



Co-Chairs, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Ashfield
Shortwood Road
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Bristol
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MoJ ref: SUB130546

9 January 2026

Dear Co-Chairs,

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

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Ashfield. I am extremely grateful for all the work that has gone into producing this informative report, particularly as the Board continues to operate with fewer than the recommended complement of members.

I am sorry to read that there were five deaths in custody during the reporting year, apparently all from natural causes. I extend my condolences to all their friends and family. I note that the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman reports are still awaited but would like to reassure you that there will be careful consideration of any recommendations made.

I recognise the urgency of the Board's request for a comprehensive national strategy for older prisoners, noting that men aged fifty and over comprise more than 40% of the population at HMP Ashfield. The rise in the number of older prisoners over the past twenty years has created challenges across the estate, particularly in meeting complex health and social care needs. Following the recommendation from the Independent Sentencing Review, we are working with prisons to develop an older prisoner strategy over the coming months. This work will draw directly on operational experience. In the meantime, a number of initiatives to support the older population at HMP Ashfield have been implemented including weekly creative arts and wellbeing groups, one to one cooking, a weekly memory group and cognitive stimulation sessions. Physical adaptations are also being made where possible, HMP Ashfield has altered seven cells to accommodate specific physical needs, such as widening doors for wheelchair users.

I appreciate your concerns regarding social care, dementia care and end-of-life care for men convicted of sexual offences. Work is underway with NHS England and Oxleas to strengthen dementia and end of life care across prisons in the South West. This includes negotiations with memory services in South Gloucestershire and plans to embed palliative care skills within the nursing workforce. Social care remains the responsibility of local authorities under the Care Act and is delivered at HMP Ashfield by South Gloucestershire Council under contract with Serco.

I share the Board's concern about the small number of prisoners who leave HMP Ashfield without suitable accommodation and I recognise the ongoing pressure on probation services in custody and in the community. HMPPS continues to expand the Community Accommodation Service (CAS) at tier three,

which provides up to twelve weeks of basic accommodation for prison leavers at risk of homelessness. In addition, all prisons and probation services in England must comply with the statutory Duty to Refer under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, ensuring individuals who are homeless or at risk are referred to a local housing authority of their choice. Strategic Housing Specialists and Homelessness Prevention Teams are working closely with local authorities and partners to identify appropriate pathways for those who would otherwise be homeless. CAS providers offer specialist support with housing applications and benefits, tenancy understanding, rent arrears, access to rent deposit schemes and liaison with accommodation providers to help sustain placements. The New Commissioned Rehabilitative Services contracts for men to support them with their accommodation needs are planned to go live in 2027.

Locally, HMP Ashfield releases approximately eighty men a year and works with probation teams in the prison and in prisoner's home areas to address accommodation early. HMP Ashfield partners with organisations such as the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, Circles and Care after Combat to support men approaching release and the majority of men from HMP Ashfield move into Approved Premises given the nature of their offences. I appreciate the anxiety that uncertainty can cause in the days before release and will ensure that national measures continue to reinforce the local effort you describe.

I was encouraged by the developments you highlight. The establishment has created a therapeutic community for long-term prisoners convicted of sexual offences, an assisted living wing for older men and an incentivised substance-free living unit. Staff have worked to maintain a safe environment, with strong multi-agency arrangements and regular consultation forums. These changes, together with efforts to stabilise education, skills and work provision and to broaden weekend activity, show a constructive focus on rehabilitation, decency and safety.

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 important monitoring of the prison estate undertaken by IMBs and extend our thanks for your ongoing commitment on behalf of HMP Ashfield.

Yours sincerely,



Lord Timpson
Minister for Prisons, Probation, and Reducing Reoffending

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Access to prison-level reoffending data

Proven reoffending statistics are published nationally and cover offenders who were released from custody, received a non-custodial conviction at court or received a caution or reprimand. These figures are published on a regular basis by the Ministry of Justice. However, at present, reoffending data is not routinely available at individual prison level. Historically, limitations in data quality and changes to offender management arrangements have meant that reoffending rates could not be robustly attributed to specific establishments. While improvements to underlying data have been made, prison-level reoffending figures are not currently published.

At HMP Ashfield, it is recognised that prisoners typically move between establishments during their sentence and often progress to open conditions prior to release. This makes it difficult to draw direct conclusions about the impact of interventions delivered at a single site. Nonetheless, reoffending data remains a valuable source of insight at a system level, and work continues nationally to improve the quality and use of data to inform rehabilitation policy and practice.

Transfers from category D to closed conditions

Decisions on categorisation and re-categorisation are overseen by the Head of Offender Management Services, who ensures that decisions are fair, consistent and evidence based. Staff use the Digital Categorisation Service, and all decisions are subject to quality assurance, including countersigning and checks for compliance with policy and monitoring of any disproportionate impact on protected characteristics. The Security Categorisation Policy Framework was republished on 28 April 2025 to strengthen and clarify processes and remains under review.

Locally, the Director reports that returns from open conditions have not affected regime stability. In some cases, categorisation or adjudication paperwork has followed the prisoner after transfer rather than in advance. Where this occurs, the receiving establishment raises the matter with the sending prison to ensure documentation is provided promptly. Complaints from prisoners in such circumstances have generally been resolved quickly.