



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Channings Wood
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Newton Abbott
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9 April 2026

Dear Chair,

HMP CHANNINGS WOOD INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 SEPTEMBER 2024 – 31 AUGUST 2025

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Channings Wood. I very much appreciate you and your colleagues' efforts in producing such valuable reflections on the current state of the prison, while continuing to operate with several vacancies. I was sorry to see that your membership reduced further during this period. I was also grateful for the opportunity to visit the prison on 11 June 2025 to learn more from the Governor and staff about the work being carried out locally.

I was saddened to read that seven prisoners died during the reporting year, with six of these occurring in hospital. Whilst early indications are that six deaths were from natural causes, it doesn't lessen the impact on those that knew them and I offer my heartfelt condolences to all their friends and family. Prison and Probation Ombudsman investigations are a vital tool to ensure lessons are learned following a death and I can provide assurance that any recommendations made will be taken very seriously.

However, I do understand the Board's further concerns about these deaths being linked to the aging prisoner population. The growing number of older prisoners can cause challenges with some complex health and social care needs. This is why the new prison places we are building are accessible by design and will significantly increase the number of cells adapted to the needs of those with mobility issues and physical disabilities. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) remains committed to improving health and care outcomes for people in prison through the National Partnership Agreement with NHS England and Local Authorities, who are responsible for delivering healthcare and social care respectively and I welcome the Board recognising prisoners are broadly satisfied with the healthcare they receive at HMP Channings Wood. The Board may be aware that the Independent Sentencing Review recommended that a national strategy for older prisoners be produced. We are grateful for this and as part of this strategy we will be considering how best to use the estate to better support older prisoners, which we aim to publish later this year.

Locally at HMP Channings Wood the lower floors of each of the new T60 accommodation blocks intend to be dedicated as social care units to overcome many of the current accommodation challenges. Prisoners assessed as needing social care do have equipment funded through the Local Authority, but meeting their threshold for care can be challenging, which has resulted in the prison having to find alternative ways to

meet some needs. The prison now has a dedicated Social Care Officer who is responsible for managing this cohort and twelve trained prisoner buddies that can provide practical support day-to-day with further prisoners being trained. Progress has been made with non-prescribed mobility aids, such as wheelchairs to transport patients to healthcare appointments and the prison will be maintaining a pool of wheelchairs to assist with transporting prisoners around the expanding prison site. It is recognised there is still more to do and there are firm plans in place to ensure a steady improvement in this area.

I can appreciate the Board's ongoing frustrations about the progress of Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) prisoners, but we remain determined to support their rehabilitation and progress towards a future release through a refreshed IPP Action Plan. This Action Plan was published in the IPP Annual Report on 17 July 2025 and sets measurable targets to ensure transparency and accountability of how progress will be made. An important emphasis has been placed on frontline delivery to ensure those serving IPP sentences have an effective sentence plan and are in a prison most appropriate to help them to reduce their risk so that they can progress towards a safe release. The Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 introduced reforms during your reporting period, such as reducing the point where licence termination is considered, automatic licence termination, and enabling the Secretary of State to re-release an IPP prisoner recalled to custody. These changes have so far resulted in the number of people serving an IPP sentence in the community falling by two-thirds. More recently, the significant reforms contained in the Sentencing Act, which received Royal Assent on 22 January 2026, not only will provide the Courts with options to end the cycle of less serious offenders in and out of prison, but the Act also includes measures on IPP licence termination. An implementation date will be confirmed in due course, but these reforms are part of our commitment to provide every opportunity for those serving the IPP sentence to demonstrate reduced risk to the point that their licence and therefore their sentence can be terminated.

It is recognised that the demand for Approved Premises nationally outstrips supply and we plan to expand the number of places in due course subject to funding. In the meantime, a digital approach developed for referrals is helping to maximise occupancy and an IPP pathway is also being piloted at 14 Approved Premises sites. This pilot is exploring the benefits of increased structured and specialist support for 16 weeks before release that has shown a decrease in recalls. Locally, IPP progression panels are being held to support prisoners progress to a future release and there is a IPP steering group to share good practice and knowledge amongst Prison Offender Managers. While delays in parole hearings have not been a direct result of the prison, these are captured in a data return which feeds into the national IPP action plan. Support is also provided to prisoners through bi-monthly IPP forums, which the Criminal Cases Review Commission has attended to provide advice, as well a successful IPP awareness open day being held with The United Group for Reform of IPP in attendance.

While challenges remain, it was reassuring to receive your comments that more prisoners are feeling safe with incidents of self-harm reducing. I was encouraged by the focus and increase in education attendance and the positive relationships within education and training between staff, mentors and learners to allow them to succeed. I was also encouraged by the employer days to challenge perceptions and the innovative practices, such as the Hard Hat Academy and, for those serving a short sentence, the Hillbrush workshop.

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 the other issues raised in your report are set out in the attached annex.

The Deputy Prime Minister and I recognise the important oversight which members of Independent Monitoring Boards provide and we extend our thanks for your continued dedication on behalf of HMP Channings Wood.

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 CHANNINGS WOOD INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 SEPTEMBER 2024 – 31 AUGUST 2025

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Prisoners' Property

HMPPS fully recognises the importance of prisoners' property and is committed to ensuring it is managed with care and respect. As an update to the previous response on this issue, further to the thematic reviews undertaken by the IMB and the Independent Prisoner Complaint Investigations, consultation with prison staff took place and a revised version of the *Prisoners' Property Policy* Framework was published on 17 November 2025. This provides additional guidance on sending excess property, the handling of prisoners' laundry and the correct completion of the cell clearance certificate, as these were identified as common areas of difficulty. In addition, HMPPS has reminded Governors and other senior leaders of key points about handling property, such as the importance of prisoners complying with volumetric limits, since property within those limits will be moved with the prisoner when they are transferred by the Prisoner Escort and Custody Service (PECS) supplier. The introduction of the digitally recorded Person Escort Record assists with any investigations for property that is lost in transit with the PECS supplier and in the past 12 months there have been no complaints received from HMP Channings Wood relating to property lost or delayed in transit. Locally, the prison has a robust process to identify and record any missing property on Reception and contact is made with the sending prison to request the missing property is sent on and this is followed up where necessary. Where property is missing at the fault of HMP Channings Wood, this is also investigated to promote learning opportunities and compensation is awarded for the missing item where the prison is at fault. HMPPS remains committed to improving the management of prisoners' property and will consider possible areas for improvement on an ongoing basis.

Staffing

Following the closure of HMP Dartmoor some staff were redeployed to HMP Channings Wood, which placed the prison in a position where it was over and above its target staffing figure. The prison has a target staffing figure of 209 with 227 staff in post and further potential candidates in the recruitment pipeline to ensure the staffing position remains positive. Due to this surplus of staff, HMP Channings Wood has been required to support other prisons facing staffing challenges through national detached duty, but HMPPS continues to review the overall staffing situation. It is also recognised that following the closure of HMP Dartmoor, sickness levels increased and local analysis was undertaken to understand these trends and better support staff, alongside using the robust processes for sickness management which is overseen by the Governor.

Regarding the mandatory drug testing levels not being achieved for two months during the reporting period, this was a result of an administrative error. This was not linked to the prisons staffing levels, but assurance processes have been reviewed to prevent recurrence.