



Chair
Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Aylesbury
Bierton Road
Aylesbury
HP20 1EH

MoJ Ref: SUB135298

25 June 2026

Dear Chair,

**HMP AYLESBURY: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 APRIL 2024 – 31 MARCH 2025**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Aylesbury. I appreciate you and your colleagues' considerable efforts in producing such informative reflections on the current state of the prison. This is despite the membership challenges you have experienced which reduced further by the end of the reporting period. I hope your position improves going forward and wish to thank you for continuing your effective oversight.

I welcome the Board's further enquiry about sentencing reform following the Independent Sentencing Review. The Government accepted the majority of the recommendations made by Independent Sentencing Review, which were published on 22 May 2025. The significant reforms contained in the Sentencing Act which received Royal Assent on 22 January 2026, are in line with many of those recommendations. The Act provides the Courts with options to end the cycle of less serious offenders going in and out of prison. It will also ensure that we never run out of prison places again, but remain able to deliver punishment that cuts crime, and place the criminal justice system on a more sustainable footing for the longer term. The first suite of measures commenced two months after Royal Assent on 22 March 2026 and include the presumption to suspend short sentences and related changes to remand. The remaining measures not yet commenced will be carefully staged across the year and into 2027. The 'progression model' and other major reforms are due to commence from Autumn 2026, alongside operational reforms that rebalance capacity across prisons and probation, such as supervision packages.

Regarding your resource request to support prisoners once they are released, I can inform you that the probation budget is being increased by up to £700 million over the next three years. This will bolster community justice, including the probation service's resource and ability to tag offenders, as well as investing in new technology to allow staff to focus on work that reduces reoffending. This is supported by Our Future Probation Service (OFPS) Programme which was created in 2025. The programme will ensure probation practitioners can provide closer oversight of offenders who pose the greatest risk and focusing more of their time on engaging, motivating and supporting people to turn their lives around by reducing workloads by 25% through targeted policy reform. While we are confident that the current Commissioned Rehabilitative Services contracts have the capacity and capability to support the growing release demands associated with recent legislative changes, we are procuring new contracts for men's services which will commence in July 2027 for up to 8 years. These contracts will expand a new standardised service across prisons to help obtain and sustain outcomes relating to Housing and Money Management. Once in the community, those on licence will also be able to access our Jobs & Skills and

Community Links offer to build on their custodial journey. Locally, in recognition of the sentencing changes a taskforce has been created in conjunction with Department of Work and Pensions and Creating Future Opportunities, to ensure that prisoners are supported through release. A revised Probation resettlement model for HMP Aylesbury will provide a Pre-Release provision delivered through a hybrid, face-to-face prison presence and remote support model, with face-to-face contact for all individuals due for release within 12 weeks to identify and facilitate resettlement needs. The Offender Management Unit is actively engaging with probation colleagues to ensure follow on support is provided by the Community Offender Managers and where applicable job centres. Work also continues to take place on implementing an Employee Advisory Board to build community links to support prisoners in custody, prior to release and on transition into the community. Furthermore, a Probation Service Officer has been recruited to specifically support the prison's Imprisonment for Public Protection wing.

Turning to your concerns about contract accountability, I recognise the importance of effective oversight of third-party contracts to ensure that services are delivered to the required standard and remain responsive to operational requirements. Formal contract management responsibilities continue to be delivered by specialist Contract Management and Commercial teams who have the expertise to manage complex contractual obligations effectively. This includes nationally commissioned third-party services supporting prisons, with only a limited number of contracts managed locally where this is necessary to meet a specific operational need. This approach ensures consistency of standards and clear professional accountability for contract management. Governors, and Directors of private prisons, play a key role in identifying delivery issues as they arise, with clear routes to advice and escalation through established arrangements, including engagement with key suppliers to support collaborative problem solving and continuous improvement. Training has been established to upskill Governors in effective contract management as part of the Enable programme to improve confidence and capability in local governance, assurance and accountability. This balanced approach reflects the position that Governors and Directors should be empowered through practical support, training and collaborative working, but not burdened with formal contract management responsibilities, which remain with appropriately skilled professionals.

Despite the work still to do, it was pleasing to receive your comments about the improvement HMP Aylesbury has made during the reporting year and the significant work to keep prisoners and staff safe, resulting in reductions in violence, self-harm and the need to use force. I was reassured to read about the improved stability in staffing, the positive relations this has allowed prisoners to have with staff and the support provided for those with complex needs. It was encouraging to note that there has been a more predictable regime and time out of cell to allow prisoners to access the education and employment pathways that have been developed along with the academy wing. I also welcome the improved success in English and maths, the introduction of Elite Rail that will provide guaranteed employment for prisoners on their release and the improved quality and quantity of vocational training and work being offered.

I note you have raised three local issues of concern in your report which the Governor will continue to keep you aware of as work continues. HM Prison and Probation Service (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 important contribution that members of Independent Monitoring Boards provide across the estate we are very grateful for your ongoing dedication on behalf of HMP Aylesbury.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James". The script is cursive and fluid, with the 'J' and 'M' being particularly prominent.

Lord Timpson
Minister for Prisons, Probation, and Reducing Reoffending

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Illicit Items

The risks that illicit items, such as drugs, weapons and mobile phones, present in our prisons are acknowledged and HMP Aylesbury is actively working with the HMPPS Security Directorate to explore alternative avenues of deployment of tactics to help reduce the conveyance of illicit items. Whilst we cannot share all our counter measures, as making these public would undermine our security, we have specialist staff and dedicated equipment in our prisons to tackle the smuggling of contraband. In recent years, prisons have expanded the use of physical security measures such as the use of X-ray body scanners, airport-style Enhanced Gate Security, and X-ray baggage scanners. Across the prison estate there are also 165 drug trace detection machines to prevent the smuggling of drugs such as psychoactive substances through prison mail. As the threats to prison security constantly evolves and criminals seek novel ways to destabilise prisons, we also constantly shift and adapt our security measures to ensure we keep pace with changing threats. As part of the wider Drug Strategy implementation, early cultural changes have been seen at HMP Aylesbury to enable long term change to be embedded. Following a staff reprofiling exercise the prison has formulated a specific Drug Strategy Officers team to further aid the proactive work that takes place to tackle the illicit economy and support users to reduce the demand. Localised disruption plans are being used to deter conveyance and a training needs analysis has been undertaken to improve the local training offer to staff to increase Strategy understanding reporting and conveyance.

Prison Officer Training

A key part of the Enable transformation programme, which is designed to change how HMPPS trains, develops, leads, and supports prison staff, is Foundation Training Reform. This a long-term review to redesign the initial training offer for Prison Officers. The future model will develop Foundation Training into a 12-month programme, centred on experiential learning and structured support in the workplace. This extended and immersive approach is designed to ensure new officers are better equipped and supported from the outset of their careers, building confidence, professional competence in their role and a stronger sense of belonging within the Service. The first elements of the new programme plan to begin being tested in January 2027, with regional rollout to follow later that year subject to the outcome of testing. In addition, in recognition of the importance of celebrating participation and achievement, graduation events are being rolled out across the prison estate. These will initially mark the successful completion of the probationary period for new recruits, providing formal recognition of their progress, professionalism, and commitment. Once the new Foundation Training package is fully in place, these graduations will evolve to mark completion of the 12-month Foundation Training programme, reinforcing its significance and recognising professional development at a key milestone in a prison officer's career.

To support these changes, HMP Aylesbury has recently advertised for a Enable Supervising Officer, which replaces and expands on the previous New Colleague Mentor role. This member of staff will support new starters but will also help embed the training learnt by a wider pool of staff than just those in the first two years of employment. The role will drive and implement a local communications strategy, capturing the change in staff needs and ensure change programmes are effectively managed. In the meantime, the prison has continued to be proactive in monitor staff development needs through quarterly performance discussions, as well as recognising and rewarding high performing and high potential staff. The training suite has been refurbished to provide a better environment and opportunity for staff to access

mandatory and locally devised training events and plans are in place to implement a local staff council, to create an additional avenue for staff to seek support.