



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Chair
Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Swansea
200 Oystermouth Road
Swansea
SA1 3SR

MoJ ref: SUB132457

6 March 2026

Dear Chair,

**HMP SWANSEA: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 NOVEMBER 2023 – 30 APRIL 2025**

Thank you for your Board's careful and balanced annual report. Your monitoring is diligent and compassionate, and I am grateful to every member of the Board for the time and care you devote to the establishment, particularly given the pressures of a busy local reception prison.

I was very sorry to read that there were four deaths in custody during the reporting period, including men who died shortly after release in the community. I extend my sincere condolences to their families and friends, and I recognise the efforts made to support others affected. Recommendations from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman are acted upon with seriousness, including the changes you note to resettlement processes and earlier housing referrals for those at risk of homelessness.

I share the Board's repeated concern about individuals whose mental health needs cannot be adequately met in custody. Prison should never be the default environment for those in acute mental health crisis. While I note that HMP Swansea now benefits from a dedicated mental health service, rather than a shared regional arrangement, the Board is right to highlight that men with severe mental illness can still wait too long for transfer and may be managed in the Care and Separation Unit (CSU) during that period. Since your last report, progress has been made. The Mental Health Act 2025 introduces a statutory 28-day time limit for transfers from prison to hospital. This is designed to ensure that clinical need, not operational pressure, dictates the pace of transfer. Health and justice partners are now focusing on implementation, supported by a statutory notice process designed to provide oversight, ensuring all agencies act promptly at each stage and remove unnecessary delays. A new National Mental Health and Justice Strategic Advisory Group has been established to monitor transfers and to hold responsible partners to account for meeting the statutory deadline. Locally, the Governor reports that HMP Swansea has already seen reduced timescales for assessment and transfer during the reporting period, alongside strengthened decision-making processes and multidisciplinary oversight. Segregation of those with mental health issues is only used as a last resort, but where this is necessary, prisoners are managed through a multidisciplinary Segregation Review Board (SRB), which includes mental health professionals to ensure that any additional safeguarding measures are identified and implemented. Staff working in the CSU are specifically selected and risk assessed, with psychological input to ensure they can support individuals safely. I recognise the need for timely clinical intervention, and I am committed to ensuring that implementation of the Mental Health Act drives the further progress that is required here.

I acknowledge the pressures created by a site of this age and it is encouraging to see the practical steps taken to maintain a decent and stable environment. Refurbished cells, improved flooring and consistently high standards of cleanliness demonstrate the commitment of staff to strengthening day-to-day conditions. Local allocation practices also ensure that single cell spaces are used for those whose needs or vulnerabilities require them, reflecting careful population management. These operational improvements sit alongside the national framework that governs certified capacity. Capacity is determined nationally to protect safety, stability, staffing and maintenance across the estate, and places are adjusted only when necessary for those reasons. There are no plans to reduce the certified capacity of HMP Swansea. Where two men share a cell originally designed for one, this occurs only following a formal cell certification process that assesses safety and suitability. HMP Swansea's efforts to strengthen decency therefore operate within the wider national safeguards that ensure capacity decisions remain safe and sustainable.

The Government has progressed the Independent Sentencing Review's recommendations through the Sentencing Act 2026. Among other measures, the Act will introduce a presumption to suspend short custodial sentences of 12 months or less (subject to exemptions), extend Suspended Sentence Orders up to 3 years so that they can be used more flexibly, enable courts to use targeted community requirements that better fit risk and need and allow deferral of sentence for longer where that would support a better-informed outcome. The overall objective is to reduce reliance on short custodial sentences where community options provide better outcomes and public protection, while maintaining the court's ability to impose custody where appropriate. Whilst implementation of the Act may help reduce HMP Swansea's churn rate, due to the extent of capacity pressures and court backlogs, it is expected to continue operating at full capacity for the foreseeable future.

Your report also records areas of strength that deserve recognition. You judge HMP Swansea to be a safe prison with constructive relationships and comparatively low levels of violence for the type of establishment it is. I was encouraged by the continued development of education and skills, including work to align the curriculum to local labour market needs, the growing contribution of the neurodiversity offer and the renewed emphasis on purposeful activity. I was particularly pleased to see the sustained impact of the library, including the Library of Sanctuary award and strong participation data, which speak to a culture that supports learning, wellbeing and good order.

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

The Deputy Prime Minister and I recognise the vital contribution of Independent Monitoring Boards in holding prisons to account and would like to thank you for your ongoing dedication on behalf of HMP Swansea.

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

Fire system upgrade and funding

The G Wing smoke control system project is in procurement with a potential contractor identified. Once the remaining approvals are completed and the contractor is appointed, a detailed design will be submitted for review and acceptance, after which a start date will be confirmed. In parallel, the prison's feasibility work for the G Wing fire system has concluded and funding has been allocated for financial year 2025–2026; local plans are in place to manage temporary decanting so that HMP Swansea can remain within its required capacity during the works. The Prison Group Director records a current planned start date of December 2026 subject to the usual design and mobilisation steps.

Prisoner digital self-service to replace paper applications

The in-cell digital programme (Launchpad) is modernising the estate and has reached a number of public sector prisons, but unfortunately there are presently no confirmed plans to deploy it at HMP Swansea. The site is pre-wired from the in-cell telephony roll-out so it can move at pace if a future funding decision includes HMP Swansea. HMPPS keeps deployment priorities under review in light of operational pressures, population needs and value for money.

Property delays and losses on transfer

HMPPS has revised the national Prisoners' Property Policy Framework to strengthen processes in areas that have driven complaints, including sending-on of excess items, handling of laundry and completion of cell clearance certificates. Governors have been reminded of key requirements, including volumetric control, so that property within permitted limits and exempt items such as legal papers, travel with the person when they transfer. Locally, HMP Swansea reports earlier difficulties linked to escort bag limits; those were mitigated by arranging retrievals and adherence to volumetric control now means outstanding collections are rarely needed. National work to monitor and improve consistency continues.

The Prison Group Director expresses that HMP Swansea had previously experienced difficulties caused by escort provider restrictions, which limited the number of bags a prisoner could transfer with. This occasionally resulted in property remaining at the sending establishment. To resolve this, HMP Swansea arranged for prison transport to retrieve any outstanding items and this action has significantly reduced the issue. Such occurrences are now infrequent, with improved adherence to volumetric control supporting further progress.

Access to prescribed and faith-related items

HMP Swansea has not experienced local difficulties in enabling prisoners to purchase prescribed items or items linked to faith practice. Existing arrangements have been effective and meet the needs of those who require them. While national supplier contracts and procurement frameworks are managed centrally and fall outside HMP Swansea's direct control. The prison continues to apply all required procedures and will respond as needed to any changes that aim to strengthen equitable access across the estate.