



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Wakefield
5 Love Lane
Wakefield
WF2 9AG

MoJ ref: SUB123909

15 May 2025

Dear Chair,

**HMP WAKEFIELD: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 MAY 2023 – 30 APRIL 2024**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Wakefield, which I have read with interest. It is clear that you and your colleagues have once again worked hard throughout the year to be able to produce this report and I am grateful to you and the other members for your contributions and dedication, particularly as you have been working below your recommended complement of members.

I was extremely saddened to read about the five deaths in custody during the reporting year and I pass on my deepest condolences to all their family and friends. I would like to offer reassurance that the deaths of all prisoners are taken very seriously, and it is important that we act on any recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman following such tragic circumstances.

I appreciate the Board's continued concerns about prisoners serving Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentences. I am very mindful of the specific challenges faced by those serving IPP sentences, and this is an issue I feel passionately about. The Government is determined to support the rehabilitation of IPP offenders through a refreshed Action Plan, which 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.

HMP Wakefield is working with the Long Term and High Security Estate IPP Operational Delivery Plan which includes specific targets and requirements for the regional team and each establishment. HMP Wakefield also has a IPP Tripartite Team, comprising key leaders in the prison and provides data each quarter, which includes detailed information about each IPP prisoner at the prison. There is a focus specifically on progression with each case given a status rating. Staff are encouraged to understand the impact on prisoners' psychologically, emotionally, relationally and behaviourally, and to consider their barriers to progression and how they might help them to progress.

I fully understand and sympathise with the Board's frustration of repeatedly raising the issue of the detention of severely mentally ill people in prison whilst they await transfer to a suitable institution. We are committed to improving mental health outcomes for people in contact with the criminal justice system and

that is why this Government introduced the long-awaited draft Mental Health Bill to parliament on 6 November 2024. The Bill includes several flagship reforms to improve access to mental health care for patients in the criminal justice system such as the introduction of a statutory 28-day time limit for transfers from prison to hospital. This time limit, together with operational improvements, aims to reduce unnecessary delays and deliver swifter access to treatment. The reforms will prevent courts from using prison as a place of safety for those awaiting treatment or assessment under the Mental Health Act. Instead, the defendant or convicted person must be transferred directly to hospital, ensuring swifter access to the care they need. The Bill will also reform the Bail Act 1976 to prevent courts from remanding a defendant for their own protection where their only concern relates to their mental health. Courts will be directed to commit defendants to bail and work with local health services to put in place appropriate support and care.

On a local level, there is a fortnightly escalation meeting with providers to discuss cases of concern, also attended by commissioners. Despite this, it is acknowledged there remain delays in transfers which occur for several reasons including the need for a more comprehensive assessment together with identifying the best placement to meet individual needs. Work is to be undertaken across the region to align data reporting, improve data quality, and to further the understanding of regional variations which will be used to identify areas where improvement can be made. This will supplement planned national work to standardise data reporting regarding transfers and remissions. Additionally, as part of quarterly contract review meetings, data on transfers and remissions is reviewed to identify trends and patterns to drive efficiency across the pathway.

Turning to the positives within your report, I was encouraged to receive your comments that the prison continues to provide a regime that is fair and humane overall, and I recognise this is despite the many challenges faced. I was pleased to read about the good work of the chaplaincy, the professionalism of staff in the Mulberry unit, and the work of the neurodiversity support manager that helped some prisoners into employment in workshops. I would also like to acknowledge the applaudable work of the healthcare and prison staff working on the in-patient unit, in particular, the compassionate care of a challenging prisoner who was on the unit for almost the entire reporting period.

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 other issues raised in your report are set out in the attached annex.

The Lord Chancellor and I sincerely value the 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 Wakefield.

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

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Close Supervision Centre (CSC) Safety

The Governor and Long Term and High Security Estate group have been working together to support staff capability and improve procedural and dynamic security within CSC procedures, utilising support from national experts. An improved level of procedural security will be introduced in due course that is designed to increase staff confidence and safety. Additional strengthening of the current Working with Challenging Behaviour course will be implemented as all new starters working within a discrete unit must complete this.

The CSC central team work closely with the local management team at HMP Wakefield ensuring that all incidents are reviewed immediately with the intention of identifying learning opportunities and reviewing procedural security. Following the most recent incident of violence against prison staff whilst managing CSC prisoners, the Central Management Group reviewed this incident in full and several recommendations were made to increase staff safety within HMP Wakefield's CSC unit and across the entire CSC system. Learning was identified and additional training will be given to all current staff working with CSC prisoners.

Astroturf Sports Pitch

HMPPS recognises the Board's long-standing frustrations with the sports pitch. Refurbishment of the entire area is not possible and therefore a bid has been put forward for the reinstatement of half of the all-weather astroturf pitch to create a separate smaller five-a-side multi-sport playing field that will be fenced off. The intention is to then utilise the remaining half of the field for gardens and polytunnels to create a new purposeful activity space that will enrich the lives of the prisoners and contribute to the greening agenda. The Board will be aware that whilst all requests from the establishment will be considered, demands for maintenance are much greater than the available funding. Therefore, once a bid for a project is received, HMPPS must prioritise works very carefully to make best use of that funding, focusing on risk to life and risk to capacity and decency.

Site Security

The security systems upgrade was regrettably delayed due to unforeseen issues with the award of work to a contractor. HMPPS can confirm that the award has now been progressed and work is due to commence later this year. A capital bid for site-wide replacement and additional CCTV is currently in the pipeline. The Cortech security system was also recently replaced due to software issues being identified.