



Ministry  
of Justice

**Lord Timpson**  
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Leicester  
Welford Road  
Leicester  
LE2 7AJ

**MoJ ref:** SUB117871

7 October 2024

Dear Chair,

**HMP LEICESTER: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 FEBRUARY 2023 – 31 JANUARY 2024**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Leicester which I have read with care. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for the hard work that has been put into capturing your helpful observations. I was deeply saddened to hear that a death occurred shortly after the prisoners release into the community. I offer my condolences to all their friends and family and would like to reassure the Board that recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman are taken very seriously.

I understand the Board's continued concerns about prisoners with severe mental health issues. It is acknowledged that vulnerable prisoners, who meet the threshold for detention under the Mental Health Act and require a transfer to a mental health hospital, do experience delays in accessing specialist care and treatment they need. The Ministry of Justice is working with the Department of Health and Social Care to reform the Mental Health Act (1983) and introduce the Mental Health Bill in this parliamentary session. The Mental Health Bill includes reforms to improve access to mental health care for patients in the criminal justice system, such as the introduction of a statutory 28-day time limit for transfers from prison to hospital which mirrors the standards set out NHS England's good practice guidance. The reforms will also prevent courts from using prison as a place of safety for those awaiting treatment or assessment under the Mental Health Act. Instead, the defendant or convicted person must be transferred directly to hospital, ensuring swifter access to the care they need. In order to support these reforms NHS England are working strategically across the systems to improve the pathways. There are also ongoing workstreams between NHS England, healthcare providers across secure estates and NHS led Provider Collaboratives to promote clinical best practice and ensure accurate and consistent recording to support timely access to care in the appropriate setting. For prisoners that remain in custody they have access to integrated mental health services commissioned by NHS England and locally at HMP Leicester prisoners are being held in the most suitable accommodation for their needs and risk and given support via the dedicated mental health team.

Regarding your concerns about opportunities for prisoners to access accommodation on release, the Community Accommodation Services Tier 2 (CAS-2) already provides accommodation for bailees and people released under Bail and Home Detention Curfew. The number of CAS2 bed spaces increased to 50 from 38 in the East Midlands during 2023/24 financial year, as part of the CAS2 expansion to 850 bed spaces in total. The transitional accommodation service, known as

Community Accommodation Service Tier 3 (CAS3), has also been delivering accommodation to thousands of prison-leavers, who are under the supervision of Probation and at risk of homelessness, to provide a stable base on release. New bedspaces continue to become available with the East Midlands Probation Region having access to 270 beds once fully implemented. There are also 49 full time equivalent Strategic Housing Specialists (SHS), across England and Wales and HMP Leicester has an allocated SHS. These work with local authorities and Homelessness Prevention Teams to remove barriers to accommodation and improve access to housing for prison leavers. In addition, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has secured an additional £26 million for their Accommodation for Ex-Offender scheme during 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years. This is targeting areas identified as high need to assist an additional 5,000 ex-offenders into private rented sector tenancies by end of March 2025. Local authorities including Leicester, Derby and Nottingham have been allocated this funding. HMP Leicester also held an open day for housing practitioners in June 2024 and will continue to work with the local council to address the housing needs of prisoners.

I recognise your concerns about prisoners being transferred away from their family and resettlement area. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) has continued to strive to maintain offender flows despite population pressures across the entire adult male prison estate. The remand population has grown to unprecedented levels due to the courts backlog, resulting in prisons being asked to show flexibility with their prisoner cohorts. To help alleviate the pressure on prison places, on 12 July 2024 the Lord Chancellor announced temporary changes to standard determinate sentences. There are wide-ranging considerations involved in transferring prisoners, and where practicable, prisoners are accommodated as close as possible to their home probation region to maintain family ties. HMP Fosse Way is geographically well placed to serve the East Midlands region and its primary function is to address the resettlement needs of prisoners from the local area. HMP Leicester provides regular category C allocations to HMP Fosse Way, however, any prisoners with more than 16 months left to serve will be allocated to the most appropriate training prison to meet their needs which may not be within the locality of Leicester. The Board can be assured that irrespective of a prisoners location, embedded pre-release teams do identify and address immediate resettlement needs with pre-release support provided to all people in prison, including those on remand or where they are out of area.

It was reassuring to note that staff have very good, supportive and constructive interactions with the prisoners in their care. Despite the increased incidents of self-harm and violence during the year, I welcome the Board commending the whole prison approach to maintain safety with staff being alert to the risks of individual prisoners and good use of intelligence to intercept illicit items. I was also pleased to read about the education and vocational courses and qualifications achieved by prisoners despite the increased turnover in the prisoner population.

I note you have raised three local issues of concern in your report which the Governor will continue to keep you aware of as work continues. HMPPS comments in response to other issues raised in your report are set out in the attached annex.

The Lord Chancellor and I appreciate the valuable role played by members of Independent Monitoring Boards throughout the estate and we are very grateful for your continued hard work on behalf of HMP Leicester.



**Lord Timpson**  
**Minister for Prisons, Probation, and Reducing Reoffending**

## **HMP LEICESTER: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 FEBRUARY 2023 – 31 JANUARY 2024**

### **HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report**

#### **Capital Investment**

Further to last year's response the submitted Estates Investment Proposal bid to replace windows on the main wing currently remains unfunded and will be considered in future years. Whilst all requests are being considered, it should be noted that demands for maintenance are much greater than the available funding and HMPPS is having to prioritise works very carefully to make best use of that funding, focusing on risk to life and risk to capacity and decency. In the interim there has been work to repair several damaged window vents on Parsons unit.

HMPPS has recently invested around £8.5 million into HMP Leicester to improve fire safety for staff and prisoners. Two further projects to improve the prison environment are in the programme for delivery this financial year, one to refurbish showers and another to paint the gym. The annual planned maintenance task for sitewide gutter clearing was also completed by specialist contractors in May 2024 and funding has been committed to replace box gutters and address insufficient connections that are causing the leaks.

#### **Workshops**

HMP Leicester is working with HMPPS Prison Industries and the New Futures Network to enhance the quality and relevance of work available to prisoners. However, it is recognised that the site has small workspaces, with limited access and power supplies which mean it is unsuitable for one of the larger scale trades such as Industrial Engineering and Woodwork Machining. Given the short stay of many prisoners at HMP Leicester this also creates challenges in the options that can be explored. Work which requires limited training, such as the Plastics workshop, is suitable for short stay prisoners to have the opportunity to increase employability skills, punctuality, and adherence to work regimes. Nevertheless, the Employment Advisory Board and prison teams are conducting market research to identify opportunities that better reflect the labour market information and the needs of prisoners. In addition, the HMP Academies project is looking to increase the number of work spaces within prisons. This is branded and hosted by employers with the aim to train prisoners in custody for employment on release. The project is in its pilot phase working with 13 prisons across the country to establish Academies with the anticipation that the model could be rolled out to other prisons across the country.

In the interim HMP Leicester continues to concentrate on recycling activities to occupy prisoners. Prisoners can complete a Level 1 Award in Waste and Recycling and also have opportunities to upskill in English, maths and customer service. The Waste and Recycling Workshop has links to employment opportunities through partnerships with companies like Bakers Waste and many work activities do enhance prisoners general awareness of recycling, repurposing, and sustainability, as well as building their skills and experience. The prison has also introduced a voluntary recycling champion who promotes recycling awareness, instilling valuable life skills for prisoners ahead of their release.