



MoJ ref: SUB121094

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Dartmoor  
Tavistock Road, Princetown  
Yelverton  
PL20 6RR

7 February 2025

Dear Chair,

**HMP DARTMOOR: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 OCTOBER 2023 – 30 SEPTEMBER 2024**

Thank you for submitting your Board's annual report on HMP Dartmoor which I have read with great care. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to you and your colleagues for your work in producing the report under exceptional and unprecedented circumstances. Whilst the prison operations and day-to-day activities captured may have only been for a three month period, it is nevertheless very insightful.

I was very saddened to learn that a prisoner died in custody during the reporting year. I offer my heartfelt condolences to all of 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 appreciate that the Board are keen to have clarity and confirmation on the future of HMP Dartmoor. Consideration of the situation remains ongoing. Your report details the chronology of events and I recognise the effects this can have on all parties. I can confirm that we are continuing to take advice from specialists and explore how HMP Dartmoor can be reopened. This is a complex situation and a long-term decision on the future of Dartmoor is yet to be made. Whilst this may be frustrating for the Board, the new Government set out its long-term plan for prison capacity through the publication of the 10-year Prison Capacity Strategy on 11 December 2024. This sets out our plans to deliver 14,000 prison places and create a resilient prison estate. Whilst this does not address HMP Dartmoor's future, the strategy underlines our commitment to improving the overall estate and future direction.

Although this has been a period of uncertainty for everyone involved, the Governor and his team have worked with diligence and care throughout a challenging and rapidly evolving situation. They responded to the need to decant the first two wings with pace and keeping the needs of individual prisoners at the centre of what they did. Despite the many challenges, they have worked hard to keep open lines of communication with staff, the prisoners, and with stakeholders and partners and should be commended for their work.

I understand and sympathise with the Board's frustrations around the apparent lack of progress with concerns raised in its previous reports. I want to reset our relationship with IMBs so that we better address the important issues identified through your monitoring activity. It is though becoming increasingly clear to me that matters raised by IMBs often reflect system-wide issues across the prison estate, criminal justice system or wider Government services. These are often not straightforward to solve, requiring progressive and collaborative action over a period of time to make the necessary changes. I believe that the voice of IMBs should be actively listened to, and I am working hard to arrange opportunities to engage

further wherever possible, such as the Independent Monitoring Board event at HMP Berwyn on 11 November 2024 where I spoke and answered questions from a number of members from across the country.

I would like to reassure you that concerns raised by IMBs feed into the department's own performance monitoring and the development of key policies. IMB intelligence is shared with ministers, policy teams and operations on a weekly basis, and is frequently used in tackling key thematic issues.

In relation to the concerns you have raised around assurances by the previous administration to develop a national strategy for older prisoner, HMPPS is currently reviewing its approach to strategy development, focusing work on a small number of core operational strategies to successfully deliver key outcomes and priorities. As part of this, discussions are ongoing about whether a bespoke strategy would be best or if "mainstream" support for older prisoners in existing strategies and forthcoming strategic initiatives, including long-term estates work and the Sentencing Review, is a better option. In the interim, HMPPS has a range of work ongoing to improve provision for older prisoners, focusing on health and care support for older prisoners, and how the estate is being used to best meet their needs and share best practice for this prisoner population.

Regarding publication of the Imprisonment for Public Protection Annual Report, the first report was written on 22 April 2024 under the previous Government and covered the reporting period for the financial year 2023/24. Publication of the first report was delayed due to the General Election. The Lord Chancellor laid the first report in Parliament on 15 November 2024.

I note you have raised some local issues of concern in your report which the Governor will continue to keep you aware of progress as work continues. HMPPS comments in response to specific radon matters and other issues raised in your report are set out in the attached annex.

It was encouraging, in what was essentially a three month reporting period, the Board were able to record some positives, namely that the prison continued to be a generally safe environment despite the uncertainty and instability. I was further encouraged to learn of the concerted efforts to create purposeful activities for more prisoners, an area that I am passionate about, and the installation of in-cell phones which had a positive impact on prisoner wellbeing together with improvements in television reception.

The Lord Chancellor and I sincerely appreciate the invaluable role of Independent Monitoring Boards throughout the estate and we are extremely grateful to you and your team for your continued hard work on behalf of HMP Dartmoor.



**Lord Timpson**  
**Minister for Prisons, Probation, and Reducing Reoffending**

## **HMP DARTMOOR: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 OCTOBER 2023 – 30 SEPTEMBER 2024**

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

#### **Radon Monitoring**

HMPPS is content that applicable policies were complied with generally. However, action has been taken to learn lessons and improve policies, processes, and guidance in order to maximise compliance.

#### **Lockdown and Radon Exposure**

There is an ongoing Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation into the management of radon at HMP Dartmoor during the period cited in the report, and HMPPS is fully cooperating with the HSE. Given the ongoing investigation by the HSE, it would not be appropriate for HMPPS to comment further at this stage.

#### **Category C Overnight Care in Devon**

Further to last years' response, a new sixteen-bed social care unit opened at HMP The Verne in late 2023. This pathway is available to individuals from Devon, with several prisoners having been transferred and cared for in the unit during 2024. Discussions relating to overnight care at HMP Channings Wood will be included in ongoing expansion planning. The current clinical needs across the prison population at HMP Channings Wood is not underlining the need for full time overnight care.

Where overnight care is required across the region's prisons, usually social care, NHS England, prison healthcare providers and HMPPS have worked in partnership to deliver what is required and overnight individual care plans were delivered during 2023/24. Prisoners requiring overnight care tend to require additional cellular space for profiling beds, hoists, double handed care etc. Whilst this care is facilitated, at present there are no Equality Act (2010) complaint cells available in the region.

#### **Other issues raised**

Please see the Minister's response in relation to concerns around the future of HMP Dartmoor, the Ageing Population Strategy and the IPP Annual Report.