



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Manchester
1 Southall Street
Manchester
M60 9AH

MoJ ref: SUB137793

8 September 2026

Dear Chair,

**HMP MANCHESTER INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
1 MARCH 2025 – 28 FEBRUARY 2026**

Thank you for submitting the Board's Annual Report for HMP Manchester. I appreciate that the Board has had issues over previous years and I am grateful to you and your colleagues for producing this report and your commitment to independent monitoring in the face of a number of challenges. I was sorry to read of the death of the Board's interim Chair during the reporting year and recognise the impact this had on those who knew and worked alongside him. I hope that my predecessors visit to the prison in August 2025 provided a helpful discussion centred around safety, security and the conditions of the estate.

I was very sorry to learn that there were six deaths in custody during the reporting period, three of which were apparently self-inflicted. Every death in custody is a tragedy and my thoughts are with the families and friends of those who died, as well as the staff and prisoners affected by these incidents. All deaths in custody are subject to investigation by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman and any recommendations arising will be carefully considered.

I recognise that the conveyance of illicit items remains one of the most significant challenges facing HMP Manchester. The prison continues to operate a robust, intelligence-led response to the threat posed by drones, organised criminal networks and other methods of conveyance. Dedicated drone intervention activity takes place nightly and is supported by specialist search teams, intelligence-led deployments and close partnership working with police and other law enforcement agencies. Targeted search operations are routinely undertaken using specialist equipment and techniques to identify and remove drugs, weapons, mobile phones and other prohibited items. Significant improvements have also been made to the physical security of the prison. New secure windows and enhanced window grilles have been installed across a number of residential units with further work continuing. Temporary anti-drone netting has also been installed with a longer-term reinforced solution planned. These measures are intended to reduce opportunities for drone deliveries and make it more difficult for prisoners to retrieve illicit items. HMP Manchester performs a critical function within the Long Term and High Security Estate (LTHSE), including the management of category A remand and sentenced prisoners and remains the only prison in the North West able to accommodate this cohort. The prison therefore continues to receive significant operational support and oversight through both local and national arrangements.

Nationally, HMPPS continues to invest in physical security measures, enhanced searching capability, ongoing reviews of technology to tackle mobile phone use and intelligence-led activity. Joint operations

with law enforcement partners have resulted in significant disruption to organised criminal networks involved in the supply of contraband into prisons.

I recognise the frustration caused when prisoners experience delays in accessing appropriate hospital treatment. NHS England continues to work with providers, HMPPS and other partners to strengthen transfers and improve access to secure forensic mental health services. Additional investment has been made to support improvement activity and reduce delays in transfers. The Mental Health Act 2025 includes provisions to introduce a statutory 28-day transfer period for prisoners requiring hospital treatment, and work is ongoing to support implementation of this reform and improve access to appropriate care. In addition, specialist multidisciplinary support within the LTHSE continues to work closely with hospitals and healthcare providers to improve pathways for some of the most complex prisoners. I recognise that this is a work in progress and that pressures on secure bed availability continue to present challenges.

I understand the Board's concerns regarding the condition of the prison and the impact that ageing infrastructure can have on prisoners and staff. HMPPS continues to invest in improving conditions at HMP Manchester. Approximately £2.6 million has already been invested in exercise yard netting and the installation of windows and grills on G Wing. A further £4.2 million investment is planned for windows and grills on K Wing and drainage repairs with work expected to commence this year. Additional projects, including structural repairs to the central tower, atrium glazing and security system improvements are progressing through assurance and governance processes before funding decisions can be confirmed. Across the estate, investment decisions continue to be informed by condition surveys and prioritised according to risk, operational need and decency.

I was encouraged to note the Board's recognition of several positive developments during the reporting year. In particular, I was pleased to read about the professionalism of reception staff, improved key worker engagement, the effective operation of the social care unit, the work of the chaplaincy team and the efforts of staff managing some of the most challenging prisoners within the estate. I was also pleased to read about the reopening of Crofters and the introduction of new educational initiatives and reading programmes.

Issues raised in your report that fall within local operational responsibility will continue to be addressed by the Governor, who will keep the Board informed of progress. Responses to matters raised for HMPPS are set out in the attached annex.

The Lord Chancellor and I continue to appreciate the invaluable contribution of members of Independent Monitoring Boards to improve the estate and we extend our thanks for your continued dedication on behalf of HMP Manchester.

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 MANCHESTER INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 1 MARCH 2025– 28 FEBRUARY 2026

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Maintenance Backlogs

Maintenance backlogs remain a challenge at HMP Manchester and are influenced by the age of the estate, operational demands and recruitment challenges within the facilities management workforce. A number of significant improvement projects are in progress. These include new windows and grills across the site, enhanced contraband netting, security system upgrades, internal wing refurbishment and essential infrastructure repairs. In addition, facilities management backlogs have reduced significantly, with open maintenance plans falling from 160 in February 2026 to 92 in July 2026. While physical security projects are not designed specifically to reduce maintenance backlogs, they contribute to improving the overall condition of the prison.

G Wing and Window Replacement Programme

The G Wing windows and grills project has been completed, and all cells have now been returned to use. The original contractor, ISG, entered administration in September 2024 which affected numerous maintenance projects across the prison estate. Legal and commercial processes were required before replacement arrangements could be put in place. HMPPS and the Ministry of Justice established specialist arrangements to progress this work as quickly as possible while ensuring appropriate governance and value for money.

Lessons Learned from Major Remedial Works

HMPPS recognises the Board's concern regarding the delivery of substantial remedial works at HMP Manchester and the challenges associated with undertaking these projects on a complex operational site. Learning from recent projects has reinforced the importance of earlier assessment of site wide dependencies, enabling works and access restrictions before procurement begins. Greater emphasis is now being placed on realistic sequencing of works and closer collaboration between commercial, operational, technical and security teams throughout the planning and delivery stages. HMPPS is increasingly adopting a more holistic approach to site wide planning so that individual projects are considered within the wider context of the establishment. This is intended to reduce disruption, improve coordination and strengthen the management of risks associated with complex and ageing prison infrastructure.

Staff Training, Development and Support

HMP Manchester has received significant support and investment in staff development as part of both its improvement activity and ongoing business-as-usual arrangements. The Prison Operational Support Programme has delivered targeted support focused on improving governance, assurance, safety, security, cleanliness and decency. A Custody Improvement Manager has remained on site to provide continued operational support, while a Standards Coaching Team delivered a 16-week programme to develop the skills and capability of both Prison Officers and Supervising Officers. Additional support has been delivered through leadership and management development. People Manager Essentials training has been rolled out to middle managers with a focus on staff support, performance management and attendance management. HMP Manchester is also participating in the Unlocked Change Makers Programme with six Custodial Managers undertaking a tailored leadership development programme.

The prison has also strengthened support for newer staff through two dedicated New Colleague Mentors and has introduced twice monthly training days. These provide opportunities for both mandatory training and broader development activity focused on local risks, emerging issues and identified learning needs.

Communication Devices

HMP Manchester continues to employ a robust, intelligence-led approach to tackling the conveyance and use of illicit communication devices. Dedicated Search Team resources, specialist search operations and enhanced physical security measures continue to support efforts to locate and recover mobile phones and other communication devices. Joint operations are also undertaken with specialist security teams, policing partners and regional organised crime units to disrupt the supply of devices and associated criminal activity. Communication devices of intelligence value are routinely submitted for download and analysis. Where devices are linked to repeat offenders, Serious Crime Prevention Orders or ongoing police investigations, referrals are made to law enforcement partners for consideration of further action. Locally, adjudication arrangements have also been reviewed to ensure possession of communication devices is treated appropriately and attracts the strongest available sanctions where justified. This work is supported by wider national investment in physical security measures, intelligence capabilities and technologies designed to disrupt the conveyance and use of illicit communication devices across the prison estate.

Recruitment and Retention

HMP Manchester remains a priority site for recruitment and a resource management plan continues to support the prison's staffing requirements. A range of measures has been introduced to strengthen recruitment, capability and workforce stability. These include targeted recruitment activity, level transfers from other establishments, alumni schemes and the return of first deployment officers as permanent members of staff. The prison has also seen a significant increase in applications through recent recruitment campaigns. Support for new officers is provided through the New Colleague Mentor scheme. This includes opportunities to observe experienced staff before completing training, gain exposure to key operational roles and receive tailored support when returning from foundation training. Confidence and competence assessments are used to identify individual development needs and ensure additional support is provided where necessary.

HMPPS continues to operate in a challenging labour market and remains committed to ensuring prisons are sufficiently resourced. Prison officers employed through the Skilled Worker route can remain in post and extensions continue to be considered in line with existing arrangements. Recruitment activity continues across establishments with staffing needs, while workforce planning processes are used to monitor current staffing levels and future requirements.