

OFFICIAL

IMB BUSINESS PLAN

2026-2027

April to September

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Monitoring fair and humane treatment in custody

Independent Monitoring Boards (IMBs) are made up of over a thousand unpaid public appointees operating in every prison in England and Wales, and every immigration detention facility across the UK.

IMB members are the eyes and ears of the public, appointed by ministers to perform a vital task: independent monitoring of prisons and immigration detention. They report on whether the individuals held there are being treated fairly and humanely and whether prisoners are being given the support they need to turn their lives around. This can make a huge difference to the lives of those held within these facilities.

Plans for 2026-2027: the first six months

This business plan, as drafted, covers the first six months of the financial year 2026-2027 only. This is in recognition of two major factors:

1. that we enter this new financial year with an interim IMB National Chair while the substantive role is advertised, and
2. this follows an announcement by the Prisons Minister of the MoJ's intention to merge the Independent Monitoring Boards with the Lay Observers (LOs) and HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP), once a legislative slot has been found.

While it is unusual to limit a business plan to only six months, this enables the interim National Chair to set their priorities for the first part of the year, recognising that a substantive postholder may want to set their own objectives once appointed later in the year. It also enables the interim National Chair to focus efforts on a small number of significant activities in the first part of the year, namely:

- providing support direct to individual IMB Boards, helping them to develop and retain quality members,
- strengthening the governance of the IMB National Chair and National Board, and
- inputting to the development of a new oversight model for the intended merger of the IMBs with the LOs and HMIP.

Progress against this business plan will be reviewed mid-year (October) when the objectives will be updated to take account of the substantive National Chair's stated direction and a new plan produced.

Strategic objective 1: Deliver effective statutory monitoring.
1.1 Public awareness: Use effective national communications through multiple channels to increase awareness of and interest in applying for the IMBs.
1.2 Member recruitment: Deliver a recruitment approach that uses staff and member resource efficiently and effectively; recognises need; and meets the Public Appointments Code.
1.3 Recruitment model: Operationalise the revised approach to recruitment, developed based on feedback from the membership, that supports the recruitment of good quality IMB members and supports reasonable adjustments.
1.4 Member appointments: Ensure members are appointed according to a robust appointments process that applies the right level of assurance and puts in place any required mitigations.
1.5 Conflicts of interest: Review and redraft the conflicts of interest policy to comply with the requirements of the Public Appointments Code as well as recognising the role of the Minister's delegate.
1.6 Member events: Organise member training and events, such as study days, networking events and conferences, to share good practice in monitoring.

1.7 Monitoring guidance: Develop detailed best practice guidance that brings together material from across the Monitors' Hub in support of the delivery of the National Monitoring Framework.
1.8 Member support: Develop and operationalise a member support role (ADACs) that, in the first instance, supports Boards to embed new recruits and works symbiotically with the role of the RSLs.
1.9 Relationships with other bodies: Develop and maintain operational relationships with other bodies in support of the work of the IMBs.
1.10 Complaints: Review and revise the complaints policy to better allow for resolution to take place at the local level as well as recognising the role of the Minister's delegate.
1.11 Member Database and IT: Undertake a roadmap exercise to look at our needs of IT systems as well as working with suppliers to make changes to the member database in support of the business.

Strategic objective 2: Maximise the impact of Board reporting and Board outcomes.
2.1 Promoting findings: Maximise the reach of reporting, using both established media and social media to disseminate IMB findings.
2.2 Thematic reporting: Collate, escalate and publish thematic findings to increase impact.
2.3 Annual reports: Oversee the local IMB annual report production and publication including providing direct support to Boards.

2.4 National annual reports: Draft, publish and promote an IMB national annual report for prisons, YOIs and the IDE.
2.5 Policy influence: Suggest changes to relevant policy, guidance or legislation drawing on thematic evidence from monitoring.
2.6 Policy influence: Contribute to policy consultations and public inquiries based on monitoring findings.
2.7 National Preventive Mechanism: Contribute to the governance structure and work of the National Preventive Mechanism.

Strategic objective 3: Prepare for and influence future change.
3.1 Culture: Promote a respectful and inclusive culture that recognises the value of the unpaid membership and the expertise of the staff.
3.2 Governance: Work with MoJ to strengthen the governance structure around the National Chair and the National Board and develop clarity around the role of the delegate in making decisions about policies and practice relating to IMB members. Communicate the output to members.
3.3 Merger: Liaise with HMIP and LOs on the intended merger to identify areas of common ground, both what should be safeguarded in any merger as well as the issues that need tackling. Ensure the voices of Boards and staff are heard as part of the new model development. Encourage MoJ to develop a comms strategy to keep the membership and stakeholders informed.

3.4 Diversity & inclusion: Implement the EDI policy to put equality, diversity and inclusion at the forefront of all staff and member matters.

Organisational objective: Provide business assurance in support of the IMB
4.1 Protocols: Review agreements and MOUs with external bodies.
4.2 Data protection: Build and maintain robust data protection by advising on compliance, managing information requests, processing data in accordance with GDPR principles, and offering training to members on safe data handling.
4.3 Risk management: Effectively manage risk through the development and implementation of a responsive risk management strategy.
4.4 Financial management: Provide robust financial forecasting and management that supports the membership and complies with departmental requirements.
4.5 Assurance: Provide business assurance through regular challenge meetings with MoJ and accurate completion of non-/financial returns and commissions as required within timescales.