



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Elisabeth Davies
National Chair, Independent Monitoring Boards
3rd Floor
10 South Colonnade
London
E14 4PU

MoJ ref: SUB119479

27 November 2024

Dear Elisabeth,

**THE IMPACT OF A CRUMBLING PRISON ESTATE ON PRISONERS
INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARDS (IMB) THEMATIC MONITORING REPORT
NOVEMBER 2024**

Thank you for providing your thematic report on how the infrastructure and maintenance of our prisons is impacting prisoners. I am extremely grateful for the work of Boards throughout the estate in being able to bring these findings to my attention. The contributions Board's make is significant and I know many of the issues noted in this thematic report are not new, but I hope I can provide them my assurance that I take the matters raised very seriously.

The Ministry of Justice and HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) do recognise the ongoing problems of an aging and crowded prison estate. We know that a significant amount of maintenance and repairs are needed to continue to maintain sufficient prison capacity to a reasonable standard and with suitable working equipment to allow the prison estate to appropriately serve our courts and rehabilitate the prisoners in our care.

In order to provide safe, secure and decent conditions for both prisoners and staff, HMPPS is continually reviewing the investment that is required across the prison estate. The state of the current infrastructure within our prisons has been identified in recent condition surveys which assessed the fabric, cells, and critical assets at each prison and these will be used to inform long-term forward maintenance registers, allowing these to be prioritised against future capital budgets. Whilst the demands for maintenance remain greater than the available funding, all project requests from prisons will continue to be considered and prioritised very carefully to make best use of that funding focusing on risk to life and risk to capacity and decency.

We also know that capacity issues within our prisons need to be addressed and we will continue to invest in critical prison maintenance to ensure that we keep as much capacity as possible in use and fit for purpose. I hope Board's also welcome that difficult decisions were taken at pace following the general election to reduce the pressure on prison places and they understand the need for the announcement that the Secretary of State made on 12 July 2024 to temporarily reduce the time standard determinate sentenced prisoners serve in prison.

New prison places will also continue to play a key part, alongside the expansion and refurbishment of the existing prison estate and we will set out our long-term plan for the prison estate in a 10-year capacity strategy before the end of the year.

Whilst there is still much work to do, I was really encouraged that Board's recognised the positive changes that reasonable adjustments, such as ramps, can make where the prison infrastructure allows us to do this, helping prisoners to fully engage with the regime. It was very pleasing that there was some good practice identified in terms of prisoner teams improving the environment they live in, as these are great opportunities to utilise and learn employable skills ready for their release into the community. I was also interested by the findings about maintenance within private prisons being reported on more positively.

The Secretary of State and I are hugely appreciative of the dedication, experience and valuable role played by Independent Monitoring Boards across the estate and are enormously thankful for their continued hard work.



Lord Timpson
Minister for Prisons, Probation, and Reducing Reoffending