



Ministry  
of Justice

Lord Timpson  
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Thameside  
Griffin Manor Way  
London  
SE28 0FJ

MoJ ref: SUB130010

22 December 2025

Dear Chair,

**HMP THAMESIDE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 JULY 2024 – 30 JUNE 2025**

Thank you for submitting the Independent Monitoring Board's annual report on HMP Thameside. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for the considerable effort and dedication that has gone into producing this detailed and thoughtful report. This is particularly impressive given the ongoing challenges you have had with membership. I do hope that the induction of new members goes well and that you are able to continue to build towards your recommended complement of members.

I was saddened to learn of the deaths of two prisoners in custody and two post-release during the reporting year. I offer my condolences to all their friends and family and note the minor recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman, although not directly related to these deaths. I would like to reassure the Board that all such recommendations are taken very seriously.

I appreciate the Board's ongoing concerns about access to secure mental health facilities. While it is encouraging that the proportion of timely transfers has improved, it is unacceptable that two-thirds of patients were transferred beyond the 28-day limit. As you will be aware, the Mental Health Bill introduces a 28-day timeframe for transfers, placing NHS England's Best Practice guidance on a statutory footing. The Bill is currently in its final stages having gone through all three readings in both the House of Lords and House of Commons. The Ministry of Justice is working closely with the Department of Health and Social Care, NHS England, the Welsh Government, the Home Office and the Youth Custody Service to create and to deliver operational improvements within 18–24 months following Royal Assent.

I note that you have also raised a query for NHS England around its capacity to support this. NHS England is improving data collection and monitoring, reviewing referral processes, and providing training to prison staff. The newly established Mental Health and Justice Strategic Advisory Group will provide clinical leadership and oversight across the pathway, helping to identify and address common causes of delay. A dedicated resource has also been assigned to scrutinise data and escalate breaches of the 28-day target directly with trusts and Integrated Care Boards (ICBs). In addition, a further £42 million recurrent investment from 2024/25 will support ICBs in recommissioning inpatient care aligned with local therapeutic models. These steps reflect our shared commitment to ensuring that people in custody with severe mental illness receive timely and appropriate care.

I acknowledge the Board's repeated concerns regarding probation and community support. Recruitment and retention remain a priority for the Probation Service, which has seen a 20% increase in staffing since unification in June 2021. Between June 2024 and June 2025, the London region saw a 4% increase in

full-time equivalent Probation Officers, with 24 additional staff recruited, and it continues to prioritise recruitment efforts. These increases form part of a broader strategy to strengthen probation services, we have committed to onboarding a further 1,300 probation trainees in 2025/26 to help ensure that individuals leaving custody receive the necessary support to reintegrate successfully into the community.

I recognise the particular challenges faced by remand prisoners. The increase in the remand population has placed additional pressure on resettlement resources. Serco is working with HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) to align resources accordingly, and while previous funding requests for resettlement and remand support were declined, discussions remain ongoing. The ID Banking Clerk role is now a full-time provision, with Catch22 continuing to support structured interventions. The absence of Bail Information Officers has been raised and is being addressed to ensure that remand prisoners receive the support they need.

It was most pleasing to read your positive comments about the excellent service provided by the chaplaincy, diversity, equality and neurodiversity teams, as well as the gym team and the Families First team. It is reassuring to note the continued good work of the Shannon Trust, the impressive library provision, and the efforts of the safer custody team to improve Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork compliance. These examples demonstrate the dedication of staff and partners to achieve better quality services and create a safer, more supportive environment for prisoners.

I note you have raised some local issues of concern in your report which the Director 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 Deputy Prime Minister and I value the vital contribution made by members of Independent Monitoring Boards across the estate, and we remain grateful for your continued commitment to HMP Thameside.

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 THAMESIDE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JULY 2024 – 30 JUNE 2025

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

#### **Probation and community resources**

See the Ministerial response above re ongoing work to strengthen this.

#### **Data Accuracy and Quality Assurance in Pre-Release Teams**

There is currently no national infrastructure for reporting the work undertaken by pre-release teams, which has been identified as a gap. In response, London Regional Probation has developed a local reporting system that relies on managers and staff to log completed tasks. Data is submitted monthly and managed by the administrative team.

HMPPS has been involved in discussions to strengthen quality assurance processes with interventions now in place to ensure improvement and provision for escalation of corrective actions where needed. Locally, the Head of Offender Management Delivery attends monthly Senior Leadership Team meetings to review and discuss team performance.

#### **Homelessness on Release**

We acknowledge and share the Board's ongoing concern regarding homelessness upon release, which remains a significant challenge. The Strategic Housing Specialist at Thameside engages in five borough panels to plan interventions ahead of release. Barriers to commissioned rehabilitative services (CRS) referrals include limited access to prisoners and facilities and late referrals. To address these issues, the 'Right First Time' briefing and Good Industry Practice document were introduced.

New contracts for CRS are being procured, effective Spring 2027, to better support housing and employment outcomes. Locally, Catch22, Probation, and the Pre-Release Team coordinate referrals to St Mungo's and CAS3, with high-risk cases directed to Approved Premises. The Strategic Housing Lead collates outcome data and chairs bi-monthly Reducing Reoffending meetings to keep this under review and seek further improvements.

#### **Coordination and Oversight of Resettlement Services**

Resettlement activity in London is overseen by a dedicated Head and Deputy Head of Service; an exception adopted three years ago to address specific regional challenges. Pre-release information sharing meetings operate across all London prisons alongside Interdepartmental Risk Management Meetings (IRMMs) to ensure pre-release planning for every sentenced prisoner and that any actions are identified and overseen by custody based Senior Probation Officers.

A deficit remains in the offer for remand prisoners, but the effectiveness of an immediate release pilot at Wandsworth has been recognised and may be rolled out nationally. Locally, fortnightly pre-release meetings and monthly IRMMs include all relevant agencies to ensure join up.

#### **Late Court Sitings and Reception Capacity**

Prisoners are allocated from court to prison based on pre-agreed alignments, irrespective of the time court proceedings conclude. This approach ensures a balanced distribution of remand prisoners and places individuals in the most appropriate establishment aligned to their originating court. Any changes to this system would disrupt the existing logistical framework and likely result in delays, negatively affecting court service delivery including increased courtroom wait times due to unaligned prisoner movements.

We recognise the need for flexibility and, where necessary, HMP Thameside collaborates with healthcare providers to accommodate late arrivals and ensure prisoner needs are met. Practice Plus Group has reviewed its reception resources and implemented a flexible plan to support efficient healthcare screening. Low-risk or non-Integrated Drug Treatment System prisoners are fast-tracked through reception, ensuring only those requiring clinical attention remain. This reduces wait times and addresses first-night concerns. The Serco Reception Officer team operates independently and is well-versed in reception procedures. As part of the broader site Detail Review, it has been identified that the reception team roster should be adjusted to include later finishes to better manage late arrivals. In the interim, HMP Thameside continues to monitor staff sickness and absence, promote employee wellbeing across the site, and maintain daily engagement between senior management and staff to address any concerns.

#### **IMB Access to Resettlement Data**

The Statutory Role of the IMB document will be shared with all staff and stakeholders to promote awareness of the IMB's role and reporting requirements. The Director at HMP Thameside remains committed to resolving access to information requests and supporting appropriate escalation where necessary.