



HM Prison & Probation Service

Sarah Coccia
Chief Operating Officer Prisons

HM Prison and Probation Service
8th Floor Ministry of Justice
102 Petty France
London
SW1H 9AJ

06th July 2026

Dear Jane,

Thank you for your letter of 3 July 2026 regarding the impact of high temperatures across the prison estate. I recognise the concerns raised by Independent Monitoring Boards and the important role Boards play in highlighting issues affecting the safety, wellbeing and decency of prisons.

HMPPS takes the risks associated with hot weather seriously. Our *Heatwave Guidance for Prison and Probation Services in England and Wales* which I've attached, provides establishments with a framework to prepare for and respond to periods of extreme heat, while allowing Governors to tailor mitigations to local risks, population needs and estate conditions.

1. What minimum expectations are in place during periods of high heat?

The guidance requires prisons to maintain hot weather and business continuity plans and to consider a range of mitigation measures during periods of elevated temperatures. These measures include ensuring adequate access to drinking water, monitoring indoor temperatures, improving ventilation, promoting hydration, providing access to sun cream, and sharing relevant health information with both prisoners and staff. The need for any additional controls should be determined through local risk assessments and may include restricting or modifying outdoor activities where necessary. This can apply to both recreational activities, such as exercise, and work-related activities, for example gardening.

Governors are also encouraged to consider practical measures to reduce the impact of high temperatures, including the provision of additional drinking water, access to shaded areas where appropriate, the use of fire-retardant curtains or blinds, adjustments to ventilation systems, and the review of activities undertaken during periods of extreme heat.

There is no national entitlement to electric fans in cells. However, the guidance advises Governors to consider the use of fans and other portable cooling devices where appropriate, including the allocation of handheld fans to medically vulnerable prisoners and those sharing double cells. Any deployment of such equipment should be supported by local risk assessments that take account of relevant considerations, including electrical safety, fire safety, and infection prevention and control requirements.

2. Are vulnerable prisoners being identified and prioritised consistently?

The guidance places particular emphasis on identifying and supporting those most vulnerable to heat-related illness, including older prisoners, those with chronic health conditions, serious mental health conditions and those taking certain medications.

Prisons are advised to work closely with healthcare providers to identify vulnerable individuals, undertake enhanced welfare checks, monitor hydration and wellbeing, and consider relocation to cooler accommodation where operationally appropriate and supported by risk assessment.

3. What guidance is being given on charging prisoners for fans?

There is currently no national policy requiring prisons to provide fans free of charge to all prisoners, nor is there a nationally prescribed charging approach.

Fans are not available through the standard prison canteen list but may be purchased through approved catalogue procurement routes or supplied locally where supported by risk assessment and operational considerations.

We recognise concerns about consistency and affordability and will continue to keep our approach under review. Overall, the provision of fans is not standardised across the estate, and remains a matter of local discretion, informed by risk assessment, population need particularly for those who are medically vulnerable and the practical constraints of individual establishments.

4. How are conditions on upper floors and in cells without in-cell sanitation monitored?

The guidance recognises that some areas, including upper-floor and south-facing accommodation, are more susceptible to overheating. Prisons are advised to monitor temperatures, identify areas of concern and implement measures to reduce risk where necessary. During heat alerts, indoor temperatures should be recorded regularly and vulnerable prisoners subject to enhanced welfare monitoring.

Governors are also expected to consider local arrangements to ensure access to drinking water and to address site-specific risks, including accommodation without in-cell sanitation.

5. What longer-term planning is under way?

HMPPS recognises that climate change presents a significant risk to prisons, particularly through more frequent and intense heatwaves. The prison population is considered especially vulnerable because many prisoners have complex health conditions, making them more susceptible to heat-related illness and the effects of overheating. In response, the MOJ is adopting a climate adaptation approach that seeks to strengthen the resilience of prison buildings and operations, ensure continuity of services during extreme weather, and better protect the health, safety and welfare of prisoners and staff. Key actions include improving understanding of climate risks through updated scientific evidence, refreshing the MOJ Climate Change Risk Assessment, embedding climate risks into operational and estate planning, developing a dedicated adaptation pathway for prison services under the National Adaptation Programme, and creating an estate and operations adaptation plan that considers both current and future climate conditions. This aims to ensure that prisons remain safe, secure and fit for purpose as temperatures rise and climate-related health risks increase.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/climate-change-and-sustainability-strategy-moj/climate-change-and-sustainability-strategy>

The Heatwave Guidance requires establishments to regularly review hot weather plans, assess environmental risks, evaluate the effectiveness of mitigations and consider environmental improvements that may reduce overheating. These local measures are supported by wider estate investment and maintenance programmes which continue to consider building performance, ventilation and climate resilience across the prison estate.

We value the evidence and observations provided by Independent Monitoring Boards and will continue to work with establishments to ensure appropriate safeguards are in place for both prisoners and staff during periods of extreme heat.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SCi', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Sarah Coccia
Chief Operating Officer Prisons