

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Leeds
2 Gloucester Terrace
Stanningley Road
Leeds
LS12 2TJ

MoJ ref: SUB137602

2 September 2026

Dear Chair,

**HMP LEEDS: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
1 JANUARY 2025 – 31 DECEMBER 2025**

Thank you for sharing your Board's annual report on HMP Leeds. I am very grateful to you and your colleagues for your continued resilience in monitoring the prison and commitment in compiling such insightful reflections despite ongoing membership challenges. I hope the situation improves going forward.

I have read your report with care and I too am concerned about the number of deaths at HMP Leeds. I was extremely saddened to hear that 13 prisoners passed away during the reporting year, five of which were self-inflicted and two occurring shortly after release from custody. I offer my sincere condolences to all their friends and family and would like to reassure them that recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman are taken very seriously. Any death in our care is a tragedy, and reducing the risk of self-inflicted deaths remains a priority for HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS).

In recognising that HMP Leeds has experienced clusters of deaths, an established taskforce is in place to provide intensive support to the prison at a regional and national level, including partner agencies. The taskforce meets regularly to monitor progress against an agreed action plan to reduce the risk of further of further deaths. As part of this taskforce, HMPPS Safety Group has provided targeted work to strengthen local safety efforts to understand risks, as well as training to improve how healthcare, mental health and safety staff recognise and respond to people in crisis. Prisoner focus groups have been used to capture lived experience and a Functional Lead at the prison is overseeing the implementation of PPO recommendations to ensure that learning is systematically embedded and translated into sustainable operational practice. The prison has also worked with the Workforce Delivery Model teams to review the staffing structure which has resulted in an increase of 10 additional Prison Officer posts to improve longer-term sustainability. These are positive steps and HMPPS will continue to monitor trends and emerging risks closely to provide additional support where needed.

I acknowledge your further request to address the maintenance backlog at HMP Leeds. HMPPS aim to provide sustained improvement in living conditions and performance across the prison estate and a range of projects are within the pipeline for HMP Leeds. HMPPS Estates are continually reviewing the projects alongside the investment that is required across the estate to make best use of the funding available which can result in backlogs as demands are much greater than the funding available. The projects for HMP Leeds include upgrades to mechanical smoke control, as well as the refurbishment of C & D wings

and the visits building. Furthermore, three coordinated 'Big Clean' events have taken place this year making immediate improvements in cleanliness and standards across all areas of the prison. Progress is also being made to recruit staff who will supervise prisoner work parties to undertake routine repairs to support the ongoing upkeep of the site.

In terms of the Sentencing Act 2026 reducing crowding at HMP Leeds, these significant reforms received Royal Assent on 22 January 2026 and will deliver on many of the Independent Sentencing Review's recommendations. These will ensure prison places are not depleted, deliver punishment that cuts crime, and place the criminal justice system on a more sustainable footing for the longer term. It also provides the Courts with options to end the cycle of less serious offenders going in and out of prison and alongside the increased probation budget by up to £700 million, as well as the investment in new technology, these will allow staff to focus on work that reduces reoffending. It is acknowledged that crowding can make it harder to deliver safe and stable regimes which places additional pressure on staff. HMPPS continually monitor capacity and adjust prison places depending on safety, stability, staffing levels and maintenance needs. Following this monitoring, in February 2026 twenty places were removed from the operational capacity of the first night centre at HMP Leeds to ease crowding and improve living conditions. Work is also taking place with Custodial Capacity to progress cell reclamation to increase the usable accommodation locally and further reduce crowding.

I can also understand your concerns about prison education funding, but HMPPS remains committed to supporting rehabilitation through high-quality education, skills and work activities and the national prison education funding has not reduced. However, the cost of delivering high-quality education has risen significantly in recent years and the budget has not kept pace with these rising costs. Consequently, some reductions in the volume of Core Education delivery have been necessary since October 2025 when the new Prisoner Education Service was introduced. HMP Leeds saw a volume reduction of 11% which is set out in the [published](#) transparency data under the previous and current core education contracts. As a result, a local curriculum review has reduced the delivery of functional skills classes and removed two vocational teaching posts. Whilst this will be a concern, please be assured the prison has proactively managed these changes through careful planning to ensure that the core educational provision remains targeted, efficient, and responsive to the needs of the population.

Whilst challenges remain, it was encouraging to receive your comments about the quality and commitment of the staff in the education department. With self-harm being a heightened concern, I was reassured to hear about the significant reduction in self-harming incidents. I also welcome the introduction of the new early days wing providing further support to vulnerable prisoners on arrival at the prison.

I note you have raised two local issues of concern 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 Lord Chancellor and I sincerely appreciate the important role played by members of Independent Monitoring Boards and we extend our thanks for your ongoing commitment on behalf of HMP Leeds.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Catherine', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Catherine McKinnell MP
Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending

HMP LEEDS: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JANUARY 2025 – 31 DECEMBER 2025

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Digitalisation

There are many factors to consider when determining the rollout and prioritisation of digital solutions across the prison estate. These will vary depending on the nature of the system being introduced and include operational need, readiness, infrastructure and the specific benefits the solution is designed to deliver. The cluster deaths status which HMP Leeds has is not a determining factor for prioritisation of digitalisation. However, HMPPS continues to strengthen the support for people at risk of self-harm through improved oversight and a new quality assurance (QA) tool has been introduced to help prisons assess how effectively they deliver the Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) case management process. This identifies learning opportunities and good practice, ensuring effective support for people at risk of self-harm or suicide and HMP Leeds was selected as a pilot site for this new digital tool. As a result of the pilot, the prison has successfully embedded and strengthened their QA process which can be evidenced at a national level. The Prisons Digital team are also continuing the work to enable NOMIS to be decommissioned and replaced with new digital services. Among the services currently being developed is a system which manages prisoner applications which is currently being tested in only a small number of prisons.

Deaths in Custody

Staff Training

HMPPS are committed to ensuring prisons are a safe place to work and to provide prison officers with the right support, training and tools to empower them to undertake their roles. All new prison officers are provided with training on suicide and self-harm prevention and staff who undertake key risk assessment and case management roles also receive specific training. However, it is important to highlight that the HMPPS Enable Programme are currently reforming foundation training for new prison officers which will introduce a 12-month, experience-led model that provides protected time for on-the-job learning and structured development. To support this, workforce planning is being adjusted to ensure prisons have sufficient capacity to maintain safe and stable regimes while releasing staff for training. In addition, the introduction of national core capability packages for officers with 6–24 months experience is being factored into the staffing models, in recognition of the importance of continued development during a key retention risk period. By embedding training requirements into workforce planning and enabling local capability planning at establishment level, HMPPS is ensuring that staffing levels are responsive to operational need while also providing the necessary flexibility for staff to undertake the essential training and development without placing additional strain on frontline delivery.

Staff Support

To support staff who are exposed to self-inflicted deaths, HMPPS has in place Trauma Risk Management training (TRiM) which is a peer-led support scheme for frontline staff who have experienced a traumatic event in prison. As of September 2025, there were 1,743 TRiM trained staff of which 345 are TRiM Managers in prisons and at HMP Leeds there are 17 practitioners and 5 TRiM managers. Staff in prisons that have had a cluster of self-inflicted deaths also receive additional support, alongside the wider existing wellbeing support offer to all staff which includes a 24-hour helpline, confidential counselling and online wellbeing services. Additionally, there is joint working with the Samaritans to support both staff and prisoners following a self-inflicted death to reduce the risk of further deaths. Locally the Governor has undertaken a comprehensive review of the local arrangements to support staff, resulting in the

appointment of a dedicated manager to monitor and strengthen the provision. This enhanced offer is recognised as the beginning of good practice across the wider staff support network, providing a coordinated approach to ensure staff can access appropriate services that promote wellbeing and resilience within a challenging operational environment and can contribute to improved morale and organisational stability. In addition, a structured wellbeing calendar has been introduced, providing staff with regular opportunities throughout the year to engage in initiatives that support health and wellbeing in the workplace.

Mental Health Transfers

It is acknowledged that prison is not the right environment for people with severe mental illness and delays continue to be experienced for those requiring treatment in secure hospital. However, the Mental Health Act 2025 received Royal Assent in December 2025 introducing the statutory time limit of 28 days for transfers from prison and other places of detention to hospital. This reform is due to start 18-24 months post Royal Assent and health and justice partners remain committed to commencing this reform in the published timeframe to deliver swifter access to treatment. In the interim, cases of concern are discussed fortnightly at a regional meeting with healthcare providers and NHS England commissioners to allow escalation and as part of the quarterly contract review meetings, data on transfers and remissions is analysed to identify trends and patterns to help drive efficiency across the pathway. Furthermore, NHS England and HMPPS have established a working group to conduct a pilot at HMP Leeds to identify ongoing challenges in transferring individuals from prison to secure care to develop a seamless and timely patient pathway. The pilot complements the wider regional and national efforts to enhance the efficiency of transfers and remissions across the secure care pathway and learning will be shared across the wider prison estate.