



Ministry  
of Justice

Lord Timpson  
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Cardiff  
Knox Road  
Cardiff  
CF24 0UG

MoJ ref: SUB132252

27 February 2026

Dear Chair,

**HMP CARDIFF: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 SEPTEMBER 2024 – 31 AUGUST 2025**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Cardiff. I am very grateful for the considerable work put into this insightful report, especially given the significant changes to your membership during the reporting period which resulted in your shortfall increasing. The efforts of the remaining members are most appreciated.

I was saddened to hear two prisoners died in custody during the reporting year. I offer my condolences to all their friends and family and would like to provide reassurance that any recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman will be taken very seriously. I also welcome the Board's recognition of the prison's Family Liaison Officer support provided to the affected families.

I do recognise the Board's frustrations regarding security vetting delaying recruitment. I must emphasise that the vetting process is vital to ensure all individuals working at the prison can uphold the security and integrity standards expected to keep our prisons safe. The checks that are undertaken assess individuals against a range of legislative requirements and security factors which is a priority for working within HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). It is acknowledged that as the pre-employment checks have been made more robust the timescales for clearance have lengthened. However, the delays have largely been caused by a 30% increase in recruitment across HMPPS and our providers when comparing 2024 to 2025. Funding has been approved to resource vetting teams in line with this 30% increase and recruitment began in the summer with new staff beginning to go live in December 2025. It is anticipated that a significant impact will be noticeable by March 2026 once further staffing cohorts are in place, but in the interim, both Shared Services Connected Ltd (SSCL) and HMPPS are using flexible resource allocation and overtime to mitigate delays. Personnel Security Vetting colleagues have also been working to upskill existing local Vetting Contact Points with local leaders asked to ensure that these Vetting Contact Points have sufficient time allocated to perform these duties. HMP Cardiff themselves have been utilising local means to negate impact as much as possible and continue to advise local partners and providers to start recruitment and vetting as soon as possible to prevent delays. However, please also be assured that HMPPS is working with SSCL and providers to improve the assessment of future recruitment activity which will ensure any spikes or increases can be managed appropriately.

I also understand your concerns about the changes to the UK Immigration Rules. These changes were made to reduce net migration as numbers must fall further as we create a migration system that is controlled and fair. However, the Ministry of Justice engaged with the Home Office on this matter given public safety is the first duty of any Government, and we must ensure prisons can continue to run safely with the right level of experienced staff. As a result, on 19 December 2025 a time-limited exemption to Skilled Worker visa rules for prison officers up to 31 December 2026 was introduced, providing a lower salary threshold of £33,400 (subject to updates) in place until 31 December 2027. There are no plans for further exemptions and I know this will remain a sensitive issue for colleagues that are affected by the changes and might not benefit from the temporary exemption. Those affected are being encouraged to seek independent legal advice to consider their visa options.

Whilst the concerns you raise are important, I was encouraged to read about the reduction in violence, self-harm by nearly 50% and the need for prison officers to use force to deescalate incidents. It was pleasing to note that improvements have been seen in the atmosphere on the wings and the positive engagement between staff and prisoners. I welcome the prisons decision locally to continue with the Here 2 Help trained peer mentors that help with emotional resilience and was interested to learn about the opening of the wellbeing hub and the proposed development to support prisoners. It was also encouraging to read about the good practice and positive performance the Board has seen in education and work within the prison given this is essential to provide prisoners the opportunity to be successful on release.

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 really value the oversight which members of Independent Monitoring Boards provide to our prisons and we are appreciative of your ongoing dedication on behalf of HMP Cardiff.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Lord Timpson**  
**Minister for Prisons, Probation, and Reducing Reoffending**

## HMP CARDIFF: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 SEPTEMBER 2024 – 31 AUGUST 2025

### HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

#### **Maintenance**

HMPPS is continually reviewing the investment required across the prison estate with funding proposals underpinned by data collected in previous condition surveys which assessed the fabric, cells, and critical assets at each prison. These are informing long-term forward maintenance registers to prioritise work against future capital budgets. Bids for HMP Cardiff have been made to upgrade the CCTV and perimeter detection system, the installation of smoke control systems in the Healthcare Unit and to demolish and rebuild Psychology, welfare facilities, and the tailor's workshop. These projects are under consideration for funding in future financial years given they are costly, lengthy and require taking many prison places offline. A bid to resolve the damp issues in the Healthcare Unit is also in the early stages of development and the previous bid for extra water tanks and a pumped feed are no longer necessary. Despite the age of some parts of HMP Cardiff, the prison remains exceptionally clean and ongoing projects are continuing to improve decency through the painting programme and cell refurbishment. Where issues are identified, the prison will continue to engage with the maintenance provider to resolve issues at the earliest opportunity, ensuring these are discussed at the weekly meeting chaired by the Deputy Governor.

#### **Hospital Escorts**

The prison has been working with Cardiff and the Vale University Health Board (UHB) to identify steps to mitigate the number of escorts and identify ways in which clinics and care can take place at the prison. Several joint actions are already in place and this partnership continues to be strengthened with enhanced clinical triage to ensure alternatives, such as in-prison treatment or remote clinical review are considered and only prisoners who genuinely require hospital attendance are escorted off site. There will be improved scheduling and coordination between the Health Board and the prison to align non-urgent appointments with times that reduce operational impact, including grouping appointments and avoiding certain times in the prison regime where possible. In-reach specialist clinics are also being developed, where clinically appropriate, so that more care can be delivered within the prison, such as diabetic reviews, tissue viability and sexual health clinics. Additionally, regular joint operational meetings between the Health Board and HMP Cardiff are taking place to ensure good communication and support to identify emerging pressures, review demand and agree mitigation measures. A plan has also been worked on jointly to produce an emergency and urgent escort protocol when this is required and there has been an emergency out of hours clinic set up with a local hospital to reduce the numbers needed to be sent to Accident & Emergency.

#### **Medication**

The prescribing provision at the prison has been incorporated into the Cardiff and the Vale UHB to ensure there is more robust cover and the team is now fully staffed for the entire week. There are two prescribing pharmacists and additionally two newly qualified pharmacists that undertake prescribing checks. It is also reassuring that the Board has recognised that the number of applications to the Board regarding prescription and medication issues nearly halved during the reporting year.

#### **Mental Health Provision**

The issues within the Health and Social Care Needs Analysis are acknowledged and the Cardiff and Vale UHB are taking a series of targeted steps to improve the service provision. This includes strengthening clinical capacity through recruitment of mental health practitioners and psychiatrists, alongside exploring new workforce models to provide more consistent on-site coverage. Multidisciplinary support is being expanded which will allow psychological therapies, primary mental health services, and substance-misuse teams to work in a more integrated way to improve continuity of care. A revised referral and triage process will ensure that individuals with the highest clinical need are seen promptly and will reduce unnecessary delays for routine appointments. This will be overseen with improved data monitoring and performance, so that waiting times, missed appointments, and service gaps are identified earlier and addressed more effectively. The positive peer review undertaken by the Quality Network for Prison Mental Health Services during the report year was pleasing and the mental health team at HMP Cardiff is now at full strength, however it is recognised the service provision requires further work. The prison will therefore continue to work alongside the Cardiff and the Vale UHB through governance meetings and the Partnership Board to alleviate any issues that are identified such as helping to increase prisoner attendance to Healthcare for appointments.