



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Swansea
200 Oystermouth Road
Swansea
SA1 3SR

MoJ ref: SUB121697

20 February 2025

Dear Chair,

**HMP SWANSEA: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 NOVEMBER 2022 – 31 OCTOBER 2023**

Thank you for submitting your Board's annual report on HMP Swansea which I have read with care. As always, I am grateful to you and your colleagues for the hard work that has been put into capturing your helpful observations. This was especially commendable given that you have continued to experience a considerable shortfall in the number of Board members throughout this reporting period.

I was deeply saddened to hear that three prisoners died during the reporting year. 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 was encouraged to read that the Board considered sufficient support was given to other prisoners who were understandably impacted by these deaths.

I fully understand your concerns about the number of prisoners with significant mental health issues and the particular challenges faced in meeting the needs of those serving short-term sentences. You reported positively about HMP Swansea now having a dedicated mental health team and I was pleased to be informed by the Prison Group Director that this team has facilitated better communication and collaboration with community mental health services and hold weekly meetings at which all new referrals are discussed. The needs of men being released are managed through these meetings to ensure that timely referrals are made to community mental health services and continuous mental health support can be put in place.

I am aware that for many, a short time in custody can start a life of reoffending and can be ineffective in terms of either deterrent or rehabilitation. The Government has recently launched an Independent Review of Sentencing which delivers on our commitment to bring sentencing up to date and to ensure sentencing frameworks are consistent. The Review will take a 'fresh look' at sentencing options, which will include examining the use and impact of short custodial sentences and all potential alternatives to them. This is a positive and timely review which will inform an approach to sentencing that will aim to address many of the Board's concerns. I am also advised that HMP Swansea is working alongside colleagues in Probation to better support men serving short sentences. National standards and assurance have been introduced to improve the quality of the contact between the Prison Offender Manager and the prisoner with the aim of making this as productive as possible by 'starting the sentence right'. Prison Offender Managers are trained to deliver interventions in relationships and thinking skills, including those specifically for those

under 25 years old. Any work started in custody can be continued or built upon in the community as a requirement of licence supervision.

Safe and stable accommodation plays a critical role in reducing reoffending and enhancing public protection. While challenges remain, HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) in Wales is committed to building on initiatives to address these issues. HMPPS in Wales is supporting the Welsh Government's action plan to end homelessness, actively focused on early intervention and prevention measures, including targeted work with Local Authorities and other stakeholders. Since the expansion of a 12-week transitional accommodation service, (known as *Community Accommodation Service Tier 3* or CAS3), into Wales in June 2022, grant agreements are now in place for up to 174 bed spaces marking an increase from the previous year. Swansea Local Authority has increased use of CAS3 temporary accommodation for prison leavers and a new grant agreement with Neath Port Talbot has further expanded direct access to accommodation for individuals leaving HMP Swansea. This strategic collaboration enables HMPPS to secure stable environments for individuals on release.

In addition, the Commissioned Rehabilitative Service (CRS) accommodation service in HMP Swansea continues to provide accommodation support services, including through specialist knowledge and support for prisoners in obtaining or maintaining existing accommodation/tenancies. CRS services work alongside Prison teams to prevent homelessness on release. In addition to sentenced prisoners, these services were recently extended to all men held in custody on remand. This additional service will focus on providing urgent and timely accommodation support for those entering custody to maintain tenancies and to address any immediate needs presented by remanded prisoners to prevent homelessness.

I was pleased to read the many positive comments from the Board regarding the treatment and experience of men serving their sentence at HMP Swansea, in particular that you considered it to be a safe prison. It was also encouraging to hear that incidents of self-harm have reduced by 23% year on year and, despite the increase in the prison population, self-harm remains relatively low. Any incidents are however of concern and the continued efforts at HMP Swansea to further reduce harm are to be commended. I also agree with you that the prison should be congratulated on the employment of a neurodiversity support manager with daily classes being held for men with neurodivergent traits.

I was very interested to read about the work and vocational training opportunities available to the men at HMP Swansea and links with relevant employers before release. The development of a construction academy at the prison, which is forging links with local education providers and employers in the construction industry is a positive and exciting initiative.

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 issue raised in your report are set out in the attached annex.

The Lord Chancellor and I appreciated 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 Swansea.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'James', written in dark ink.

Lord Timpson
Minister for Prisons, Probation, and Reducing Reoffending

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Maintenance Performance

HMPPS has spent around £10,000 on continued works for the cell refurbishment programme at HMP Swansea for the removal and addition of cell dividers in B and C wings which was completed in May 2024. In addition, a smoke control system project is currently in development and will be retendered as soon as commercial proceedings with the administrators have concluded, at which point a revised timetable for delivery will be understood. With regards to holding Amey Projects to account there is a system through which Defect Notices can be issued, which can result in the imposition of financial penalties, should work not be carried out to required specifications.