



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Co-Chairs, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Brixton
Jebb Avenue
London
SW2 5XF

MoJ ref: SUB133556

21 April 2026

Dear Co-Chairs,

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

Thank you for your Board's detailed and thoughtful annual report. It is evident that your monitoring has been both diligent and compassionate, despite the substantial operational upheaval that HMP Brixton has faced. I am grateful to each member of the Board for their continued commitment, particularly during a year shaped by transition, structural challenges and sustained population pressures.

I was deeply saddened to read of the four deaths in custody recorded during the reporting year. Each death represents a profound loss and I extend my sincere condolences to their friends and families. I am encouraged that chaplaincy, Listeners and staff provided supportive care during these difficult events, and I want to assure you that any recommendations from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman will be taken forward with full seriousness.

I appreciate the Board's concern that the uncertainty surrounding the timeline for HMP Brixton's transition to a category B reception establishment impeded sustained delivery of programmes in mental health, substance misuse, education and vocational training but despite these pressures, no core rehabilitative pathways were withdrawn, although the compressed timeframes for many prisoners necessarily limited their ability to complete interventions. The Government remains committed to improving early assessment, stabilisation and pre-release coordination, particularly for short-stay and high-churn populations. As HMP Brixton completes its transition and refurbishment, these improvements will support more consistent delivery from the point of arrival. I am grateful to the Board for its persistence on this matter and will continue to monitor progress closely.

You raise a serious concern regarding the 11 men who were unlawfully detained during the year. Any such error is unacceptable and I share your view that its impact on the individuals involved can be considerable. HMPPS is already implementing strengthened release-accuracy checks, more robust digital record keeping and enhanced oversight, as set out in the Deputy Prime Minister's five point action plan. An independent inquiry will report further recommendations to reduce inaccuracies system-wide. On the Board's proposal for automatic compensation, claims will continue to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. However, I welcome the notion that communication with affected prisoners could be improved and this will be explored further once Dame Lynne Owens' review concludes.

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. 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.

Although the year has clearly been marked by considerable operational pressure, your report also highlights several areas of positive progress that deserve recognition. I was particularly encouraged to read of the continued reduction in self-harm incidents, down 21% on the previous year, which reflects the efforts of staff to deliver sensitive and consistent Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) support. I also welcomed your positive comments about the high quality of food, strong kitchen oversight and the significant improvement in cleanliness and pest control across residential areas. Furthermore, the strides made in purposeful activity, with 42% of the population in full-time activity by year end, demonstrate commitment to meaningful engagement despite exceptional churn. These achievements are a credit to staff, partner organisations and the men themselves.

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 Brixton.

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 BRIXTON: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 SEPTEMBER 2024 – 31 AUGUST 2025

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Transfer of Men with Only 28 Days Left to Serve

The increase in men transferred with 28 days or fewer left to serve arose from estate wide population pressures, including unprecedented remand levels that required temporary flexibility in allocation and transfer arrangements. Under normal national criteria, prisoners with fewer than 29 days remaining would complete their sentence in a reception establishment; however, operational necessity required a short-term adjustment to these thresholds. All core resettlement provision continued during this period. Induction screening, prioritised release planning and tailored interventions for individuals with specific risks or needs were used to mitigate disruption caused by the accelerated turnover.

HMPPS is using learning from this period to ensure consistent application of national transfer rules as population pressures stabilise and as HMP Brixton completes its transition to a category B reception and resettlement prison.

Lost Property and Delayed Compensation

Management of prisoner's property remains a key operational priority. The revised Prisoner's Property Framework introduced in November 2025 provides strengthened national processes for handling excess property, sealed bags, laundry and cell clearance documentation. Governors and senior leaders have been reminded on the operational requirements set out in the revised framework, including the need to maintain accurate records and to ensure that property complies with volumetric control limits. Property that falls within those limits, along with items exempt from them, such as legal papers will transfer with the prisoner when they move between establishments. Clear compliance with these requirements reduces the risk of items going missing and supports timely resolution where issues arise.

The introduction of the digital Prisoner Escort Record provides auditable tracking of sealed property items during escort, improving the ability to resolve issues arising in transit. Only a small proportion of HMP Brixton's property complaints over the past year related to escort arrangements. At establishment level, Governors are responsible for the timely investigation of property complaints and for arranging compensation in accordance with the HMPPS Finance Manual. HMPPS acknowledges that processing times can extend to around two months and is taking steps to strengthen accuracy and efficiency within reception operations. HMPPS will continue to monitor compliance with the revised framework and to support establishments in reducing delays and improving consistency in property management.

Cost of In-Cell Calls and Support for Maintaining Family Contact

A range of communication methods are available across HMP Brixton to support contact between prisoners and their families. These include free video calls, two free letters each week and telephone calls that Governors may authorise at public expense in circumstances involving welfare needs, compassionate grounds, safeguarding concerns, family emergencies or mental health concerns. These arrangements also apply in situations where an individual does not have sufficient funds to make a call. Prisoners who are foreign nationals or who have close family members living overseas are entitled to a free five-minute telephone call within every four-week period when they have not received any social visits. Establishments are also expected to take account of significant time-zone differences by enabling telephone access outside standard hours when required to facilitate contact.

The national policy on prisoner pay allows Governor's discretion to provide additional financial support to individuals who are experiencing hardship. A one-off allocation of funding in 2024 was provided to all prisons to help support those who are most financially vulnerable and establishments determined locally how best to distribute this resource in line with operational priorities. At HMP Brixton, local arrangements within the Incentives policy enable additional flexibility for those with specific communication needs, including individuals who require more frequent contact due to emotional vulnerability or family circumstances overseas. Staff monitor vulnerability through structured processes such as the ACCT, the Challenge, Support and Intervention Plan process and weekly Safety Intervention Meetings. These mechanisms ensure that individuals who require additional support with communication are identified promptly and can access appropriate arrangements.

HMPPS continues to review the operation of communication systems across the estate to ensure that they remain accessible, safe and proportionate while reflecting the financial pressures that some individuals may face.