



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Wymott
Ulmes Walton Lane
Leyland
Preston, Lancashire
PR26 8LW

MoJ ref: SUB130012

22 December 2025

Dear Chair,

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

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Wymott. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your continued hard work and dedication in producing this informative report, particularly as you operated with a reduced Board and ended the year with fewer members than at the start. I sincerely hope the situation improves over the current reporting period and beyond.

I was saddened to hear eleven prisoners died during the reporting year, including two that were apparently self-inflicted. Every death in our care is a tragedy and I offer my heartfelt condolences to the friends and family of all the deceased. I was heartened by your observations that the prison has managed these in a sensitive manner. I am reassured that HMP Wymott is either in the process of responding, or has responded, to all three of the recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) to date. Any further recommendations made by the PPO will be treated with the upmost seriousness.

Further to last year's response about plans for a new prison near HMP Wymott, it is envisaged this will be a 1,700 capacity category C resettlement prison. This is part of our commitment to deliver an additional 14,000 prison places by 2031 that will ease pressures across the estate, including at HMP Wymott. Operational details of how the new facility will relieve pressure on the prison is still being developed. I am aware that population pressures at the prison have remained acute throughout the reporting year with the prison operating at or near capacity despite the implementation of early release schemes. Locally, the prison continues to work closely with Population Management to ensure that transfers in and out are managed as effectively as possible,

I would like to assure the Board that this Government is committed to ensuring that people in contact with the criminal justice system can access appropriate and timely support. The Mental Health Bill's reforms include introducing 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. NHS England's national team have now 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 understand the Board's concerns about the employment status of non-UK staff and would like to clarify that HM Prisons and Probation Service (HMPPS) does not actively recruit foreign nationals from overseas. The Prison Service publishes vacancies across formal UK advertising boards, and the hiring process is the same for both UK and non-UK nationals. The Civil Service Nationality Rules govern eligibility for employment in the Civil Service on the grounds of nationality.

You will be aware the Home Office introduced changes to the UK Immigration Rules aimed at reducing net migration, effective from 22 July 2025. Under current arrangements, prison officers already sponsored via the Skilled Worker route will be able to remain in post and extensions will be considered in line with policy. As a government department and sponsorship licence holder, the Ministry of Justice and its agencies must comply with the rules set by the Home Office and has no authority to alter or make exceptions to these requirements. We are, however, in discussions with the Home Office to consider the impact of the changes both on the existing workforce and recruitment pipeline. We are also exploring options to further support staffing, including renewed efforts to recruit officers already settled in the UK.

I appreciate these changes may cause worry for members of staff and their families and HMPPS is therefore strongly encouraging employees to seek independent counsel to consider their options. Support services are also available to help with their immigration status and their wellbeing whilst navigating the impact of the changes.

Whilst there is work to be done at HMP Wymott, I was encouraged by your comments about the positive impact of a new computer system in the education department. I would also like to echo the Board's commendation of the efforts of the kitchen staff in light of the challenges they face together with the dedication of the dentist to reduce the backlog following the disruption with the treatment chair.

I note you have raised some issues for the attention of the Governor who 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 Deputy Prime Minister and I greatly appreciate the vital role played by members of Independent Monitoring Boards throughout the estate and we are very grateful for your ongoing commitment on behalf of HMP Wymott.

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

Refurbishment Funding

HMPPS recognises the physical condition of the site remains a significant challenge. Whilst the replacement of the workshop roof has been completed, progress on other major refurbishment projects has been slow. The main contractor for A and B wings went into receivership, leaving these areas in a state that is unfit for purpose. The project has now been retendered, and the newly appointed contractor is validating the work of the former contractors and finalising delivery plans. Once the validation period concludes, a revised delivery timetable will be confirmed.

HMPPS is working closely with the facilities management provider as the service delivered to date has, at times, impeded our ability to maintain and improve the estate to the standard required. Despite these setbacks, some improvements have been made, such as the installation of temporary boilers and ongoing pest control measures. The prison has worked closely with maintenance contractors and has issued improvement notices where necessary. Estates meetings continue to prioritise the kitchen upgrade and other essential works, and HMPPS remains in active dialogue with budget holders regarding funding and approvals for further refurbishment.

Drones

HMPPS is investing over £40m this year in physical security across 34 prisons, including approximately £10m on anti-drone measures such as window replacements, external window grilles, and specialist netting across 15 priority prisons. HMPPS has developed a tailored vulnerability assessment specifically designed for custodial environments. This tool, alongside other resources, is available to help sites better identify local risks and implement effective mitigation.

A vulnerability assessment was conducted at HMP Wymott in August 2025. Consequently, HMPPS is obtaining quotes for window replacement projects for C, D, E, F, G and H Wings together with site surveys for CCTV and window grille installation projects. When drone drops are suspected at the prison, targeted searches are conducted, and any prisoners found to be involved face disciplinary action. Educational efforts are ongoing to discourage prisoners from facilitating drone activity, emphasising the risks and consequences involved. HMP Wymott is further mitigating against drone incursions by introducing a local drone incursion contingency plan and a drone sighting protocol. These measures have significantly improved detection and response capabilities, resulting in more timely and effective interventions by the Police Service.

Prison Officer Development

New Colleague Mentors (NCMs) support the wellbeing of all new staff. They provide a welcoming and supportive onboarding, induction, and early career journey experience for colleagues by providing ongoing guidance and advice throughout their first year. NCMs are in place within all prison sites, and they establish, run and maintain a buddy scheme within their prisons. The Buddy Scheme is an informal onboarding and knowledge sharing scheme used to support new staff or those moving to Prison Service workplaces for the first time. It supports them with familiarising themselves in a new work environment.

Core Capability Packages (CCPs) have been specifically created to help support staff confidence, capability, and knowledge-building as they go about their challenging and rewarding roles. This learning is predominantly aimed at Prison Officers with less than 2 years' service. Sixteen prototype core packages

are in development, with a number of completed prototype packages progressing through early adoption. During June and July 2025, the first six CCPs were made accessible nationally. Whilst the packages are not mandated, delivery guidance has been provided to prisons to ensure the right people with the right skills facilitate the learning. Prisons that have chosen to engage in accessing the prototype learning products have been undertaking facilitator upskilling from August 2025 to enable CCP delivery planning locally.

At HMP Wymott, specialist teams, such as those in the Care and Separation Unit, receive additional training and psychological support to help them manage the demands of their roles. A new enhanced onboarding programme has been developed at the prison and the intention is to foster a culture of continuous professional development, improve staff retention, and ultimately enhance the quality of service provided to those in custody.