

What we're hearing from the prison population

In May 2025 we attended a health promotion event at HMP Coldingley to hear about experiences of healthcare whilst in prison.

Who did we hear from?

- **14** men shared their experiences of physical and mental health support with us
- **36%** were from a minority ethnic group¹
- **85%** were aged 25–49 years old.

Key findings



People are generally feeling well supported in their physical health

- Access to food, exercise and support to stop smoking or using drugs while in prison is contributing to better physical health for some. However, there was mention of other inmates using substances.
- Access to routine care is satisfactory.



"I'm generally very healthy; my physical health is better than my mental health but that has actually been better since I've been inside. I think being here has made me more resilient as I'm having to deal with new people and new places. I think my health has been well looked after here – I've had therapy to help me to deal with the crime I committed and to start to forgive myself."



Long term health upon release is a concern

- Not knowing where they will live when they leave prison means they are unsure how or where to access healthcare.
- Issues such as housing will take priority over healthcare.



People would benefit from better access to mental health support

- ADHD medication shortages are impacting on people's mental health.
- One person said they have an eating disorder but are not getting the right help.
- Peer support could be invaluable for improving mental health.



"I think I'm healthy physically but not mentally. I have ADHD but the wait for treatment is 3 years which is far too long. I do get help for my mental health in here but more needs to be done. I think the problem is that men just don't talk to each other and/or about their feelings."

¹ 28% of the prison population in England are from a minority ethnic group according to the Prison Reform Trust.