

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Woodhill
Tattenhoe Street
Milton Keynes
MK4 4DA

MoJ ref: SUB138164

18 September 2026

Dear Chair,

HMP WOODHILL: PROGRESS UPDATE
RE: IMB ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JUNE 2024 – 31 MAY 2025

Further to my predecessor's response of 22nd December 2025 to your Board's last annual report on HMP Woodhill, I now write to update you on progress. You will recall that six-month updates on those prisons of most concern is an initiative that Lord Timpson began last year and ensures that you receive a progress update ahead of my response to your next annual report.

As you are aware, following a HM Inspectorate of Prisons' inspection in March 2026, a second Urgent Notification was invoked citing concerns over the continued poor outcomes in safety and purposeful activity. In response, a comprehensive action plan has been put in place to address concerns. The appointment of a new and experienced Governor is providing the strong and consistent leadership needed to drive sustained improvements, supported by the Long Term and High Security Taskforce.

I am pleased to confirm that the Mental Health Act received Royal Assent on 18 December 2025. The NHSE-led National Mental Health & Justice Strategic Advisory Group (MHJSAG) is now overseeing and monitoring the transfer process from prison to hospital to work towards all transfers being completed within 28-days of referral for individuals who have been assessed as requiring detention under the Mental Health Act.

Regionally, Health and Justice East of England, in partnership with the East of England Provider Collaborative and the health provider will enhance the escalation process for those awaiting mental health transfers. This will include learning lessons from past hospital transfers, review current outstanding cases, and collaborate on pathways to 'speed up' transfers to hospitals when men are identified as needing in-patient psychiatric care. A bi-monthly online learning session focussed on improving the flow of patients will also take place.

I would also like to update on the continued work of the Neurodiversity Support Manager, who is providing training and briefing sessions for different groups of staff to help them support neurodivergent prisoners. This is in addition to her individual work with prisoners and providing assistance in attending prison reviews including Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork and Challenge, Support and Intervention Plans.

Coming to the concerns you raised about capital investment and infrastructure, on 11 June the Deputy Prime Minister visited HMP Woodhill to announce that an extra £35 million will be invested to strengthen physical security at 17 prisons vulnerable to drone activity, HMP Woodhill is included in this. It is also pleasing to see 120 window grilles have already been installed, a full-site programme to install all remaining grilles will be delivered and the installation of anti-drone wires to House Unit 1 is complete. An 18-month, site-wide programme of shower refurbishments has been approved at a cost of c.£9m.

Conditions in the segregation unit have also been improved through a deep clean of the area. Clean, Rehabilitative, Enabling and Decent (CRED), a programme to engage prisoners in work that improves their skills, confidence and employability, will also be introduced at the prison, and will contribute to ensuring a more decent environment.

Regarding the support for effective training and resettlement, you will be pleased to hear activity places will be increased through the recruitment of five additional instructors increasing access to training and qualifications. New workshop/classroom spaces will also be created with a specific focus on activities for high-risk prisoners and those newly admitted to the prison. Prisoners will be signposted to New Futures Network, a specialist part of HMPPS that connects prisons with employers to help prison leavers secure employment three months before release. A Prison Work Coach has also been recruited and is currently awaiting vetting clearance.

To strengthen sentence management and release planning, two Probation Service Officers (PSOs) have been recruited. They will be responsible for delivering Case Management Support, allowing for individual tasks to be delegated from a Probation Offender Manager (POM) to a PSO to ensure Probation POMs prioritise essential risk management tasks and actions, building on previous arrangements to improve the consistency and timeliness of sentence management and release planning activity. A mapping exercise has also commenced to understand how the join up between the Pre Release team, Prison Offender Manager and Community Offender Manager can be improved.

I hope the Board will find this update useful. The Lord Chancellor and I sincerely appreciate your continued hard work and dedication and thank you on behalf of HMP Woodhill.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Catherine'.

Catherine McKinnell MP
Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending