



Ministry  
of Justice

Lord Timpson  
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Berwyn  
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Wrexham Industrial Estates  
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North Wales  
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MoJ ref: SUB129611

21 January 2026

Dear Chair,

**HMP BERWYN: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 MARCH 2024 – 28 FEBRUARY 2025**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report for HMP Berwyn. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for the hard work and continued dedication in capturing these helpful observations. I have noted that whilst the complement of members had increased slightly at the end of the reporting period, you continue to operate far short of the required number and I hope the situation improves further. I enjoyed my visit to HMP Berwyn and welcomed the opportunity to be able to meet with the IMB.

I was very saddened to hear two prisoners died in custody during the reporting year. I offer my sincere condolences to the friends and family of the deceased and would like to reassure the Board that recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman are always taken very seriously.

The Government is very mindful of the specific challenges faced by those serving Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentences. Whilst we are determined to make further progress to support this cohort towards a safe and sustainable release, it will not be in a way that compromises public protection. The refreshed IPP Action Plan, published on 17 July 2025, set a target in the plan to ensure that all IPP offenders recalled for being out of touch, or in relation to allegations which were quickly found to be unsubstantiated, will be considered for Risk Assessed Recall Review (RARR). The power of RARR has already been used to release a number of IPP prisoners, in some cases, months ahead of a parole hearing.

I can assure the Board that we are not standing still on the issue of progressing those serving IPP sentences towards a prospective future release. As mentioned above, the refreshed IPP Action Plan puts an important emphasis on effective frontline delivery in our prisons and the Probation Service to ensure that those serving IPP sentences have robust and effective sentence plans, which they are actively engaging with, and that they are in the most appropriate prison for their needs. This is the most effective way to help them to reduce their risk so that they can progress towards safe release from custody. The refreshed Action Plan and IPP Annual Report can be accessed on the GOV.UK website.

I appreciate your concerns around prisoners arriving on short-term sentences. The Sentencing Bill, introduced on 2 September 2025, takes forward many recommendations made by the Independent Sentencing Review that require primary legislation. The reforms in the Sentencing Bill will ensure the demand on prisons is on a more sustainable footing going forwards. The Government is now delivering a series of reforms through the Bill that is currently before Parliament. These reforms will reduce reliance on short-term custody, while ensuring public protection and

maintaining judicial discretion. The measures within the Sentencing Bill include: a presumption for courts to suspend short custodial sentences of 12 months or less (subject to exceptions); extension of suspended sentence orders up to three years from the current two years; enhanced community sentences such as bans on driving or from attending pubs or sports together with new tough restriction zones restricting offenders to a specific geographical area; and a new progression model including intensive supervision with tagging and new licence conditions but subject to exceptions.

Turning to post-release arrangements, the Wales Resettlement Model delivers an assessment of immediate resettlement needs via a Guided Interview with all prisoners at HMP Berwyn regardless of their geographical home area. It ensures that every prisoner has an opportunity to discuss their needs and for follow-up signposting and referral to a range of resettlement provisions on-site or in the community to facilitate timely preparation for release. The Community Probation Practitioner and staff within the establishment are advised of the assessment findings and any actions that have been commenced or require their intervention to progress. Whilst early release schemes have put a pressure on this service, staff have prioritised those by proximity to release to ensure all prisoners are supported.

During 2024-25 HMP Berwyn received a high proportion of prisoners originating from the North West of England and needing hospital admission to a medium secure unit. It is acknowledged that there is a considerable waiting time and pressure on the availability of medium secure spaces in the North West of England. NHS commissioners consequently resorted to sourcing secure private beds that resulted in delays over the recommended 28 days. I can confirm that officials from Wales are working closely with the UK Government on the Mental Health Bill. The Bill recently completed Committee Stage in the House of Commons and the 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. Whilst I cannot comment on individual cases and operational decisions, my officials assure me that the prison tries to avoid locating prisoners in segregation pending a transfer. Segregation is only used as a last resort to protect staff and prisoners and following multidisciplinary meetings.

I recognise there are issues to address at HMP Berwyn and it was therefore encouraging to receive your comments that the workshops and training have improved, and the prison had the highest number of prisoners in employment on release in its comparator group. I was further encouraged to note the prisoners' enthusiasm around the peer mentoring course together with the pride they took in producing sandbags for the Ministry of Defence. I would also like to commend prison staff for their thoughtful planning for the Christmas period. Whilst the appointment of the new governor was not in the reporting cycle, I welcome the appointment and am very encouraged by early reports of his leadership.

Local issues of concern in your report will be addressed by the Governor who will continue to keep you aware of progress 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 appreciate the valuable role played by members of Independent Monitoring Boards throughout the estate and we are very grateful for your continued commitment and hard work on behalf of HMP Berwyn.

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 BERWYN: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 MARCH 2024 – 28 FEBRUARY 2025**

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

#### **Cells Condition**

As the Board have noted, the rolling programme of cell painting improvements has had to be halted due to general prison population pressures preventing cells being taken out of use. However, when cells require repairs for reasons other than painting the opportunity is taken to improve the paintwork and work in this way has now been completed in approximately 300 cells. This work is undertaken by the Clean, Rehabilitative, Enabling & Decent (CRED) team of prisoners who may also receive formal training in plastering. CRED prisoners have described the job as the best they have ever had while in prison and the details of their training and experience is passed to employers as part of their preparations for release.

#### **Heating System**

HMPPS is pleased to confirm the heating system continues to operate normally following extensive works and is now only subject to routine maintenance.

#### **Weekend Medication Dispensing**

Prison pharmacies are expected to comply with professional standards for medicines optimisation in secure environments as described by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society. All prisons in Wales have been subject to an external review against these standards. Services should be modelled to maximise prisoners' access to medicines during initial hours following admission such as first night medications.

Out-of-hours dispensing needs at HMP Berwyn is met via several 'Mediwell' facilities located in the healthcare building and on the house blocks where a range of medications is stored. Alongside this primary option, the healthcare provider has access to the emergency 24-hour pharmacy at the local hospital in the event a particular medication is required and not available on-site. These options ensure required medications are available over the weekends and out of hours. The only caveat is if a prisoner arrives at HMP Berwyn prescribed with a rare type of medication (usually prescribed by a specialist unit). In such circumstances there may be a delay as the hospital may not stock the required medication or the healthcare team are required to obtain the same from the prescribing specialist unit.