



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP/YOI Sudbury
Sudbury
Ashbourne
DE6 5HW

MoJ ref: SUB130549

9 January 2026

Dear Chair,

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

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP/YOI Sudbury. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work that has been put into capturing your helpful observations, especially as you continued to remain very short of members throughout the reporting period.

I was very saddened to hear that a person died shortly after release from custody. I offer my condolences to all their friends and family and I would like to reassure the Board that any recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman will be taken very seriously in such tragic circumstances.

I have read your report with care and I note your concern regarding changes to prisoner categorisation creating challenges in terms of staffing and rehabilitation. It is essential to ensure that prisoners are held in the right parts of the adult male estate at the right time, according to their security category, to engage effectively with sentence planning targets and resettlement needs. The Government is committed to ensuring robust pre-release plans are in place, which identify and put the support individuals' need in place before release to ensure access to housing, healthcare, employment or education, benefits, and family support where it is needed. I can advise the Board that a staffing reprofiling exercise began at HMP Sudbury in October 2025 to ensure that the prison is making the most effective use of the resources available. It remains a key priority across HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) to get prison leavers into employment as we know that finding employment within twelve months can reduce the chance of reoffending. HMP Sudbury is therefore continuing to develop its links with training providers to explore further opportunities for prisoners locally to access training and Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL). I can also advise that with the change in population HMP Sudbury, discussions are taking place to explore potential opportunities for delivering the Building Choices Offender Behaviour Programme at the prison in the future.

I am also aware that the quality of the ageing accommodation is a repeated issue which is rightly troubling you. The safety and decency of where prisoners reside and staff work is paramount. Prison conditions are continually monitored and all funding requests from prisons to undertake improvements are being considered, noting that demands for maintenance are much greater than the available funding. HMPPS does have to prioritise works across the prison estate very carefully to make best use of that funding, focusing on risk to life and risk to capacity and decency. In the meantime, HMP Sudbury will continue to

implement a decency programme of redecoration of communal areas in the residential dormitories, using the local prisoner project team and facilities management provider.

I do also recognise your concerns about the probation service provision in the community and access to approved premises, although I was reassured to note in your report that it is very rare for prisoners to be released without accommodation. You will be interested to know that the Commissioned Rehabilitative Services (CRS) are currently procuring new contracts which go live in Spring 2027 and will enhance the rehabilitative services provision for men leaving prison and in the community. Regarding Approved Premises, it is acknowledged that demand for places currently outstrips supply, and we hope to expand the number of places in due course. A digitalised approach to Approved Premises referrals has been developed, as well as there now being a National Central Referral Unit that oversees assessment for suitability, matches individuals to placements to maximise occupancy of the national capacity. These approaches are enabling HMPPS to improve timeliness and allow greater consistency and responsivity, underpinned by the department's demand analysis.

It was reassuring to receive your comments about the low levels of violence between prisoners and towards staff, as well as low levels of self-harm. It is therefore pleasing to hear that prisoners feel safe in the prison environment. I am also encouraged by the quality of teaching in education reaching a very good standards with results in English and Mathematics at a high level given your concerns about the low education levels of some prisoners transferring which HMPPS has addressed further in the annex to this letter.

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 appreciated the valuable role played by members of Independent Monitoring Boards throughout the estate and we are very grateful for your continued hard work on behalf of HMP/YOI Sudbury.

Yours sincerely,



Lord Timpson

Minister for Prisons, Probation, and Reducing Reoffending

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Digital Learning

The Digital Education Platform project successfully installed Wi-Fi coverage across educational areas at HMP Sudbury in November 2024. This installation included 24 Wi-Fi access points, 50 desktop PCs for prisoner use, three career laptops, two printers, and five MoJ laptops for staff to share, enabling a more seamless operation of educational services. Currently, there are no plans to roll out Launchpad (prisoner in-cell self-service) at HMP Sudbury. It is recognised that some prisoners will be used to these services within closed prisons, however the aim is to extend Launchpad across the closed public-sector estate subject to securing the necessary funding.

Drug Testing

Compact Based Drug Testing (CBDT) was rolled out across the prison this year using urine testing kits. However, it is recognised that since then a new testing regime was introduced nationally across HMPPS in July 2025. The new test kit was selected through an open competitive procurement exercise and was evaluated to ensure it meets HMPPS specifications and demonstrated compliance with our technical requirements, whilst offering value for money. While the new test kit and process is different from the previous one, it enables HMPPS to continue to deliver CBDT and Voluntary Drug Testing in prisons to maintain a critical part of recovery and release functions. The prison's local Drug Strategy Lead has raised concerns with the national policy lead regarding the new kits which will continue to be monitored closely at the prison and feedback provided where necessary. There is also an avenue where kits appear to be faulty to return these to supplier to be replaced free of charge.

Education

The new Prisoner Education Service contracts which launched on 1 October 2025 set clearer expectations for screening and assessment. New digital systems will reduce repeated assessments; and improve recording of previous achievements and tracking of learners' progress. It remains important that prisons continue to plan their curriculum based on careful analysis of their population's needs, and that ongoing efforts are made to improve attendance and allocations to ensure learners can gain the maximum benefit from the provision available. Locally there will continue to be a focus on English and Maths which will be prioritised to allow prisoners to gain level 1 in preparation for accessing work in the community via Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL). The prison will continue to monitor this closely with the new education contract through the Education Performance Meetings.

Telephone Provision

There are currently no specific projects or timelines in place to extend in-cell telephony in open prisons. While this does create a disparity compared to the closed estate, where in-cell telephones are available, and with the newer house blocks at HMP Sudbury, prisoners in open prisons typically have greater freedom of movement which can allow easier access to communal phones on wing landings and more opportunities for family contact during ROTL. The strengthening of family ties for those preparing for release remain important and HMPPS is committed to exploring all viable options to improve telephony provision across the open estate, including actively considering future enhancements as part of the wider prisoner telephony contract. However, these considerations must balance competing requirements and costs across the prison estate for prisoner communications. In the meantime, HMPPS will continue to

work with the open prison estate to identify opportunities to expand the existing communal phone infrastructure wherever possible.

Prisoners Property

Further to last year's response, HMPPS has now considered carefully the IMB national thematic report on the impact of property loss on prisoners, and the thematic review by Independent Prisoner Complaint Investigations of the property complaints they have received over the last five years. In considering the reports, consultation with prison staff took place on the issues raised and a revised version of the *Prisoners' Property Policy Framework* was published on 17 November 2025. This includes additional guidance on the sending on of excess property, the handling of prisoners' laundry and the correct completion of the cell clearance certificate, as these were identified as common areas of difficulty. In addition, HMPPS has reminded Governors and other senior leaders of key points around handling property, including the importance of prisoners complying with volumetric limits. Compliance with volumetric control remains of key importance, since property within those limits will be moved with prisoners when they transfer. Locally the challenges of the escort contractor not being able to bring all an individual's property during transfer and the need for prisons to send on property post transfer is recognised. Processes and procedures at HMP Sudbury about prisoner property have therefore been reviewed to improve audit trails of accountability and any identified discrepancies are escalated when required. HMPPS remains committed to improving the management of prisoners' property and will consider possible areas for improvement on an ongoing basis.