



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Pentonville
Caledonian Road
London
N7 8TT

MoJ ref: SUB128742

27 November 2025

Dear Chair,

**HMP PENTONVILLE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 APRIL 2024 – 31 MARCH 2025**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Pentonville, I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work that has been put into capturing your helpful observations, particularly whilst you were short of members.

I was saddened to hear that there had been eight deaths during the reporting year. I offer my condolences to all their friends and family and would like to reassure the Board. I note that there are still inquests outstanding but would like to reassure you that recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman are taken very seriously. To that end, I am encouraged by your report that action is being taken regarding the recommendation around sickle cell disorder training in the Prevention of Future Deaths report received.

I met with the Governor during my visit to HMP Pentonville on 17 July 2025 and welcomed the opportunity to discuss key issues in greater depth given the Urgent Notification triggered by the Chief Inspector of Prisons. In accordance with my drive to improve engagement with IMBs, given that HMP Pentonville is subject to an Urgent Notification, I will be writing to you in six months' time so that you can be updated on progress being made.

I have read your report with care and understand the Board's concerns around HMP Pentonville's physical fabric. I am pleased to report that capital investment is being made with a rolling programme of shower upgrades now underway at HMP Pentonville, which is expected to complete within the current financial year. Temporary showers have been installed in G Wing, and a project to permanently convert cells into showers is in design. Delivery is being considered for the 2026/27 funding programme.

The Board will be aware that the cell window replacement programme is ongoing and has significantly improved the external environment by preventing the disposal of waste from windows, which previously attracted vermin. In addition, projects to rebuild the Clothing Exchange Store (CES) and to replace boilers and heating pipework are in design and development. Both are being considered for funding in the 2026/27 programme.

With reference to Offender Management Unit (OMU) resourcing, as part of the Workforce Delivery Project, a review of staffing models across adult public sector prisons – including HMP Pentonville – has been completed. It considered cohort complexity, infrastructure, and other operational factors. Implementation planning is underway, but any staffing increases remain subject to affordability.

A national review of OMU case administration led to significant investment across the estate with staffing increases of over 175 full time equivalent posts in total. This included additional resource at HMP Pentonville. Locally, the Governor has also reviewed OMU structures and recruited additional managers and case administrators to strengthen oversight.

It was encouraging to receive your comments regarding the increase in prisoner engagement with the Employment Hub. Liaison with employers had resulted in 21 provisional job offers, reflecting the hub's growing effectiveness in supporting resettlement and employment pathways. I was also pleased to read about the Arsenal Twinning Project, with 30 prisoners obtaining a Level 1 FA coaching qualification, with post-release access to the Arsenal Hub, FA First Aid training, and support for employment and further education.

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. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) comments in response to other issues raised in your report are set out in the attached annex.

The Deputy Prime Minister and I recognise the vital role played by members of Independent Monitoring Boards throughout the estate and we appreciate your ongoing dedication on behalf of HMP Pentonville.

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

Maintenance Contract Management

The Ministry of Justice is now running a competitive tender process under the Property Transformation Programme (PTP) to secure new contracts. Future contracts will include enhanced requirements and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), with financial penalties governed by a Performance Credit Model.

A revised performance framework will prioritise first-time fixes and permanent repairs. Providers will operate local helpdesks to improve efficiency and resource allocation. Furthermore, PTP is establishing a dedicated contract management team to ensure consistent oversight and timely issue resolution. Until contract expiry, existing services are managed under the GFSL Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which includes a structured performance framework.

At HMP Pentonville, a dedicated Area Property Operations Manager (APOM) works closely with GFSL and the Governor to monitor delivery. The new FM site manager attends daily operational meetings to provide updates on remedial works and enable direct escalation of delays. Maintenance progress is also reviewed at the monthly Estates Tripartite Meeting, whereby concerns can be raised with senior MOJ Property and Estates managers.

Prisoner Property

HMPPS acknowledges the Board's concerns regarding the management of prisoners' property. The issue is receiving renewed focus, informed by the IMB national thematic report and a five-year review of complaints by the Independent Prisoner Complaint Investigations team. In response, Governors and senior leaders have been reminded of key property handling protocols, including adherence to volumetric control limits. Further consultation with prisons is underway to address additional issues raised in the reports.

Assessment Care in Custody Teamwork (ACCT)

HMPPS remains committed to strengthening ACCT processes. The ongoing record form has been revised to align with the Safety Framework (effective 1 January 2025), featuring clearer prompts, simplified language, and reducing the form from six pages to a four-page format to support efficient record keeping. The Safety Group continues to provide targeted support, including an ACCT quality assurance visit to HMP Pentonville in June 2025 to upskill staff and senior leaders. In light of the urgent notification, further coaching from the National Safety Team has been provided in risk identification and management.

Prisoners Convicted of Sexual Offences (PCoSOs)

HMPPS has increased investment in accredited programme resources for PCoSO prisoners. HMP The Verne is set to begin delivering *Building Choices*, while HMPS Ashfield and Rye Hill have received additional funding to expand provision. Existing

Offending Behaviour Programmes (OBP) resources have also been directed to PCoSO cohorts at HMPs Five Wells, Oakwood, and Fosse Way, enhancing national provision.

A new Digital Prison System (DPS) approach, launched last year, enables Prison Offender Managers to identify suitable prisoners for *Building Choices* immediately following a completed or updated OASys. The system also facilitates rapid digital referrals and helps locate delivery sites—supporting establishments such as HMP Pentonville in making appropriate transfers. HMPPS continues to conduct annual demand reviews to ensure resources are targeted effectively.

Drugs

In 2025, HMPPS is investing over £40 million in physical security across 34 prisons, including anti-drone measures such as window replacements, external grilles, and netting at 15 priority sites. An anti-drone wire solution is also being trialled in the Long-Term High Security Estate.

All prisons, including HMP Pentonville, are equipped with specialist contraband detection tools such as X-ray body and baggage scanners and Trace Detection Units. At Pentonville, a window replacement project is underway to further strengthen security.

HMP Pentonville also has a dedicated Drug Strategy Lead overseeing a coordinated approach to supply reduction, demand management, and recovery. This includes an Incentivised Substance-Free Living (ISFL) unit, offering enhanced conditions for prisoners who commit to remaining drug-free.

The mandatory drug testing programme detects a wide range of substances, including Novel Psychoactive Substances (NPS). A new testing contract enhances flexibility and responsiveness to emerging drug trends. Seized substances can also be forensically tested, including for NPS.