



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP/YOI Brinsford
New Road
Featherstone
Wolverhampton
WV10 7PY

MoJ ref: SUB131210

13 February 2026

Dear Chair,

**HMP/YOI BRINSFORD: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 JULY 2024 TO 30 JUNE 2025**

Thank you for submitting your Board's annual report on HMP/YOI Brinsford. I have read your report with care, and I am very grateful to you and your colleagues for the considerable work that has gone into preparing it and capturing a detailed and honest account of the prison's current state with the aim of improving practices. This is particularly appreciated given that you were again operating below your recommended complement of members.

I was saddened to hear that there was one death in the prison during the reporting year. I appreciate that any death is always difficult to deal with and offer my condolences to all those affected. I note that there are ongoing investigations by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman and we await any subsequent recommendations, which will be treated with the upmost importance. I was heartened to read that the prison has already taken proactive steps in response to the death by amending the practices set out in its Local Security Strategy.

I share the Board's concern about men who are acutely unwell waiting too long for specialist hospital care. The new Mental Health Act 2025 creates a statutory 28-day time limit for transfers from prison to secure mental health hospitals. A Mental Health and Justice Strategic Advisory Group, chaired by the National Medical Director for Mental Health and Neurodiversity, is overseeing delivery and reporting regularly to Ministers. Regionally, both Midlands Provider Collaboratives have strategic and operational action plans focused on bed capacity, clinical prioritisation, improved data and new delivery models. There are also fortnightly clinically led operational meetings that track individual cases until transfer. I expect these arrangements to translate into consistent compliance with the statutory time limit, and I will continue to ask for clear, published progress against that standard. The significant reforms of the Sentencing Act 2026, which received Royal Assent recently on 22 January 2026, will provide further options to the Courts and will help inform future requirements for the prison estate at a strategic level.

Locally, I recognise the burden that delayed transfers place on staff in HMP/YOI Brinsford's healthcare centre and on residential units. Senior leaders and healthcare partners are reviewing waiting lists together and escalating cases through the regional governance I have described. I am grateful to the staff who continue to support men compassionately while specialist beds are found.

I recognise the frustration and anxiety caused when property goes missing. The Prisoner's Property Policy Framework was revised and reissued on 17 November 2025, adding clearer guidance on sending excess property, handling laundry and completing cell clearance certificates, precisely the areas the Board has flagged as the most frequent points of failure. Senior leaders across the estate have been reminded of the essentials of sound property handling, including the importance of volumetric control so that what is within limits travels with the individual. Locally, HMP/YOI Brinsford has tightened processes at enhanced gate security and at reception, introduced streamlined clothing parcel arrangements and added weekend cover to issue property promptly. Encouragingly, your data show a reduction in property related applications to the Board compared with last year. We will keep the revised national framework under review, and I will expect the Governor and Prison Group Director to sustain and evidence further improvement.

Turning to the positives in your report, I was pleased to read your positive findings about the care shown to vulnerable men in the 24-hour healthcare unit and about the professional relationships you witnessed in the care and separation unit. The development of the new care leaver's flat is a tangible step forward, creating a homely, well-equipped space where care experienced men can practise the everyday skills that matter on release. I also welcome the chaplaincy's visible and practical role and the family days that staff deliver with energy and warmth. Keeping families connected is central to rehabilitation and stability.

I note that your report has also raised some local concerns. The Governor will continue to keep you informed of any developments regarding these matters. HMPPS comments in response to the other issues raised in your report are set out in the attached annex.

The Deputy Prime Minister and I very much appreciate the important role played by all members of Independent Monitoring Boards in improving our prisons and we are grateful for your ongoing dedication on behalf of HMP/YOI Brinsford.

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/YOI BRINSFORD: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JULY 2024 TO 30 JUNE 2025

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Heating system performance and temperature control

A bid to replace heat exchangers across the site has been made and is in the investment pipeline. This sits alongside wider works being prioritised across the estate on a risk-based basis. The establishment will continue to make operational adjustments to mitigate extremes while the bid progresses.

Fitness of the education contract, motivation and attendance

HMPPS is procuring a new Core Education contract for the West Midlands, scheduled to launch in September 2026. This contract will introduce a Governor commissioned curriculum tailored to the needs of HMP/YOI Brinsford's population with consistent screening and assessment for functional skills, reading, English for Speakers of Other Languages and additional learning needs. Careers, Information and Guidance services have already been implemented and are delivered by the Growth Company supporting prisoners from reception through to release with induction, reviews, pre-release sessions, employer events and peer mentoring. Digital systems are being expanded to improve access to secure online content and to track progress more effectively. The Dynamic Purchasing System remains available to Governors to commission local, practical provision that meets the needs of their cohort. An evaluation and monitoring strategy is being developed to assess the impact of these changes on engagement and reoffending. In the meantime, the Governor continues to use local commissioning to provide vocational courses and practical learning opportunities that prisoners find motivating.

Condition of the prison and investment in infrastructure

HMP/YOI Brinsford requires significant investment to bring accommodation and facilities up to an acceptable standard. A site wide fire safety project is in design and development and the national pipeline of works for HMP/YOI Brinsford includes upgrades to the building management system, replacement of the incoming water main and pipework, a site-wide closed circuit television upgrade, replacement of all old windows, remediation of V1 and V2 gates, heat-exchanger replacement and refurbishment of showers in Residential Units 2, 3 and 4. These proposals are underpinned by the condition surveys and will be prioritised against future capital budgets. While these major works progress, the prison continues to invest locally through the Clean, Rehabilitative, Enabling and Decent programme, which has improved cell standards and cleanliness and reduced graffiti through regular assurance checks.

Showers and ventilation in the healthcare centre

The establishment has submitted a capital bid to replace the healthcare centre showers and temporary mitigations have been applied but full remediation requires investment. This sits alongside the wider pipeline of works noted above and will be considered through the same national prioritisation process.

Purposeful activity volumes and the meaningfulness of work in a resettlement prison

HMP/YOI Brinsford has faced longstanding challenges in providing sufficient purposeful activity, particularly since plans to build three new workshops were delayed due to asbestos discovered during preparatory works. Despite these setbacks, progress has been made locally. A previously unused workshop has been repurposed to house a Forest Garden production line, where prisoners manufacture timber products using power tools and jigs, replicating commercial processes. This initiative provides around 24 part time places and offers real-world skills. Discussions have taken place about introducing an automotive recycling workshop in partnership with a major employer, but the Governor has chosen to consolidate the Forest Garden provision before mobilising further activity. Nationally, HMPPS is

expanding vocational training and apprenticeships, introducing the Future Skills Programme to provide short, sector specific courses linked to guaranteed interviews and strengthening employer engagement through the New Futures Network. Careers, Information and Guidance services are also supporting prisoners to plan for employment on release. These measures, combined with the national regime model requiring year on year improvements in purposeful activity will help HMP/YOI Brinsford deliver a more meaningful and consistent offer.

Transfers between establishments, gang dynamics and population stability

Transfers are driven by complex and wide-ranging considerations and allocation decisions must reflect both the specific needs and circumstances of the individual and the operating environment and services at the receiving prison. Maintaining flow to resettlement prisons is necessary to keep space in reception prisons so that local courts can sit. Within these pressures, the national Population Management Unit seeks to ensure that prisoners who have been accepted for transfer are moved as soon as is practical in accordance with national offender flows. The function books over three hundred moves per week and works closely with contractors to deliver them in a system under pressure. HMP/YOI Brinsford has limited control over the volume of transfers but mitigates risk through timely checks at reception and careful management of affiliations that might destabilise the population. The agreed prison criteria are stated on all transfers and as such, the sending establishment must ensure those criteria are met.

Securing places elsewhere for urgent moves

When an urgent move is necessary, the same constraints and criteria apply. Allocation decisions must reflect specific needs and the operating environment of the receiving prison. The national Population Management Unit will book moves as soon as practical, but the sending establishment is responsible for ensuring that men who are in the process of completing a course are not listed on booked drafts. Swift and efficient transfer, particularly progressive moves to open and resettlement prisons remain necessary to maintain the flow from reception prisons and the functioning of local courts. The Governor will continue to escalate truly urgent cases through the Prison Group Director to Population Management and will keep the Board informed of outcomes.

Transfers disrupting courses and reducing family contact

Where transfers occur during the middle of courses or in ways that affect family contact, the sending establishment is responsible for ensuring that men who are attending or imminently due to start a programme are not added to transfer schedules.

HMP/YOI Brinsford now delivers the Building Choices programme, which replaces most previous accredited offending behaviour programmes and can be delivered at both moderate and high intensity. This change increases the likelihood that men can complete required work locally, reducing the need for transfers solely for programme access. The high intensity variant is shorter than previous programmes, creating more flexibility for men with higher risks and needs. As stated, national guidance requires that men should not be transferred while attending a programme and should be placed on hold when they are imminently due to start. Where transfers are unavoidable, the prison will continue to promote family contact through visits and virtual technology and will consider distance in allocation decisions wherever possible.

Restoration of the site following halted construction

The prison has been operating largely as normal despite the disruption caused by the halted build of two new residential units. The necessary works to return the site to its previous condition, including removal of temporary hoarding and reinstatement of the car park, are expected to be completed by the end of March 2026. The Governor will provide updates to the Board as contractors complete the remaining works.