



Ministry  
of Justice

Lord Timpson  
Minister of State for Justice

MoJ ref: SUB125473

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP/YOI Eastwood Park  
Eastwood Park  
Falfield  
Wotton-Under-Edge  
GL12 8DB

3 July 2025

Dear Chair,

**HMP/YOI EASTWOOD PARK: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 NOVEMBER 2023 – 31 OCTOBER 2024**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP/YOI Eastwood Park. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your dedication and hard work that has been put into capturing your helpful observations, especially as you operated with a reduced complement throughout the reporting period. I noted that you ended the year with fewer members than at the start and I hope the recruitment position improves in the current period.

I share the Board's concerns around prolific self-harmers at HMP/YOI Eastwood Park. The prison's Safety Strategy was written to take account of the unique challenges faced at the establishment and is aligned with the National Safety Framework. This was written with involvement and collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders who are invested in ensuring the prison is a safe and caring place. A Safety Summit took place in May 2025 to inform this year's strategy. The key elements of the Safety Strategy include how best to respond and support self-harm and prolific self-harm as two separate categories; understanding the drivers for harm and the actions that need to be taken to make the prison feel safer; tracking the impact that the increase in key work is having on self-harm and violence levels; and working with the Procedural Justice Team to reduce violence against staff.

More generally, it is worth noting the rate of self-harm in the female estate is more than eight times higher than in the male estate. However, the higher rate of self-harm in the women's estate is largely driven by a small number of women who repeatedly self-harm, rather than a higher proportion of individuals self-harming. The Women's Health and Social Care Review was published in November 2023, a joint review between HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) and NHS England (NHSE) which was commissioned to address the disproportionate higher levels of health and social care needs for women in comparison to their male counterparts in prisons and in the wider population. The review identified eight strategic findings, which includes self-harm, with supporting recommendations. We consider this collaborative work critical to improving the mental health and wellbeing of women in custody and we continue to work closely with NHSE to implement recommendations and make positive changes for women in prison.

All prison staff receive suicide and self-harm prevention and mental health awareness training to increase skills in supporting prisoners in distress. A range of evidence-based interventions and services are provided for women in prison. Referrals for all services are encouraged from across the female estate, to

support women to access the services they need. These services include 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 Eastwood Park, to deliver therapeutic services for women in our care.

I appreciate the Board's suggestion about distributing prolific self-harmers more evenly throughout the women's estate. An individual's prison location is based on the proximity to their home area, the availability of interventions to help them progress in their sentence plan, and the levels of security required. Moving a vulnerable individual has the potential to further destabilise them as moving them further from home, children and families can impact negatively on resettlement and putting an end to any positive relationships they may have built during their time at an establishment. The women's estate strives to only transfer an individual in their own best interest and moving someone who has a history of self-harm because of their self-harming behaviour would be adversative to this. The Women's Estate Case Advice and Support Panel (WECASP) continues to support prisons in the management of complex needs women and is a resource available to all those located in the women's estate irrespective of sentence length or recall status.

Whilst it was a challenging reporting period with the rise in self-harming, I was encouraged to receive your comments that the Governor and senior management team endeavoured to keep the prison population safe. I was further encouraged to read that good practice and prompt action by staff saved lives when engaging and supporting prisoners in crisis. I noted the drive to increase attendance in education, the appointment of housing and employment specialists, and I welcome the positive comments about the gym and library support. I was impressed to learn about the achievements of the Rubies group of over 50's prisoners who won various Koestler Awards for arts in criminal justice and that their work was displayed in the Festival Hall, London. I was also very pleased for the two prisoners who started a crochet and knitting business on release.

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 appreciate the invaluable role played by members of Independent Monitoring Boards throughout the estate and we are extremely grateful for your continued hard work on behalf of HMP/YOI Eastwood Park.

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/YOI EASTWOOD PARK: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 NOVEMBER 2023 – 31 OCTOBER 2024

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

#### **Expansion Project**

The women's expansion programme was officially suspended in March 2024. The Lord Chancellor has launched the Women's Justice Board to address the distinct needs of women in the criminal justice system, with the aim of fewer women in prison and more supported in the community. It will initially focus on early intervention, community solutions and improving outcomes for young adult women, pregnant women and mothers of dependent children.

#### **Residential Unit 7**

An options and feasibility study for the demolition or replacement of Residential Unit 7 at HMP/YOI Eastwood Park was recently completed and the Rapid Deployment Cells Programme were taking its replacement through governance assurance as part of their ongoing programme. Increased costs at the final business case stage meant that the replacement project did not offer value for money and HMP/YOI Eastwood Park was de-scoped from that programme. The project will now be reconsidered for potential capital funding in the current financial year.

#### **Video Conferencing**

At HMP/YOI Eastwood Park, 63% of all eligible hearings took place using video-link hearing capacity compared with a national average of 53% (as at February 2025). HMPPS recognises the important part video-link provision plays in improving efficiency in the women's estate by reducing the amount of time women spend travelling from prison to court and back, especially those who are pregnant or new mothers. To help improve decency in the women's estate, HMPPS is working hard to progress a video conferencing centre at HMP/YOI Eastwood Park. However, this remains subject to confirmed funding and any subsequent contract award.

#### **Use of Force (UoF)**

Following the HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) Thematic Inspection "*Time to Care: What Helps Women Cope in Prison?*", HMPPS has committed to several measures related to UoF. Funding will be sought for a dedicated UoF co-ordinator for twelve months to provide specialist oversight in the prisons most in need of support, and a full-time UoF co-ordinator is now in place at HMP/YOI Eastwood Park. Additionally, a UoF Insights and Assurance Lead will be introduced for an initial 12-month period to improve practices in women's prisons. The HMPPS Operational Response and Resilience Unit (ORRU) will review incidents involving UoF highlighted by HMIP, explore revalidation courses for instructors, and drive the implementation of a new UoF curriculum. The ORRU will also consider developing an Independent Restraint Review Panel and offer healthcare staff training on the medical risks associated with UoF techniques. The ORRU team facilitated two Continuous Professional Development days at HMP/YOI Eastwood Park in March 2025 and are assisting with local governance and assurance.

Data indicates a reduction in UoF since the beginning of the year. To further decrease these levels, the HMPPS Women's Group and HMPPS Safety Group will convene a forum with Governors/Directors in the Women's Estate and wider partners to identify and share promising practices for safer outcomes. HMPPS and HMP/YOI Eastwood Park will work with the Ministry of Justice to develop an evidence-based approach to target safety support effectively, aiming to reduce violence, self-harm, and suicide across the women's estate.

HMPPS has also piloted strengthened governance arrangements regarding the use of alternative clothing, reaffirming that alternative clothing is only used as a last resort, and all women's prisons have implemented the guidance. Since the end of April 2024, 'Behind the Behaviour' (BTB) training has begun to be rolled out to operational staff at HMP/YOI Eastwood Park. Up to February 2025, 140 staff across the prison had completed the training. This programme of training continues, and plans are in place to support the staff who have completed the training to consistently implement the learning. At another site where BTB has been implemented this has contributed to the staff using force less, as they are more skilled and confident in de-escalating situations which might otherwise have resulted in force being used. It is hoped that over time, as more staff undertake the training, these impacts will be observed at HMP/YOI Eastwood Park.

### **Staff Safety and Wellbeing**

HMPPS recognises that the challenges of a prison environment can have negative effects on staff and consequently there is a range of services available to support the staff wellbeing. Within HMPPS' Women's Group, a number of specific additional measures are also being trialled, including psychologists providing supervision to staff in particular areas of prisons such as the Cherry Blossom and Induction units at HMP/YOI Eastwood Park. The Enable team is also testing an approach of staff support across a number of prisons, and at HMP/YOI Styal a different approach to staff support is being tested, called Staff Space. This will provide monthly one-to-one sessions between every operational member of staff and a registered forensic psychologist, and an evaluation is being carried out on the impact of this. Staff Space is now available on some residential units with a plan to roll out across the site once adequate staffing is available. Across HMPPS' Women's Group there is also a focus on developing understanding of assaults by prisoners so that the organisation is better able to understand and reduce violence against staff.

### **Staffing Levels and Experience**

HMP/YOI Eastwood Park has 98.13% staff in post against their target staffing figure, with a healthy number of Band 3 Officers on the merit list available to take up future positions. The Operational Priorities for prisons in 2025/26 include building staff capability and confidence. A suite of core capability packages to help support Prison Officers confidence, capability, and knowledge building, is due to be made available soon with a local delivery plan to be agreed once available. HMPPS is building on the introduction of gender specific training available for new Prison Officers, and the Working with Women e-learning package, by considering the views from staff who have completed the training to date and incorporate into a review of content. In addition, HMPPS plans to evaluate women specific Band 3 Prison Officer Entry Level Training and refresher training to ensure that training meets the needs of this staff group.

HMP/YOI Eastwood Park allocates each new prison officer a buddy who they shadow during the first two weeks after returning from training. The buddy will continue to work with them alongside the Learning and Capability Manager and line manager providing ongoing support. HMP/YOI Eastwood Park has previously received bespoke support from the Standards Coaching Team (SCT). A further application will be submitted for additional deployment to the prison and if successful, SCT will work with the Senior Leadership Team and develop a targeted action plan with the overall purpose of developing confidence, competence and empowering staff in their roles.