



Ministry  
of Justice

Lord Timpson  
Minister of State for Justice

Co-Chairs, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP New Hall  
New Hall Way  
Dial Wood  
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6 March 2026

Dear Chairs,

### **HMP/YOI NEW HALL INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 MARCH 2024 – 28 FEBRUARY 2025**

Thank you for your Board's detailed and balanced annual report. It is clear that your monitoring has been diligent, thoughtful and compassionate and I am grateful to every member of the Board for your continued commitment during a challenging year for New Hall.

I was deeply saddened to read of the two deaths during the reporting year, including one death in the community within 28 days of release. These losses are felt deeply and I extend my sincere condolences to the families and friends affected. I note the findings of the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman, including the positive assessment of care provided in the palliative case and I assure you that all recommendations arising from these investigations are taken forward with full seriousness.

The Board has expressed concern about the pressure placed on the Offender Management Unit following recent sentencing changes. The Sentencing Act 2026 is now law and requires His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) to make operational changes based on the recommendations of the Independent Sentencing Review. These include standardised release points for determinate sentences and reforms to recall. Although the Act is now in force, not all measures take immediate effect; they will be implemented in phases to support operational readiness. HMPPS is undertaking a dedicated programme of work to prepare for these changes, including modelling the impact on Offender Management Units and strengthening processes, training and systems to support the revised framework.

The significant reforms contained in the Sentencing Act, which received Royal Assent on 22 January 2026 will provide the Courts with options to end the cycle of less serious offenders going in and out of prison. This includes the biggest ever expansion in tagging and the use of restriction zones to better protect victims. Alongside this, the probation budget will be increased by up to £700 million over the next three years to bolster community justice, including the probation service's resource and ability to tag offenders. The government is also investing in new technology to reduce admin so staff can focus on work that reduces reoffending.

The Board has again reiterated concern about acutely unwell women who cannot access hospital treatment swiftly once they have been admitted to custody. This remains a pressing issue across the women's estate. The Mental Health Act 2025, which received Royal Assent on 18 December 2025,

introduces substantial reforms designed to improve access to appropriate clinical settings. The Act will prevent courts from using prison as a temporary place of safety while individuals await assessment or treatment, will end the use of remand for “own protection” where mental health is the sole concern and will introduce a statutory requirement that transfers from prison to hospital must occur within a maximum of 28 days. These changes represent a significant shift intended to reduce delays and ensure that those who require specialist treatment can access it more swiftly. Work with health partners is now underway to implement these reforms, including identifying the operational changes necessary to deliver the statutory time limit. This includes work to address barriers related to secure bed capacity, workforce availability and estates constraints. In the interim, all people in prison continue to receive NHS commissioned mental health services in line with the national service specification.

A comprehensive review of the X-Ray Body Scanner Policy Framework is currently in progress to support the planned extension of their use across the women’s estate. This work includes careful consideration of a range of factors — including privacy implications — which need to be fully addressed prior to implementation.

Your report identifies several areas of strength across the establishment. The continuing development of the Drug Recovery Wing is helping women to stabilise without drugs and work to establish a women’s welfare hub is strengthening provision for health and wellbeing. I was pleased to read your observations on the strong and respectful relationships between staff and the women, supported by clear communication and an effective key worker model. Reductions in use of force and prisoner-on-staff assaults, together with a well established Listener service, reflect the efforts of staff to maintain a safer and more supportive environment. The breadth of the education and skills offer, alongside robust resettlement provision, is helping women to progress and reintegrate. These developments reflect the hard work of staff, partner organisations and the resilience of the women in custody.

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’s comments in response to the other issue raised in your report are set out in the attached annex.

The Deputy Prime Minister and I very much appreciate the valuable role played by all members of the Independent Monitoring Boards operating throughout the prison estate and we are grateful for your ongoing dedication on behalf of HMP/YOI New Hall.

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 NEW HALL INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 MARCH 2024 – 28 FEBRUARY 2025

### HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

#### **Subject header**

The Mental Health Act 2025 introduces vital reforms to support people with severe mental illness in custody. The Act ends the use of prison as a place of safety, removes the ability to remand a person to prison for their own protection where the sole concern relates to mental health and establishes a statutory 28 day time limit for transfers from prison to hospital. These changes are intended to reduce unnecessary delays and enable people to access appropriate treatment more swiftly.

NHS England and HMPPS are working together to implement these reforms. In the region, escalation meetings with healthcare providers and commissioners take place regularly to review complex cases and quarterly contract review processes analyse transfer data to identify trends. Joint work, including a pathway pilot at HMP Leeds is underway to identify and address operational obstacles in the transfer process and the learning will be shared across the estate, including HMP/YOI New Hall. Additional investment has been made to support a dedicated mental health practitioner for the twelve-cell vulnerable-women unit and the procurement of healthcare services includes additional funding to meet the needs of the population.

#### **Monitoring and publication of reoffending data**

Following improvements to data quality, the Ministry of Justice has recommenced publication of reoffending rates by releasing prisons. The first publication including HMP/YOI New Hall was issued on 29 January 2026 and covers adults released between April 2023 and March 2024. This data will continue to be published annually. Due to historic data quality limitations, it is not possible to produce releasing prison rates for cohorts released between October 2015 and September 2022.