



Ministry  
of Justice

**Lord Timpson**  
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Forest Bank  
Agecroft Road  
Salford  
M27 8FB

**MoJ ref:** SUB125641

10 July 2025

Dear Chair,

**HMP FOREST BANK: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 NOVEMBER 2023 – 31 OCTOBER 2024**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Forest Bank. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work that has been put into capturing your helpful observations, particularly as you were short of members.

I understand from the establishment that five prisoners died in custody or shortly after release during the reporting year. Every death in our care is a tragedy and I offer my sincere condolences to the friends and family of all the deceased and would like to reassure the Board that recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman are taken very seriously.

Having read your report with care, I do understand the capacity pressures prisons have been facing nationally but there are no plans to increase the capacity at HMP Forest Bank currently. All additional prisoner places within the HMP Forest Bank contract have been applied and the increase in capacity during the reporting year returned the prison to its original operational capacity. This had previously been reduced as the prison was subject to contractual action through a Rectification Notice. However, steps are being taken aimed at addressing prison capacity. In July 2024, the Lord Chancellor announced a package of measures including changing the automatic release point for those serving standard determinate sentences from 50% to 40%. In December 2024, the 10-Year Prison Capacity Strategy was published which sets out the delivery of 14,000 additional prison places by 2031 consisting of the construction of four new prisons, as well as the expansion and refurbishment of the existing estate and temporary accommodation. An Annual Statement on prison capacity was also published at this time, which provides additional transparency to hold this and future governments to account on long-term planning to ensure that decisions on prison demand and supply are balanced.

Prison building is just one part of this Government's plan and the Independent Review of Sentencing which was launched in October 2024 with a goal to ensure we are never again in a position where there are more prisoners than prison places. To allow for this review a further package of measures were introduced to alleviate the capacity within prisons, including extending the maximum Home Detention Curfew period from 6 to 12 months, reforming recall practices, and identifying further ways to speed up the removal of foreign national offenders in prisons.

It was encouraging to receive your comments about progression opportunities for prisoners with purposeful activities increasing during the year and good standards of education and industries training

being provided. I was reassured to read about the prisons progress in proactively tackling drug, illicit items, organised crime and corruption. It was also pleasing to note the excellent levels of hygiene and cleanliness in the kitchens and effort of staff and prisoner cleaners taking pride in providing a clean and decent living environment.

I note you have raised some local issues of concern in your report which the Director will continue to keep you aware of as work continues. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) comments in response to other issues raised in your report are set out in the attached annex.

The Lord Chancellor and I appreciated the valuable role played by members of Independent Monitoring Boards throughout the estate and we are very grateful for your continued hard work on behalf of HMP Forest Bank.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James', written in a cursive style.

**Lord Timpson**  
**Minister for Prisons, Probation, and Reducing Reoffending**

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**HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report**

**Reception Prisons**

The Government does recognise the pressure that HMPPS is operating under and it remains a priority to maximise the capacity in reception prisons to be able to serve the courts. For this reason, two prisons, HMP Liverpool and HMP Holme House have been re-rolled to increase reception capacity and HMP Brixton will also re-roll to a reception and resettlement prison serving the local courts. HMPPS will continue to undertake transfers in accordance with Offender Flow rules despite the continued population pressures across the entire adult male prison estate. It is also acknowledged that due to the Remand and Convicted Unsentenced population remaining at unprecedented levels, alongside national prison capacity remaining challenging, prisons are continuing to show flexibility with their prisoner cohorts. However, prisons will continue to ensure that the rehabilitation needs of each prisoner are met and protected and most prisoners continue to be held in the right place at the right stage of their sentence to get the help they need to manage their risks.