Ministry of Justice

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Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
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Dear Chair,

HMP WANDSWORTH: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JUNE 2025 – 31 MAY 2026

Thank you for sharing your Board's annual report on HMP Wandsworth. I want to express my sincere appreciation for you and your colleague's continued commitment in monitoring the prison throughout the reporting period despite your reduced membership.

It was deeply saddening to read that five deaths occurred during the reporting period with one happening shortly after release from custody and I extend my condolences to the families and friends. Whilst the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman investigations remain ongoing, I want to provide assurance that any recommendations made will be taken very seriously and acted upon.

I do acknowledge your ongoing concerns about the challenges facing foreign national prisoners. The dedicated Foreign National Specialist role across prisons continues to help support the removal of prisoners who have no right to be in this country and to support frontline staff to respond to the needs of the foreign national cohort. I note that the Board welcomed the staff training to improve foreign national awareness that was delivered this year, which was supported by these specialist roles who will continue to be funded until March 2029. Although the national translation supplier performance operates at approximately 90–95%, it is recognised that sourcing suitably qualified and security-cleared interpreters to fulfil rare languages can be challenging. It is therefore reassuring that HMP Wandsworth has increased the English for Speakers of other Languages provision and I understand that the use of translation services locally has been greatly improved to support the day to day running of the prison. HMPPS is also exploring how AI translation capabilities could be built into Justice Transcribe to help complement existing services to overcome barriers and improve the prison experience for foreign nationals.

Regarding the removal of foreign nationals, as part of the Sentencing Act 2026 the scope of the automatic deportation threshold has been extended to include individuals receiving a suspended sentences of 12 months or more. This is in addition to the existing deportation of foreign nationals who receive a custodial sentence of at least 12 months under the UK Borders Act 2007. However, consideration will still be given to the suitability of deporting all foreign nationals who receive a suspended sentence. Whilst it is recognised that delays can impact the removal processes which can be frustrating, many of the factors contributing to these are outside the

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direct control of both prisons and the Home Office, such as legal barriers or documentation. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Justice, HMPPS and the Home Office are working to progress cases at the earliest opportunity and at the end of July 2026, 3,141 people had been returned through the Early Removal Scheme. This represents a 20% increase compared with the same period 12 months prior and this progress has been evident at HMP Wandsworth with the strengthened links contributing to a notable increase in the timeliness of removals.

I welcome that the Board has identified the successes of the innovative work taking place at HMP Wandsworth. The value of sharing learning across the estate is important and HMPPS is developing a Promising Practice platform as a route to share good practice and learning from across the prison estate. This will help prisons to explore, identify and assess whether other initiatives would be applicable locally and appropriate for their own prisoner cohorts. Whilst HMP Wandsworth is currently focused on ensuring that the current initiatives are embedded to provide sustainable delivery, the Governor will be considering whether the Vanguard Wing can be applied elsewhere in the prison, as well as working to identify a suitable location for an incentivised substance-free living unit to better focus on those affected by substance misuse.

I also recognise your concerns where a prisoner is released with severe mental health needs. The Board can be assured that the NHS England Liaison and Diversion Service specification already provides the mechanisms needed to improve court awareness of the consequences of releasing people with serious mental illness. These services underwent a re-procurement in 2025 and new pan-London services went live in November 2025. The specification strengthens the flow of information between different agencies across the criminal justice sector, including courts, prisons and healthcare teams, with these services specifically designed to identify and assess people with mental health needs and vulnerabilities to inform decision-making. HMP Wandsworth has also established improved links with the Courts Diversion Team and Mental Health Services in the community which has been achieved through the prison's Local Delivery Board.

Whilst there is much still to do, I was reassured that the Board considers the recovery work is being maintained and that incidents of self-harm, assaults on staff and the need to use force reduced during the reporting period. It was interesting to read about the positive early indications from the pilot residential unit which is following Scandinavian penal principles. It was pleasing that work and education places have been increased to create opportunities for prisoners to learn skills. I also hope that the visits to the prison by HRH The Princess Royal in October 2025 and my predecessor, Lord Timpson in January 2026 were helpful.

I note you have raised some 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 continue to be grateful for the dedication and independent scrutiny that members of Independent Monitoring Boards provide throughout the estate and we want to thank you for your hard work on behalf of HMP Wandsworth.



Catherine McKinnell MP
Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending

Annex

HMP WANDSWORTH: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JUNE 2025 – 31 MAY 2026

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Infrastructure

HMPPS acknowledges the delays regarding the delivery of estate projects and lessons that have been learnt have been applied to help strengthen the planning and delivery of further works at HMP Wandsworth and at other sites across the estate. Local concerns about estate projects continue to be escalated through the appropriate governance arrangements, but the appointment of an onsite Project Manager at HMP Wandsworth has been supporting improvements in local outcomes. The construction of the Nightingale Unit was significantly delayed by a combination of Covid-19 restrictions, wider construction challenges and Care Quality Commission guidelines for a new healthcare facility. The improvements being undertaken on K wing are part of a wider programme to the Trinity Building which are substantial and go beyond like-for-like replacement, incorporating fire safety improvements, increased shower facilities and upgraded windows within the constraints of an aging prison with listed status. The scope and complexity of the work requires the whole wing to be taken out of use to ensure maximum value for money and whilst there have been some delays, an overspend is not currently forecast. The lessons learned from K Wing will be applied to the further phases on G and H Wings. In terms of the Chapel project whilst this is progressing through development this remains subject to funding approval and a detailed programme with timescales is not yet confirmed.

Fire Safety

Fire safety is taken seriously across the prison estate and it is a priority issue at HMP Wandsworth. A substantial Fire Safety Improvement project commenced at the prison in July 2026 which will make upgrades to the existing fire pump house, cell ventilation and smoke extraction systems, emergency lighting, misting units and replacement fire hose reels. HMPPS is also conscious of the fire safety risk while work is ongoing to complete the installation of Automatic Fire Detection (AFD) in all cells in the prison and across the estate. This is being constrained by the supporting infrastructure particularly in older buildings and the population capacity which limits the number of cells that can be emptied to secure areas to complete the installation. Whilst everything reasonably possible is being done to install AFD in cells as quickly as possible, steps have also been taken to minimise risks, including placing standalone battery-powered smoke detectors immediately outside cell doors which ensures compliance with fire safety legislation as confirmed in a recent Crown Premises Fire Safety Inspection.

Kitchen and Telephony Contracts

HMPPS recognises the importance of effective oversight of contracts to ensure that services are delivered to the required standard and remain responsive to operational requirements. Although formal contract management responsibilities continue to be delivered by specialist contract management and commercial teams, governors play a key role in identifying delivery issues as they arise, with clear routes of escalation when prisons have concerns about delivery. HMPPS and colleagues across the Ministry of Justice continue to strengthen the practical support available to Governors to focus on effective day-to-day working to avoid burdening them with formal contract management responsibilities. Whilst telephony faults will be addressed and repaired as soon as possible after being reported, where a prison has concerns about telephony services these can be escalated centrally to the PIN phone services team. For facilities management there are local monthly tripartite meeting which capture concerns about delivery. A

national procurement programme is also nearing completion to secure new contracts for facilities management services across the prison estate which aims to come into service by autumn 2027 to improve outcomes and ensure value for money. In the interim, additional funding has been allocated this year to replace equipment on hire and improvements have been made to the catering supply contract to support faster repair and replacement.

Staffing

HMPPS is committed to ensuring that prisons are sufficiently staffed and that the right levels of experience are retained as this is fundamental to delivering quality outcomes. Careful monitoring of staffing levels takes place across the estate and recruitment efforts are ongoing at all sites where vacancies exist or they are projected. Drivers of staff attrition are also being tackled, as well as there being a wider Enable Programme within HMPPS to strengthen the professional development of the workforce. Prison Officer Foundation Training is currently being redesigned to embed continuous professional development throughout a prison officer's career, rather than concentrating training solely at the point of entry. A structured 12-month learning programme is being designed that combines formal training with supported operational experience, alongside regular assessment and mentoring to provide the skills, knowledge and support needed to work safely and effectively. This will be supplemented by a range of ongoing learning and development opportunities, including mandatory refresher training, role-specific professional development, specialist qualifications and leadership programmes. In addition, absence management is a priority at HMP Wandsworth with the newly appointed London Prison Group Director recognising this as an area of concern that impacts delivery and has commissioned an independent review which commenced in October 2026 to identify opportunities to make improvements.