



Ministry  
of Justice

Lord Timpson  
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Ashfield  
Shortwood Road  
Pucklechurch  
Bristol  
BS16 9QJ

MoJ ref: SUB121699

21 February 2025

Dear Chair,

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

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Ashfield. Having read your report with great care, I appreciate that you and your colleagues have put in a lot of hard work into gathering your helpful observations, especially as you were short of members.

I was very saddened to read that a prisoner died in custody of natural causes during the reporting year, which is most unfortunate. I offer my sincere condolences to all their friends and family. I was encouraged that in this instance the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman judged his clinical care to be of a good standard but would like to reassure the Board that any recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman following a death in custody are taken very seriously.

I can fully understand the Board's ongoing concerns about the time it takes to consider the Parole Board recommendations on transfers to open conditions for those convicted of a sexual offence and subject to a life sentence or indeterminate sentence for public protection. Where a prisoner is awaiting a decision from the Secretary of State on whether a Parole Board recommendation for a move to open conditions will be accepted or rejected, it is the responsibility of the Secretary of State to respond within 28 calendar days, which is the internal target set out in the policy. In some cases, further information is required before a decision can be issued and representations from the prisoner must be sought. The Secretary of State has continued to reduce the backlog of cases requiring a decision on a move to open conditions and it is the aim of the Secretary of State to inform prisoners of the outcome of their parole as soon as possible.

I have looked at the matter you raise of a small number of prisoners being released from HMP Ashfield in the last 12 months not having suitable accommodation prepared for them prior to release. I can confirm that HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) offers a three-tier structure of temporary accommodation known as Community Accommodation Service (CAS). This includes CAS1, which is accommodation with a public protection focus for higher-risk offenders, known as Approved Premises, CAS2 for low to medium risk offenders on Home Detention Curfew or bail and CAS3 that provides up to 12 weeks' basic accommodation for prison leavers at risk of homelessness. HMPPS are also developing a new digitalised approach to Approved Premises referrals, through a National Central Referral Unit. This will oversee assessment for suitability and eligibility and match individuals to placements, whilst maximising occupancy and use of national capacity. Additionally, HMPPS are working closely with Local Authorities,

our Strategic Housing Specialists, probation colleagues, and other partners to identify the most appropriate accommodation pathway for individuals who would otherwise be homeless.

As the Board rightly highlights, at present, prisons are not commonly informed about which prisoners released by them go on to reoffend or why. However, proven reoffending figures for offenders who were released from custody, received a non-custodial conviction at court, or received a caution or reprimand are published at the following link - <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/proven-reoffending-statistics>. By way of clarification, various changes were made in 2017 to the management and rehabilitation of offenders, known as Transforming Rehabilitation. Therefore, the data source was changed for compiling the statistics to better reflect the way in which offenders were now managed by the probation services. The new data source did not enable the Department to break down the reoffending rate by prison, due to data quality issues. This has now been improved, and the Ministry of Justice anticipate being able to resume publication of the reoffending rates by prison in the future.

I would also like to thank everyone working at the prison for their continued efforts through this reporting period, particularly given the uncertainty brought by the re-tendering of the contract to run the prison. Despite this additional challenge, it was really encouraging to receive your comments about HMP Ashfield's record of safety during this reporting period. I am pleased to be informed that there has been a significant decrease in both the number of incidents of self-harm and violence. It is good to be aware that fair and humane treatment has meant that the number of prisoners locked in their cells on good order or discipline or cell confinement remains very low indeed compared with national norms and it is pleasing that HMP Ashfield continues to have no need for a dedicated segregation unit.

I note you have raised three local issues of concern in your report which the Director will continue to keep you aware of as work continues. HMPPS comments in response to the other issue 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 Ashfield.

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**

**People Convicted of Sexual Offences**

HMPPS recognises the increase in the number of people convicted of sexual offences (PCoSOs) and other vulnerable prisoners (VP). Work has been taking place to expand the number of prison places offered for this group of prisoners, particularly in resettlement prisons and since March 2024 around 1,000 additional Category C PCoSO/VP places have been made available through a combination of new accommodation and reconfiguring existing main accommodation. Further projects to reconfigure around another 900 places are currently underway and a strategy to deliver more places in the medium to longer term is in the process of being drawn up.