



Co-Chairs, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Nottingham
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27 February 2026

Dear Co-Chairs,

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

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Nottingham. I very much appreciate you and your colleagues' efforts in putting together an informative report, particularly as you have continued to operate with around half your membership for another year.

I was very saddened to hear seven individuals died during the reporting year, the majority of which occurred were shortly after release from custody. Every death is a tragedy and I offer my heartfelt condolences to all their friends and family and can give assure that any recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman will be taken very seriously.

I recognise the Board's concerns regarding increasing secure specialist mental health spaces. Further to my response to your last report, I am pleased to say that the Mental Health Bill received Royal Assent on 18 December 2025. We are working with health partners to create a robust implementation plan setting out the operational changes necessary to fulfil our commitment to commencing these reforms. Shortfalls and regional variation in bedspaces across low, medium, and high-secure mental health services are acknowledged and the NHS Secure Care Programme aims to refine pathways and reduce out-of-area placements. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and NHS England are also working to increase capacity in secure hospital beds and specialist prison units for high-risk individuals. However, building or commissioning additional secure beds requires significant capital investment and infrastructure planning and must follow robust data and commissioning cycles. Therefore, NHS England and HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) have begun mapping transfer pathways and barrier points within prisons, prison mental health teams, and secure units. In the interim it remains the case that the integrated Mental Health Service at HMP Nottingham will continue to identify and address the mental health needs of prisoners as would be the case in the community. Where these needs cannot be met in prison custody, referrals will be made to secure mental health hospitals.

I can also understand the request for earlier screening to ensure timely transfer to secure hospital. The Mental Health Act introduces the statutory 28-day transfer target for moving severely unwell prisoners to hospital care, reducing delays that currently exacerbate risk. To focus on meeting the requirements of the legislation, NHS England have a national Mental Health & Justice Strategic Advisory Group which will report directly to Parliament. NHS-Led Provider Collaboratives for the Midlands also have newly developed action plans to accelerate prison transfers, which includes remodelling of bed capacity and care pathways as well as procurement of additional beds. Progress is being reported to the national

group, and the Midlands Health and Justice Commissioning Team continues to engage with the commissioners and providers of secure mental health services bi-weekly to support the timely assessment and transfer of prisoners. In addition, the Board can be assured there is a commitment to early identification which was set out in NHS England's Health & Justice Framework (2022–2025). This prioritises initial health assessments within 24 hours of arrival in custody, and integration of health professionals into reception teams for rapid triage. Earlier screening is already embedded in policy, and the legislative changes aim to make specialist placement faster and more consistent. Progress will be reviewed as part of the implementation of the new legislation and will be reinforced by digital health records and risk stratification tools to flag urgent cases for specialist accommodation. Prison's will also continue to facilitate all necessary reviews and assessments to help expedite transfers to secure hospital.

Regarding the challenges that high levels of recall can have on prisons. Both the Sentencing Act 2026, which received Royal Assent on 22 January 2026, and the Independent Review of Criminal Courts will have an impact on the prison population and will provide Courts with options to end the revolving door of less serious offenders. While recall remains an essential safeguard to protect the public when risk increases, the Sentencing Act implements the Independent Sentencing Review's recommendations for recall, by replacing the current short-term recalls for most Standard Determinate Sentence offenders with a fixed-term recall of 56 days, except for those who are excluded. This aims support rehabilitation and reduce the need for future recalls, providing more time to undertake a thorough review of an offender's release plans and licence conditions, to ensure their needs and risk are managed. However, public protection will remain our priority and the decision to recall an offender on licensed supervision will continue to be taken where their risk escalates and the alternative controls available are no longer sufficient to safely manage the offender in the community.

The Board is also right to highlight concerns with the number of prisoners who are convicted but yet to be sentenced by the Courts. We know this is a cross-system challenge and there is no quick fix to the criminal courts crisis which requires collective action. The Government has already acted through increasing magistrates' court sentencing powers. This is reducing the number of cases where convicted defendants need to be sent to the Crown Court for sentence to enable swifter justice. The Sentencing Act includes amendments to the Bail Act so that it applies where the court considers that there is no real prospect that the defendant will be sentenced to an immediate custodial sentence, as well as to defendants who have been convicted but are awaiting sentence. The Sentencing Act also provides the presumption against short sentences, which will limit the use of custodial remand where a sentence of immediate imprisonment is unlikely. In December 2025 the Deputy Prime Minister also announced a package of criminal court reforms designed to progress cases more quickly through the criminal courts and help ensure that those on remand are tried and sentenced more quickly.

In terms of resettlement services, the Sentencing Act will reduce the amount of time most prisoners on standard determinate sentences will spend in custody to one third, with the remaining time of their sentence spent in the community under probation supervision. As a result, the probation operating model including the offender management in custody (OMiC) model are under review with a new OMiC model planned to begin implementation in summer 2026. A national review of Pre-Release Teams has also been launched to assess and improve service delivery for individuals preparing to leave custody. The next steps will focus on the future design, including resource modelling, digital integration, and alignment with broader reforms such as the Independent Sentencing Review, progression model, changes to fixed term recall and Our Future Probation Service Programme. In addition, the future Commissioned Rehabilitative Services contracts for men are currently being re-commissioned and will go live in 2027. A key improvement in this service will enhance the support for those in custody to address housing, financial and wider pre-release needs with a focus on enabling a smoother transition in the community to reduce the risk of reoffending.

Despite the operational challenges, it was reassuring to receive your comments about the decline in incidents of self-harm and the positive interactions staff have with prisoners when times have been difficult, such as case management and Good Order and Discipline reviews or adjudications. I was pleased to learn about the promotion of inclusivity through events and the weekly cultural food menu, as well as the initiatives for neurodivergent prisoners and a full-time reading specialist. Given the concerns about mental health, it was also encouraging to read about the health and wellbeing interventions, prisoners recognition of the wellbeing suite sessions and the good examples of healthcare staff working with prisoners with severe mental health problems.

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. The prison remains committed to working collaboratively with all stakeholders to improve safety, enhance rehabilitation, and treatment of prisoners and the Board's recommendations will be used to inform local strategic priorities for the year ahead. HMPPS comments in response to other issues raised in your report are set out in the attached annex.

The Deputy Prime Minister and I recognise the important role which members of Independent Monitoring Boards provide throughout the estate and we are very grateful for your ongoing dedication on behalf of HMP Nottingham.

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

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Mental Health Transfers

Further to the Minister's response, HMPPS remains committed to working in partnership with health and social care partners so that people in prison can access the equivalent standard and range of health and social care services as they would receive in the community. It remains the case that all health treatment in custody is the responsibility of NHS England and NHS Wales. However, joint oversight by NHS England, the Department for Health and Social Care, MoJ, and HMPPS will continue focusing on key improvement workstreams. These include improving data and monitoring through a new clinical template to track referral-to-transfer timeline to enable better identification of delays. A National Referrals Review which was launched in October 2023 to standardise the referrals process including forms and documentation is helping to eliminate obstructions. Enhancing Clinical Leadership to provide oversight across prison and hospital pathways and detailed mapping of transfer bottlenecks to support targeted interventions. All these measures aim to ensure severely mentally unwell prisoners are rapidly identified and transferred to secure hospital settings to reduce harmful delays.

Prisoner Churn

As the Minister response confirms the Independent Review of Criminal Courts and the Sentencing Act will have an impact on the prison population. The HMPPS Estate Configuration Review will be considering the implications of these which will inform future requirements for the entire prison estate at a strategic level, including offender flows and the functions of prisons. Given HMP Nottingham's current function as a reception prison serving the courts, in the interim prisoners will continue to be transferred to training establishments as appropriate to meet their sentencing plan needs, given the activities, education, programmes and resettlement opportunities these can provide for sentenced prisoners. However, to help support prisoner education and training needs when being transferred, in October 2025 the new Prisoner Education Service (PES) was launched. This has provided significant investment in digital infrastructure to expand access to secure online education content, reducing the need for repeat assessments when transferred. It also provides newly introduced national screening tools to identify additional learning needs and will improve recording of previous achievements and tracking of learners' progress. Common Awarding Organisation contracts have also been implemented for the most frequently used and employer recognised qualifications including English, maths, engineering, textiles and hospitality and catering to ensure that prisoners can continue learning as they transfer between prisons across the estate. In addition, in April 2025 a new Careers, Information and Guidance contract was launched to enable consistency between prisons and for prisoners transferring across the estate.

Healthcare Provision

The National Partnership Agreement on Health and Social Care in England, set out the governance arrangements to improve health and care outcomes for people in prison and on probation when it was published in 2023. The Health and Justice Framework (2022–2025) also outlines strategic commitments including patient-centred care, mental health provision in custody, and improved technology integration. These established governance arrangements provide opportunities for Governors and Prison Group Directors to work with NHS Health and Justice Commissioners and providers on local healthcare delivery. Whilst the responsibility for the delivery of Healthcare Services at HMP Nottingham recently transferred to a new provider, Northants Foundation Healthcare Trust, the Board can be assured that detailed delivery

plans, timelines, and accountability mechanisms are in place to ensure joint working and shared progress tracking. Although it is early in this partnership, relations are good and the signs of a focus on service delivery are encouraging.