



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Doncaster  
Marshgate  
Doncaster  
DN5 8UX

MoJ ref: SUB124209

29 May 2025

Dear Chair,

**HMP DONCASTER: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 SEPTEMBER 2023 – 31 AUGUST 2024**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Doncaster, which I have read with care. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you as the new Chair and to express how grateful I am to you and your colleagues for all the hard work that has been put into capturing your helpful observations, particularly as you started the reporting period with a severely depleted complement of members.

I was deeply saddened to read there were six deaths in custody during the reporting year. I extend my heartfelt condolences to all their friends and family. I would like to reassure the Board 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 comments about the high level of concern and importance given to deaths in custody by the management team and how the prison has handled these sad events, including the care extended to staff, other prisoners and family members.

I understand the Board's continued concerns for those prisoners with mental ill health being located within the Segregation Unit whilst awaiting transfer to a secure hospital. Segregation is an absolute last resort for those deemed a risk to themselves or others. The Mental Health Bill, which was introduced to Parliament on 6 November 2024, will provide a new statutory time limit of 28-days for the transfer of patients with a mental disorder from prison and other places of detention to hospital. This time limit, together with operational improvements, aims to reduce unnecessary delays and deliver swifter access to the specialist care and treatment they need.

I would like to assure that Board that HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) and NHS England are fully committed to the 28-day timeframe, working together to improve the transfer and remission process, and helping to avoid prison being used inappropriately. Delays in transfers can occur for a number of reasons including the need for a more comprehensive assessment of needs as well as identifying the best placement to meet the needs of the individual prisoner. Whilst there is an adequate supply of adult secure beds in the region, the focus is on improving efficiency across the whole pathway, ensuring appropriate lengths of stay and reducing transitions. This will in turn make better use of existing capacity across the whole system, including the pathway to and from prison. The data on transfers and remissions is regularly reviewed and will be used to monitor compliance with the guidelines. An escalation process is in place for any individual cases that breach the timescales and guidance.

I fully understand the Board's concern around crowding and the sharing of cells at HMP Doncaster that were originally designed for one prisoner. The Board can be assured that accommodation is only shared

where it has been assessed by a Prison Group Director to be of adequate size and condition and meeting certain standards to ensure prisoners are accommodated safely. On 12 July 2024, the Lord Chancellor announced a package of measures aimed at addressing prison capacity issues and preventing the collapse of the criminal justice system. Further, on 11 December 2024, we set out our long-term plan for prison capacity through the publication of the 10-year Prison Capacity Strategy. This sets out our plans to deliver 14,000 additional prison places and create a resilient prison estate that includes the construction of four new prisons as well as expansion and refurbishment of the existing prison estate. Whilst this does not address the immediate crowding and cell sharing issues at HMP Doncaster, the strategy underlines our commitment to improving the overall estate and future direction.

Turning to some positives captured in your report, it was encouraging to read that prisoners at HMP Doncaster are treated fairly and respectfully, and there is a positive emphasis on the humane treatment of prisoners. I was also encouraged to read about the refurbishment improvements and the efforts of the prison staff to reduce violence in the prison. I am pleased to note that attendance at work and education has increased significantly, and the Board will know that I have a keen interest in skills and training. Consequently I was delighted to read about the Market Street, an innovative area in the prison that offers a wide range of practical activities including cycle repair and woodwork.

I note you have raised some local issues of concern in your report which the Director 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 appreciate the invaluable role played by members of Independent Monitoring Boards throughout the estate and we are extremely grateful for your continued hard work and dedication on behalf of HMP Doncaster.

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 DONCASTER: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 SEPTEMBER 2023 – 31 AUGUST 2024

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

#### **Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) Prisoners**

The Government is determined to support the rehabilitation of IPP offenders through a refreshed Action Plan. This was published on 15 November 2024 in the HMPPS Annual Report on the IPP Sentence 2023 to 24 and can be accessed online. The refreshed plan re-emphasises the importance of 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. The Government is committed to working with organisations and campaign groups to ensure the appropriate course of action is taken to support IPP prisoners.

Within HMP Doncaster, whilst prison staff work closely with probation specialists to provide the best possible support for any IPP prisoners who comes to the prison, it is acknowledged that as a local and remand prison, HMP Doncaster is not in the best position to offer the full range of support IPP prisoners need. As such, the prison always aims to progress IPP prisoners into a more suitable establishment as soon as possible. In some individual cases the prison has escalated the needs of a particular prisoner to the National IPP Board.

#### **Post-Release Support**

Commissioned Rehabilitative Services (CRS) are designed to provide specialist support to individuals under probation supervision, including people leaving prison to help break the cycle of reoffending. Those services which are delivered pre-release, the Accommodation and Personal Wellbeing (mentoring through the gate), will continue post-release and attendance at appointments with CRS suppliers will be part of mandatory licence appointments. The CRS accommodation (men's) contacts have recently been extended to include people on remand and to those who are sentenced and released on the same day (immediate releases).

CRS accommodation suppliers are based in resettlement prisons within the geographical area they cover. For people being released to areas outside of this geography, this support will be delivered via visits or by phone/video rather than by staff based in the prison. The CRS contracts have been designed to allow flexibility to meet changes in demand. HMPPS is currently reviewing the design and will be commissioning these services to ensure that future CRS services will more effectively deliver services to people leaving custody and align with wider services to best meet people's resettlement and rehabilitative needs. HMP Doncaster works closely with probation and other partners (including charities) to provide prisoners with the best possible support in identifying accommodation and support on release. Offender management unit staff are now embedded into the senior leadership team within the prison and can provide feedback regarding resettlement challenges from a probation perspective. The resettlement team senior probation officers and heads of offender management delivery are building stronger relationships to understand pressure points and challenges to improve service delivery.