



Ministry  
of Justice

**Lord Timpson**  
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Oakwood  
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Featherstone  
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**MoJ ref:** SUB118601

31 October 2024

Dear Chair,

**HMP OAKWOOD: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 APRIL 2023 – 31 MARCH 2024**

Thank you for submitting your Board's annual report on HMP Oakwood which I have read with care. It is clear that you and your colleagues have, as ever, put in a huge amount of work to capture the current state of the prison. I would like to express my gratitude to you all, particularly as you continued to operate with a reduced complement of members.

I was deeply saddened to hear eight prisoners died during the reporting year, either in custody or at hospital. Any death in our prisons is a tragedy and I offer my heartfelt condolences to their friends and family. Whilst the number of deaths was high, I was reassured to note that none were untoward or self-inflicted and there was a high standard of palliative care. I would like to take this opportunity to reassure the Board that recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman are taken very seriously.

As the Board will be aware, healthcare provision for HMP Oakwood is commissioned by NHS England and delivered by Practice Plus Group (PPG). Mental Health Services have been subcontracted to the Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust (MPFT) by PPG. In respect of your concerns regarding mental healthcare vacancies, recruitment, and retention at HMP Oakwood, I would like to reassure the Board that NHS Commissioners monitor outcomes including resourcing. This includes the level of use of agency and bank staff along with recruitment and retention, and all issues are discussed at monthly Local Delivery Boards and Quarterly Contract review meetings.

It is regrettable that the recruitment of a psychologist at HMP Oakwood remains challenging, however I am pleased to confirm that a Locum Psychologist will be recruited as a priority until this vacancy can be filled permanently. The psychology service staffing provision will be reviewed by MPFT to ensure it meets the requirement of the establishment.

Although the Board's concerns are repeated matters, I was nevertheless encouraged to receive your comments that you viewed the prison as a safe and secure environment that has a positive and respectful culture towards prisoners. I was further encouraged to learn that there was a 25% reduction in violence compared to three years ago. It was also pleasing to read your

observations of the positive and helpful atmosphere in the library, including the use of guest speakers, and that the farms and gardens are well used and valued by the prisoners.

I note you have raised some local issues of concern in your report which the Director will continue to keep you aware of progress as work continues. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) comments in response to other issues raised in your report are set out in the attached annex.

The Secretary of State and I hugely appreciate the invaluable role of Independent Monitoring Boards throughout the estate and we are very grateful to and your team for your continued hard work on behalf of HMP Oakwood.



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

## HMP OAKWOOD: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 APRIL 2023 – 31 MARCH 2024

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

#### **Healthcare Provision**

A full Health Needs Assessment has been commissioned and the outcomes from this exercise will provide clear indications for future direction and actions required to improve healthcare provision at HMP Oakwood. NHS Commissioners will continue to monitor contracts to ensure provision meets the needs of the population at the prison.

The timeframes for mental health transfers is a national concern. This is actively monitored by NHS Commissioners who support escalation routes to ensure the timescales can be met, where possible. 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 sets out vital reforms to support people with severe mental illness in the criminal justice system with the aim of speeding up access to specialist inpatient care and ensuring that offenders and defendants with severe mental health needs are able to access appropriate and timely support in the most appropriate setting. The provisions include, but are not limited to, the introduction of a statutory 28-day time limit for the transfer of patients from prison to hospital. The time limit mirrors that introduced in NHS England's good practice guidance, published in June 2021, starting at the point of an initial referral and ending at the point of the patient's admission to hospital. This time limit, together with operational improvements, aims to reduce unnecessary delays and deliver swifter access to treatment. .

#### **Offender Management Unit (OMU)**

HMPPS notes the concerns of the capacity of the OMU and whether this is sufficient to meet the needs of the current prison population at HMP Oakwood. Probation Central Operations Support (COS) team have recently reviewed the prison's probation staffing level against the Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) target staffing model. The target staffing level was set at fourteen POMs to ensure adequate OMU provision and proposed changes will be considered via the National Operational Stability Panel (NOSP) in October 2024. With both the qualification of PQiPs (Professional Qualification in Probation) and the centralised recruitment of PQiPs in the West Midlands region, HMP Oakwood should achieve its target staffing by the end of December 2024. This will be continually reviewed to ensure it meets the demand of the prison population.

#### **Prisoners' Property**

HMPPS appreciates the Board's ongoing concerns about prisoners' property, particularly when a prisoner transfers establishments. The introduction of the digitally recorded Prisoner Escort Record (dPER) included a property section that accurately records the number and type of sealed property 'owned' by and transferred with the prisoner and an accurate record of property handover between different stakeholders. This is now embedded as business as usual. The digital process has assisted with investigations for property that is lost in transit with the transport suppliers, and complaints are reviewed monthly during formal meetings with transport suppliers. For property delay, in-line with the HMPPS Prisoner Property Framework, if the limit of items allowed in possession has been reached, and if there is no space on the Escort Vehicle to transport items safely and securely, then responsibility for transfer of any remaining items remains with the sending prison.

Following the introduction of the Prisoners' Property Framework, prisoners must comply with volumetric control limits, since any property within these limits will be transferred with them. This includes items which are exempt from volumetric control, such as legal papers. It is not possible to transfer with a prisoner all excess property which they might have accrued above these limits and any excess property outside of these limits will be transferred within four weeks. HMPPS is aware of the problems around property and continues to explore what further can be done.

### **Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) Prisoners**

HMPPS is confident that the achievements of the the HMPPS IPP Action Plan has contributed to an overall reduction in the IPP population between June 2023 and June 2024. As part of the Plan, in February 2024, Phil Copple, the Director General of Operations at HMPPS commissioned each of the seven Area Executive Directors for England and Wales, as well as the Executive Directors of the Long-Term High Security Estate, the Women's Estate and Contracted Prisons to develop operational IPP delivery plans and to begin delivering those plans from Summer 2024.

These Delivery Plans directly target front-line delivery in support of helping those serving IPP sentences to work on and achieve the objectives within their sentence plans and move towards a future prospective safe and sustainable release, and when in the community, towards a future termination of their licence. At HMP Oakwood, the Head of Resettlement, in collaboration with probation staff, has established an IPP panel for prisoners nearing release. HMPPS will continue to monitor the progress of the IPP Action Plan and consult expert organisations and campaign groups to ensure that we are considering all options.

The Board may also be aware that on 5 September 2024 the Lord Chancellor announced that from November 2024, anyone who was released on IPP licence five or more years ago and has spent at least the last two years of that period in the community without being recalled, will have their IPP licence terminated without the need for a review by the Parole Board. The Secretary of State will also have two new 'Risk Assessed Recall Review' powers. The first enables her to not reset the two-year period after someone is re-released from a recall. Secondly, she will be able to re-release people who have been recalled at any point without referring the case to the Parole Board. These measures will make an overall difference to the number of IPP prisoners held across the estate, including HMP Oakwood.