



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Leicester
Welford Road
Leicester
LE2 7AJ

MoJ ref: SUB126637

21 August 2025

Dear Chair,

**HMP LEICESTER: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 FEBRUARY 2024 – 31 JANUARY 2025**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Leicester. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the Board for its dedicated monitoring and the comprehensive insight provided into the prison's performance over the reporting period while short of members.

I have read your report with care and understand the Board's continued concerns about the number of prisoners with serious mental health needs who face delays in accessing secure hospital placements. The Government recognises that these delays can have significant implications for the care of vulnerable individuals. We continue to work closely with NHS England and the Department of Health and Social Care to reform the Mental Health Act 1983 and improve access to appropriate treatment for mentally unwell individuals in the criminal justice system. The Mental Health Bill is progressing through Parliament and currently awaiting the report stage in the House of Commons before going through its 3rd and final reading. These reforms aim to reduce unnecessary delays and ensure timely access to specialist care. NHS England is supporting this work through the development of an implementation plan and locally at HMP Leicester, multi-agency care planning is in place to manage complex mental health cases while hospital transfers are awaited.

The Board also raised concerns about the number of prisoners released from HMP Leicester without accommodation, which I acknowledge you also raised in your previous report. Access to stable housing is central to successful rehabilitation and reducing reoffending. Through the Community Accommodation Service Tier 3 (CAS3), we continue to provide transitional accommodation to prison-leavers under probation supervision who are at risk of homelessness. The East Midlands region has access to an expanding number of bedspaces and HMP Leicester benefits from the support of a dedicated Strategic Housing Specialist who works with local authorities and Homelessness Prevention Teams. Regular pre-release panels help ensure all available local options are explored and additional Community Accommodation Service Tier 2 (CAS2) beds are also available in the Leicester area for those released on bail or Home Detention Curfew.

I appreciate the concerns you have raised around a prisoner with severe dementia being placed in HMP Leicester and the risks that brought. The prisoner was a recall for breach of a sexual harm prevention order and was categorised as a critical public protection case. Unfortunately, he was held at HMP Leicester because, despite approaches, there was no suitable option to transfer him to an inpatient facility.

The prisoner was, however, successfully located to a suitable facility following various assessments and transferred prior to his release date under a Mental Health section. Whilst this situation was far from ideal, I would like to reassure you that the individual was kept under close scrutiny by NHS Commissioners who reported favourably on the care the prisoner was receiving in HMP Leicester.

In terms of appropriate pathways for those with dementia, all healthcare in prison is the responsibility of the NHS. NHS England has governance in place to support such individuals via multi-disciplinary meetings to discuss complex patients and regional and national escalation routes with support from a national Psychiatrist. A pathway has been developed with voluntary sector organisation Dementia UK who have delivered specialist dementia training onsite to both healthcare staff and prison staff. Community links have also been established with adult social care partners with medium secure and high secure specialist facilities and community facilities. However, there remain challenges with these facilities either refusing to take the patient and/or the shortage of inpatient beds, which are trying to be addressed.

I recognise the challenges in delivering timely and effective resettlement for those on short-term recall. HMP Leicester's pre-release team, which includes four dedicated Prison Service Officers, works proactively with the recall cohort to support Community Offender Managers in securing housing and other support ahead of release. A regional referral hub is also being explored to improve the speed and quality of referrals to services. While time constraints and accommodation restrictions create real challenges, especially for those excluded from council or CAS3 housing, work with partners remains focused on improving outcomes for this high-risk group.

Longer-term, we are looking to address this issue. You will be aware that the recently published Independent Sentencing Review recognises that short fixed-term recalls are ineffective and disruptive to individuals. It therefore recommends a new recall model that tightens the threshold and replaces short-term recalls with a longer fixed-term recall period for the most serious non-compliance and risk.

I was pleased to note a number of positive developments during the reporting period. The reduction in self-harm incidents by 33%, and a 55% fall in prison transfer-related incidents, reflects an increased focus on care and safety although I appreciate there is more to do. The continued development of education provision, including improved attendance and success rates in functional skills, is commendable. It is encouraging to see the reintroduction of Prisoner Council meetings as well as the delivery of accredited restorative justice and conflict resolution programmes through the chaplaincy. The Board's continued recognition of constructive staff/prisoner engagement and thoughtful initiatives, such as the new reception shop and additional pin credit at Christmas, are further welcome signs of progress.

I note you have raised some issues of concern in your report for His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), and comments in response to these are set out in the attached annex. In respect of the local issues of concern in your report, the Governor will continue to keep you updated on as work progress.

The Lord Chancellor and I continue to appreciate the value Independent Monitoring Boards bring throughout the estate. We extend our gratitude to you and your members for your ongoing dedication on behalf of HMP Leicester.

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

Availability of Illegal Drugs and prevention

The Board's concerns about the availability of illegal drugs within HMP Leicester, including through the use of drones, are noted. HMP Leicester benefits from a full suite of specialist equipment designed to intercept contraband, including X-ray body scanners, baggage scanners and Enhanced Gate Security. A major project to replace all windows across the site was mandated last year to help reduce the risk of illicit items being passed into the prison. The outline business case was approved in March 2025 and the project is now in the detailed design phase. The final full business case is expected to be submitted for funding approval by March 2026 with a projected start-on-site date of May 2026.

The Governor has taken a proactive approach to address both the supply of and demand for drugs. The prison works closely with substance misuse services to identify individuals at risk and to promote support for abstinence. To combat supply routes, continuous CCTV monitoring of external areas has been installed to help detect drones and intelligence-led searching has been intensified using both local and national resources. These efforts are supported by an in-house dog team, which has achieved some positive results during the reporting period.

HMPPS has provided additional support, including upskilling security analysts, facilitating closer working with law enforcement agencies, funding extra security management resource and revising the Local Security Strategy. A State of Security Review has been completed and temporary staffing shortages in the dedicated searching team have been addressed through targeted backfilling.