



Ministry  
of Justice

Lord Timpson  
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Bristol  
19 Cambridge Road  
Bristol  
BS7 8PS

MoJ ref: SUB121879

27 February 2025

Dear Chair,

**HMP BRISTOL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 AUGUST 2023 – 31 JULY 2024**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Bristol. I have read your report with care and I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work that has been put into capturing your helpful observations, especially as you were short of members throughout the reporting period.

I was very saddened to hear about the deaths of five prisoners during the reporting year. I understand three deaths were in custody and two shortly after release. I offer my sincere condolences to all their friends and family and can reassure the Board that recommendations made by the PPO are taken very seriously.

I appreciate and sympathise with the Board's continued concerns about overcrowding. As a reception prison, HMP Bristol is pivotal for the South West in providing court spaces and there are no current plans to reduce the prison's operational capacity. However, to alleviate pressure across the prison estate and towards the end of the Board's reporting period, on 12 July 2024 the Lord Chancellor announced a package of measures aimed at addressing prison capacity. This included a commitment to publish a 10-year prison capacity strategy along with measures to reduce the time those sentenced to eligible standard determinate sentences serve in prison, known as SDS40. The SDS40 initiative has generated much-needed flexibility and, whilst it is not possible to commit to numbers or locations, could enable targeted reductions of the least suitable prison places.

Our 10-year Prison Capacity Strategy has now been published and is available online at GOV.UK. This sets out our plans to deliver 14,000 additional prison places, explore the acquisition of land should we need to build more prison places, and maintain the existing estate to provide sufficient accommodation. Our plans will be kept under constant review so that we can ensure we are responding to the demand in the system and providing value for money. Additionally, we launched an Independent Sentencing Review, chaired by the former Lord Chancellor, David Gauke. The Review's aim is to ensure we are never again left in a position where we have more prisoners than places available. I can also provide assurance that the HM Prison and Probation Service's (HMPPS) Certified Prisoner Accommodation Policy Framework ensures that cells are only shared where a Prison Group Director has assessed them to be of adequate size and condition. There are other standards set out in the framework to ensure that prisoners are accommodated safely even when held in crowded conditions.

Many projects to improve the physical environment are currently in progress or have already been completed which the Board will be aware of. Subject to the necessary approvals, future projects include fire safety works; removal of night sanitation and installation of toilets; the refurbishment of showers in B1 wing; the replacement of the Oak Centre roof; the replacement of cell windows; and CCTV works.

The Board will know that I am passionate about reducing reoffending. The decision to recall an offender on licensed supervision is taken on the professional advice of senior probation staff following consideration of safe alternatives to recall. This decision is not taken lightly and where individuals are recalled, it is because they present a risk of harm to the public and the controls available are no longer sufficient to keep the public safe. I can assure the Board that the Governor and colleagues at HMP Bristol will continue to work with all partners who support people on release using all pathways. This includes a weekly release board to ensure multi-disciplinary release planning takes place for every prisoner; appropriate referrals are made to community services in a timely manner; and improving local Through The Gate referrals and continuity of care on release. The WRAP (Willing to Restart After Prison) centre will continue to support all prisoners on the day they are released and signpost to additional provision.

Mental health awareness and wellbeing is becoming more prominent in prisons and rightly so. Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust, the service provider at HMP Bristol, are continuing to review the service model to ensure it meets the needs of all prisoners. Oxleas are working closely with the prison to ensure clinic-based mental health appointments are prioritised; groups are delivered as planned and enablement issues are addressed promptly. Oxleas will continue data-driven performance conversations with the Governor. Additional support is offered to prisoners with mental health needs through group work led by the prison's psychology team and neurodiversity manager to complement the offer from Oxleas.

Whilst issues remain at HMP Bristol, the prison has come a long way since the Urgent Notification in July 2023 as evidenced by the Inspectorate's Independent Review of Progress in June 2024. I was therefore pleased to hear about prisoners' increased time out of cell and an improved regime, together with improved staffing levels. I am passionate about prisoners undertaking purposeful activity and it was very encouraging to read that close to 80% of prisoners actively engaged in work or education and that this is rarely cancelled on the day due to a lack of staff.

I note you have raised some local issues of concern in your report, of which the Governor will continue to keep you aware of progress 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 are sincerely grateful for the valuable role played by members of Independent Monitoring Boards throughout the estate and we truly appreciate your continued hard work on behalf of HMP Bristol.

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**

## HMP BRISTOL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 AUGUST 2023 – 31 JULY 2024

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

#### **Staffing Levels**

To aid retention, HMPPS created a retention strategy which is linked to wider activities around employee experience, employee lifecycle and staff engagement at work. Alongside the strategy a retention toolkit has been introduced which identifies local, regional and national interventions against the drivers of attrition, which are utilised by both establishments and Probation Delivery Units.

A new exit interview process was introduced in 2021 to undertake in-depth conversations with departing staff, enabling leaver trend data to be analysed. Since the launch of the retention strategy, toolkit, and exit interview process, a new retention oversight process was introduced across HMPPS in August 2022. The retention oversight process targets priority sites, i.e. establishments and Probation Delivery Units with the highest attrition rates and those that are a cause for concern due to increasing attrition. Overall, the national Band 3-5 prison officer position continues to stabilise, with continuing signs of a more positive position across the most difficult to recruit to prisons.

#### **Information Technology**

There are no current plans yet to introduce the Launchpad IT system at HMP Bristol. Subject to funding, the ambition is to eventually roll out Launchpad across the closed public-sector estate. HMPPS recognise that the applications process continues to frustrate prisoners, and local management have therefore reviewed the process at HMP Bristol to improve the managerial oversight and timeliness of responses.

#### **Illicit Items**

Support to prevent the ingress of illicit items has been made available through a number of resources including The Risk and Capabilities Unit who conduct full vulnerability assessments for establishments and the Counter Corruption Team who work nationally with establishments to identify risk and are currently rolling out PREVENT talks for staff. Regionally, and for any prison identified as being vulnerable for drone activity, the directorate of security will conduct a drone vulnerability assessment. The prison can also access intelligence and wider security support via its Local Tactical Assessment and escalate issues to the Area Intelligence Unit where required. To support prisoners and reduce demand, HMP Bristol now has a dedicated Demand Reduction Officer that provides weekly keyworker sessions to the highest risk prisoners with drug and alcohol support needs; weekly Review and Response meetings are held by the Drug Strategy Lead with representatives from a number of functions to agree actions to support prisoners confirmed as under the influence; and Change Grow Live (CGL) continue to consider new and innovative ways to widen their reach, motivate prisoners and celebrate recovery-related achievements supported by an enthusiastic and highly skilled group of peer supporters across the wings, all of whom have lived experience of addiction.

Across the wider estate, through the Workforce Delivery Project, Workforce Delivery Models (WDMs) have been created to demonstrate the optimum resources for all areas of operational delivery, including dedicated search teams, enhanced gate security, overall security and intelligence, vehicle searching, mandatory drug searches, safety, and cell searching. New models are planned for approval in April 2025 alongside an implementation plan that is likely to take effect during the 2026-27 financial year. HMP Bristol's resource model will be reviewed as part of this process.