hybrid working should be rolled out in the Prison Service to all those staff who could benefit from this; and
- Annual leave provision should be increased to at least 35 days on entry to the Service.

3.37 The PCS believed that market supplements distorted the pay structure, were ineffective and divisive because they are only paid to Band 3 Prison Officers. They argued that they would also be hard to remove from existing staff and that prisons located nearby without the supplements were negatively impacted by those prisons with the supplement.

3.38 In its written evidence, the PCS again proposed that pay progression should be paid to those working through formal poor performance measures. It said that denying those on poor performance procedures could not be applied consistently, given Bands 2, 4, 7 and 12 were spot rates and many other staff were on pay maxima. The union also believed that denying those on formal poor performance procedures a pay increase disproportionately impacted those with protected characteristics. The PCS emphasised that point during oral evidence, adding that the performance management system was flawed and not being used as intended.

Community Union

3.39 This year, we also received a written submission from the Community Union who represent staff at HMP Lowdham Grange, which transferred to the public sector in August 2024. This meant that those former operational equivalent grades at the prison transferred into our remit. These staff are on a different set of pay arrangements to the rest of the Service and therefore we shall treat them as if they

⁸³ PCS notes the following, but this is not exhaustive: ACCT Accessors; First Aiders; Mental Health Allies; Shannon Trust Mentors; Rehabilitative Culture Champions; Care Team; Family Liaison Officers; Peer Mentoring; and TRIM and TUBU Mediators.

were closed grades, in line with our usual approach. We understand that these staff have been given the opportunity by HMPPS to opt in to Fair and Sustainable.

3.40 The Community Union made the following proposals:

- Fair and Sustainable Bands 2 to 5 and closed grade equivalents should receive a consolidated increase of 8.3% to all pay points;
- Fair and Sustainable UWH payments should increase from 20% to 30% of base pay; and
- The introduction of a time and a half payment for those staff who take on unpaid duties and for each additional duty they take on. This would include Operation Tornado duties and training. The union also supports the introduction of a trial scheme to track and monitor hours and costs.

Evidence from visits

3.41 As discussed in Chapter 1, this year we undertook seven visits to public sector prisons, one visit to a private sector prison and to the ORRU based at Kidlington. We have grouped the main points and themes from our visits below for ease of reading.

Pay

- Overall, most staff said that last year's pay award was "fair" or "good" and were "happy" with its level, especially as it built on the two previous years' awards. However, staff still said the cost of living and inflation, coupled with "lower" pay awards historically, meant their pay was behind where they felt it should be.
- This year staff were more vocal about the difference in pay between the grades, considering the differential between grades as not being sufficiently wide to encourage promotion or taking on additional responsibilities.
- Operational managers discussed the Band 7 spot rate, with experienced Band 7s feeling the grade should not be a spot rate as it did not compensate for their experience. Band 4s also noted that the spot rate did not remunerate for experience at that grade. Both grades suggested they should return to having some form of range/scale.
- OSGs were unhappy about being seen as performing a "minimum wage" role and were pleased that we had made recommendations on top of the NLW increase in the 2024-25 pay round.
- Staff were vocal about the lateness of the pay award, noting the effect it could have on some staff's wider finances.

Allowances

- OSGs continued to inform us that they were working around, if not over, 40% of their hours unsocially and therefore the 20% UWH payment should be increased. This year, we also heard more strongly from other grades, including governing governors, that OSGs were working more hours unsocially and more often than other grades in the Service.

- Staff wanted to be compensated for undertaking additional voluntary duties, such as Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork assessors or as negotiators. Operational managers also noted that there were many elements, such as complex HR challenges, for which they were not remunerated for, and which were now taking more of their time.
- Payment Plus should be increased as this had fallen in relative value given recent pay increases. It was reported that significant numbers of staff relied on Payment Plus to “get by”. Many staff considered the value should be around £30 an hour. Some felt Payment Plus and OSG overtime should increase by the headline pay award each year.
- The National Tactical Response Group (NTRG) and National Dog and Technical Support Group (NDTSG) were generally pleased that the Operation Tornado rate of pay had been increased to £40 an hour for officers and said they felt they had been listened to. Although we met few Tornado trained staff in prisons, those we did said they were not routinely called out and so did not materially benefit from this increase.
- The NTRG and NDTSG staff felt strongly that the ORRU on-call allowance should be increased significantly as it had been frozen for years, the number of call outs was increasing rapidly and the level of disruption to normal life was exceptionally high.
- Generally, staff were pleased that the dirty protest payments had been increased, although some said it was still not enough for what were “vile” duties.

Recruitment and retention

- There were concerns about the people the Service was attracting to the Band 3 Prison Officer role, many of whom it was felt did not have the depth of life skills needed. The feeling was that the Service would benefit from recruiting more mature officers who had previous careers, including ex-military personnel.
- Most staff were dismissive about the recruitment and training processes. In particular we frequently heard that recruitment materials for Bands 2 and 3 did not make it clear that recruits would need routinely to work shifts. Many staff, at all grades, repeated the view that new Band 3 Prison Officers should be interviewed by staff at the prison in which they would be working. This would then “weed” out those who were felt not able to “make it” as a prison officer.
- Generally, it was felt that Band 3 recruitment and retention had improved, although there were some sites still struggling. However, we were told that the budgeted rate for non-effectives⁸⁴ was not set high enough and therefore staff did not see this improved position in staffing levels on the frontline.
- There was a general feeling that Band 2 retention remained challenging, due to more competitive salaries in the wider economy and because of recent, sometimes large, NLW increases.

⁸⁴ Non-effective hours are currently set at 20% of a prison’s total operational staffing hours and built into its staffing numbers. These are designed to cover: annual leave, maternity leave, sickness absences and staff training.

Motivation and morale

- Morale was mixed. Some said it was low, others felt it had improved. Staff continued to express the view that they were the “forgotten Service”.
- There was a concern around increases in the availability of drugs, which was felt to be contributing to a “worrying” increase in violence against staff.
- Staff wanted a better work-life balance and it was felt that current shift patterns did not help. A number of prisons had moved to a four-day week shift pattern and staff generally said they preferred this, as it allowed a better work life balance and produced lower sickness absence rates.
- A recurring theme we have heard in recent years was that OSGs often feel the most undervalued by their colleagues and the Service, which we again heard this year. However, this year in particular, we heard significant numbers of staff, across all grades right up to and including governing governors, express a recognition and value for the critical role OSGs play in the safe and effective running of prisons and the wider Service, emphasising their responsibilities on night shifts.
- Operational managers again noted their hours worked were well in excess of their 37 hour contract, which impacted on their and their families’ wellbeing.

Other issues

- Many staff said that they had not had a performance management conversation for a considerable time, with some saying that they rarely saw their line manager.
- Staff continued to consider that prison officers should be permitted to retire earlier than the current pension age of 67/68 which they believed was too old for prison officers to be working in high risk, operational prison environments. Many wanted parity with the other uniformed emergency services.
- Staff, particularly OSGs, said there was a lack of training and it was difficult to undertake role specific training courses, often relying on colleagues for advice and guidance.
- Operational managers also noted concerns about how the complexity of prisons was rated, which impacted on what grades operational managers were assigned at different prisons. Some suggested that Band 7 and 8 roles should be combined into a single grade and Deputy Governors should all be Band 9s.

3.42 In Chapter 4, we make our recommendations for 2025-26 and outline our reasoning along with the evidence that has led to what we have recommended.

Chapter 4: Our recommendations on pay

Introduction

- 4.1 This chapter presents our recommendations on pay and allowances with effect from 1 April 2025, together with the rationale underpinning them.
- 4.2 In the earlier chapters of this report, we set out the evidence we considered from a range of sources, including: His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS); the trade unions; our remit group, including the evidence gathered during visits; economic evidence; pay data; evidence specific to the remit group such as recruitment, retention and morale; equality and diversity; and the competitiveness of Prison Service pay. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the Prison Service and our remit group have continued to face significant challenges, particularly regarding prison population pressures. While there have been measures introduced to alleviate these pressures in the short-term, sustainable solutions are needed for the longer-term.
- 4.3 Our main objectives for our recommendations this year included:
- Maintaining the improved market position of Prison Service pay arising from our previous recommendations. While we acknowledge that the data may indicate the promise of sustained improvement in the staffing situation, we consider that the job is not yet finished and do not want to risk undermining the progress made over the last few years; and
 - Giving all staff a pay award, or the opportunity of accessing a pay award, which attempts to reflect developments experienced by other workers in the rest of the economy.
- 4.4 We again propose an across-the-board award for those in Fair and Sustainable this year and remain aware of the financial constraints within which HMPPS needs to operate. We recognise that our recommendations will cost more than HMPPS said it has budgeted for. However, we consider that our evidence-based recommendations are appropriate and consolidate the progress made in recent years. They recognise the critical role which the Prison Service plays to keep communities safe. We believe our recommendations will help towards improving staff retention, and to alleviate some of the potential issues caused by a relatively inexperienced workforce.
- 4.5 We continue our focus on the lowest paid in our remit group, aiming to ensure that ground is not lost relative to the wider labour market. We do not yet have the evidence to conclude that the recent improvements in pay and allowances have completely resolved the recruitment and retention issues, especially in relation to Band 2.
- 4.6 Our recommendations this year would remove the remaining legacy Locality Pay Allowances (LPAs) as one of the final barriers to closed grade staff opting in to Fair and Sustainable, although some staff may have other marked time payments which means they would not benefit financially from opting in.

Pay award

Bands 3 to 12 pay award

- 4.7 As we set out in Chapter 3, for this round HMPPS proposed a headline increase for all staff in Bands 3 to 12 of a fixed cash value, derived as a percentage of the National pay range maxima or, for Bands with spot rates, of 2.9%. HMPPS told us that cash awards were worth more to those lower down the pay scale/range. We had concerns over the potential unintended consequences of such an approach, especially compression of pay bands, but HMPPS did not see compression as a significant issue and told us that the flat rate approach was not part of a longer term pay strategy. HMPPS also said that they would consider any compression issues as a result of the flat rate, if accepted, following the next Spending Review. However, this did not persuade us to deviate from our normal approach of a headline percentage award applied to all pay points, which is simpler and better understood by staff.
- 4.8 The POA proposed that all staff in Fair and Sustainable Bands 2 to 5 should receive a consolidated 6.5% uplift to all pay points. The union also proposed the introduction of contractual consolidated incremental pay for all operational Bands 2 to 5 for a five year period from 1 April 2025 (from 1 April 2026 for those recruited after 31 March 2025). The POA stated that it was open to a two year pay settlement for 2025-26 or 2026-27. If such a settlement was to start in 2025-26, the POA would propose a headline award of 6.5% for each year (see Chapter 5, paragraph 5.3).
- 4.9 The Prison Governors' Association (PGA) proposed that the percentage differentials between the Band 7 spot rate and the Band 11 maximum be reinstated to the original Fair and Sustainable levels (in 2012). The base pay maxima for Bands 7 to 11 should then be reset to 2012 levels, with inflation from 2012 onwards then applied. This reset of pay ranges alone would give increases of up to 18.9% for some staff. The same should apply to Band 12. Following those steps, the PGA proposed that a headline pay increase of 5% for 2025-26 be applied to the minima, maxima and spot rates.
- 4.10 The Public and Commercial Services (PCS) Union proposed a headline 10% pay increase for all staff. It said that base pay increases must be consolidated and pensionable and applied to minima, maxima and spot rates and be backdated to 1 April 2025. It considered that competitive pay and terms and conditions would remain an important recruitment and retention aid.
- 4.11 When reaching our conclusions on the headline pay award for Bands 3 to 12, and in line with our standing terms of reference, we considered a wide range of relevant pay and workforce data. While a more positive picture is gradually emerging, we still have concerns over recruitment and retention. In recent years, we have focused heavily on Band 3 as it is the main operational recruitment grade into the Service. Recent recommendations have sought to improve the pay position of Band 3 relative to a number of comparable occupations given the competitive labour market within which HMPPS operates. We note that retention remains fragile with considerable numbers still leaving the Service within their first 24 months of joining. This leads to a high recruitment, training and financial burden (each new Band 3 recruit costs the Service at least £13,000) as well as increasing the load on experienced staff. Furthermore, we hear that staff morale is, at best, mixed. HMPPS uses market supplements at some sites (and has signalled that it will continue to do so) and in recent years the Service has had to use significant numbers of staff on detached

duty to ensure that relevant establishments with shortages of staff are able to function. Expenditure on Payment Plus also remains at a high level.

- 4.12 We want, as a minimum, to maintain the relative market position of all staff in our remit group. We are also aware that all staff have faced high cost of living pressures in recent years and take account of this, among other factors including pay settlement data, when reaching our recommendations. We are also mindful that, unlike the remit groups for most other Pay Review Bodies and the labour market more widely, the majority of our remit group cannot take industrial action of any form. After weighing up all the relevant factors, we consider an award of 4% to be appropriate and justifiable, based on the evidence. Therefore, we recommend that the Fair and Sustainable National Bands 3, 5, 8, 9, 10 and 11 base pay points and the Bands 4, 7 and 12 spot rates be increased by 4%.

Recommendation 1: We recommend that from 1 April 2025, the Fair and Sustainable National Bands 3 to 12 base pay points and spot rates are increased by 4%, as set out in Appendix D. This award to be consolidated and pensionable.

Pay structures

- 4.13 Following successive years of tweaks to the pay structures, particularly for operational managers, HMPPS made no proposals for restructuring this year, other than for one slight change to London differentials – see paragraphs 4.30 and 4.31.
- 4.14 On the pay structure for operational managers, the PGA proposed that pay scales have a 10% differential between each pay band, from the lower grade maximum to the higher grade minimum.
- 4.15 We do not see a pressing need to change the status quo and are content to maintain the current position. Therefore, we make no recommendations for changes to pay structures. However, given that we have heard concern expressed over the talent pipeline for more senior operational managers as many of the current cadre approach retirement age, we would be willing to consider evidence-based proposals for change in the future.

Band 2 pay award

- 4.16 For Band 2 Fair and Sustainable staff, HMPPS proposed a total uplift of 3.0%, which incorporated the 1.7% needed to remain compliant with the National Living Wage (NLW) from 1 April 2025. The POA proposed that Band 2 staff should receive a consolidated 6.5% in addition to the NLW. The PCS proposed an increase of 10% to all pay points and that Band 2 pay increases should be in addition to the NLW increase. It also said that as a minimum, staff should be paid £15 an hour, reflecting its national position.
- 4.17 In our 2024 Report, we set a clear direction for our considerations of Band 2 pay. We said that there should not be a formal link with the NLW for Band 2 staff, given their key responsibilities and the critical role they play in the safe and effective running of prisons, and we maintain that position. We note that the recruitment and retention picture for Band 2 remains the most challenging for the Service. Band 2 also remains below the 20th percentile of economy-wide earnings in England and Wales. Given that the NLW is mandatory for all employers, we consider, as we did in 2024, that our award should be in addition to this increase. Therefore, we recommend that

Band 2 staff receive the same overall headline award of 4% as for all other staff in our remit, in addition to the NLW increase that took effect from 1 April 2025. We also note that there is plenty of 'headroom' between the Band 2 spot rate and the Band 3 minimum, so this recommendation should not act as a disincentive for promotion between those bands.

Recommendation 2: We recommend that from 1 April 2025 the Fair and Sustainable National Band 2 base pay spot rate be increased by 4% as set out in Appendix D. This should be in addition to the National Living Wage increase that Band 2 staff received on 1 April 2025. This award to be consolidated and pensionable.

Closed grades

- 4.18 For the last two years, to facilitate the movement of all remit group staff onto one pay structure, we have not recommended a pay uplift for those closed grade staff for whom it would be financially beneficial to opt in to Fair and Sustainable. For those for whom it would not be beneficial to opt in, we have recommended non-consolidated payments. This year, the POA proposed that all staff remaining on the closed grade equivalents to Bands 2 to 5 should receive a consolidated 6.5% uplift to all pay points and that those with historical pay allowances should be given the opportunity to opt in to Fair and Sustainable. The PCS proposed that those closed grades who would not benefit financially from opting in to Fair and Sustainable should receive a payment that matches the headline pay recommendation. However, given that, at the time of writing, some 98% of remit group staff are on the Fair and Sustainable pay structure, we consider it appropriate to maintain our existing approach.
- 4.19 Our recommendation should mean that all of the remaining closed grade staff in receipt of legacy LPAs should now be able to benefit financially from opting in to Fair and Sustainable. However, we recognise that some staff may have other legacy marked time payments including TUPE terms, preventing them from benefitting financially from opting in. Therefore, for this small group of staff, we recommend a non-consolidated payment of 4% of base pay.

Recommendation 3: We recommend that from 1 April 2025, those closed grade staff who would not financially benefit from opting in to their equivalent Fair and Sustainable grade receive a non-consolidated, non-pensionable payment of 4% of base pay.

- 4.20 We also note that a small number of closed support grades will have already seen their pay increase from 1 April 2025 due to the increase to the NLW. Therefore, we recommend that HMPPS ensures that the pay for all closed grades is, at least, compliant with the NLW.

Recommendation 4: From 1 April 2025, we recommend that that all closed grade pay rates are compliant with the National Living Wage.

Opting in to Fair and Sustainable

- 4.21 When HMPPS runs its opt in exercise, it offers an incentive payment equal to the difference in pay staff would have received had they opted in on 1 April of the

relevant year when our recommendations take effect. However, this is a cash amount and is not pensionable. As last year, the POA proposed that this lump sum be made pensionable. While we understand the rationale behind this, the incentive payment is a policy decision made by HMPPS and is outside our remit. We do, however, note that the late running of the pay round means that the opt in exercise also runs later than it should, and that this once again highlights the importance of the pay round returning to its previous earlier timetable.

- 4.22 As in previous years, we recommend that closed grades should continue to opt in to the maximum of their relevant Fair and Sustainable grade. This offers an incentive to opt in and ensures that their experience is rewarded by not placing closed grades on the same pay rates as their less experienced counterparts.

Recommendation 5: We recommend that from 1 April 2025 all closed grade staff who choose to opt in this year be moved to the maximum of their respective Fair and Sustainable grade pay range or scale. The opt in process should be expedited to start as close as possible to the publication date of this report.

Pay progression

Support and officer grades

- 4.23 Staff in Fair and Sustainable Bands 3 and 5 do not have contractual pay progression so we make recommendations on their progression each year. We do not make progression recommendations for Bands 2 and 4 as these are spot rates. HMPPS proposed one pay point progression for staff in Bands 3 and 5 who are not subject to formal poor performance procedures. This is in line with the approach we have adopted in recent years, so we are content to endorse it.
- 4.24 The PCS again requested that progression was not held back for those working through poor performance procedures. It considered that withholding progression for poor performance was an arbitrary and outdated notion. PCS also highlighted that withholding progression cannot be applied to those on pay maxima or spot rates. The PCS view was that withholding progression for those on formal poor performance procedures adversely affected staff with protected characteristics more than other staff. While we recognise the potential inconsistencies highlighted by PCS given the pay band structures, it remains our view that poor performance should not be rewarded and will therefore continue with our existing approach. We would, however, welcome more information on the impacts of the approach to progression for our next round.
- 4.25 As mentioned, the POA proposed the introduction of contractual consolidated incremental pay for all operational Bands 2 to 5 for a five year period from 1 April 2025 (from 1 April 2026 for those recruited after 31 March 2025). The union considered that introducing additional incremental pay for five years would improve recruitment and retention, improve morale, compensate for late pay awards and be competitive with other public sector workforces. We consider that this would reintroduce complexity into a pay structure that in recent years we have been aiming to simplify and would narrow the differentials with more senior grades. We are not convinced that introducing more increments would achieve the intended goals and are concerned that it would not represent good value for money, particularly when budgets are under pressure. Additionally, this would increase the length of the scale

when all parties have previously agreed that three years is about the right period to reach the maximum.

Recommendation 6: We recommend that all staff (except those subject to formal poor performance procedures) on Fair and Sustainable Bands 3 and 5 who are in post on 31 March 2025 progress by one pay point, effective from 1 April 2025.

Operational managers

- 4.26 Operational managers made up around 3.6% of the remit group at the end of September 2024, with around 99% of them on Fair and Sustainable. In our last report, we recommended that the length of the pay ranges for Bands 8 to 11 be reduced from 20% to 10%. We also accepted the view from the PGA and HMPPS that operational managers become competent in their roles within three years and made a recommendation to enable progression through the pay ranges from minima to maxima within three years. Therefore, HMPPS proposed progression of 3.33% for Bands 8 to 11, unless they are subject to formal poor performance measures, with the PGA also proposing progression of at least a third, linked to performance.
- 4.27 This year, the PGA also proposed accreditation or utilisation payments. These would be linked to staff achieving accreditation in one of four areas. When a manager was promoted to a Head of Function role (Band 7 or 8) they would receive a 10% payment. They would then be eligible to receive a further 5% payment on becoming an accredited Deputy Governor (Bands 8 and 9), 5% for becoming a Governor and 5% for becoming a Prison Group Director (giving a maximum total of 25%). The union stated that this would remunerate operational managers who are required to obtain additional occupational qualifications and competencies compared with their non-operational counterparts.
- 4.28 We do not believe that there is evidence to suggest that these proposed changes would be effective in improving the recruitment or retention of operational managers. Such changes would, however, introduce complexity to the Fair and Sustainable pay structure, along with implications for those officer grades who are also required to pass additional occupational qualifications and competencies. We consider that, following a number of changes in previous years, the structure should be allowed to settle and be evaluated in the near future.

Recommendation 7: We recommend that all staff (except those subject to formal poor performance procedures) on Fair and Sustainable Bands 8 to 11 who are in post on 31 March 2025 receive a consolidated and pensionable progression increase of 3⅓%, capped at the 1 April 2025 band maximum.

Locality pay

- 4.29 We are required to consider 'regional/local variations in labour markets and their effects on the recruitment and retention of staff'. There are several locality payments available to staff in our remit group, including: the legacy LPA rates; Fair and Sustainable Inner and Outer London differentials; and the red and red plus market supplements. The last of these we discussed in Chapter 3.

London Fair and Sustainable differentials

- 4.30 HMPPS proposed just one change to the pay structure this year, aimed at ensuring all staff receive the full 10% increase on promotion from the Band 9 maximum to Band 10 Inner and Outer London ranges. This proposal would give an additional increase to the Band 10 Inner and Outer London rates. The proposal would erode the differential slightly between Band 10 and the Band 11 minimum but would still allow for a 10% pay rise on promotion from Band 10 to Band 11. This proposal was supported by the PCS.
- 4.31 When HMPPS made this proposal last year, we decided not to endorse it as it did not affect any staff in our remit group. HMPPS brought it back to us for this round, explaining that there was the potential for our remit group to be affected by this and that the principle of a 10% increase or moving to the next band minimum (whichever is higher) on promotion was well-established across the Civil Service. When considering the proposal, we noticed that as submitted, the proposal could potentially have unintended consequences such as introducing different London differentials at Band 10 or changing the span of the pay band. Our recommendation, increasing the National Band 10 pay scale by slightly more than our recommended headline award, maintains consistency with the rest of the pay scale and avoids introducing anomalies into the structure that might need to be addressed later.

Recommendation 8: We recommend that the Band 10 Fair and Sustainable National maximum should increase to ensure there is 10% between the Band 9 and 10 maxima when the Inner and Outer London pay differentials are added.

- 4.32 Aside from the slight change already covered, HMPPS proposed that the Inner and Outer London differentials should not be increased. HMPPS said that this aligned with its proposal to give cash value awards based on National maxima or spot rates rather than a headline percentage award.
- 4.33 The PGA said that the value of the London payments did not attract or retain staff and was lower than other public sector organisations. It proposed that London differentials be increased, with Outer London set at 15% above the National scale and Inner London set at 20% above the National scale. It stated that the payments should be consolidated and only apply to the remit group. The PGA also considered that sites outside of London where it was difficult to recruit should receive one of the enhanced London rates.
- 4.34 We consider that we should continue with our regular approach of increasing the Inner and Outer London cash differentials by the headline award. We therefore recommend that the Inner and Outer zones be increased by the 4% headline award. This results in the maxima for Inner and Outer London zones respectively being placed at £5,041 and £3,315 above the National maxima. The resulting ranges, spot rates and scales are set out in Appendix D.

Recommendation 9: We recommend that from 1 April 2025, the fixed cash pay differentials for the Fair and Sustainable Inner and Outer London zones be increased by 4% and continue to be applied consistently across all bands, positioning maxima at £5,041 and £3,315 respectively above the 37 hour National maxima. We also recommend adjusting minima and intermediate points so that progression steps are the same percentage as on the National bands. The increases to be consolidated and pensionable.

Market supplements

- 4.35 In Chapter 3 we noted that HMPPS now sees market supplements as an enduring feature of the pay structure. While we continue to believe that they should be phased out, we have decided not to make a recommendation on market supplements this year. As for last year, and taking into account affordability constraints, we consider that it is more appropriate to focus on the headline award and those allowances covered in the next section.

Allowances and payments

- 4.36 For this report, we committed to considering the Operational Response and Resilience Unit (ORRU) on-call allowance⁸⁵ as part of our programme of rolling reviews. We were also due to consider several other areas – Payment Plus, Operational Support Grade (OSG) overtime and Unsocial Working Hours (UWH) for Band 2 – that had been repeatedly postponed. The continued lack of evidence provided by HMPPS prompted us to make Recommendation 14 in our last report. This recommended that HMPPS provide us with: an overview of the pilot schemes and new initiatives it was running in relation to the reduction in the use of Payment Plus and OSG overtime; data on the percentage of hours being worked unsocially by OSGs nationally and broken down by establishment; and information on discussions HMPPS had with the unions on Payment Plus, OSG overtime; and OSG unsocial hours. The Government accepted this recommendation. However, at the time of writing, we had yet to receive all of the information we asked for, although some elements of our 2024 Recommendation 14 were addressed in HMPPS's written submission. We have considered the relevant areas for this report, although, due to the lack of evidence, not in the detail we had hoped. We set out our thoughts later in this chapter. We again note our requests for further data and information in Chapter 5.

Operational Response and Resilience Unit on-call allowance

- 4.37 The ORRU on-call allowance is aimed at compensating those staff in the National Tactical Response Group (NTRG) and National Dog and Technical Support Group (NDTSG) (together forming the ORRU) for having to be on-call (outside normal working hours) for 26 weeks a year. It was introduced from 1 April 2019, replacing a system which required claims to be made, and which was more closely aligned with the closed structure. The ORRU is part of the Service's national resource and is trained to be deployed at the most serious, high-risk incidents within prisons along with incidents at height. The unit requires a higher level of regular physical fitness testing, and training involves a range of tactical options and equipment, all of which comes at a cost to HMPPS. It can also be called upon to deal with incidents at the

⁸⁵ In our previous reports this has been referred to as the NTRG and NDTSG on-call allowance, however, in written evidence HMPPS indicated that this was known in the Service as the ORRU on-call allowance. Therefore, this has been changed to the ORRU on-call allowance for this and future reports.

request of other organisations such as Immigration Removal Centres, prisons in the Isle of Man and Channel Islands, courts and the three secure hospitals. When not dealing with incidents in prison, these staff provide a training function.

- 4.38 The ORRU on-call allowance was introduced as part of our 2019 report, following an agreement between HMPPS and the POA. It is non-pensionable and has not been increased since being introduced. The current rate is £6,670 a year. In its submission, HMPPS noted that the ORRU allowance was paid in addition to the UWH allowance and/or Required Hours Addition/Allowance (RHA) and reflects the unique working demands and on-call commitments that ORRU staff make when joining the group. Those in eligible roles receive this allowance for committing to being on call and available for work or immediate deployment for a maximum of 26 weeks a year and available for work or operational deployment with 11 hours' notice for the remaining 26 weeks of the year. This represents a very significant commitment. HMPPS proposed that the allowance be increased by 7.8%, taking it from £6,670 to £7,190 a year.
- 4.39 The POA provided useful background to the allowance in its submission and noted that the allowance had been in place since 2019 and had not increased in that time. The POA said that inflation had increased by over 29% over the same period and, as the allowance was unlikely to be reviewed again for another five years, it considered that a 30% increase, to £8,673 a year was reasonable.
- 4.40 We visited ORRU's Kidlington site as part of our visit programme for this report and drew on information from our visit to the Hatfield Woodhouse site for our last report. We heard from staff that workloads across the group had grown substantially in recent years, due to the significant increase in the number of callouts to establishments. The high levels of on-call and call-out hours had an increasingly disruptive and restrictive impact on officers' lives and on their families, with concerns being expressed about the wellbeing of officers given the long hours of work and the unpredictability of those hours. During the visit, we were told that the unit had 794 call outs in 2023, up by 28% on 2022. They had already reached 794 at the time of our visit in October 2024 and the estimate for the whole year was 900. We have also been advised by the POA and HMPPS that ORRU is running below required staffing levels.
- 4.41 After reflecting on all of the evidence from HMPPS, the POA and our visits, we agree that the ORRU on-call allowance should be increased. This is to recognise the increased disruption to ORRU staff, who are critical to the safe running of the prison estate, and to encourage recruitment and retention of specialist, highly trained staff. We consider increasing the allowance to £8,000 to be appropriate, an increase of 19.9%.

Recommendation 10: We recommend that from 1 April 2025 the Operational Response and Resilience Unit on-call allowance be increased from £6,670 to £8,000 a year.

Payment Plus

- 4.42 Payment Plus is a non-consolidated, non-pensionable flat cash payment of £22 an hour. It is paid to officer grades (Bands 3 to 5 and closed grade equivalents) for specific operational duties, and it is the only overtime payment available to Bands 3

to 5. It was introduced in July 2008 to replace the separate bedwatch, constant watch and contracted supplementary hours payments. Payment Plus is therefore not intended to be an all-encompassing overtime payment, although many staff see it as such. Staff are only paid Payment Plus if it is on a non-working day or for the hours that fall outside their scheduled shift pattern for that day. For example, an officer scheduled to work until 17:00 would only be paid Payment Plus for the hours worked beyond this if undertaking one of the qualifying duties. All costs for Payment Plus must be covered from existing establishment budgets.

- 4.43 We were scheduled to review Payment Plus in our 2023 report, as part of our rolling review of allowances. When we had still not received sufficient evidence from HMPPS for our 2024 Report, we made Recommendation 14, which was accepted by Government. This asked HMPPS to provide us with information on initiatives to reduce the use of Payment Plus (and OSG overtime) by the end of October 2024 and for information on discussions HMPPS had held with the unions on these payments. We also signalled that we would consider any joint proposals the parties may have reached. We were, therefore, disappointed that the HMPPS December 2024 written submission stated that it was still working on these issues and contained just two examples of initiatives to reduce the use of Payment Plus and OSG overtime. Additionally, there had been no discussions with the POA.
- 4.44 HMPPS's submission did request that we recommended no changes to Payment Plus while it was working on the requirements of Recommendation 14. It asked that no recommendations were made in these areas until the next round, when any proposals will be included in the submission, potentially having been agreed with the unions.
- 4.45 The POA's submission proposed that Payment Plus be increased to £30 an hour and that it should be made pensionable. For Band 3 staff, the current rate represents roughly time and a quarter, with £30 an hour representing around time and two thirds for Band 3 staff, time and a half for Band 4 and time and a third for Band 5.
- 4.46 The POA stated that the duties delivered on Payment Plus are simply the core duties of all prison officers under their contract of employment. They said that it was not extraordinary, nor paid only for a specific set of tasks and circumstances. The POA considered that Payment Plus was being used by establishments to cover for staff sent on detached duty, and for other staffing shortfalls. The union noted HMPPS's previous intention to introduce a contracted supplementary hours scheme, but there had been no discussions, and the union did not believe it was the right time to remove Payment Plus, which was working and accepted by staff. The union considered that £30 an hour would be fair, affordable and would ensure continued sufficient volunteers to meet demand.
- 4.47 On our visits, we also heard concern that Payment Plus had become an overtime rate in all but name rather than being paid for specific tasks, something HMPPS accepted in oral evidence last year. Many staff thought that it should be increased as its relative value had fallen over time. It was reported that significant numbers of staff used Payment Plus to "get by". Some felt Payment Plus should increase by the headline pay award each year, while others considered £30 an hour would be appropriate.
- 4.48 We note that the rate of Payment Plus has not been changed since 2016 and so its real value to staff has been eroded. The rate is also relatively low against other

comparators. However, HMPPS has undertaken to bring forward proposals on this issue for our 2026 Report. In addition, any increase in Payment Plus would be expensive and could come at the cost of the headline award. The amount spent by HMPPS on Payment Plus⁸⁶ has reduced from £62.6m in 2022-23, the highest spend ever recorded, to £48.3m in 2023-24, which we hope is in some part due to the improved staffing position. Therefore, we have decided that we will not make a recommendation on Payment Plus this year. However, we expect evidence from HMPPS for our next round and will make a recommendation in our 2026 Report. We will also adhere to our published timetable for our rolling review of allowances and will therefore consider Payment Plus again in our 2028 Report.

Operational Support Grade overtime

- 4.49 For staff on Fair and Sustainable, overtime for OSGs is 1.3 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, plus weekday working between 19:00 and 07:00. The rates are non-pensionable and, unlike Payment Plus, OSG overtime can be used to cover vacancies, sickness absence, training etc, as long as the establishment has the budget for the overtime. Staff can choose to take time off in lieu instead, but this is calculated only at single time for the hours worked. Both rates have an extra £5 an hour permanently added to the multiplier, following our previous recommendations. This has the effect of increasing the multiplier to 1.75 (green hours) and 2.17 (red hours) based on 2024 pay rates.
- 4.50 We were also scheduled to review OSG overtime in our 2023 Report. HMPPS's response to Recommendation 14 of our 2024 Report is covered in the previous section.
- 4.51 In its submission, the POA proposed that OSG overtime rates be increased to time and a half for green hours (07:00-19:00 weekdays) and double time for red hours (19:00-07:00 weekdays and all day at weekends), for Fair and Sustainable and closed grades. The POA considered that this was needed to help to reduce the high leaving rate of Band 2 staff.
- 4.52 After consideration, including a review of rates paid elsewhere, we have decided not to make any recommendation on OSG overtime this year. The hourly rate goes up as base pay increases because overtime is a multiple of base pay. We also note that OSGs receive an additional £5 per hour when working overtime which brings them broadly into line with public and private sector practice. However, as for Payment Plus, we do expect information from HMPPS on OSG overtime for our next round in 2026, and we will reconsider this in our 2028 Report as scheduled in our rolling review. We have not considered closed grade OSG overtime as those staff nearly all benefit from opting in to Fair and Sustainable where pay and overtime rates are worth significantly more.

Unsocial Working Hours

- 4.53 Unsocial hours in the Prison Service are classified as Monday to Friday 19:00-07:00, all day/night weekends, Public and Bank Holidays. Working unsocial hours is

⁸⁶ These figures also include constant watch and bedwatch payments which are paid at the £22 an hour Payment Plus rate.

remunerated through the UWH payment for Bands 2 to 5 and the RHA for Bands 7 to 11. Band 12 Prison Group Directors do not receive RHA for unsocial hours.

- 4.54 We last reviewed unsocial working hours in our 2022 Report as part of our rolling review and following proposals from HMPPS and the trade unions. While we made a recommendation to increase the rate from 17% to 20% of base pay for all eligible bands, and apply it to all contracted hours, we expressed concern over the lack of evidence about the extent to which staff in our remit group worked unsocial hours. We considered that the issue of how much time is worked unsocially had not been considered in depth since 2006, with particular concerns around Band 2 working significantly higher proportions of unsocial hours. We therefore requested information from HMPPS on this issue – a request we repeated in our 2023 and 2024 Reports.
- 4.55 HMPPS proposed that we make no increases to UWH and RHA rates. It said that there was a large volume of data to be analysed in response to our Recommendation 14 last year, which it was still analysing, and this was particularly the case for unsocial hours working.
- 4.56 The POA proposed that the UWH allowance be increased from 20% to 50% of base pay for Band 2 staff and from 20% to 30% for Bands 3 to 5 staff. The POA stated that it provided evidence in 2023 and 2024 to demonstrate that the unsocial hours worked by Band 2 staff were consistently above 40% and included information around OSG shift patterns from a number of prisons. It noted that HMPPS had not provided any evidence on this despite repeated requests over a number of years and did not provide the statistics as required by Recommendation 14 in our 2024 Report. The union said that HMPPS had not formally discussed this issue with them.
- 4.57 The PGA proposed that an enhanced rate of RHA of 25% should be paid to prison-based operational managers. It also considered that RHA should be paid to Band 12 staff, but only in those roles that were part of the original Band 12 agreement. It thought that we should also consider the amount of time on-call versus those in the non-remit group who receive RHA. The union said that the frequency of on-call can be high, especially in the open prison estate and there was no compensation for this.
- 4.58 During visits, OSGs continued to inform us that they were working around, if not over, 40% of their hours unsocially and therefore the 20% unsocial hours payment should be increased. We also heard more strongly than previously from other grades, including governing governors, that OSGs were working more hours unsocially and more often than other grades in the Service.
- 4.59 We are mindful that HMPPS asked us not to make a recommendation to increase the rate of unsocial hours payments. However, we consider that the available evidence supports an uplift of the rate of UWH for Band 2 staff to 25%. We have consistently heard and been provided with evidence that OSG staff are working significantly more than 20% to 30% of their hours unsocially. Our recommendation is for a temporary uplift, for two years from 1 April 2025. We will, however, keep this under review and will reassess in our 2026 Report, when we expect to have received the evidence that HMPPS promised to provide on the unsocial hours worked by Band 2 OSG staff. We will review unsocial hours payments for the whole remit group in two years' time, in our 2027 Report, as scheduled under our rolling review of allowances.

- 4.60 We recognise that the payment for unsocial hours more generally is intertwined with the Bailey equal pay case and a number of elements come out of this judgement that HMPPS may need to consider in our next review in two years' time.
- 4.61 While we have some sympathy with the points raised by the POA and PGA in respect of Bands 3 to 5 and operational managers, we do not feel that there is sufficient evidence to warrant any change at this time for these grades. We would be pleased to consider these issues again in our 2027 Report.

Recommendation 11: We recommend that from 1 April 2025 the Unsocial Working Hours payment for Fair and Sustainable Band 2 Operational Support Grades be temporarily increased from 20% to 25% of base pay for all contracted hours. Subject to review in our next report on the basis of the evidence we are expecting to receive on scheduled unsocial hours working by Operational Support Grades, this increase to be in effect for two years, until our next full review of unsocial hours payments for all grades in our 2027 Report.

Physical Education Instructors

- 4.62 In our 2024 Report, we noted that we had received written and oral evidence on the difficulties HMPPS was having with the recruitment and retention of Band 4 Physical Education Instructors (PEIs). PEIs are trained prison officers who perform an important function in prisons to enhance the wellbeing of prisoners through physical exercise, to provide healthy outlets for the energies of prisoners and to contribute to rehabilitation by providing accreditations that may help to secure jobs on release. Their role is recognised and valued by prisoners and staff alike, and violence is rare in prison gyms as a result. We understand that these staff are required to undertake a 13 week pass or fail course, which includes an enhanced fitness test to qualify initially and then annual refresher training to remain qualified. We recognise that there is an issue with PEI recruitment and retention but, as HMPPS told us last year that it was trialling a new approach to how it recruited PEIs, we decided that it would be appropriate to understand the outcome of that trial and to revisit the issue as part of this report. We also asked for data on the numbers of PEIs in post, along with the target staffing levels, plus information on the numbers in training.
- 4.63 In its written submission for this report, HMPPS said that there were a complex range of reasons for the shortage of PEIs, including: the impact of the pandemic; a previous lack of promotion opportunities for PEIs; a lack of succession planning for potential PEIs; and a lack of training opportunities nationally. It outlined a change in structure for the responsibility for training and stated that there had been a pilot on PEI training in London and the Youth Custody Service (YCS) between 2022 and 2023 which identified opportunities to better support the complexities of PEI training provision. HMPPS stated that the training team would review the data and the strategy for the development of the PEI staffing pipeline over the next 12 months and would continue to update unions on progress. During oral evidence, HMPPS said that the training pipeline for PEIs had improved and that there were some initiatives around succession planning and advertising roles as staff often said they did not know what the role entailed or how to apply. HMPPS provided us with an evaluation report of a pilot scheme that it ran in London and the YCS during 2023. The pilot concluded that the initiatives that had been trialled had some positive results but overall had made little difference to the total numbers of PEIs, particularly in London where there was in fact a 20% reduction.

- 4.64 In its written submission, the POA stated that Band 4 PEIs were not properly recognised for their skills and were paid the same as other Band 4 staff. The POA proposed an annual consolidated payment of £1,500 per year for Band 4 PEIs to encourage recruitment and retention in these roles. It said there were 120 vacancies against a target staffing figure of 729. The POA said it attended a meeting with HMPPS in November 2024 to discuss the issue but reported that HMPPS said that it would not be making any proposals for PEIs as it had “not yet exhausted all options to increase recruitment and retention”. During oral evidence, the POA told us that HMPPS’s pilot to increase numbers had not worked. It also stated that prisoners valued the gym, which helped reduce frustration and therefore violence levels across the establishment.
- 4.65 We note that PEIs are recognised in Fair and Sustainable as a Band 4 Specialist Officer role rather than as was the case in the closed grades, where most were Band 3 equivalents with a £1,200 a year specialist allowance. The Band 4 specialist role is an improvement on the previous position because it is a higher band with higher pay, between £4,279 and £6,354 a year depending on a 37 or 39 hour week, with unsocial hours. However, there remains a shortage of qualified PEIs and we have seen no evidence that HMPPS’s attempts to resolve the situation have been successful.
- 4.66 We have consistently said that we think it is inappropriate to recommend blanket payments for all staff who undertake additional or specialist duties. However, we would consider recruitment and retention payments for specific individual specialisms if compelling evidence was provided. We consider that such evidence has been supplied by the POA over the last two years and this was supported by what we heard on our visits. In the absence of evidence from HMPPS that the issue is being resolved without any additional payments, we have therefore decided to recommend a temporary recruitment and retention payment for PEIs.

Recommendation 12: We recommend from 1 April 2025 the introduction, on a temporary, two-year basis, of a non-consolidated and non-pensionable payment of £1,500 a year for qualified Physical Education Instructors, working in a recognised Physical Education Instructor role. We will review this payment in our 2027 Report.

- 4.67 We commit to reviewing this payment in two years’ time to assess the available evidence on the effect of the additional temporary recruitment and retention payment. We also emphasise that this is not a payment for any additional skills held by PEIs, because those are covered by being a Band 4 Specialist Officer. This recommendation is aimed at improving the recruitment and retention of this group.

Dog trainers

- 4.68 The POA proposed that there should be a Dog Trainers’ Allowance which would be a payment of £1,500 a year for those delivering initial training and £1,000 a year for those delivering continuity training. It said that HMPPS needed to deliver around 8,000 dog training and accreditation days each year, plus extra initial courses and unplanned training. Selection, training and assessments are required to carry out the role, but there was no financial incentive. It considered that the retention of trainers was an issue and provided figures suggesting that high security establishments did not have the necessary number of trainers, which could put prisons at risk.

- 4.69 The issue of a lack of dog trainers was raised on the visits to the NTRG and NDTSG in 2023 and 2024, and we asked for comment and data from HMPPS on retaining local dog trainers. HMPPS told us that ORRU was responsible for training dogs and capability was at a satisfactory level overall. HMPPS accepted that dog handlers were Band 4s but that dog trainers did have a lot of additional work and it could be reasonable to consider an enhanced payment or some form of reward via the Enable Programme, which HMPPS noted in its written submission.⁸⁷ However, HMPPS subsequently stated that it did not believe a payment was necessary.
- 4.70 We consider that there is insufficient evidence at the moment to recommend introducing a new allowance or payment for dog trainers. However, we think that POA and HMPPS should work together on this issue and submit any joint proposals to us for our next round.

Care and Maintenance of Dogs allowance

- 4.71 We have previously stated that we think it appropriate to maintain the real value of the Care and Maintenance of Dogs allowance. We stated that it would be our intention to increase it by the headline award each year and we see no reason to depart from that intent this year. We recommend that the single rate of the Care and Maintenance of Dog allowance should be increased by 4%, with the multiple dog rate remaining set at 25% above this single dog rate. We will undertake a full review of this allowance as scheduled in our rolling programme, in 2027.

Recommendation 13: We recommend that from 1 April 2025, the Care and Maintenance of Dogs allowance be increased by 4% to £2,845 a year to those with responsibility for a single dog. We further recommend that the rate for multiple dogs is set at 25% above the single dog allowance rate.

Voluntary duties and specialisms

- 4.72 We received proposals this year from the POA and PCS for allowances to be paid to those individuals who volunteer to carry out specialist roles over and above their basic job description, and to recognise specialist grades of staff. The POA considers that staff should not undertake additional tasks unless they receive additional pay for doing them. It therefore proposed a £1,000 payment to operational Bands 2 to 5 staff who take on additional tasks. The POA also proposed new allowances for PEIs and dog trainers (see paragraphs 4.64 and 4.68) and an annual retainer for Tornado trained staff (see paragraph 4.77).
- 4.73 The PCS believes that there should be financial compensation for volunteering to undertake additional tasks and the training for such tasks – either as a one-off payment or an hourly allowance. It considered that this would compensate for the emotional and psychological demands of some of the additional tasks, particularly because it was hard for staff to withdraw from tasks once they had been taken on. The PCS said that those who are required to have specialist qualifications to undertake certain roles should be remunerated with an annual retention bonus. It thought that the alternative of placing all staff with specialist skills and/or additional

⁸⁷ The Enable Programme, which draws on best practice from other jurisdictions and academia, is a new long-term change programme focused on the transformation of the way that HMPPS trains, develops, leads and supports prison staff to develop those transformational relationships.

qualifications on a Band 4 spot rate would cause recruitment and retention issues because these staff could earn more outside the Service.

- 4.74 During oral evidence, the PCS informed us that HMPPS had said that it would look at those additional voluntary duties which it considered appropriate to explore. The next steps then being for HMPPS and the unions to discuss the implications in terms of timing, training, related issues and other requirements. We look forward to receiving progress reports on these discussions in due course.
- 4.75 In its oral evidence session, the POA highlighted concerns about the lack of qualified first aiders in prisons, especially during night shifts. They followed this up by providing us with information showing some shortfalls in certain areas. We consider that this is an issue that HMPPS should be addressing.
- 4.76 We have previously stated that, while we do not believe in a blanket payment for every additional task or specialism, we will consider the matter of a particular specialism if any of the parties brought compelling evidence to us, particularly if there are recruitment and retention issues. We therefore welcomed the evidence from the POA on PEIs, first aiders and dog trainers. We would also consider joint proposals from HMPPS and the trade unions.
- 4.77 Last year, we undertook our scheduled review of Operation Tornado payments. We recommended that the rate for officers increase from £24.86 to £40 an hour and from £19 to £30 an hour for OSGs. In its submission, the POA told us that it did not believe that the uplift had made any difference to the recruitment and retention of Tornado trained staff. It proposed the introduction of a £500 annual retainer for Tornado trained staff, to be paid on completion of the initial Tornado course, then annually on completion of the refresher training. Maintaining an adequate number of Tornado trained staff is essential for the safe operation of the Service. However, while we note the proposal, we do not consider that there has been enough time to evaluate the impact of the uplift that was implemented last year. We think it better to wait for any emerging evidence ahead of our next report.

Band 8 Deputy Governor

- 4.78 The PGA has a number of standing items directed by its conference to put before us each year, including increasing the remuneration package for Band 8 Deputy Governors. The enhancement would be in recognition of the additional role responsibilities and accountabilities that Deputy Governors have above that of a Band 8 Head of Function and which are not recognised under the current Job Evaluation System (JES). For this year, the usual proposal was subsumed by the PGA's proposed accreditation payments.
- 4.79 The Deputy Governor issue was also raised on our visits. There were some suggestions that Band 7 and 8 roles should be combined into a single grade and Deputy Governors should all be Band 9 roles.
- 4.80 We understand the issue the PGA raised and recognise that Band 8 is a stepping stone to senior leadership so is an important part of the talent pipeline. However, we believe that this issue should be addressed via the JES, which is outside our remit. Therefore, as in 2024, we again encourage the PGA and HMPPS to discuss the Deputy Governor issue to determine whether changes are appropriate and, if so, to agree and implement a way forward.

Other allowances and payments

- 4.81 The PGA proposed that, as operational managers were largely unable to work flexibly, unlike their headquarters-based colleagues, they should receive a payment as compensation. The payment should be equivalent to two days of average UK daily commuting costs per week. The PCS also made a number of points around flexible working, including that staff working in prisons should have the same access to flexible working opportunities as those in headquarters. It considered that better flexible working would improve retention, help with childcare costs, improve work life balance and increase the availability of workspaces inside overcrowded prisons. However, it does note that it would largely be non-operational staff who would benefit. The PCS said that exit interviews show that the lack of flexible working options is one of the top five reasons why staff leave.
- 4.82 The PGA made a number of additional proposals this year, including: lowering the retirement age for operational staff to 60 years; introducing fully funded healthcare provided to operational managers to include 24-hour access to a GP, enhanced wellbeing and occupational support; and a salary sacrifice scheme for electric vehicles and other schemes that benefit society. The POA also requested that the pension age reduces to 60 years. The PCS proposed that annual leave entitlement should increase to at least 35 days upon entry to the Service. These proposals are outside of our remit, so we have not made recommendations on them and would encourage the unions to take these matters up with HMPPS.
- 4.83 We make no recommendations on other allowances and payments. For our 2026 Report we will consider on-call allowances in Fair and Sustainable as part of our rolling review of allowances.

Performance management

- 4.84 The PGA expressed concerns around the performance bonus system and the localised approach, which it sees as producing inconsistencies and unfairness. It said that the current system lacked transparency and uniformity, leading to disparities in how bonuses are awarded in different regions. The PGA considered that a properly functioning system would boost morale and asked that we recommend that HMPPS introduced a funded performance bonus system. Whilst not within our remit, we continue to note how the lack of a fit for purpose, fair and valued performance management system impacts on staff morale at all levels.
- 4.85 The PCS considered that the reward system was not being used in an equitable way. It thought that HMPPS should look at the system and ensure it is open and transparent.

Cost of our recommendations

- 4.86 We estimate that our recommendations will result in an increase of approximately £73 million to the total paybill for our remit group, excluding pay progression and the statutory requirement to pay the NLW.⁸⁸ This equates to around 1% of HMPPS's

⁸⁸ Our estimate takes account of our recommended increases to pay scales and allowance rates (including Unsocial Working Hours, ORRU on-call and PEIs non-consolidated payments) for our remit group. Our estimate includes oncosts for employer pension and national insurance contributions. Our estimate does not include the cost of staff opting in to Fair and Sustainable, as we cannot be sure how many staff will be eligible for, and decide to opt in. Our estimate does not include the cost of increasing pay to meet the NLW requirement but includes the additional cost of the headline award when applied on top of the NLW.

£6.9 billion annual budget for operating expenditure as of 2023-24.⁸⁹ This estimate does not include the cost of closed grade staff opting in to Fair and Sustainable, as we cannot know precisely which staff on other pay/allowance arrangements would financially benefit from opting in. As we have set out in previous reports, we do not include the cost of performance awards when calculating the cost of the annual pay award.

- 4.87 While our recommendations have a cost, we believe that they are able to bring savings for the Service. Better retention would result in fewer new recruits being needed, saving the associated recruitment costs. It costs time and money to bring new recruits up to standard, in terms of their initial training and then the on-the-job training needed once they arrive at their establishment. Improved retention should also increase the depth of experience in the workforce, contributing to a safer environment for both staff and prisoners, and assist the Service in its aim of reducing its reliance on Payment Plus, overtime, detached duty, temporary promotion and a large time off in lieu liability. We also consider that a decent award is important to a workforce whose morale is fragile.
- 4.88 In Chapter 5, we identify the information and evidence we expect to receive to inform our considerations for our next report.

⁸⁹ HMPPS, (2024). *HMPPS Annual Reports and Accounts 2023 to 24*. (online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hmppps-annual-report-and-accounts-2023-to-24> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

Chapter 5: Forward look

Introduction

- 5.1 In this final chapter we refer to areas which we request that the parties review, discuss and provide evidence about, including relevant data, to inform our 2026 Report. We ask the parties to take note of our requests and ensure that they are answered as fully as possible in their evidence, and where possible shared with other parties so they have an opportunity to consider ahead of their evidence submission. Where the parties believe that no changes should be made, we expect the reasoning and evidence to be comprehensively covered in written submissions.

Our timetable

- 5.2 We are pleased to be able to report this year that our timetable has seen a significant advancement following earlier receipt of the Government's written evidence, which has allowed us to submit this report some two months sooner than in recent years. We also welcome the Government's aim to return to our usual timetable in the next round with the 2026 Report submitted in mid-February, in time for our remit group to receive their pay award in April. We therefore look forward to receiving our activation letter for the 2026 Report in summer 2025 and, more critically, written evidence from the Government and the parties in mid-September 2025, to get us back on to our original timetable.

Two year pay deal

- 5.3 In its evidence to us, the POA proposed the possibility of a two year pay deal which would cover the 2026 and 2027 reports, noting that this would allow future pay awards to be paid in April. The POA also noted that the Government would have undertaken its Spending Review by the time of the next round, after which His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) would have a multi-year settlement. It is not in our remit to undertake a two year pay award without being explicitly asked for this by government, but if this is considered to be a beneficial way forward then we would be content to proceed on that basis.

Our remit and its scope

- 5.4 In previous reports, we have raised concerns about the impact of our recommendations on those non-operational staff in HMPPS who are outside of our remit. We note that the Bailey equal pay case took place nearly 20 years ago, with Fair and Sustainable being introduced 12 years ago. As we have remarked in our considerations of Operational Support Grade (OSG) unsocial hours, roles and responsibilities have changed over time. HMPPS may therefore wish to revisit the pay link between operational and non-operational staff to see if outcomes decided nearly two decades ago remain relevant. Resultant changes could allow us to make recommendations affecting only those in our remit group and HMPPS to make pay decisions for those outside our remit, which currently is apparently not possible.
- 5.5 The POA raised in its evidence that it would like to see Band 2 OSGs removed from our remit and returned to collective bargaining as these staff have the right to strike and take all forms of industrial action. This is an anomaly that we have pointed out to HMPPS and government before. It is, however, not within our gift to decide who is and who is not within our remit. That decision would need to be made by the Government following discussions with the POA.

Allowances

Recommendation 14 from our 2024 Report

- 5.6 We have commented in Chapter 4 about our disappointment that HMPPS has not fulfilled the terms of Recommendation 14 from our 2024 Report. This has not been fair to the remit group, especially as the majority of them do not have the right to take industrial action. HMPPS has assured us that it is working to fulfil the terms of the recommendation, and we comment further on the individual allowances below. Our more recent discussions with HMPPS led us to conclude that the Service is taking this seriously. As the Government accepted all our 2024 recommendations in full, we do still expect to receive the remainder of the information in accordance with this recommendation.

Rolling review of allowances 2026

- 5.7 Under our rolling review of allowances, we had planned to consider specialist allowances (in the closed grades) and on-call/standby allowances (in both pay structures). However, following the successful opt in exercises in the last two years, the numbers of closed grades have very significantly diminished and accordingly so have the numbers of those in receipt of closed grade specialist allowances and on-call allowances. Therefore, consistent with our position on not providing consolidated pay increases to those closed grade staff who can financially benefit from opting in to Fair and Sustainable, we are proposing that closed grade allowances are also not increased, and that going forward are removed from our rolling review programme. Consequently, as part of the rolling review of allowances for our 2026 Report, we propose only considering on-call (home) allowances in Fair and Sustainable.
- 5.8 As we have highlighted in previous reports we would like to receive the following information from the parties: the intended purposes of on-call payments; information on any recruitment and retention difficulties, including any plans for improvement; impact on family life and in particular on those with caring responsibilities; and finally, any external comparator information that may be available. We would also like to receive information on the yearly cost to the Service of the three rates of Fair and Sustainable on-call (home) allowances and how many staff on average a year are receiving these payments. Again, if one of the parties is requesting no uplift, we wish to receive the rationale and reasoning for this proposal. We would also welcome any agreements HMPPS and the POA might be able to reach on these on-call (home) payments.

Payment Plus

- 5.9 As noted in Chapter 4, we have decided this year not to make a recommendation on increasing Payment Plus, noting that we preferred to put as much as possible into base pay rather than allowances. However, we will return to Payment Plus next year when we have the promised evidence from HMPPS and again in 2028. Given comments from HMPPS we would anticipate that there would be a continued reduction in its use and cost. We request an update on the Escort, Bedwatch and Constant Supervision Review, the outcome of that review and how this is expected to reduce expenditure on Payment Plus. We also wish to know how the results of the review have or will be applied, along with clearly set out and measurable milestones and timeframes. We note that the HMPPS written evidence included Shaping A New Employee Offer (SANE0) as a means of reducing Payment Plus by having a more flexible staffing pool. However, as noted in Chapter 3 and later in this chapter, we understand that aspects of the SANE0 programme may not be funded. We would

therefore welcome an update on the SANEO programme generally, and how it is now expected to reduce the expenditure on Payment Plus.

OSG overtime

- 5.10 In Chapter 4 we recommend that the OSG overtime rates remain at their current levels. As we note, its cash value increases each year in line with the overall pay award. Given that since 2016 there is also a £5 per hour addition being paid on top of the rate, the value is perhaps worth more than staff fully appreciate – around a 1.75 multiplier for green hours and a 2.17 multiplier for red hours. We will relook at Band 2 Fair and Sustainable OSG overtime as part of our rolling review of allowances for our 2028 Report. Consistent with our overall approach to closed grade allowances, we do not propose to consider the rate of closed grade OSG overtime because these staff generally now all benefit financially from opting in to Fair and Sustainable where they can receive higher pay and overtime rates. Closed grade overtime will therefore be removed from our rolling programme of allowances.

Unsocial hours payments

- 5.11 As we note in Chapter 4, we have recommended a temporary increase to Fair and Sustainable Band 2 OSG Unsocial Working Hours (UWH) payments. We ask that HMPPS continues to collate the data that we have requested by prison and nationally on the hours that OSGs are detailed/scheduled to work unsocially as an average percentage of their weekly hours. If we receive those data in time, we will revisit the issue of Band 2 UWH payments in our 2026 Report.
- 5.12 We will review unsocial hours payments for the whole remit group in two years' time, in our 2027 Report, as scheduled under our rolling review of allowances. We ask both HMPPS and the POA to present proposals to us for that report along with rationales and reasoning on the appropriate payment rates for each grade. We ask that data collected by HMPPS are in a format that is shareable with the trade unions. Our preference would be for joint proposals from HMPPS and the POA for us to consider for our 2027 Report.

Physical Education Instructors recruitment and retention payment

- 5.13 The data we received led us to recommend a recruitment and retention payment of £1,500 for the next two years to current and new Physical Education Instructors (PEIs). As we note in Chapter 4, this is an interim measure which we plan to reconsider as part of our 2027 Report. We ask HMPPS and the POA to provide us with evidence next year on any initiatives to attract new applicants as PEIs, the progress being made on the recruitment of PEIs, along with information on retention. We would like to receive shareable and publishable data on the number of PEIs in post versus the target, broken down by establishment and protected characteristics, along with information on any individual prisons or areas that are having particular difficulties in recruiting to the PEI role. We would also find it useful to hear some of the reasons why PEIs leave that specialism and to be informed about the impact on recruitment and retention of the reorganisation of responsibilities within HMPPS headquarters described in this year's written submission from HMPPS.

Request for evidence

- 5.14 In addition to the information already noted, we request evidence and data on the following areas:

- The Prison Service is currently in the process of expanding the prison estate by way of new builds and new houseblocks at existing prisons, some of which will be in the public sector. Therefore, we would like to receive data on which prisons, run by the public sector, will be expanding and how many additional staff at all operational grades will be needed in the next three to five years. These data would help us better understand the Service's recruitment and retention needs;
- We would like to receive evidence from the parties on the HMPPS staffing resource model. There is a clear difference of opinion on the level of staffing needed to run a safe and secure service while providing meaningful activity and rehabilitating prisoners. HMPPS believes that the Service is almost fully staffed and that recruitment issues are easing. The unions feel that the HMPPS model and budgeted staffing levels are inadequate. In its annual report, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons also suggested that staffing levels were too low for the safe operation of the estate and the rehabilitation of prisoners. By contrast, His Majesty's Treasury (HMT) considers that above inflation pay increases should be funded by cashable productivity improvements, implying that the potential for cashable efficiencies does exist. We understand that a new resource model is being developed by HMPPS/Ministry of Justice and we would welcome an update on the implications of this given the range of perspectives described;
- Linked to the point above, in oral evidence, HMPPS stated in 2024 and 2025 that it was reconsidering its non-effective levels. It stated that the level had remained at 20% since the late 1980s despite changes in employment practices. HMPPS accepted that there were far more rights for workers to different types of leave and that 20% of its operational staffing budget was not sufficient to include essential activities such as staff training. We have also heard from the unions and staff at all grades that the current arrangement is not fit for purpose. We would therefore like to hear from HMPPS how a move to a higher non-effectives percentage will be managed and if without additional staffing, which it intimated in oral evidence, how this is expected to work;
- HMPPS said it had developed a new annual internal review of market supplements rather than negotiating with HMT each year. We would therefore like to receive an overview of what the process is, along with information and data on the outcome for each market supplement site. We would also be interested in HMPPS's approach should it be planning to remove a particular market supplement from an establishment; and
- We welcome the useful information HMPPS provides on the numbers of staff opting in to Fair and Sustainable broken down by grade, and request that this continues for our next report.

Workforce strategy

5.15 In oral evidence, the Minister and HMPPS covered a number of areas around future workforce strategy. The first was the areas of new recruit and in service prison officer training. We often hear negative views of recruitment training from staff on visits and this is something Lord Timpson said he was committed to improving. Lord Timpson said he was keen to see initial Band 3 Prison Officer recruitment training increase from the current seven weeks to around 15 weeks, with on-going support

provided for the first 12 months of service. We would like to be kept informed on how this develops, including any early feedback or analysis that might be available. We would, however, stress the importance both of continuing professional development for all grades, and of training for grades other than Band 3, particularly at Band 2 level where many staff tell us on visits that they are unable to access fundamental basic job training, instead relying on their colleagues to deliver it. In addition, we would like to hear of any plans HMPPS has for improving the pipeline and quality of junior and senior leadership across the Service, something the Minister said he was eager to see.

- 5.16 Linked to improved training was the professionalisation of the prison officer role which the Minister said was an important part of his focus on developing staff. We understand that this may fall under the banner of the “Enable” programme, but about which the Prison Service had little to tell us in this year’s submission. We would like to hear more about these plans as they develop. Given that the role of a prison officer may change, as the role of an OSG has, HMPPS may need to revisit its Job Evaluation Scheme especially as Fair and Sustainable was introduced well over a decade ago.
- 5.17 We have noted in past reports that HMPPS has cited several initiatives related to our remit around recruitment and retention, or which might affect that remit. However, as we wrote in our last report, whilst many of these can appear constructive and promise tangible benefits, we rarely hear about the evaluation or cost-benefit analysis of those initiatives or whether they become embedded as business as usual in the longer term. Multiple short-term initiatives without feedback or analysis can have a significant cost to the Service and could impact on frontline staff who may inevitably become sceptical as to the value of future initiatives. Therefore, to help us fulfil our function effectively, we request an overview of initiatives that impact on our remit and terms of reference, to help us understand what initiatives are underway, what evaluations have been carried out or are planned, and how any new initiatives will be evaluated in the future.

Flexible working

- 5.18 This year on our visits, flexible working was one of the main non-pay issues that staff at all levels raised with us. This was particularly strongly felt amongst female staff (both officers and operational managers) and those with young families where both parents worked. Many reported that the shift patterns offered by the Prison Service were based on long-established practice and were not family friendly. HMPPS told us that its SANEO programme was looking at a new rostering tool but in oral evidence the POA indicated that HMPPS did not have the necessary funding to take this forward. It was also disappointing to hear HMPPS did not keep records centrally, with flexible working being managed purely at a local level. As we noted in Chapter 3, the POA told us that it had found around 58% of requests to work flexibly had been declined. During oral evidence, the Public and Commercial Services Union told us that job adverts continued to reference flexible working, but the Service could not provide data on how many staff were working flexibly. We also hear from staff on visits that Governors at some prisons simply refused to implement arrangements to enable flexible working and/or in practice were resistant to requests from staff to work flexibly.
- 5.19 There is a wealth of evidence on the benefits of flexible working in attracting talent, retaining experienced staff, building a more diverse and inclusive workforce,

reducing sickness rates, and improving employee satisfaction, engagement, wellbeing and work-life balance, against a relatively low cost of implementation. Furthermore, flexible working takes many forms, not all of which involve reduced hours. Whilst we are unable to make recommendations on improving flexible working opportunities, as it appears to be outside our remit, it does impact on recruitment and retention which is one of our key considerations. The points made by the trade unions highlight that the lack of access to flexible working is an issue for operational staff and this is something we also hear frequently about on our visits. We would therefore like to hear from HMPPS on how it is going to monitor the progress of its flexible working policy service-wide, and how it will ensure consistency of approach whilst allowing sufficient latitude for tailored solutions to local problems. At the very least, and in order to quantify the success of its strategy, we would expect that HMPPS would implement quantitative and qualitative measures, to include the number of applications, the number of acceptances/rejections, and data on the protected characteristics of who is applying. In addition, the consistent gathering of staff feedback service-wide would provide useful data for the future.

Productivity

- 5.20 The evidence we received from HMT made clear that departments across government would be expected to fund any pay settlements above its recommended maximum of 2.9% through productivity improvements. We were disappointed that none of the evidence we received addressed this challenge. In oral evidence, we heard that there had been productivity improvements historically, not least because the Prison Service was caring for more prisoners without a proportionate increase in staffing numbers. We recognise that, in the present fiscal climate, the relevant productivity improvements would essentially equate to cutting costs. However, we heard no suggestions about how future developments, for example in training, technology or operational practice, might help to meet the financial pressures that have been described without compromising the level and quality of services provided. We invite all parties to consider that question in their evidence for next year.

Equality and diversity

- 5.21 As we have noted in our previous reports, our standing terms of reference require us to take into account the legal obligations on HMPPS including anti-discrimination across the full range of protected characteristics. We note that whilst the data we have requested from HMPPS is improving, some of the data we receive remains variable, particularly around allowances and payments where we receive no information broken down by protected characteristics. We have also noted earlier that the lack of data prevents us from fulfilling our remit in relation to disability other than for recruitment. We believe that this is an important part of our remit and should equally be of interest to HMPPS. We would therefore ask HMPPS to provide data on those in receipt of allowances broken down by all protected characteristics.
- 5.22 Furthermore, in oral evidence, HMPPS stated that the Service needed to do more to tackle racism, misogyny, sexism and homophobia, indicating that there needed to be a shift in culture. HMPPS referred to an increase in complaints in these areas, stating that fewer staff were prepared to put up with such behaviour and were more likely to report it. It goes without saying that such behaviour is abhorrent and completely unacceptable in any public service, far less one in which some of the most vulnerable in society are the service users. It is positive that HMPPS had identified that it needs to do more in these areas. We would like to hear for our next

report what the Service has been doing, and what progress it has made in tackling these kinds of unacceptable behaviours.

- 5.23 We have also noted that ethnic minority applicants for Bands 2 and 3 posts have lower acceptance rates than their white counterparts. Additionally, female applicants for Band 3 roles seem to be less successful in the recruitment process than male applicants. We would like to understand why this is happening, so ask HMPPS if it has conducted any analysis leading to an explanation of these differences in outcomes.

Conclusion

- 5.24 The scale of the problems facing the Prison Service has rightly received considerable media attention and therefore entered public consciousness over the last year or two. Our remit group has a critical role to play in managing an expanding prison estate in a safe and secure manner while also working to rehabilitate offenders. In our recent reports, we have sought both to recognise that role and to improve the relative pay of the remit group to address the serious problems of recruitment and retention which have contributed to what the Secretary of State for Justice has called a “crisis”. The evidence suggests that, for recruitment at least, some progress has been made, although retention remains an issue. The recommendations in this report seek, as a minimum, to maintain that progress, while recognising the constraints of affordability in difficult economic circumstances. A professional, properly trained, motivated, stable and committed workforce is a vital component of the long-term resolution of the current crisis, to say nothing of the positive outcomes for rehabilitation of prisoners and reduction of crime in communities. We make these recommendations in the hope that the government will agree that addressing prison capacity longer term and resolving staff recruitment and retention are inextricably linked.

Appendix A: Transcript of the Minister's activation letter⁹⁰

Dear Mr Flesher,

THE PRISON SERVICE PAY REVIEW BODY (PSPRB) REMIT 2025/26

I would like to thank the Prison Service Pay Review Body (PSPRB) for their continued hard work and dedication to Prison Service pay for our valued staff. I was pleased to have the opportunity to meet with you in August to discuss pay for the Prison Service, and the upcoming 2025/26 pay round.

The Government values the vital contribution made by the almost 6 million public sector workers across the UK, who deliver the public services we all rely upon. This includes the excellent work of our Prison Service staff, often in challenging circumstances. The Government accepted all recommendations from the PSPRB for the 2024/25 pay round. This delivered a further substantial pay increase, of at least 5%, to Prison Service staff, in recognition of their dedication to rehabilitating prisoners and keeping the public safe.

I am writing to commence formally the 2025/26 pay round and set out how the Government intends to work with the PSPRB over the coming year. I am asking you to provide recommendations in line with your terms of reference, with particular regard for this government's objective of providing mission-led public services that are equipped to efficiently deliver the vital, high quality public services we all rely on, whilst ensuring value for money for taxpayers.

During this pay round, you will receive evidence from my department, HM Treasury and key stakeholders including trade unions. My department's evidence will, as usual, cover the recruitment and retention context for the Prison Service, alongside pay and earnings data, as well as our workforce strategy, and the expected position following the implementation of the 2024/25 pay award. It will also set out the funds available to MoJ/HMPPS for 2025/26, which will be finalised through the Spending Review and announced at the Autumn Budget on 30 October. This comes against the backdrop of the challenging financial position this government has inherited, including a £22 billion pressure against the spending plans set out for departments at Spring Budget 2024.

As discussed when we met, conducting the pay round to an accelerated timeline compared to previous years is a key priority. I know this is a shared ambition of the PSPRB and our Trade Unions, which would provide improved outcomes for Prison Service staff by way of more timely pay awards. As the Chancellor said in her July Statement, the Government's intention is to announce pay awards as close to the start of the pay year of 1 April as possible for 2025/26. It is unfortunate that, given the knock-on effects from the previous government's delays to the 2024/25 round, it is unlikely that workforces will receive pay increases by April, but by bringing the pay round forwards this year, we can more fully reset the timeline in 2026/27.

To this end, where possible I would be grateful if you can deliver recommendations to the Government on the 2025/26 pay award for the Prison Service at the earliest point that allows you to give due consideration to the relevant evidence. To support with this, the

⁹⁰ GOV.uk, (2024). *Remit letter for the PSPRB 2025 England and Wales pay round*. (online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/remit-letter-for-the-psprb-2025-england-and-wales-pay-round> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

Government will publish its written evidence as soon as possible after the Spending Review is finalised and 2025/26 budgets are set on 30 October, including budgets relating to pay. I recognise that changing the timeline from recent years will present challenges for the PSPRB, but I am sure you also share the Government's belief in the importance of returning to more timely annual pay processes, so I hope you will understand the necessity of doing so.

Thank you again for the valuable contribution and commitment of the PSPRB to Prison Service pay.

Lord Timpson

Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending

Appendix B: Transcript of PSPRB Chair's response to Minister's activation letter⁹¹

Dear Lord Timpson,

PRISON SERVICE PAY REVIEW BODY – 2025 REPORT

Thank you for attending oral evidence with PSPRB on Thursday 16 January. The Review Body found the session interesting and useful.

Now that we have concluded all of our oral evidence meetings, I can inform you that we will aim to submit our 2025 Report to you in mid-April. This will be some six weeks earlier than last year and I hope that we can get the round fully back on track for our 2026 Report.

Yours sincerely

Tim Flesher
Chair, Prison Service Pay Review Body

⁹¹ GOV.uk, (2025). *PSPRB response to the 2025-26 England and Wales remit letter and timetable*. (online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/psprb-response-to-the-2025-26-england-and-wales-remit-letter-and-timetable> [accessed on 3 April 2025].

Appendix C: Visits and discussion groups held in 2024

As part of our in-person visit programme we visited the following establishments and sites.

HMP Brixton

HMP Fosse Way⁹²

HMP & YOI Hindley

HMP Isle of Wight (both Albany and Parkhurst sites)

HMP Lancaster Farms

HMP & YOI Lincoln

HMP North Sea Camp

HMP Swansea

Operational Response and Resilience Unit – Kidlington

⁹² Privately managed by Serco.

Appendix D: Current and recommended pay levels

Current and recommended pay for Fair and Sustainable grades (£ per annum)⁹³

Fair and Sustainable ranges – National

Bands 7 to 12 – National

| Grade | From 1 April 2024 | | From 1 April 2025 | |
|--|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| | 37 hour base pay | 37 hour inc 20% RHA | 37 hour base pay | 37 hour inc 20% RHA |
| Prison Group Director (Band 12) spot rate | 116,965 | - | 121,644 | - |
| Governor (Band 11) max | 93,546 | 112,255 | 97,288 | 116,746 |
| Governor (Band 11) min | 85,042 | 102,050 | 88,444 | 106,133 |
| Governor (Band 10) max | 82,703 | 99,244 | 86,446 | 103,735 |
| Governor (Band 10) min | 75,185 | 90,222 | 78,587 | 94,305 |
| Deputy Governor (Band 9) max | 75,124 | 90,149 | 78,129 | 93,755 |
| Deputy Governor (Band 9) min | 68,295 | 81,954 | 71,027 | 85,232 |
| Deputy Governor / Head of Function (Band 8) max | 58,656 | 70,387 | 61,003 | 73,204 |
| Deputy Governor / Head of Function (Band 8) min | 53,324 | 63,989 | 55,457 | 66,548 |
| Head of Function (Band 7) spot rate | 50,303 | 60,364 | 52,316 | 62,779 |

⁹³ Please see page 92 for explanatory notes on the Fair and Sustainable pay scales, spot rates and ranges.

Custodial Manager (Band 5) – National

| Pay scale | Pay point | From 1 April 2024 | From 1 April 2025 |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 37 hour base pay | 3 | 36,429 | 37,887 |
| | 2 | 35,585 | 37,009 |
| | 1 | 34,760 | 36,151 |
| 37 hour inc 20% unsocial | 3 | 43,715 | 45,464 |
| | 2 | 42,702 | 44,411 |
| | 1 | 41,712 | 43,381 |
| 39 hour inc 2xACHP & 20% unsocial | 3 | 46,078 | 47,922 |
| | 2 | 45,011 | 46,811 |
| | 1 | 43,967 | 45,726 |

Supervising / Specialist Officers (Band 4) – National

| Pay scale | Pay point | From 1 April 2024 | From 1 April 2025 |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 37 hour base pay | Spot rate | 31,995 | 33,275 |
| 37 hour inc 20% unsocial | Spot rate | 38,394 | 39,930 |
| 39 hour inc 2xACHP & 20% unsocial | Spot rate | 40,469 | 42,088 |

Prison Officer (Band 3) – National

| Pay scale | Pay point | From 1 April 2024 | From 1 April 2025 |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 37 hour base pay | 3 | 28,472 | 29,611 |
| | 2 | 27,986 | 29,106 |
| | 1 | 27,040 | 28,122 |
| 37 hour inc 20% unsocial | 3 | 34,166 | 35,533 |
| | 2 | 33,583 | 34,927 |
| | 1 | 32,448 | 33,746 |
| 38 hour inc 1xACH & 20% unsocial | 3 | 35,243 | 36,654 |
| | 2 | 34,642 | 36,029 |
| | 1 | 33,471 | 34,810 |
| 39 hour inc 2xACH & 20% unsocial | 3 | 36,321 | 37,774 |
| | 2 | 35,701 | 37,130 |
| | 1 | 34,494 | 35,875 |
| 39 hour inc 2xACHP & 20% unsocial | 3 | 36,013 | 37,454 |
| | 2 | 35,399 | 36,815 |
| | 1 | 34,202 | 35,571 |
| 40 hour inc 3xACH & 20% unsocial | 3 | 37,398 | 38,894 |
| | 2 | 36,760 | 38,231 |
| | 1 | 35,517 | 36,939 |
| 41 hour inc 4xACH & 20% unsocial | 3 | 38,476 | 40,015 |
| | 2 | 37,819 | 39,333 |
| | 1 | 36,541 | 38,003 |

Operational Support Grade (Band 2) – National⁹⁴

| Pay scale | Pay point | From 1 April 2024 | From 1 April 2025 (inc NLW) | From 1 April 2025 (recs) |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------|--|---|
| 37 hour base pay | Spot rate | 23,200 | 23,583 | 24,527 |
| 37 hour inc 25% unsocial | Spot rate | 27,840 | 29,479 | 30,659 |
| 39 hour inc 2xACHP & 25% unsocial | Spot rate | 29,345 | 31,072 | 32,316 |

⁹⁴ The unsocial hours rate for Band 2 OSGs has been temporarily increased from 20% to 25%. However, the pay rates for 1 April 2024 are calculated using the previous 20% for unsocial hours.

Fair and Sustainable ranges – Outer London

Outer London covers – Belmarsh, Downview, Feltham, High Down, Isis and the controllers' offices at Bronzefield and Thameside.

Bands 7 to 12 – Outer London

| Grade | From 1 April 2024 | | From April 2025 | |
|---|-------------------|---------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| | 37 hour base pay | 37 hour inc 20% RHA | 37 hour base pay | 37 hour inc 20% RHA |
| Prison Group Director (Band 12) spot rate | 120,152 | - | 124,959 | - |
| Governor (Band 11) max | 96,733 | 116,080 | 100,603 | 120,724 |
| Governor (Band 11) min | 87,940 | 105,528 | 91,458 | 109,750 |
| Governor (Band 10) max | 85,890 | 103,068 | 89,761 | 107,713 |
| Governor (Band 10) min | 78,082 | 93,698 | 81,601 | 97,921 |
| Deputy Governor (Band 9) max | 78,311 | 93,973 | 81,444 | 97,733 |
| Deputy Governor (Band 9) min | 71,192 | 85,430 | 74,041 | 88,849 |
| Deputy Governor / Head of Function (Band 8) max | 61,843 | 74,212 | 64,318 | 77,182 |
| Deputy Governor / Head of Function (Band 8) min | 56,221 | 67,465 | 58,471 | 70,165 |
| Head of Function (Band 7) spot rate | 53,490 | 64,188 | 55,631 | 66,757 |

Custodial Manager (Band 5) – Outer London

| Pay scale | Pay point | From 1 April 2024 | From 1 April 2025 |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 37 hour base pay | 3 | 39,616 | 41,202 |
| | 2 | 38,699 | 40,248 |
| | 1 | 37,802 | 39,315 |
| 37 hour inc 20% unsocial | 3 | 47,539 | 49,442 |
| | 2 | 46,439 | 48,298 |
| | 1 | 45,362 | 47,178 |
| 39 hour inc 2xACHP & 20% unsocial | 3 | 50,108 | 52,115 |
| | 2 | 48,949 | 50,908 |
| | 1 | 47,814 | 49,728 |

Supervising / Specialist Officers (Band 4) – Outer London

| Pay scale | Pay point | From 1 April 2024 | From 1 April 2025 |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 37 hour base pay | Spot rate | 35,182 | 36,590 |
| 37 hour inc 20% unsocial | Spot rate | 42,218 | 43,908 |
| 39 hour inc 2xACHP & 20% unsocial | Spot rate | 44,501 | 46,281 |

Prison Officer (Band 3) – Outer London

| Pay scale | Pay point | From 1 April 2024 | From 1 April 2025 |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 37 hour base pay | 3 | 31,659 | 32,926 |
| | 2 | 31,119 | 32,365 |
| | 1 | 30,068 | 31,271 |
| 37 hour inc 20% unsocial | 3 | 37,991 | 39,511 |
| | 2 | 37,343 | 38,838 |
| | 1 | 36,082 | 37,525 |
| 38 hour inc 1xACH & 20% unsocial | 3 | 39,189 | 40,757 |
| | 2 | 38,520 | 40,063 |
| | 1 | 37,219 | 38,708 |
| 39 hour inc 2xACH & 20% unsocial | 3 | 40,387 | 42,003 |
| | 2 | 39,698 | 41,287 |
| | 1 | 38,357 | 39,892 |
| 39 hour inc 2xACHP & 20% unsocial | 3 | 40,044 | 41,647 |
| | 2 | 39,361 | 40,937 |
| | 1 | 38,032 | 39,554 |
| 40 hour inc 3xACH & 20% unsocial | 3 | 41,584 | 43,249 |
| | 2 | 40,875 | 42,512 |
| | 1 | 39,495 | 41,075 |
| 41 hour inc 4xACH & 20% unsocial | 3 | 42,782 | 44,495 |
| | 2 | 42,053 | 43,736 |
| | 1 | 40,633 | 42,258 |

Operational Support Grade (Band 2) – Outer London⁹⁵

| Pay scale | Pay point | From 1 April 2024 | From 1 April 2025 (inc NLW) | From 1 April 2025 (recs) |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------|--|---|
| 37 hour base pay | Spot rate | 26,387 | 26,770 | 27,842 |
| 37 hour inc 25% unsocial | Spot rate | 31,664 | 33,463 | 34,803 |
| 39 hour inc 2xACHP & 25% unsocial | Spot rate | 33,376 | 35,271 | 36,684 |

⁹⁵ The unsocial hours rate for Band 2 OSGs has been temporarily increased from 20% to 25%. However, the pay rates for 1 April 2024 are calculated using the previous 20% for unsocial hours.

Fair and Sustainable ranges – Inner London

Inner London covers – Brixton, Pentonville, Wandsworth, Westminster headquarters and Wormwood Scrubs

Bands 7 to 12 – Inner London

| Grade | From 1 April 2024 | | From 1 April 2025 | |
|--|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| | 37 hour base pay | 37 hour inc 20% RHA | 37 hour base pay | 37 hour inc 20% RHA |
| Prison Group Director (Band 12) spot rate | 121,812 | - | 126,685 | - |
| Governor (Band 11) max | 98,393 | 118,072 | 102,329 | 122,795 |
| Governor (Band 11) min | 89,449 | 107,339 | 93,027 | 111,632 |
| Governor (Band 10) max | 87,550 | 105,060 | 91,487 | 109,784 |
| Governor (Band 10) min | 79,591 | 95,509 | 83,170 | 99,804 |
| Deputy Governor (Band 9) max | 79,971 | 95,965 | 83,170 | 99,804 |
| Deputy Governor (Band 9) min | 72,701 | 87,241 | 75,610 | 90,732 |
| Deputy Governor / Head of Function (Band 8) max | 63,503 | 76,204 | 66,044 | 79,253 |
| Deputy Governor / Head of Function (Band 8) min | 57,730 | 69,276 | 60,040 | 72,048 |
| Head of Function (Band 7) spot rate | 55,150 | 66,180 | 57,357 | 68,828 |

Custodial Manager (Band 5) – Inner London

| Pay scale | Pay point | From 1 April 2024 | From 1 April 2025 |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 37 hour base pay | 3 | 41,276 | 42,928 |
| | 2 | 40,320 | 41,934 |
| | 1 | 39,386 | 40,962 |
| 37 hour inc 20% unsocial | 3 | 49,531 | 51,514 |
| | 2 | 48,384 | 50,321 |
| | 1 | 47,263 | 49,154 |
| 39 hour inc 2xACHP & 20% unsocial | 3 | 52,208 | 54,298 |
| | 2 | 50,999 | 53,041 |
| | 1 | 49,818 | 51,811 |

Supervising / Specialist Officers (Band 4) – Inner London

| Pay scale | Pay point | From 1 April 2024 | From 1 April 2025 |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 37 hour base pay | Spot rate | 36,842 | 38,316 |
| 37 hour inc 20% unsocial | Spot rate | 44,210 | 45,979 |
| 39 hour inc 2xACHP & 20% unsocial | Spot rate | 46,600 | 48,465 |

Prison Officer (Band 3) – Inner London

| Pay scale | Pay point | From 1 April 2024 | From 1 April 2025 |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 37 hour base pay | 3 | 33,319 | 34,652 |
| | 2 | 32,751 | 34,062 |
| | 1 | 31,644 | 32,911 |
| 37 hour inc 20% unsocial | 3 | 39,983 | 41,582 |
| | 2 | 39,301 | 40,874 |
| | 1 | 37,973 | 39,493 |
| 38 hour inc 1xACH & 20% unsocial | 3 | 41,244 | 42,894 |
| | 2 | 40,540 | 42,163 |
| | 1 | 39,170 | 40,738 |
| 39 hour inc 2xACH & 20% unsocial | 3 | 42,504 | 44,205 |
| | 2 | 41,779 | 43,452 |
| | 1 | 40,368 | 41,984 |
| 39 hour inc 2xACHP & 20% unsocial | 3 | 42,144 | 43,830 |
| | 2 | 41,425 | 43,084 |
| | 1 | 40,025 | 41,628 |
| 40 hour inc 3xACH & 20% unsocial | 3 | 43,765 | 45,516 |
| | 2 | 43,019 | 44,741 |
| | 1 | 41,565 | 43,229 |
| 41 hour inc 4xACH & 20% unsocial | 3 | 45,025 | 46,827 |
| | 2 | 44,258 | 46,030 |
| | 1 | 42,762 | 44,474 |

Operational Support Grade (Band 2) – Inner London⁹⁶

| Pay scale | Pay point | From 1 April 2024 | From 1 April 2025 (inc NLW) | From 1 April 2025 (recs) |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------|--|---|
| 37 hour base pay | Spot rate | 28,047 | 28,430 | 29,568 |
| 37 hour inc 25% unsocial | Spot rate | 33,656 | 35,538 | 36,960 |
| 39 hour inc 2xACHP & 25% unsocial | Spot rate | 35,476 | 37,458 | 38,958 |

⁹⁶ The unsocial hours rate for Band 2 OSGs has been temporarily increased from 20% to 25%. However, the pay rates for 1 April 2024 are calculated using the previous 20% for unsocial hours.

Notes pages for Fair and Sustainable pay scales, spot rates and ranges

Bands 2 to 12

D1. The 37 hour base pay salaries are the basis from which other rates are calculated.

D2. Base pay rates are calculated by rounding up to the nearest £.

Bands 2 to 5

D3. These staff may also qualify for an additional Unsocial Working Hours (UWH) allowance of 20% or 25% which is pensionable.

D4. The UWH allowance, Additional Committed Hours (ACH) and Pensionable Additional Committed Hours (ACHP) are calculated by rounding to the nearest £.

D5. ACH and ACHP also attract unsocial hours payments of 20% or 25%, which are pensionable.

D6. Inner and Outer London scales are calculated by setting the scale maximum at a value equal to the equivalent National pay band maximum plus the Inner London differential - £5,041 from 1 April 2025 (previously £4,847 from 1 April 2024) - or plus the Outer London differential - £3,315 from 1 April 2025 (previously £3,187 from 1 April 2024). Other points are then calculated so that they are the same proportion of the maximum as the equivalent point on the equivalent National scale.

D7. The base pay rate for National Band 2 was increased on 1 April 2025 to ensure compliance with the National Living Wage. Therefore, the pay values shown as current will not match the equivalent pay values from the 2024 Report. This also impacts on the calculation for Inner and Outer London Band 2 pay rates as per paragraph D6 above.

Bands 7 to 12

D8. The Bands 8 to 11 ranges do not have fixed incremental pay points. Band 7 and 12 are spot rates.

D9. Pay with Required Hours Addition/Allowance (RHA) is presented as rounded to the nearest £, is pensionable and calculated as 20% of base pay.

D10. Inner and Outer London ranges are calculated by setting the range maximum at a value equal to the equivalent National pay band maximum plus the Inner London differential - £5,041 from 1 April 2025 (previously £4,847 from 1 April 2024) - or plus the Outer London differential - £3,315 from 1 April 2025 (previously £3,187 from 1 April 2024). Minima are then calculated so that they are the same proportion of the maximum as is the minimum of the equivalent National range.

D11. From 1 April 2024, the Bands 8 to 11 ranges were shortened from 20% to 10% from minima to maxima.

Current pay for non-Fair and Sustainable grades (£ a year)⁹⁷

Non-Fair and Sustainable operational manager grades

| Grade | From 1 April 2025 |
|---|-------------------|
| Senior Manager A | 94,896 |
| Senior Manager B | 92,110 |
| Senior Manager D (post-2009 scale) | 70,003 |
| Manager F | 44,697 |
| Required Hours Addition (pensionable) ⁹⁸ | 6,206 |

Non- Fair and Sustainable support and officer grades^{99,100}

| Grade | From 1 April 2025 |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Principal Officer | 38,087 |
| Senior Officer | 35,429 |
| Prison Officer | 32,915 |
| Operational Support Grade | 24,858 |
| Night Patrol | 28,044 |
| Prison Auxiliary | 24,858 |
| G4S Security Officer ¹⁰¹ | 24,858 |

Non-Fair and Sustainable TUPE transfer grades

There are several grades in our remit that have TUPE transferred on different pay and grading arrangements following HMP The Wolds in 2013 and HMP Birmingham in 2019. We treat these staff as part of the closed grades and they are entitled to the closed grade pay award. Those staff that opt in to Fair and Sustainable will be covered under the Fair and Sustainable rates of pay. In August 2024, HMP Lowdham Grange staff TUPE transferred to HMPPS on existing pay and grading arrangements. Therefore, these staff are now part of our remit and will be treated as closed grades, entitled to the closed grade equivalent pay award until such time as they opt in to Fair and Sustainable.

⁹⁷ Senior Manager C, Senior Manager D (pre-2009 scale), Manager E, Prison Officer 2 and G4S Prison Custody Officer have been removed as there are no longer any remit group staff on these pay scales.

⁹⁸ This applies to the following grades: Senior Manager D (post-2009) and Manager F.

⁹⁹ The pay shown in this table is based on a 39 hour week, except for the Night Patrol grade, which is a 44 hour week.

¹⁰⁰ The base pay for the following grades has been uplifted to remain compliant with the 1 April 2025 NLW: OSG; Night Patrol; Prison Auxiliary; and G4S Security Officer.

¹⁰¹ This grade was formerly part of HMP Wolds run by G4S.

Appendix E: Legacy Locality Pay Allowance rates

We recommend no change to legacy Locality Pay Allowances rates for the closed, non-Fair and Sustainable grades so the rates remain as below. These rates are pensionable and are only payable to those staff in post at 31 March 2012.

| Rating structure | £ a year | Establishment/sites covered |
|-------------------------|-----------------|--|
| Rate 1 | 4,250 | Brixton, Pentonville, Wandsworth and Wormwood Scrubs |
| Rate 2 | 4,000 | Feltham, Huntercombe, The Mount and Westminster headquarters |
| Rate 3 | 3,100 | Belmarsh, Bronzefield, ¹⁰² Coldingley, Downview, High Down, Isis and Send |
| Rate 4 | 2,600 | Aylesbury, Bedford, Bullingdon, Chelmsford, Grendon/Springhill and Woodhill |
| Rate 5 | 1,100 | Lewes and Winchester |
| Rate 6 | 250 | Birmingham, ¹⁰³ Bristol, Littlehey, Long Lartin and Onley |

¹⁰² Payable to eligible staff in the controllers' office at this establishment.

¹⁰³ There may be a number of former HMPPS staff that were TUPE transferred to G4S at this establishment who have now TUPE transferred back to HMPPS, that may also be in receipt of this LPA rate.

Appendix F: Allowances and payments

We recommend two changes to allowances: to both rates of the Care and Maintenance of Dogs allowance and the Operational Response and Resilience Unit on-call allowance. Below are the continuing rates from 1 April 2025.

| Allowances and payments | Closed grades from 1 April 2025 | Fair and Sustainable grades from 1 April 2025 |
|--|---|--|
| Care and Maintenance of Dogs Rate 1 – single dog | £2,845 a year | £2,845 a year |
| Care and Maintenance of Dogs Rate 2 – multiple dogs ¹⁰⁴ | £3,556 a year | £3,556 a year |
| Specialist allowance (pensionable): ¹⁰⁵ Patrol and Search Dog Handlers and Physical Education Instructors | £1,200 a year | Not applicable |
| Operational Response and Resilience Unit on-call allowance ¹⁰⁶ | £8,000 a year | £8,000 a year |
| Operation Tornado payment (officers) | £40.00 an hour | £40.00 an hour |
| Operation Tornado payment (OSGs) | £30.00 an hour | £30.00 an hour |
| Payment Plus | £22.00 an hour | £22.00 an hour |
| Dirty protest allowance: four hours or less per day | £15.00 a day | £15.00 a day |
| Dirty protest allowance: over four hours per day | £30.00 a day | £30.00 a day |
| On-call (radio pager): weekdays | £5.67 per period of more than 12 hours | Not applicable |
| On-call (radio pager): weekends and privilege holidays | £16.13 per 24 hour period or proportionately for periods less than 24 hours | Not applicable |
| On-call (radio pager): public and bank holidays | £20.41 per 24 hour period or proportionately for periods less than 24 hours | Not applicable |

¹⁰⁴ The Care and Maintenance of Dogs allowance multiple dog rate is calculated as an additional 25% of the single dog rate.

¹⁰⁵ There are no longer any staff claiming this allowance as: Caterers, Librarians, Trade Instructors and Works Officers. These have now therefore been removed from the closed grade specialist allowance list.

¹⁰⁶ Following discussions with HMPPS the National Tactical Response Group and National Dog and Technical Support Group on-call allowances are officially known by the Service as the Operational Response and Resilience Unit on-call allowance. Therefore, we have changed the name of the allowance to reflect this.

| Allowances and payments | Closed grades from 1 April 2025 | Fair and Sustainable grades from 1 April 2025 |
|--|---|---|
| On-call (home): weekdays | £7.09 per period of more than 12 hours | Not applicable |
| On-call (home): weekends and privilege holidays | £20.17 per 24 hour period or proportionately for periods less than 24 hours | Not applicable |
| On-call (home): public and bank holidays | £25.47 per 24 hour period or proportionately for periods less than 24 hours | Not applicable |
| On-call (home): ¹⁰⁷ weekdays and privilege holidays | Not applicable | £9.00 per period of 12 hours or more |
| On-call (home): weekends and public holidays | Not applicable | £25.00 per period of 24 hours or more or proportionately for periods less than 24 hours |
| On-call (home): (hourly rate) | Not applicable | (£1.04 per hour whilst on call outside of normal office hours) |
| Stand by (office): weekdays | £13.43 per period of more than 12 hours | Not applicable |
| Stand by (office): weekends and privilege holidays | £38.46 per 24 hour period or proportionately for period of less than 24 hours | Not applicable |
| Stand by (office): public and bank holidays | £48.26 per 24 hour period or proportionately for period of less than 24 hours | Not applicable |

¹⁰⁷ For staff on Fair and Sustainable grades the on-call payments are payable as two rates: (a) work days and (b) rest days or weekends and bank or public holidays.

Appendix G: Rolling review programme for Prison Service staff allowances and payments

The table below outlines our rolling review programme and which allowances and payments will be considered in detail in which report and year.

| PSPRB Report | Allowances or payments to be considered |
|-----------------------|--|
| Twenty-Fifth (2026) | On-call allowances (Fair and Sustainable) |
| Twenty-Sixth (2027) | Unsocial hours payments (Fair and Sustainable) Care and Maintenance of Dogs |
| Twenty-Seventh (2028) | Payment Plus OSG overtime |
| Twenty-Ninth (2029) | Operation Tornado payments Dirty protest payments |
| Thirtieth (2030) | Operational Response and Resilience Unit on-call allowance |

Appendix H: Summary of recommendations from the 2024 England and Wales report

- H1. Bands 3 to 5 pay scales and spot rates increased by a consolidated 5% from 1 April 2024.
- H2. Band 2 spot rate increased by 5% from 1 April 2024 and in addition to the National Living Wage increase that Band 2 staff received from 1 April 2024.
- H3. The Band 8 to 11 pay ranges are reduced from 20% to 10% in length by increasing the minima.
- H4. Bands 7 to 12 pay ranges and spot rates increased by a consolidated 5% from 1 April 2024.
- H5. Closed grade staff who would not benefit from opting in to Fair and Sustainable received a non-consolidated, non-pensionable payment of 5% of base pay.
- H6. All closed grade pay rates are National Living Wage compliant.
- H7. Those closed grade staff who chose to opt in to Fair and Sustainable are moved to the maximum of their respective Fair and Sustainable pay scale, range or spot rate.
- H8. All staff (except those on formal poor performance procedures) on Bands 3 and 5 who are in post on 31 March 2024 progressed one pay point, effective from 1 April 2024.
- H9. All staff (except those on formal poor performance procedures) on Bands 8 to 11 who are in post on 31 March 2024 progressed by 3⅓% capped at the 1 April 2024 band maximum.
- H10. From 1 April 2024 the fixed cash pay differentials for Inner and Outer London zones increased by 7% and are applied consistently across all bands, positioning maxima at £4,847 and £3,187 respectively above the 37 hour National maxima. Intermediate points and minima are adjusted so progression steps are the same percentage as on the National bands.
- H11. The Operation Tornado rate for officers increased from £24.86 to £40 an hour and from £19 to £30 an hour for Operational Support Grades (OSG).
- H12. The dirty protest rate for periods of four hours or less per day increased from £10 to £15 and for periods of over four hours per day from £20 to £30.
- H13. The Care and Maintenance of Dogs allowance increased by 5% to £2,735 a year for a single dog and the multiple rate to remain set at 25% above the single dog rate.
- H14. Prior to the end of October 2024, His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service provides an overview of the pilot schemes and new initiatives it was running in relation to the reduction of Payment Plus and OSG overtime. Further data was required on the percentage of time worked unsocially by OSGs. Along with outlining its discussions with the trade unions.

Appendix I: Summary of PSPRB headline pay award recommendations from 2014 to 2023

11. **2023** – a consolidated 7% to Bands 3 to 5 and a consolidated 5% to Bands 7 to 12. Band 2 spot rate to increase by £2,000. No pay award for closed grades that can financially benefit from opting in to Fair and Sustainable, with a £1,500 non-consolidated payment for those that do not. Band 7 made a spot rate. The Inner and Outer London cash differentials applied to Band 12.
12. **2022** – a consolidated 4% to Bands 3 to 5 and Bands 7 to 11, including all closed grade staff. The Band 2 spot rate to increase by £1,500 and Band 12 spot rate by 5% (latter reduced by the Government to 3%), from 1 April 2022. From 1 September 2023 a £3,000 total increase to Band 3, eroding the amber market supplement. A reduction in pay points for Bands 3 and 5. Increasing the UWH allowance for Bands 2 to 5 and the RHA for Bands 7 to 11 from 17% to 20%.
13. **2021** – Government pay freeze for those earning over £24,000 full-time equivalent a year with a £250 consolidated pay increase for those earning under this figure.
14. **2020** – a consolidated 2.5% increase for all Fair and Sustainable and closed grades from 1 April 2020. From 1 September 2020 the Fair and Sustainable National Band 3 base pay points increase by £2,564 giving a total consolidated and pensionable award of £3,000 when the 17% unsocial hours payment is included.
15. **2019** – a consolidated 2.2% increase for all Fair and Sustainable and closed grades, except Fair and Sustainable Band 3, which was recommended a 3.0% consolidated pay increase.
16. **2018** – a consolidated 2.75% increase for all Fair and Sustainable and closed grades, except Fair and Sustainable Band 3 and 4, which were recommended increases of 5.25% and 3.5% respectively. Rejected by the Government and reduced to a 2.0% consolidated and 0.75% non-consolidated award for all Fair and Sustainable and closed grades.
17. **2017** – a consolidated flat cash award of £400 to all uniformed grades (both those on Fair and Sustainable and closed grades) and an increase of 1% to the maxima of the Fair and Sustainable National Bands 7 to 11.
18. **2016** – an increase of 1% to the maxima of the Fair and Sustainable National bands and non-consolidated awards of £300 for Prison Officers and support staff, £325 for Senior Officers and £350 for Principal Officers.
19. **2015** – an increase of 1.8% to the maxima of the Fair and Sustainable National bands but no recommended pay awards for those on closed grades. The Government then provided non-consolidated retention bonus payments (£300 for Prison Officers and support staff, £325 for Senior Officers and £350 for Principal Officers) shortly after the publication of our 2015 report.
110. **2014** – a 1% consolidated pay increase for all officers and support staff on all pay structures and changes to some Fair and Sustainable National Band 7 to 11 pay structures to provide 2% to staff who opted in.

