



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP The Verne
Portland
Dorset
DT5 1EQ

MoJ ref: SUB122781

10 April 2025

Dear Chair,

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

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP The Verne. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for the hard work that has been put into capturing your helpful observations. This is particularly appreciated as you continued to operate with fewer members than your recommended quota and have also been training up new members over the reporting year.

I was saddened to hear of the deaths of six prisoners during the reporting year and I offer my sincere condolences to all their friends and family. Such events are tragic, and I would like to reassure the Board that any recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman following deaths in custody are taken very seriously.

I have read your report with care and appreciate your desire to see improved services for end of life care. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) work in collaboration with health and social care colleagues to ensure equitable access to palliative and end of life care in prisons. HMPPS and NHS England co-produced the 'Dying Well in Custody Charter - Self-Assessment Tool' (England Only) was published in 2024 and provides practical examples for health care and prison staff to support people in palliative or end of life care well in prisons. NHS England have been in discussion with HMPPS regarding developing a plan to further enhance the end of life care offer regionally, with the aim of creating more bespoke pathways for prisoners requiring complex care. This will seek to build on the positive relationships with wider healthcare providers including local hospices.

Regarding specific provision at HMP The Verne, the benefits of an end of life suite are regularly reviewed but it is considered that this would have a minimal impact on the number of bed watches. There have been several prisoners who have required end of life care while at HMP The Verne and I understand that they have received dignified and compassionate care. In part this is thanks to the introduction of the excellent social care suite. I am delighted to read of the positive impact of the social care suite in supporting the wellbeing of the most sick and disabled prisoners.

In relation to progress made on concerns raised in your last report, I am grateful for your acknowledgment of the improvements made to resettlement thanks to efforts of senior managers locally and additional funding. I do though recognise your ongoing concerns and that there is further work to do here. HMP The Verne continue to work with Offender Management in Custody leads to identify opportunities and potential pathways to secure permanently employed probation staff. I also want to acknowledge your concerns

around key work. Like you, I am encouraged by the appointment of a Senior Custodial Manager to oversee this and hope that there are improvements over the next reporting year.

I note you have raised some local issues of concern in your report which the Governor will continue to keep you aware of 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 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 The Verne.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James', written in a cursive style.

Lord Timpson

Minister for Prisons, Probation, and Reducing Reoffending

HMP THE VERNE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 August 2023 – 31 July 2024

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Alternative accommodation for the healthcare unit

HMPPS currently has no plans to replace the healthcare unit. Unfortunately, demands for maintenance are much greater than the available funding. Therefore, HMPPS must prioritise works very carefully to make best use of that funding.

Considerable work has been undertaken to improve the existing healthcare facilities, including a complete re-roof to prevent water penetration and eliminate dampness. The entire building has been redecorated, giving it a clean and fresh appearance.

Offending behaviour programmes for prisoners convicted of sexual offences

As set out in your report, funding has been agreed for The Verne to implement the next generation of Offending Behaviour Programmes (OBP) - 'Building Choices'. Programme delivery affects two-thirds of the population at HMP The Verne in terms of parole eligibility, making it crucial for the rehabilitation and progression of prisoners. One benefit of Building Choices is the ability to flex delivery between moderate and high intensity demand and hence reduce the need for transfers for different programmes.

The prison has started recruitment and are in the process of recruiting a Programme Manager, Treatment Manager, and Intervention Facilitators, who will be central to ensuring the correct groundwork and environmental support is in place for the successful roll out of OBP interventions at The Verne. A review of the population has taken place, to identify prisoners who are eligible for the programme.

Alongside the prison's recruitment campaign, Psychology Services Group have begun recruitment to expand their psychology support at the site and ensure clinical oversight of the programme roll out and ongoing quality. They have also identified a Trainee Psychologist to attend training and support programme delivery.

At present we anticipate training places will be available in April/May 2025, with delivery starting early in the new financial year.

HM Inspectorate of Prisons also raised in its most recent report that HMP The Verne was not fulfilling its key purpose as a training prison for prisoners convicted of sexual offences (PCoSOs). As a result, there is a commitment for the establishment to work in collaboration with HMPPS Interventions Services and the Prison Group Psychology Lead to formulate a Programmes Strategy and Action Plan to ensure a range of interventions is available to PCoSOs. The Action Plan will be reviewed on a quarterly basis at the Reducing Reoffending meeting chaired by the Governor.