



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP/YOI Brinsford
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MoJ ref: SUB126726

24 September 2025

Dear Chair,

**HMP/YOI BRINSFORD: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 JULY 2023 – 30 JUNE 2024**

Thank you for submitting your Board's annual report on HMP/YOI Brinsford. I would like to express my appreciation to you and your colleagues for your continued commitment to independent monitoring and for the valuable insights you provide. This is especially commendable given that you have been operating with approximately half of the recommended complement of members.

I recognise the Board's concerns regarding the recruitment and retention of staff across the Prison Service. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) carefully monitors resourcing levels through a number of processes which provide the appropriate level of information for staffing decisions to be made. There is a centralised recruitment model for Prison Officers and targeted interventions are applied to those prisons with the most need. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) continues to enhance its recruitment processes to ensure that those it attracts, and recruits, have the relevant skills and attributes needed to meet the demands and expectations of the role. This includes ensuring the assessment tools help provide a realistic job preview, filter unsuitable applicants at the earliest stage, and allow only the most suitable applicants to progress. To support retention, HMPPS have introduced a Retention Toolkit which identifies local, regional, and national interventions against the drivers of attrition. This toolkit is utilised by establishments to ensure that they are embedding bespoke Retention Plans.

The workforce planning processes also help prison groups to manage their current staffing levels as well as making accurate projections about their future needs. In regard to HMP/YOI Brinsford specifically, I am pleased to report that staff retention has improved, with resignation rates reducing from 9.69% in July 2024 to 5.79% in April 2025, this being amongst the lowest rates for a Category C Resettlement Prison. The introduction of the New Colleague Mentor has helped integrate new staff into the establishment and the ongoing staff wellbeing initiatives are contributing to these improved retention figures.

I was concerned to read that the Board considers the Crown Prosecution Service's (CPS) follow-up and prosecution of serious assaults, both prisoner-on-prisoner and those against staff, to be insufficient. It is of utmost importance that all assaults are dealt with swiftly and appropriately. I can reassure you that the HMPPS Prison Safety Group is working closely with the Police and the CPS to ensure those who commit violent offences in prison are successfully prosecuted. To support prosecutions, over 13,000 Body Worn Video Cameras are available across public sector prisons, meaning every Band 3-5 officer can wear a camera whilst on shift. This helps to provide high-quality evidence to support the progression of effective prosecutions. HMPPS have also established a Crime in Prisons Team to further disrupt and deter crime and ensure the evidence and investigations lead to improved criminal justice outcomes.

Following the appointment of the Crime in Prison Co-ordinator (CiPCo) at HMP/YOI Brinsford in January this year, there have been remarkable improvements in identifying and referring prison-based crime. I am aware that the CiPCo role has already strengthened multi-agency coordination and is helping embed best practice across the estate. The partnership working has resulted in evidence packages being both timely and produced to the required standards, resulting in more cases being investigated and progressed to the CPS. The CPS are providing clear reasoning when not pursuing a prosecution and the CiPCo role serves as an essential conduit for improving transparency for victims and staff. The Police's recent commendation nomination for the CiPCo at HMP/YOI Brinsford serves as a strong endorsement of the significant impact of this work.

I share your concerns regarding the delays in the court system and the particular impact of these on remand prisoners. The Government has already taken a number of measures to address the backlog. The first phase report of the Independent Review of the Criminal Courts commissioned by the Lord Chancellor and led by Sir Brian Leveson was published on 9th July 2025. The review was undertaken to consider the merits of longer-term reform, as well as reviewing the efficiency and timeliness of court processes. The report made a number of recommendations to build upon the measures already put into place. Our measures included increasing Magistrates Court sentencing powers from 6 months to 12 months' imprisonment for single triable-either way offences and funding 110,000 sitting days in the Crown Court this financial year, which is a record high. The Spending Review settlement will provide additional investment of up to £450 million per year for the courts system by the end of the Spending Review period and the MoJ is working closely with His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service to understand the impact of the recommendations and establish timelines for implementation.

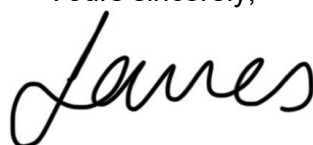
It was most pleasing to read your positive comments about how the Senior Leadership Team at HMP/YOI Brinsford continue to strive for higher standards. I also noted the continued reduction in the number of prisoners who self-harm that is attributed to the exemplary staff teams working well together. It is commendable that healthcare and mental health staff are continually working to help those men who are vulnerable to self-harming from doing so. I was encouraged to learn about the work done with those who have vulnerabilities, whom you describe as being very well looked after, with some excellent work being observed in helping them cope with their particular circumstances and needs. I am heartened to hear about this compassionate response by key staff within HMP/YOI Brinsford to the people in their care.

I was very interested in your comments about the completion of a modern and well-equipped care leavers' flat at the prison. Being able to provide high quality resettlement support is fundamentally important and a flat designed to replicate a home environment and facilitate the development of essential skills will help immensely. I look forward to learning more about the impact of this initiative in your next report.

HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) comments in response to other issues raised in your report are set out in the attached annex and the Governor will continue to keep you updated on matters raised for their attention as work progresses.

The Lord Chancellor and I sincerely appreciate the invaluable 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/YOI Brinsford.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James', with a stylized, flowing script.

Lord Timpson
Minister for Prisons, Probation, and Reducing Reoffending

HMP/YOI BRINSFORD: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JULY 2023 – 30 JUNE 2024

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Infrastructure Investment

HMPPS is continually reviewing the investment required across the estate. These proposals will be underpinned by the data collected in recent condition surveys which assess the fabric, cells, and critical assets at each prison. These will inform long-term forward maintenance registers, which can then be prioritised against future capital budgets. All requests from the establishment will be considered, noting that demands for maintenance are much greater than the available funding. Therefore, once a bid for a project is received, HMPPS has to prioritise works very carefully to make best use of that funding, focusing on risk to life and risk to capacity and decency.

The Board will be aware of the numerous projects underway or completed at HMP/YOI Brinsford totalling in excess of £5 million. Future works include the Fire Safety Improvement (FSI) programme which is currently forecasted to commence in 2026. In March 2025, further bids were made to upgrade both the heating management system (BMS) and water infrastructure and for replacement of all the old windows with vented cellular accommodation windows.

Through the Clean, Rehabilitative, Enabling, and Decent (CRED) programme; investment in a Band 6 Clean and Decent Lead and the re-introduction of the cleaning officer role, The prison has worked to improve both cell refurbishment and decency across the site. Living conditions have improved as a result, however it is acknowledged that this area requires further attention. The maintenance contractor's local performance is now positive and all Key Performance Indicators are being met.

Mental Health Care

A national Rapid Review Framework is being established to drive forward actions to improve the timeliness of prison transfers to secure mental health hospitals across the estate. Regionally (Midlands-wide) there is a monthly strategic working group across Health and Justice Commissioning, Specialised Commissioning and Provider Collaboratives that has developed a Regional Action Plan to focus on key areas such as bed capacity, clinical prioritisation, data collection and scoping of new models of delivery (e.g. rapid assessment, treatment, and remission). A fortnightly, clinically led operational group meets to discuss patient-specific cases and actions required across all partners to ensure timely transfer to secure beds. The West Midlands Health and Justice Commissioning team continue to chair a fortnightly call with the commissioners and providers of secure mental health services to discuss and support the timely assessment and transfer of prisoners, although the availability of suitable beds does remain a constraining factor. Visits to the Health Care Centre are undertaken by the Governor at HMP/YOI Brinsford several times a week to monitor timescales and moves for prisoners waiting a mental health bed with the Head of Healthcare and healthcare staff.

Prisoners' Property

HMPPS note the Board's concerns about the handling of prisoners' property. This is an area to which HMPPS is currently giving further attention. Careful consideration is being given to the findings in the IMB National Thematic Report on how property loss impacts on prisoners, as well as those received from Independent Prisoner Complaint Investigations following a thematic review of the property complaints they have received in the last five years. Since receiving the reports, Governors and other senior leaders have been reminded of the most important property handling points. This includes the need to ensure compliance with volumetric control limits.

HMPPS also note the Board's concerns about the lack of digital improvements on property handling. HMPPS recognises the current prisoner property card solution on NOMIS is not adequate and consequently it is not widely used across the estate. MoJ Justice Digital team have prioritised their work

to decommission NOMIS, meaning that prisoner property has not been addressed. Given the findings on property loss and its impact on prisoners, potential digital solutions will be explored and reviewed as part of routine quarterly prioritisation activity and will involve a wide range of stakeholders. Risks around replacing NOMIS within the required timescales will be considered as part of the prioritisation exercise. Capacity to deliver a solution will be subject to the results of the Spending Review.

At HMP/YOI Brinsford, the Governor has made property issues a priority with both Enhanced Gate Security and Reception teams working collaboratively. This has seen a reduction in complaints relating to local processes. Revised processes for receiving clothing parcels have been introduced which aims to streamline processing and searching requirements. The recently introduced staffing profile additionally provides weekend cover to support the issuing of property to prisoners once processed and for prisoners transferring in. The processing of property out of the establishment has also improved, particularly in cases where prisoners move to another establishment following a court appearance.

Education and Purposeful Activity

Novus

Novus is contractually and ethically committed to deliver education that supports prisoner rehabilitation and reduces reoffending. Education providers are not penalised for withdrawals, rather they are judged against success rate targets which are calculated by the percentage of learners starting a course against the percentage who complete a course. This is in line with education practice in the community. The Prison Service is responsible for commissioning courses and for allocating learners at site level and not the education supplier. The provider faces financial penalties if they do not run courses that have been commissioned by the site and on the Annual Delivery Plan. There is no financial incentive not to run courses with the fear that prisoners may withdraw. In the event a prisoner withdraws, there is an expectation that Novus will make efforts to re-engage learners and not cancel provision. This system is designed to encourage flexibility and persistence.

Unavailable courses/completion of courses prior to transfer

It is acknowledged that due to national overcrowding issues, there may have been continued cases of prisoners being transferred to HMP/YOI Brinsford prior to completing courses in their residing establishment and instances of these courses not being available in the establishment to proceed with. Prisoners should not be transferred whilst they are attending an Offending Behaviour Programme (OBP) and will be placed on hold when they are imminently due to start or are already on a programme. HMPPS does not however hold individuals from transfer when they are not on or about to commence an accredited OBP.

Access to OBPs is prioritised by closeness to release and risk level in custody and depends on both the priority of an individual and the capacity of places available at a time. Accredited programmes generally run with eight places per group and depending on the intensity level can on average run for between ten weeks up to six months. Prisoners may be required to move on to alternative prisons, sometimes for other progression opportunities and there may be opportunities to access accredited programmes at an alternative site as there are 75 prisons planned in 2025/26 to operate the newly accredited Building Choices OBPs, plus five prisons running Democratic Therapeutic communities.