



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP New Hall
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WF4 4XX

MoJ ref: SUB124488

3 May 2025

Dear Chair,

**HMP/YOI NEW HALL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 MARCH 2023 – 29 FEBRUARY 2025**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP/YOI New Hall. I have read your report carefully and I am grateful to you and your colleagues for the hard work that you have put into capturing helpful observations. This is particularly appreciated as you operated with a reduced complement throughout the reporting period and ended the year with fewer members than at the start. I hope this situation improves in the current reporting period.

I understand from the establishment that four prisoners died during the reporting year, either in custody or shortly after release. Whilst we await the Coroner's reports, I offer my heartfelt condolences to the friends and family of all of the bereaved. I would like to reassure the Board that recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman are always taken very seriously.

I appreciate the concerns that you have raised around the number of women at the establishment with significant mental health issues and the challenges that this poses within the prison environment. We are committed to improving mental health outcomes for people in contact with the criminal justice system, which 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 Board will also be pleased to know that we have established a Women's Justice Board (WJB) which met for the first time under my chairmanship on 21 January. The WJB has the clear task of reducing the number of women in prison and addressing their distinct needs within the Criminal Justice System (CJS). The WJB will initially focus on: work to intervene earlier and divert women away from the criminal justice system where appropriate; community solutions to increase the use of robust community sentences and support resettlement from custody; addressing issues specific to pregnant women and mothers with young children across the CJS, including those in prison; and reducing the number of young adult women entering the CJS and improving outcomes for them across their journey. The WJB will be supported by a Partnership Delivery Group that includes external experts recruited by open competition, together with senior government representatives from key departments.

I have noted the Board have raised other specific mental-health related concerns, addressed to HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), and responses to these issues are set out in the attached annex. Local issues of concern raised in your report will be addressed locally by the Governor who will continue to keep you aware of progress as work continues.

Despite the numerous mental health-related concerns raised, I was encouraged to receive your comments about the prison's new Drug Recovery Wing that provides a safe and secure place to help women stabilise without drugs. I was further encouraged to note the good work of the kitchens, efforts that I have no doubt will aid rehabilitation. I would also like to commend HMP/YOI New Hall for the investment in the reception and first night centre, an investment that will help ensure prisoners' needs can be met and rehabilitation can begin as early as possible in their custodial journey.

The Lord Chancellor and I sincerely 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/YOI New Hall.

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

Mental Health Funding

NHS England continues to commission a holistic trauma responsive healthcare service that meets the needs of the population at HMP/YOI New Hall. This service and model is continually under review and additional monies will be made available in line with the national Womens Review and the recommissioning of the service during the course of the financial year 2025/26.

Whilst mental healthcare provision in prisons is the responsibility of NHS England, to support care for women in prisons, HMPPS has introduced gender-specific training for new prison officers and staff working with women which includes the impact of trauma. All prison staff receive suicide and self-harm prevention and mental health awareness training to increase skills in supporting prisoners in distress. Governors across the Women's Estate have recently received Behind the Behaviour training, in advance of this being rolled out to wider staff groups. Behind the Behaviour training is designed to improve understanding of women's behaviour in custody and develop skills to respond in ways which reduce challenging behaviour. The Women's Offender Personality Disorder Pathway, as well as the Women's Estate Psychology Services team, which provides forensic psychologists within all women's prisons including HMP/YOI New Hall, continues to deliver therapeutic services for women in HMPPS care.

Prisons As A Place of Safety

The draft Mental Health Bill, introduced to parliament on 6 November 2024 and referred to in the Ministerial response, includes reforms that 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.

NHS England (North East and Yorkshire region) recognise that some courts are using prisons as a place of safety. Consequently, they are supporting a member of staff from HM Courts and Tribunals Service to work as a link between the courts across the region to try to reduce the number of instances this occurs. This issue is also highlighted at a regular 'escalation call' and as part of their monthly Quality Reports for the NHS England Local Governance Group. Separately, and as mentioned in the Minister's response above, the work of the Women's Justice Board has begun and includes a clear remit to intervene earlier and divert women away from the criminal justice system where appropriate and therefore further reducing the use of prisons as a place of safety.

Transfer and Remission of Mental Health Prisoners

To improve overall assessment and transfer lead times, NHS England is focussing on improving efficiency across the whole pathway such as ensuring appropriate lengths of stay, reducing transitions, and thereby improving throughput. This will make better use of existing capacity across the whole system, including the pathway to and from prison.

For adult medium and low secure beds, the 15 Adult Secure NHS-led Provider Collaboratives play a lead role in managing the patient pathway and addressing the needs of their local population whilst also being involved in strategic national commissioning and preserving the integrity of the overall secure estate.