



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Co-Chairs, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Wormwood Scrubs
Du Cane Road
London
W12 0AE

MoJ ref: SUB124588

5 June 2025

Dear Chairs,

HMP WORMWOOD SCRUBS: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JUNE 2023 – 31 MAY 2024

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Wormwood Scrubs. I am really grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work in capturing your comprehensive observations.

I was saddened to hear six prisoners died during the reporting year, with two of these occurring in the community shortly after release from custody. I offer my condolences to all their friends and family and would like to reassure the Board that recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman are taken very seriously.

I do understand the Board's repeated request for further investment to improve the prison's ageing infrastructure. To improve living conditions, safety, and infrastructure the ongoing project to install new windows on all living spaces has recently been finally completed. The next project, which is now underway, is a site wide cell call bell system upgrade, as well as critical fire safety improvements works. All three projects in total will result in an estimated £68 million being invested in HMP Wormwood Scrubs. Other projects were also completed over the course of the reporting year including the healthcare lift being refurbished, new heating controls and lighting installed on wings to improve the environment. Further works are planned to take place over the course of the year including, refurbishment of C and D wings which commenced in March 2025, the continuation of the shower refurbishments, and a new lift in A wing, as well as other local measures such as painting and deep cleaning work.

HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is continually reviewing the investment required across the estate to inform long-term maintenance and priorities against future capital budgets. Bids have been made for further projects across HMP Wormwood Scrubs. These include modifications to the CCTV Control Room, additional CCTV and car park lighting, mesh and rendering works to improve 88 cells and the installation of contraband netting on the north wall. However, as it remains the case that demands for maintenance are much greater than the available funding, all project bids will be prioritised very carefully to make best use of that funding, focusing on risk to life and risk to capacity and decency.

I also recognise the Board's concerns about the release support for individuals on remand. HMPPS is committed to enhancing access to these services. Although, pre-release teams already identify and address any immediate resettlement needs and provide pre-release support for all people in prison, including those who are on remand, the London Probation Region is involved in the development of new processes to make improvements. These will ensure that practitioners are well-informed and equipped to

manage cases where there is an unplanned immediate release. Commissioned Rehabilitative Services, which provide the specialist knowledge to support people in custody in obtaining or maintaining existing accommodation, have been extended to provide services specific to the needs of remand prisoners. These are also working alongside prison teams to prevent homelessness on release. This housing service for prisoners on remand at HMP Wormwood Scrubs has now started through St Mungo's, who are an established provider of housing support. The Probation Service Officers who previously supported sentenced prisoners are taking on the further work to support the local remand population.

It is regrettable that transferring prisoners with severe mental health issues to specialist care continues to be a concern. The Mental Health Bill was introduced to Parliament in November 2024 and includes 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 treatment. Whilst the Board will be aware health providers have been working towards this time limit as good practice, cross-agency work to support its implementation has led to a greater understanding of the barriers to meeting this. It has revealed the systemic barriers and the scale of the challenges that include workforce, bed capacity and estates. We will therefore be working with partners to create an implementation plan which sets out the operational changes which will be necessary to fulfil our commitment to commencing this reform

Regionally, NHS England Health and Justice do have a comprehensive approach implemented to deliver all Mental Health transfers, as well as monitoring referrals in accordance with the existing good practice guidance. This approach has supported timely escalation to attempt to resolve delays and ensure the focus remains on clinical priority and risk. However, it is recognised that there remain significant system pressures around the availability of Mental Health beds, from Psychiatric Intensive Care Units through to all levels of secure service, which makes waiting times challenging. NHS England is undertaking work on a wider patient flow programme, with dedicated workstreams, to focus on meeting timeframes across all service types and improving the average Referral to Transfer times to reduce waits.

Although it is recognised that there is more to do, I welcome the Board's view that resettlement support and preparation for prisoners leaving custody improved. It was reassuring to note the better safety outcomes at HMP Wormwood Scrubs than in comparator prisons and I was pleased to read that improvements were made in the number of prisoners engaged in work, education and training.

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 Wormwood Scrubs.

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 WORMWOOD SCRUBS: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JUNE 2023 – 31 MAY 2024

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Building Fabric and Infrastructure

Please see the Ministerial response above for an update on this concern.

Key Work

It is recognised that the core expectations for key work delivery are that prisons must utilise all their allocated resource for this task and that it must be profiled. Every prisoner must receive one key work session every four weeks as a minimum and any remaining resources must be targeted at an enhanced offer for individual prisoners based on an assessment of risk, need and cohort prioritisation. One of the HMPPS operational priorities for 2024/5 was to increase the quantity and quality of regimes, including key work, and to support this a new regime and business planning process has been introduced. The Workforce Delivery Project has also been looking nationally at prison resourcing against required delivery, and this will include considerations around keywork.

An increase was seen in keywork delivery at HMP Wormwood Scrubs towards the end of 2024 which supported a specific cohort of prisoners who were not engaging in the prison regime and those who were on remand and did not have a Prison Offender Manager supporting their case. Key Work is now one of the core priorities for HMPPS in 2025/6. The expectation will be that key work delivery will increase in this cycle of Regime Planning aligned to each prisons Regime Management Plan and additional elements have been added to the Regime Planning Template to enable prisons in their delivery.

Prisoners' Property

The Board's concerns about the handling of prisoners' property are noted and this is an area to which HMPPS is currently giving further attention. Careful consideration will be given to the findings in the IMB national thematic report on how property loss impacts on prisoners as well as the recent PPO Policy into Practice publications, highlighting learning and key policy requirements for prison staff around correctly handling prisoners' property and property complaints. As the Board identifies, a common area for problems is when excess prisoner property is forwarded on when a prisoner transfers. We know that when Prisoner Escort Custody Service (PECS) suppliers transfer property within the volumetric control limits of the Prisoners Property Framework there are few complaints for lost property overall. During the 12 months of the reporting there were five complaints received from HMP Wormwood Scrubs although none in relation to the loss of property attributed to PECS. It is therefore key that prisoners comply with volumetric control limits, since anything within those limits will transfer with them. Locally, HMP Wormwood Scrubs did introduce a bar code system in August 2024 to track parcels sent in from family and friends and this has reduced the complaints of lost property. However, the prison continues to work with other prisons to follow up property that has been lost during transfer. HMPPS will also continue to focus on what more can be done to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Framework.