



Ministry  
of Justice

Lord Timpson  
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Woodhill  
Tattenhoe Street  
Milton Keynes  
MK4 4D

**MoJ ref:** SUB130054

22 December 2025

Dear Chair,

**HMP WOODHILL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 JUNE 2024 – 31 MAY 2025**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Woodhill. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for the hard work that has been put into capturing your helpful observations, particularly as you have been operating far below your recommended number of board members. I also appreciated the opportunity to visit the prison recently on 30 October 2025 and hear more about the work that the prison is undertaking from the Governor and staff.

I was saddened to hear two prisoners died during the reporting year, whilst detained in custody. I offer my condolences to all their friends and family. I note the Board's concerns around previous Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) recommendations not being implemented fully and that you are seeking a response from the Governor. However, I would like to reassure the Board that any recommendations made by the PPO in relation to these further deaths will be taken very seriously.

I have read your report with due care and note the Board's concerns regarding the progress and implementation of the Mental Health Bill. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and the Department of Health and Social Care will continue to work together on the implementation of the Mental Health Bill, and wider mental health provision in prisons. The Bill continues to progress towards Royal Assent, having now been through all three readings in both Houses. NHS England's national team have completed the initial scoping work to ensure there is clinical leadership throughout the pathway to and from prison and secure hospital. The recently launched Mental Health and Justice Strategic Advisory Group will assure the 28-day transfer process. The group is chaired by NHS England's National Medical Director for Mental Health and Neurodiversity, who will report regularly to Ministers and be responsible for agreeing a joint workplan to support implementation of the statutory time limit, identifying solutions to common barriers to timely transfers and holding relevant parties to account.

I acknowledge that there are increasing numbers of neurodivergent prisoners held in custody who will inevitably require additional support to ensure their needs are met. In response to this, Neurodiversity Support Managers (NSMs) have been rolled out across the prison estate. NSMs are responsible for implementing a whole-prisons approach to neurodiversity. This includes providing training and guidance for prison staff to equip them better to support neurodivergent individuals in their prison. Given the increasing number of prisoners presenting with neurodiverse conditions, earlier this year, the NHSE East of England Health & Justice team co-produced a neurodiversity resource for prison staff, aimed at showcasing the prisoner voice. The booklets aim to increase awareness and understanding of

neurodiversity within the prison population, as well as providing practical tips for improving support, and links to additional resources.

In respect of improving the prison fabric, as outlined in my last update, there are a number of planned projects including refurbishment of shower facilities, in-cell improvements and drone resistant wiring system (due to commence in January 2026), all of which will improve conditions. A project is also currently in development to upgrade and extend the existing CCTV infrastructure. In respect of ongoing maintenance of such improvements, the Governor will work collaboratively with the National Estates and Facilities Management Team to help ensure this. There is a major drive on cleanliness on the residential units, concurrent to the ordering of a full set of bedding for each prisoner to enable the prison to move to an organised one for one kit exchange system. The process for ordering cleaning and in-cell equipment on the residential units has been reviewed to make it more efficient. There is an additional initiative to set up a central painting party and yard cleaning party to further improve standards on the residential units.

To support effective training and resettlement, the Government is committed to ensuring robust pre-release plans are in place, identifying and putting support in place to address individuals' needs before release. The MoJ is working closely with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to ensure prison leavers have effective support to prepare for employment on release. The joint National Partnership Agreement, underpinned by local partnership agreements for each prison and Jobcentre district, sets out roles and responsibilities and how the two departments work together to ensure the most effective join up in services. For example, Employment Hubs and Prison Employment Leads have been rolled out in 93 prisons, who work alongside DWP Prison Work Coaches to provide a joined-up approach to preparing for employment. Prisoners can meet with a DWP Prison Work Coach from up to 12 weeks before release to provide advice on benefits and employment. Despite, the challenging landscape within which HMP Woodhill operates, the prison has recently implemented small-scale interventions to improve resettlement experiences, such as job seeking skills, CV writing and interviewing skills, as well as a range of e-learning packages to enable prisoners to better prepare for employment upon release.

It remains no secret that the rehabilitation of prisoners is a key passion of mine. Critical to this is the release of prisoners into supported and secure accommodation. As outlined in my previous letter to you, New Commissioned Rehabilitative Service contracts are currently being procured and will go live in Spring 2027. These future services will be commissioned as combined services that bring together support for different rehabilitative needs, including housing. I do recognise that demand for these Approved Premises currently outstrips supply, and it is hoped that HMPPS will expand the number of places in due course. A digitalised approach to Approved Premises referrals has been developed offering welcome improvements. A National Central Referral Unit oversees assessment for suitability and eligibility, matching individuals to placements, whilst maximising occupancy and use of national capacity. This will enable HM Prison and Probation Services (HMPPS) to improve timeliness and allow greater consistency and responsiveness.

Noting the improvements that are required, I am pleased to see the Board's positive comments about the support offered by staff in Reception and during induction. It is well recognised that early days in custody play a vital role in how a prisoner feels about their own safety. It is encouraging to hear that in the Board's view, new prisoners at Woodhill feel safe and cared for.

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 Deputy Prime Minister and I are grateful for the important role played by members of Independent Monitoring Boards, and we appreciate your ongoing dedication on behalf of HMP Woodhill.

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 WOODHILL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JUNE 2024 – 31 MAY 2025**

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

#### **Quality Work Contracts**

During the reporting period, work has been ongoing to introduce new commercial contracts into workshop areas. This has resulted in the opening of a new commercial woodwork shop, as well as the enhancement of the existing packing workshop where a robust support package is in place. There is a renewed focus on improving underpinning employability skills to enable transition into other workplaces.

The existing inter-governmental department contract to supply tens of thousands of sapling trees to Ministry of Defence sites is now in its second year and workers demonstrate pride in the work they carry out as part of this provision. Following industry-standard practices, Waste Management Instructors have worked with prisoners to start directly generating revenue at source, from waste items that would have otherwise gone to landfill or be claimed by partner agencies. In addition to this, prisoners create artwork from recycled materials for the Koestler Arts awards.

HMP Woodhill work collaboratively with New Futures Network and Education providers to identify new opportunities for their prisoner cohort to enable them to engage in fulfilling employment and training.

#### **Property**

HMPPS notes the Board's concerns about the handling of prisoners' property. Since receiving reports from the national IMB and Independent Prisoner Complaint Investigations, Governors and other senior leaders have been reminded of the most important property handling points. This includes the need to ensure compliance with volumetric control limits to avoid issues on transfer. Consultation is taking place with prisons on areas raised in the reports to identify where further improvements can be made.

HMPPS also notes the Board's concerns about the lack of digital improvements on property handling. While it is recognised this will be disappointing, other pressures around digital changes mean that it is not anticipated that an electronic property card will be in place in the immediate future.

#### **Contract Workshops**

Working across all sites, the Long Term High Security Estate (LTHSE) taskforce is developing a long-term strategy, with the aim of securing each prison's role in prison industries, regime planning and wider purposeful activity. The LTHSE has reviewed all available activity spaces to assess if the work fits the risk profile of the population. In addition, the LTHSE works in partnership with the Education Group to ensure that the Annual Delivery Plan planning and workshops align with the Establishment Needs Analysis of the population.

At HMP Woodhill, the Head of Education, Skills and Work has brought in commercial contracts for production woodwork and light assembly packing, which provide activity for different areas of their complex population. Additional qualifications have been put in place in the industrial workshops such as

horticulture, laundry as well as the gymnasium in line with sentence progression. It has also considered those prisoners who have lower levels of English and Maths and high workshop risk assessments to allow for skills development such as teamwork and communication which underpin employability. HMP Woodhill is a national resource and does not release into the local community, however, they engage with the Local Authorities and are planning more consistent pre-release workshops, as outlined in the Ministerial response, such as CV writing, job searches and interview skills.