



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP/YOI Bedford
St Loyes Street
Bedford
MK40 1HG

MoJ ref: SUB120854

22 January 2025

Dear Chair,

**HMP/YOI BEDFORD: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 JULY 2023 – 30 JUNE 2024**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP/YOI Bedford, which I have read with interest. It is clear that you and your colleagues have worked hard throughout the year to be able to produce this report and I am grateful to you and the other members for your contributions and dedication, particularly as you have been working below your recommended complement of members.

I was extremely saddened to read that three prisoners died in custody during the reporting year and I pass on my deepest condolences to all their family and friends. I would like to offer reassurance that the deaths of all prisoners are taken very seriously, and it is important that we act on any recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman following such tragic circumstances

I note that the Board has not raised any specific issues for my consideration. As you will be aware HMP/YOI Bedford was subject to an Urgent Notification in November 2023, which raised many of the same issues that the IMB had observed. I am pleased to read that there are again common observations of progress between your report and the most recent Independent Review of Progress at HMP/YOI Bedford. This includes reductions in self-harm (although this still remains too high), improvements to the reception process and the positive impacts of the relocation of the Care and Separation Unit. I am also heartened to read that the Board is of the opinion that there has been considerable progress in providing effective career education, information, advice and guidance following the introduction of the employment hub and the work completed by the employment lead.

I acknowledge though that there is a distance still to travel to respond to issues, but I am encouraged that HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) leadership has set a robust vision, underpinned by sound strategic objectives, which will continue to drive HMP/YOI Bedford into a more stable and sustainable position.

I note you have raised some 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/YOI Bedford.



Lord Timpson
Minister for Prisons, Probation, and Reducing Reoffending

HMP/YOI BEDFORD: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JULY 2023 – 30 JUNE 2024

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Relocation of the Care and Separation Unit (CASU)

The CASU has now been relocated which the Board reflects on in the report. We recognise the importance of learning lessons from the project and issues of concern, raised with the present Governor and Deputy Governor, have all been addressed or are being addressed as part of the build.

Provision of Maths and English

To address prisoner needs, the increase of English and Maths was necessary for this business year, and unfortunately to do this required reduced delivery in other areas. A new needs analysis and a curriculum review will be carried out to ensure the needs of prisoners are met. HMP/YOI Bedford is currently exploring enrichment activities through local organisations and charities to reintroduce some courses to vary the offer alongside the core educational delivery. In the recent Independent Review of Progress carried out by HM Inspectorate of Prisons it was recognised that HMP/YOI Bedford had made reasonable progress against this key concern.

System for Managing Property

HMPPS notes the Board's continuing concerns about the handling of prisoners' property. This is an area to which HMPPS is currently giving further attention. Careful consideration will be given to the findings in the recent IMB national thematic report on how property loss impacts on prisoners, as well as those due to be received from Independent Prisoner Complaint Investigations in the coming months following a thematic review of the property complaints they have received in the last five years.

As the Board identifies, a common area for problems is when excess prisoner property is forwarded on when a prisoner transfers. It is therefore key that prisoners comply with volumetric control limits, since anything within those limits will transfer with them. HMPPS is focusing on what more can be done to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Framework. HMPPS also note the Board's concerns about the lack of digital improvements on property handling. While it is recognised this will be disappointing, other pressures around digital changes mean that it is not anticipated that an electronic property card will be in place in the immediate future.

At a local level, there is an ongoing discussion with Prisoner Escort Custody Services to collaboratively address property issues. The issue raised by the Board directly correlates to HMP/YOI Bedford's highest level of complaints and therefore the establishment has commissioned a piece of work locally to address this as a matter of urgency.

.