



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Guys Marsh
Shaftsbury
Dorset
SP7 0AH

MoJ ref: SUB135077

19 June 2026

Dear Chair,

**HMP GUYS MARSH INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
1 DECEMBER 2024 – 30 NOVEMBER 2025**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Guys Marsh. I remain sincerely grateful to you and your colleagues for the resilience shown in monitoring the prison and providing detailed observations despite your membership challenges which had reduced by the end of this reporting period. I hope this improves in the coming year.

I can understand and share the Board's concerns about timely access to accommodation on release. It is fully recognised that a stable home can provide prison leavers with the opportunity to rehabilitate, get a job, reconnect with their families, and integrate back into society. However, reducing homelessness is a shared responsibility across Government which is why, alongside the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, we have committed to halving the proportion of those released homeless from prison and increasing access to settled accommodation by the end of this Parliament in 2029. Our departments have worked together on developing the recently published National Plan to End Homelessness, which will put us back on track by tackling its root causes and investing in long-term solutions. For the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), key activity includes expanding our Community Accommodation Service (CAS)³ provision, which provides up to 12 weeks basic accommodation for prison leavers at risk of homelessness. We are also investing in integrating digital community accommodation services to make it easier to identify and match individuals to the right housing-related support at the right time. Our fifty full time equivalent Strategic Housing Specialists, based across prisons in England and Wales, including at HMP Guys Marsh, will also continue collaborating with local authorities and partners to help remove the barriers to accommodation and improve pathways to housing for prison leavers.

The current Commissioned Rehabilitative Services (CRS) accommodation contracts that deliver specialist support to people on probation and people in prison with their accommodation needs, are designed to complement and improve access to mainstream public services such as housing, local authority support and third sector organisations. CRS is currently procuring new contracts for men's services which will go live in July 2027 to better reflect the tenacious, time-consuming support needed to secure and maintain housing and jobs. These services will address immediate needs as early as possible, on reception to custody, alongside other issues that arise throughout someone's time in custody. In the meantime, the CRS providers will continue to support men with pre-release needs and duty to refer activities, liaising with CAS³ provision for eligible prisoners at the earliest opportunity where there are no other options

available. Where referrals are made into CAS3 at short notice, due to a short sentence or recall to custody, HMPPS will continue to make every effort to offer a placement. In addition, 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. Not all measures will take effect immediately and HMPPS is undertaking a dedicated programme of work to support implementation. This is also helping to inform the future requirements for the prison estate and will provide probation and prison staff the opportunity to further focus on rehabilitation, protecting the public and reduce reoffending.

Although there is more work to do, it was reassuring that incidents of violence, assaults on staff, self-harm and the need for staff to use force to de-escalate incidents have all fallen significantly. It was encouraging to read about the improvements to the accommodation and environment with increased standards and cleanliness enhancing decency. I was pleased to note that a more consistent regime is being provided which has allowed attendance at education, skills, and work to improve and give prisoners the opportunity to access the range of vocational training courses on offer. I welcome the Board commending workshop instructors for developing non-accredited qualifications tailored to jobs to improve the chances of employment on release. It was also encouraging to read about the improving work in resettlement planning and that the employment hub is providing a key role in release preparations. It was particularly pleasing that the number of prisoners in employment at the six week and six month points after release are exceeding targets. I look forward to the Board reporting on this further in the forthcoming year as the Governor will be looking to build on the progress already made with the purposeful activity offer to help prisoners leave better equipped to lead law abiding lives.

I note you have raised a local issue of concern about social video calls in your report which the Governor 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 wish to express our appreciation for the invaluable scrutiny that Independent Monitoring Boards member provide to improve our prisons, and we are grateful for your continued commitment on behalf of HMP Guys Marsh.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James".

Lord Timpson
Minister for Prisons, Probation, and Reducing Reoffending

HMP GUYS MARSH INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 1 DECEMBER 2024 –30 NOVEMBER 2025

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Enhanced Gate Security

The risks that illicit items, such as drugs and mobile phones, present in our prisons are acknowledged. We know that effective prison security is essential to provide the safe and stable regimes needed to promote a rehabilitative culture. Whilst we cannot share all our counter measures to tackle illicit items, as making these public would undermine our security, prisons do have a range of physical security countermeasures and specialist equipment to reduce the conveyance of illicit items. Although one of these measures, Enhanced Gate Security is not currently scheduled to be installed at HMP Guys Marsh at this time, the Board's recognition of the prisons efforts to decrease the availability and use of drugs, through better searching, securing throw overs, mail screening and improved secure windows is welcome. Although there is more to do to minimise the threat and impact of illegal substances, the prison will be continuing to prioritise security and safety management. Local efforts to mitigate risk and deter ingress will include random searching throughout the day, alongside regular searching by the Regional Dogs and Dedicated Search Teams and the continued use of the clear bag policy and no open liquids on entry to the prison.

Telephony Call Charges

As previously indicated and during this reporting period a 20% reduction in call rates was secured under the current prisoner communications service contract to UK landlines and mobile phones which took effect from April 2025. Work is progressing on the future Prisoner Integrated Communications Service (PICS) which aims to make voice calls more affordable, enabling prisoners to maintain more frequent contact with family and friends, whilst continuing to provide a service which remains financially sustainable for the MoJ and HMPPS. The MoJ is maintaining continuity of the current prisoner communications service while transitioning to PICS, a more strategic and adaptable service with full deployment across the estate by late 2031.

Prison Officer Training

It is acknowledged that the Independent Review of Prison Officer Training, which took place in September 2022, set out the case for a new approach. In response a long-term Foundation Training Reform programme is working to redesign the training provided to prison officers. This future model will centre on an experiential learning approach delivered over a twelve-month period to ensure that new prison officers are better equipped and supported from the outset of their careers and allow them to build their competence and confidence in the role. 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 the meantime, it is encouraging that the Board recognises the efforts of the national Standards Coaching Team during the months that were on site at HMP Guys Marsh to provide support to staff locally who improved their effectiveness.