



Ministry  
of Justice

Lord Timpson  
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP/ YOI Peterborough  
Saville Road  
Peterborough  
PE3 7PD

MoJ ref: SUB121700

21 February 2025

Dear Chair,

**HMP/YOI PETERBOROUGH WOMEN: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 APRIL 2023 – 31 MARCH 2024**

Thank you for submitting your Board's annual report on HMP/YOI Peterborough (women). I am truly grateful for the huge amount of work put into producing this report and capturing the key issues. This is particularly impressive given the Board's membership has been running at around half of its complement.

I was really saddened to read that a prisoner died in custody during the reporting year whilst at hospital in the community and the death of another prisoner which occurred shortly after release from prison. I offer my deepest condolences to their friends and family. It is important in these tragic circumstances that we act on any recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman and I would like to reassure the loved ones of those who have passed away that deaths in custody are taken extremely seriously.

I understand the Board's request for the Mental Health Bill to be enacted as soon as possible. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has been working with the Department of Health and Social Care on a Mental Health Bill and I am pleased to say this was introduced to Parliament on 6 November 2024. It includes a range of reforms to support people suffering severe mental illness in the criminal justice system and will ensure they are able to access appropriate and timely support in the most appropriate setting. We are also working across Government on an implementation plan which sets out the operational changes and improvements which will be necessary to fulfil our commitment to enable safe commencement of these reforms. NHS England Commissioners are working directly with the healthcare provider locally to understand and support mental health provision at HMP/YOI Peterborough, with particular focus on women's health. A local women's service board is now in place, allowing NHS England to support the prison and its stakeholders in developing and commissioning mental health provision specifically for women. Wider work has also been taking place to enhance mental health delivery for women as a consequence of the Women's Services Review to provide an enhanced mental health offer to ensure that their particular health and wellbeing needs are recognised and addressed.

I do fully recognise the Board's concerns about the short sentences which some women receive. Whilst sentencing is a matter for the Judiciary, the MoJ and HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) continue to share information with courts to raise awareness of the specific issues faced by women who offend to increase the understanding of the possible implications and opportunities of sentencing. There is also work underway already to divert women from short custodial sentences with a Women's Intensive Supervision Court pilot that was launched in Birmingham Magistrates' Court in June 2023. This allows women with complex needs to be diverted from short custodial sentences into enhanced community-

based sentences, where they receive support tailored to their needs to help break the cycle of re-offending. Additionally, the Bail Information Service is being expanded to all courts and reception prisons to ensure the prioritisation and appropriate use of bail for specific groups of defendants, including women to access effective and appropriate support services.

This Government is already delivering on a manifesto commitment to bring sentencing up to date and ensure the sentence framework is consistent having launched an Independent Review of Sentencing chaired by the former Lord Chancellor, David Gauke. The Review has a broad remit. It will be up to the Chair to decide his areas of focus. However, the Board can be assured that the terms of reference ask the Review to consider whether the framework appropriately takes into account the specific needs or vulnerabilities of women within the Criminal Justice System. The Lord Chancellor also recently announced the creation of a Women's Justice Board (WJB). This will meet for the first time early this year with its initial focus on intervening earlier and diverting women away from the CJS where appropriate; community solutions, such as residential alternatives to custody; improving the outcomes for young adult women, pregnant women, and mother of young children; and ensuring that those women who do need to be in custody are given the best chance possible to tackle the drivers of their offending and to contribute meaningfully to society.

I was greatly encouraged by the Board's comments that the prison works hard to create a safe environment and that the care and support for prisoners at risk of suicide or self-harm is very good and well managed. I note that the prison has had challenges with providing a stable regime and purposeful activity for the prisoners in their care and it is really reassuring that as the remediation plan has been implemented there are early signs of improvement. I was also pleased to read that good relationships have continued to be maintained with prisoners and that staff genuinely care and will go the extra mile for a prisoner, despite the staffing challenges the prison has faced.

I note you have raised some 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 value the role played by members of Independent Monitoring Boards throughout the estate and we greatly appreciate your continued hard work on behalf of HMP/YOI Peterborough.

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/YOI PETERBOROUGH WOMEN: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 APRIL 2023 – 31 MARCH 2024**

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

#### **Release Accommodation**

HMPPS offers a three-tier structure of temporary accommodation known as Community Accommodation Service (CAS). In recent years HMPPS has expanded CAS1, accommodation with a public protection focus for higher-risk offenders known as Approved Premises, capacity with 54 additional spaces for women. This has expanded provision for women by over 30% increasing their opportunities to have a place in Approved Premises after release or as part of a community order. A new digitalised approach to Approved Premises referrals is also being developed and this new approach will enable HMPPS to improve timeliness and allow greater consistency and responsiveness, underpinned by demand analysis. More widely, CAS2 that provides places for low to medium risk offenders on Home Detention Curfew or bail continues to increase its capacity which currently stands at 851 bed spaces in over 275 properties across England and Wales. CAS3 is also now operating in all probation regions providing up to 12 weeks basic accommodation for prison leavers at risk of homelessness and new places continue to be added as the service develops. In addition, the broad approach to improving accommodation outcomes has benefited from increasing the number of Strategic Housing Specialists across England and Wales to 49 Full Time Equivalent, alongside embedded Homelessness Prevention Teams within probation regions to strengthen the strategic relationships between prisons, probation and local authorities to build accommodation pathways.