



UK NPM statement on the Committee for the Prevention of Torture's (CPT) report on their ad hoc visit to England in December 2025

October 2026

The UK NPM welcomes the findings from the Council of Europe Committee for the Prevention of Torture's (CPT) [report on its ad hoc visit to the UK](#) in December 2025. The visit focused on the treatment of women in prison in England and Wales, with the delegation visiting HMP Eastwood Park and HMP Styal.

During their visit, the CPT delegation visited HMP Eastwood Park and HMP Styal and met with HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP), a UK NPM organisation, as well as the Ministry of Justice, HM Prison and Probation Service, the NHS, the Howard League for Penal Reform and Prison Reform Trust.

Ongoing engagement with the CPT is of great value to the UK NPM as the Committee has significant expertise on the human rights and treatment of people deprived of their liberty.

Findings

The UK NPM was pleased to see examples of good practice recognised by the CPT and recognises that such practices are the result of the dedication and hard work of all those involved.

At the same time, the CPT report contains wide-ranging observations and recommendations, including in relation to accommodation standards, staff training and the impact of staff shortages, with some of these issues having previously been raised by NPM bodies. While some of the CPT's observations have been identified below, the UK NPM encourages readers to review the [full report](#).

Accommodation and maintenance

The CPT noted that urgent action was needed to bring HMP Styal into conformity with fire safety regulations given that the lives of women, and potentially their children, were at risk. The UK NPM welcomes the Government's response confirming that HMP Styal is a priority site within the Fire Safety Improvements programme, however given the safety risks involved, the UK NPM urges swift action to ensure compliance with fire safety regulations and where works may be ongoing, ensure that appropriate safeguards are put in place.

The CPT also noted that some areas of HMP Styal were in an inadequate state of repair, echoing concerns previously reported by UK NPM bodies. During an inspection in 2024, HMIP found that most houses at HMP Styal needed significant investment to make them decent, and the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Styal has repeatedly raised concerns about the state of repair of the houses, alongside concerns about delays to maintenance work programmes.

While conditions of detention at Eastwood Park were generally acceptable, the CPT noted the size of some cells designed for single occupancy being used to accommodate more than one prisoner and reminded authorities that toilets in multiple-occupancy cells should be fully partitioned.

Staffing and Staff Training

As in many places of deprivation of liberty across the UK, and as echoed by NPM bodies, the CPT identified staffing shortfalls at both prisons which affected regime delivery, and impaired safety and prisoner welfare. The CPT also found that staff needed more support to face the specific challenges within the female estate and recommended that training for prison officers is reassessed and strengthened.

In its response, the UK Government confirmed that substantive recruitment efforts continue at all sites (including Eastwood and Styal) where vacancies exist or are projected. The response also noted that prison officers working in women's prisons receive gender-specific training, and that from 2027 all new prison officers, including those in women's prisons, will benefit from redesigned initial training.

Short Sentences

At the time of the visit, the CPT found that a large proportion of the population at HMP Eastwood Park and HMP Styal were being deprived of their liberty for short periods, either having been recalled (for 14- or 28-days) or serving short sentences. The CPT noted that short periods in custody provide insufficient time for women to participate meaningfully in therapeutic activities or programmes, and can disrupt housing, healthcare, relationships and other forms of community support.

Both the CPT report and the UK Government's response refer to provisions in the Sentencing Act 2026 replacing 14- and 28-day recalls with a fixed-term recall of 56 days. The CPT has expressed doubts that increasing the number of days of recall to 56 days will sufficiently address the specific needs of the women on recall. While commenting on sentencing policy does not fall within its remit, the UK NPM agrees with the CPT's assessment that there must be a focus on the reasons behind women being recalled – for example, unmet mental health, social care and housing needs.

Mental Health

Positively, the delegation found that the general provision of somatic and mental healthcare at both prisons was of good quality and delivered in a trauma-informed way. However, mental healthcare provision remained challenging, with transfers to secure mental health facilities too slow. The CPT has called for a thorough assessment of women's mental healthcare needs at both HMP Eastwood Park and HMP Styal, and recommended wider access to tailored therapeutic activities and more comprehensive mental health support following release.

The UK NPM welcomes the CPT's recognition of the work undertaken to prevent suicide and self-harm, including multidisciplinary case management, de-escalation approaches and specialist programmes. These initiatives demonstrate the positive outcomes that can be achieved through individualised and trauma-informed support. Also highlighted as good practice was the use of a summary sheet at HMP Styal which provided staff with an insight into the specific needs, triggers and positive interactions for the various women held on the care and separation unit there.

Response and Next Steps

The CPT's report demonstrates the need for sustained action to improve outcomes for women in detention. The UK NPM notes, however, that many of the issues identified cannot be addressed by one system alone. Coordinated investment in community mental healthcare, housing, social care, probation services and specialist women's services are all essential to addressing the complex needs that often bring women into contact with the justice system.

The UK NPM is pleased to note that the UK Government has stated its commitment to work with the CPT to improve the conditions and care of women deprived of their liberty.

Rachel Lindsay, Chair of the UK NPM, said:

"I welcome the CPT's report and recommendations, and thank the Committee for its continued engagement and support, which is of real value to the UK NPM. While it is encouraging to see positive practice recognised in relation to the treatment of women in prison in England and Wales, significant challenges remain in ensuring that treatment and conditions meet acceptable standards. The UK NPM will carefully consider the report's findings and how best it can support continued improvement across the UK's deprivation of liberty landscape."

For any enquiries, please contact the UK NPM Secretariat at UKNPM@hmi.prisons.gov.uk.

[END]