



MoJ ref: SUB121878

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Whatton
New Lane
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27 February 2025

Dear Chair,

**HMP WHATTON: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 JUNE 2023 – 31 MAY 2024**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Whatton, which I have read with care. It is clear that you and your colleagues have, as ever, put in a huge amount of work in producing this report and capturing the key issues, for which I am grateful. This is of particular note given you continued to operate below your recommended complement of Board members.

I was deeply saddened to read that two prisoners died of apparent natural causes during the reporting year. I extend my heartfelt condolences to all their friends and family. I welcome that the Board reports that staff go out of their way to ensure those likely to be affected by deaths have access to counselling and that the chaplaincy unit hold a service to mark the death, which prisoners can attend. I would also like to reassure the Board and the bereaved that all deaths in custody are treated extremely seriously, and recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman are always acted upon.

I appreciate the Board's continued concerns about prisoners serving Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentences. On 5 September 2024, the Lord Chancellor announced that the Government would implement reforms we supported in opposition to the IPP licence period in the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024. These commenced on 1 November 2024, when the licences for 1,742 IPP offenders in the community were terminated. The remaining reforms were implemented on 1 February 2025, which reduced the qualifying period for consideration of licence termination and saw around 600 additional referrals made to the Parole Board. The Secretary of State also has two new powers, the power to use 'Risk Assessed Recall Review' (RARR) for recalled IPP prisoners and the power to disapply a recall. The first enables her to re-release people who have been recalled at any point without referring the case to the Parole Board, where safe to do so. The second enables her to not reset the two-year period after someone is re-released from a recall.

The Government is determined to support the rehabilitation of IPP offenders through a refreshed Action Plan, this was published on 15 November 2024 in our IPP Annual Report and can be accessed online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hmpps-annual-report-on-the-ipp-sentence-2023-to-24>. The refreshed Plan puts an important emphasis on ensuring that those serving IPP sentences have robust and effective sentence plans, which they are actively engaging with, and that they are in the correct prison to access the right interventions and rehabilitative services. This is the most effective way to help them to reduce their risk so that they can progress towards safe release from custody. I am very mindful of the specific and substantial challenges faced by those serving IPP sentences and this is an issue I feel passionately about. The Government is committed to working with organisations and campaign groups to ensure the appropriate course of action is taken to support IPP prisoners.

In terms of the IPP policy and the wellbeing and morale of this cohort, the HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) prison safety programme and the safety focused actions in the IPP Action Plan are designed to continue to improve the way that HMPPS identifies, manages and supports those at risk of self-harm and suicide. Based on the learning from IPP self-inflicted deaths and incidents of self-harm, HMPPS has provided guidance to all prison staff and partner agencies and developed an IPP Safety Toolkit. A series of live events has also been delivered to further raise staff awareness on the risks of IPP prisoners, and HMPPS will continue to consider further ways to raise awareness on the risks with staff. At HMP Whatton, a keyworker group has been allocated to the IPP and lifer cohort of prisoners who have been given additional training and will keep prisoners informed of any new national updates.

I appreciate the Board's funding request for site and staffing investment. Whilst HMPPS is continually reviewing the investment required across the estate, the proposals will be underpinned by the data collected in recent condition surveys which assessed the fabric, cells, and critical assets at each prison. These will inform long-term forward maintenance registers, which can be prioritised against future capital budgets. HMPPS is currently investing around £47.3 million into HMP Whatton. This includes a programme for fire safety works with an estimated start date of November 2025. A project to replace hot and cold-water pipework supplies across Bravo units 1, 2 and 3, and Plant rooms 1 and 2, commenced in December 2024. I hope the Board will understand that demands for maintenance of the prison estate are much greater than the available funding. Therefore, once a bid for a project is received, HMPPS has to prioritise works very carefully to make best use of that funding, focusing on risk to life and risk to capacity and decency.

Turning to staffing, HMPPS carefully monitors resourcing levels to ensure that it can manage current staffing levels and make accurate predications around future needs. Although HMPPS has experienced recruitment and retention challenges in recent years, there are now positive indications of an improving national staffing picture. For prison officer and operational support grades, recruitment campaigns are open in all sites where there is a current or future need. The staffing position at HMP Whatton has improved with the recruitment pipeline being able to meet the ongoing needs of the prison and those in the surrounding area. Forecasts for staffing show that HMP Whatton will be near to its target staffing in 2025 with no significant shortfalls. The prison also reviews its staffing position across all grades at monthly local Work Force Planning meetings.

Reflecting on the positives captured in your report, it was reassuring to receive your comments that prisoners are treated fairly and humanely and feel safe. I was extremely pleased to note the increased efforts and preventive measures made to tackle the ingress of illicit items. I was also encouraged to read that in-cell telephony has been installed, together with plans to improve the stair lift, and the large produce garden that managed to put funds back into the industries budget.

I note you raised a local issue of concern in your report about visits which the Governor provided an update about on 4 December 2024. HMPPS comments in response to the issues raised in your report are set out in the attached annex. The Secretary of State and I are hugely appreciative of the invaluable role played by members 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 Whatton.

Yours sincerely,



Lord Timpson
Minister for Prisons, Probation, and Reducing Reoffending

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Courses

The new regime model introduced for the 2024/2025 business planning year, mandates prisons to plan a range of activities and courses. Each prison's regime plan will be localised dependent on its population's needs and planned resources and will set out the local vision of what the prison aims to deliver against the tiered regime model. The ambition is that every prison's regime offer should be underpinned by the fundamentals of rehabilitation. There should be a focus on creating the right conditions and culture for effective regime delivery. Without this focus, increasing the provision of activity will have a minimal impact, as without the right conditions the planned activity is unlikely to achieve its intended outcomes. Time in the regime should be created to enable staff to have positive pro-social interactions with prisoners to support their desistance and minimise the barriers to attendance. Increasing provision/funding will have minimal impact unless mechanisms are in place to ensure that attendance is maximised.

HMP Whatton has the largest programmes team nationally providing 11 teams and the largest single delivery site of the Healthy Sex Programme. It is a national resource and specialist centre for accredited programmes for those convicted of sexual offences. HMP Whatton provides the full range of accredited programmes for prisoners convicted of sexual offending, also specialising in those adapted programmes for individuals with learning difficulties and challenges (LDC). The prison has also specialised in moderate and high intensity interpersonal violence interventions which can be relevant to groups within this population. Their delivery and scope are comprehensive as a national specialist programmes delivery site. Accredited offending behaviour programmes are aimed at those with medium and higher risks of reoffending. Not all prisoners are eligible for accredited programmes, some may not be ready or have other responsivity issues that would require alternative interventions potentially before being able to access an accredited programme.

HMPPS has developed a new accredited programme called Building Choices to replace all group programmes, (Healthy Sex Programme and Healthy Identity Intervention will remain) as part of the next generation of programmes, led by HMPPS Interventions Services. This is an innovative approach of a single programme with different formats (high, moderate, with or without LDC needs). Staff only require training in one programme and hence this approach will provide greater flexibility for prisons to meet local demand and reduce training demands on staff, enhancing delivery time. HMP Whatton is currently rolling down existing programmes and preparing to implement Building Choices as an early adopter prison. All prisons will convert to Building Choices by the end of 2025, and this will enable other prisons greater flexibility and reduce the need for some prisoners to transfer to HP Whatton as sites will be able to flex their delivery locally with Building Choices. There has also been additional commissioning nationally of more programmes capacity for prisoners convicted of sexual offending with two new delivery teams implemented in 2023/24. Three other prisons have received additional funding to deliver accredited offending behaviour programmes to prisoners convicted of sexual offending with implementation in 2025 (HMP The Verne, HMP Ashfield and HMP Rye Hill) to increase wider system capacity.

Work Placements

Building strong links with employers is a key part of the steps we are taking to improve employment outcomes. This requires close engagement with employers to break down barriers, fill vacancies, and drive growth by bringing prison leavers into the workforce. The Regional Employment Broker for East Midlands is now sharing vacancies directly with HMP Whatton to provide more opportunities for prison leavers on release. Resettlement meetings are now being held every 6 weeks with the Regional

Employment Broker and the Employment and Skills team to discuss upcoming releases and match individuals to suitable vacancies.

HMP Whatton is working with the New Futures Network to share success stories of work placements for prisoners recently released from prison. The prison also continues to work with companies willing to employ prisoners who are convicted of sexual offences to increase work opportunities.