



Chair  
Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Hewell  
Redditch  
Worcestershire  
B97 6Q

MoJ ref: SUB133418

22 April 2026

Dear Chair,

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

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Hewell. I remain deeply appreciative of all members of the Board for your continued commitment in capturing your helpful observations and preparing the annual report. I noted that the complement of members improved slightly from the beginning of the reporting period and hope the situation continues to improve.

It was very upsetting to learn there were five deaths in custody during the reporting year. Every death in our care is a tragedy and I extend my condolences to the friends and family of all the deceased. I would like to reassure the Board that any recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman are always taken very seriously.

The provision of mental health services for prisoners continues to improve. NHS England are currently reviewing the Integrated Custodial Mental Health Service specification for prisons to ensure consistency in the design and delivery of these services, making sure that prisoners who have a mental health need are appropriately supported. The revised specification will be published later this year. I would like to assure you that HM Prisons and Probation Service (HMPPS) remains committed to working in partnership 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.

Additionally, the Mental Health Act, which received Royal Assent in December 2025, is progressing towards graduated 'switch in', starting with the Code of Practice being revised in 2026 with the first major reforms switching on in 2028/29. The full timeline is in development with the Department for Health and Social Care. The intentions of the revised Mental Health Act are to provide the least restricted treatments, improved choice and autonomy, and individualised care. The revised service specification will ensure custodial mental health services align with these priorities.

To support and enforce the statutory 28-day transfer time limit (subject to any exceptional circumstances), NHS England has established a national Strategic Advisory Group who are overseeing the revision of the transfer guidance and will report to ministers on the progress of the 28-day transfer timeframe. Locally, both Mental Health Provider Collaboratives for the Midlands have newly developed strategic and operational action plans to accelerate prison transfers which includes remodelling of beds/bed capacity, care pathways and procurement of additional beds. These actions are reviewed contractually with providers, and progress reported to the national group routinely. In the meantime, the West Midlands Health and Justice Commissioning team continue to chair a fortnightly call with the commissioners and

providers of secure mental health services to discuss and support the timely assessment and transfer of prisoners, although currently the availability of suitable beds is a constraining factor.

Our in-cell technology programme for prisoners and detained children, Launchpad, has now been delivered in 19 public sector establishments. Further to last years' response, there are still currently no plans to expand Launchpad at HMP Hewell. I appreciate this will be frustrating, and any decisions on future delivery will be taken as and when funding becomes available, but is likely to consider several factors, such as the need to alleviate operational and capacity pressures, and the specific needs of different prisoner cohorts. To assist prison staff, a programme is currently underway to replace the legacy prisoner management and information system (NOMIS) with new digital services which are designed to enable staff to complete their tasks efficiently and to benefit from improved reporting. Staff at HMP Hewell will now be using modern software for most of their prisoner facing duties and will be accessing bespoke reports to manage responsibilities such as unlock and activities movements. Among the services being developed is a system which manages prisoner applications. This is currently being tested in a small number of establishments.

Stable support on release is critical to reducing recall and reoffending. That is why we are taking forward a range of measures focused on strengthening rehabilitation and smoothing the transition from custody to the community. Commissioned Rehabilitative Services (CRS) provide specialist interventions designed to support individuals in custody or under probation supervision, including support with all housing needs, and work closely with other stakeholders to reduce the risk of homelessness on release. These contracts are currently being re-commissioned and will go live in 2027. A key improvement in these services is the enhanced support available for those in custody to address housing, financial, and wider pre-release needs and for this support to focus on enabling a smooth transition to the community and to continue into the post-release licence period in order to reduce the risk of reoffending and recall. Additionally, 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.

Whilst many of the Board's concerns are repeated issues, it was encouraging to receive the numerous positive comments, most notably the work of the activity boards and addition to the range of industries on offer with almost all work now leading to a recognised certificate. I was reassured to note the improvement in self-harm incidents, the positive interactions between staff and prisoners, the good work of the employment hub, and the establishing of a prisoner-led prison council. I look forward to receiving your observations about the newly launched incentivised substance-free living zone in next year's report and wish the prison complete success.

Issues raised for the attention of the Governor will be addressed locally and will continue to keep you updated 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 sincerely value the important scrutiny and contribution made by Independent Monitoring Boards across the prison estate, and we are very grateful for your continued dedication on behalf of HMP Hewell.

Yours sincerely,



**Lord Timpson**

**Minister for Prisons, Probation, and Reducing Reoffending**

## HMP HEWELL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 OCTOBER 2024 – 30 SEPTEMBER 2025

### HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

#### **Staff Training and Enable Programme**

The Enable Programme is a psychologically and operationally informed, medium term transformation programme designed to change how HMPPS trains, develops, leads, and supports prison staff. Its long-term aim is to create safer, more supportive working environments where staff feel valued, confident in their skills, and equipped to make a meaningful difference.

Although the full transformation will take place over the medium term, the programme is already delivering support for frontline staff in the interim. A major strand of this work is the Foundation Training Reform, which is redesigning the initial training model into a 12-month, experiential learning approach. This long-term reform is intended to strengthen confidence, competence, and belonging for new officers.

While this future model is being designed and tested, the Enable Programme has launched national core capability training packages. These packages are targeted primarily at officers with 6–18 months' service, helping build capability across 16 essential areas, such as relational practice and effective communication. This ensures staff receive practical, immediate support even as the broader programme continues its medium-term development. In addition, the Custodial Manager Portfolio has recently launched as a way to provide a portfolio of modules for aspiring, temporary or substantive custodial managers to support their capability, confidence, and leadership skills with the long-term goal of custodial managers gaining confidence in their leadership and operational delivery whilst understanding how to work in a more relational way. HMP Hewell will receive the Enable training improvements as each part of the national programme is rolled out. Early updates are already in place for new apprentices, with wider workforce changes to follow as national products are completed.

#### **Recruitment Interviews**

Band 3 recruitment is managed nationally to ensure consistency, fairness, and compliance with Civil Service standards, as well as to coordinate mandatory assessments and national workforce planning. While prison Governors cannot interview locally, early establishment engagement can help reduce drop-out rates and HMP Hewell is actively supporting improvements by working with the Regional Director's office on a recruitment transformation pilot.

#### **Prisoner IT Access**

Please see the Minister's response above for more detail on ongoing work around IT access for prisoners, namely the Launchpad rollout. HMPPS understands and sympathises with the Board's concerns, however the agency must balance competing requirements against the need to alleviate operational and capacity pressures and the specific needs of different prisoner cohorts.

#### **Pilot Scheme Funding**

HMPPS ensures all funded pilot schemes have clear success measures and scale up plans in place. Whilst a clear metric for success for the Here-to-Help mentoring programme is not in place, HM Inspectorate of Prisons reported there was reduced low level antisocial behaviour, increased staff confidence, and greater cultural stability at HMP Hewell as a positive impact of the initiative.