



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Chair,
Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Dovegate
Uttoxeter
Staffordshire
ST14 8XR

MoJ ref: SUB133471

17 April 2026

Dear Chair,

**HMP DOVEGATE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 OCTOBER 2024 – 30 SEPTEMBER 2025**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Dovegate. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your diligence in capturing such helpful insights, especially as you have continued to undertake your monitoring with a high number of vacancies.

It is with great sadness that I note five prisoners died during the reporting year in custody. Every loss of life is significant and my thoughts go out to all their friends and family. I note that two deaths were likely self-inflicted and one potentially as a result of an accidental overdose - please be assured that any recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman following investigation of these incidents will be treated with the utmost importance.

I have read your report with care and acknowledge your concerns about offender management resourcing in light of changes in sentencing. The Independent Sentencing Review made recommendations to alter the structure of the community and custody components of a prisoner's sentence, with the aim of ensuring that the prison system is sustainable and effective. These changes were included in the Sentencing Act, which received Royal Assent on 22 January 2026. The reforms introduced in the Act include standardising the custodial element of determinate sentences and providing more effective supervision in the community. The Act also included reforms to fixed term recall to ensure that this is used effectively. Not all measures will take effect immediately, and HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is undertaking a dedicated programme of work to support implementation, including ensuring that OMU teams have the right support, tools and guidance. As part of the reforms, HMPPS is also developing a new model for the delivery of offender management in custody. This focuses on reducing workloads for staff, clarifying roles and responsibilities, simplifying handover processes and improving communication between custody and community. The new case management in custody model is currently being developed, with implementation planned to begin in summer 2026.

You can be assured that there is a comprehensive approach to improve recruitment and retention across the Probation Service to provide sufficient staffing. Since unification of the Probation Service in June 2021, there has been an overall increase in probation staffing of 21% at the end of your reporting period. The Probation Service also exceeded the 2024/25 target of 1,000 trainee Probation Officers and for the 2025/26 financial year, has committed publicly to onboarding at least another 1,300 Trainee Probation Officers. In addition, Our Future Probation Service Programme will be rebalancing demand and capacity

by designing and implementing measures that will reduce workloads and make processes more efficient through harnessing technology.

I understand your concern regarding the impact mass media can have on the public view of prisoners and the effectiveness of prisons. Arguably, this can hinder reintegration and willingness to engage with people leaving custody, which is why improving public understanding of rehabilitation outcomes is a priority. The intention is to rebuild confidence in the criminal justice system by developing a sustainable and effective prison and probation service that protects the public, provides effective punishment, and reduces reoffending. Through our communications strategy we demonstrate the positive effect rehabilitative initiatives and programmes can have on addressing behaviours linked to reoffending, such as supporting prison leavers into employment, improving access to accommodation, and in-prison education. This includes showcasing success stories from staff and people in prison or on probation, outcome data, and case studies that demonstrate how prisoners make meaningful progress towards successful reintegration back into the community. Recent examples have highlighted how a skills-building project at HMP The Mount, a gardening initiative at HMP The Verne and recovery programmes at HMP Holme House have transformed individuals' lives. By sharing these stories we humanise their work, strengthen engagement and help inspire positive behaviour change. Locally at HMP Dovegate, work has continued with the Employment Advisory Board, employers and community partners to promote positive stories and expand employment pathways. The growing number of employers engaging with HMP Dovegate is evidence of the progress being made that individuals who work hard to change their lives will be supported in the community.

It was encouraging to receive your comments about the digitalisation of recording property arriving at HMP Dovegate which has helped to reduce the number of complaints and resolve issues quickly. I am pleased to note that there is a scheduled equality and diversity event each month. I also welcome that education attendance and performance continue to improve and that from February last year, HMP Dovegate became the highest performing privately run prison for education.

I note you have raised three local issues of concern in your report which the Director will continue to keep you aware of as work continues. 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 importance of Independent Monitoring Boards in helping to improve our prisons and we thank you for your continued dedication on behalf of HMP Dovegate.

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

Release Accommodation

Local Authorities remain responsible for ensuring the accommodation needs for prison leavers or people on probation at risk of homelessness are met. To support this, Prisons and Probation have a statutory duty to refer anyone at risk of homelessness to a Local Authority for assistance under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. However, HMPPS also offers a three-tier structure of temporary accommodation known as Community Accommodation Service (CAS). CAS1, known as Approved Premises is for higher-risk offenders, CAS2 for low to medium risk offenders on Home Detention Curfew or bail, and CAS3 which provides up to 12 weeks basic accommodation for prison leavers at risk of homelessness. Our regional probation Homelessness Prevention Teams and prison Strategic Housing Specialists across the country work closely with Local Authorities and other partners to identify the most appropriate accommodation pathways for individuals who would otherwise be homeless. In turn, this supports other areas of resettlement work such as ensuring the continuation of healthcare or securing employment in the correct area. HMP Dovegate is continuing to strengthen pre-release planning and expanding local partnerships to ensure support is in place at the point of release. The prison has also been provided with additional support and guidance by HMPPS to help improve accommodation outcomes, which includes a two-day focused intervention and access to resources to support staff, who will remain in close contact with the prison until June 2026.

Specialised Healthcare Provision

Whilst all health treatment in custody is the responsibility of the NHS within England, HMPPS remains committed to working 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. A national Mental Health & Justice Strategic Advisory Group, which reports direct to Parliament, is focused on meeting the requirements of the Mental Health Act that received Royal Assent in December 2025, such as the 28-day timescales for transfers from prison to a secure hospital. It is recognised that there is a demand for specialist placements and the availability of suitable beds can be a constraining factor. NHS led Provider Collaboratives in the Midlands 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. These actions are reviewed contractually with Provider Collaboratives and progress is being reported to the national group. In the meantime, the NHS England West Midlands Health and Justice Commissioning team continue to hold fortnightly calls with the commissioners and providers of secure mental health services to support the timely assessment and transfer of prisoners. HMP Dovegate also continues to work closely with the healthcare providers and the psychology team to expand the knowledge of staff locally to help them manage prisoners with complex needs whilst they remain at the prison.