



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Leeds
2 Gloucester Terrace
Stanningley Road
Leeds
LS12 2TJ

MoJ ref: SUB127300

15 September 2025

Dear Chair,

**HMP LEEDS: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 JANUARY 2024 – 31 DECEMBER 2024**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Leeds. I have noted that you continued to operate with several vacancies despite the recruitment campaigns. I am extremely grateful to you and your colleagues for your ongoing dedication and for the hard work put into capturing your helpful observations. It is a testament to your commitment that the Board increased the number of monitoring visits and handled significantly more applications during the reporting year despite the depleted numbers.

I was deeply saddened to learn that seven prisoners died during the reporting year, six of which I understand were self-inflicted. I offer my heartfelt condolences to the friends and family of all the deceased and would like to reassure you that recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman are taken very seriously.

HMP Leeds is currently receiving enhanced support from headquarters' National Safety Group under the Cluster Death Support process. This is being co-ordinated by a taskforce led by the Area Executive Director. Recent support has included production of a bespoke Safety Learning Summary and National Safety Group visits that provided targeted Assessment Care in Custody Teamwork (ACCT) refresher sessions for staff. I appreciate the Board's concerns around the recording of information on the ACCT case management system and I can assure you that the National Safety Group will continue to work to achieve better implementation. Recent improvements include a new quality assurance tool together with an improved recording system for observations and conversations.

The Governor has also been working with the healthcare provider and NHS England to explore an increase in mental health provision and improved links with the non-custodial services (including liaison and diversion services). Other measures taken locally include the introduction of CCTV assurance, improved governance arrangements, and the creation of a Family and Significants Officer position to deliver events and support for prisoners not receiving family contact, including Foreign National Offenders. One self-inflicted death is one too many and that is why I would like to echo the Board's recognition of the quick actions of prison officers and the healthcare team throughout the year who intervened to save the lives of prisoners during attempts of suicide.

HMP Leeds is a historic establishment facing infrastructure challenges commensurate to its age. In recognition of these issues, I am pleased to confirm that substantial funding has been secured for the 2025–26 financial year to support a series of critical upgrades. These improvements are designed to enhance safety, decency, and security. Projects that have received significant financial backing include a

fire alarm system upgrade; body-scanner replacement; computer-controlled Building Management System upgrade; main kitchen freezer installation to improve food production and storage, and hospital substation improvements expected to future-proof the system for the next two decades. A site-wide cells call-system replacement bid has also been submitted and a decision is currently pending. While these initiatives will not resolve all existing challenges at HMP Leeds, they mark a significant step forward in improving the infrastructure and overall environment.

The Government is very mindful of the specific challenges faced by those serving Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentences. Whilst the Government is determined to make further progress to support this cohort towards a safe and sustainable release, it will not be in a way that compromises public protection. The latest published statistics show that as at 30 June 2025, the unreleased IPP prisoner population has fallen to 978 with the number of recalled IPP prisoners standing at 1,508. This is a significant milestone as it is the first time the unreleased IPP population has gone below 1000 prisoners. Our commitment can be seen from the refreshed IPP Action Plan published in July this year as part of the 2024/5 Annual Report on the IPP Sentence, which is the most effective way to help these prisoners reduce their risk so that they can progress towards safe release from custody.

Turning to the outcome of the Gauke Review and the backlog of court cases, the Lord Chancellor, in her statement to The House on 22 May 2025, set out the Government's in-principle support and intention to take forward the majority of recommendations in the review. The Sentencing Bill will be introduced in due course to take forward several of the recommendations. This will make significant changes to the sentencing framework and aim to put the prison system on a sustainable footing. To reduce the backlog of court cases, the Government has increased magistrates' court sentencing powers to free up capacity in the Crown Court; funded increased sitting days in the Crown Court this financial year to a record-high; and announced we will provide up to £450 million additional investment per year for the courts system by the end of the Spending Review period. The first phase report of the Independent Review of the Criminal Courts was published on 9th July 2025 and a number of recommendations were made to build upon the measures already put into place. The Ministry of Justice is working closely with HM Courts and Tribunals Service to understand the impact of the recommendations and establish timelines for implementation.

I appreciate that many of the Board's concerns are repeated issues, and I understand your frustration with progress on these matters. Whilst these issues remain ongoing, I was encouraged to note the increased utilisation of the video suite and wish Q-Branch maintenance team continued success. The initiative to recognise prison officers who dealt with challenging situations together with the Lean on Leeds and 'Check in on a Mate' schemes ought to be commended too. I was also impressed to learn of a prisoner establishing his own book club and of the good work done with the grounds of the prison.

HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) comments in response to other issues raised in your report are set out in the attached annex. The two issues of concern addressed to the Governor will be addressed locally who will continue to keep you aware of progress as work continues.

The Lord Chancellor and I continue to appreciate the invaluable role played by members of Independent Monitoring Boards throughout the estate and we are very grateful for your ongoing commitment and dedication on behalf of HMP Leeds.

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

HMP LEEDS: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JANUARY 2024 – 31 DECEMBER 2024

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Digitalisation

HMPPS recognises that digital tools and technology are transformational for our staff, regimes, and people in our care. HMPPS is continuing to develop the Digital Prison Services (DPS) platform that will replace the outdated legacy National Offender Management Information System (NOMIS) that staff use to manage and record data on offenders. DPS provides a single platform for a new set of modern digital services that will be more efficient, saving staff time and giving them confidence in the digital tools they use. It will empower staff to use their time more effectively.

Prisons are selected for DPS using a range of criteria, from involvement in initial research and development (known as 'Discovery') to testing prototype software and inform further design (Alpha and Beta testing). Once a viable product has been developed, a group of prisons will be selected to ensure all types of establishment and populations benefit from the service (Private Beta) before it is made available to all prisons/users and ultimately deployed as a live service. At each of these stages, Prisons Digital teams will consider factors that will ensure software is developed efficiently and will be likely to ensure progress to the whole estate as effectively as possible. For example, the teams may wish to select a wide range of cohorts and prison categories to design and test their prototypes and ensure all are able to use the service. In other cases, it may be more effective to select a geographical area to design and test a service.

Launchpad is another programme that includes the provision of WiFi infrastructure together with laptops for prisoners and kiosks on wings. Launchpad is modernising the prison estate, improving efficiency, processes, and communication across the estate. Decisions on future Launchpad expansion will be taken as and when funding becomes available, relevant considerations may include the need to alleviate operational and capacity pressures, along with other factors such as the specific needs of various prisoner cohorts and categories of prison, and the need to support evaluation plans. Unfortunately, HMPPS is unable to provide an implementation date for DPS or Launchpad at HMP Leeds at this time.

Staffing Levels and Training

Non-Effective Staffing Levels

Whilst HMP Leeds was 'over staffed' for much of the reporting period for officer grades, it is recognised that non-effective rates (absences due to annual leave, sickness, training etc.) were too high. It is also acknowledged that the Regime Management Plan has not been sufficiently implemented, however a review is underway. HMP Leeds has also recently re-introduced a training day to ensure existing-staff training is completed.

Training

All new prison officers receive training in suicide and self-harm prevention as well as mental health awareness as part of their foundation training course. This training is specifically designed to equip officers with a robust understanding of the complexities surrounding self-harm and suicide within custodial environments. The programme highlights the essential role that each staff member plays in recognising and responding to individuals at risk. It also introduces the support systems available to both prisoners and staff, ensuring officers are well-prepared to manage such situations effectively. A key focus of the training is the application of trauma-informed care principles and the cultivation of positive, supportive relationships with prisoners. Officers are trained to identify signs of vulnerability and to provide appropriate, compassionate support.

The Enable Programme is a dedicated HMPPS workforce transformation programme. It aims to transform prisons, changing how HMPPS trains, develops, leads, and supports prison staff to ensure that they feel

safe, supported, valued, and confident in their skills and their ability to make a difference. This includes core capability training packages which is intended for prison officers between 6 and 18 months into service who have already completed foundation training and induction. Implementation of the programme is being rolled out in a number of Early Adopter prisons. A new Custodial Manager Portfolio will support, build confidence and increase leadership capability in custodial managers, who are first-line managers in prisons and set the tone and culture across sites. A similar offer will be developed for Heads of Functions. New specialist roles with a focus on supporting and mentoring Prison Officers will also be introduced. The early adopter approach will also provide the opportunity to test the feasibility of implementing, localising, and scaling the Enable model across different operational contexts, with a particular emphasis on embedding relational approaches within custodial environments.

Offender Flow Policy

HMPPS is aware of the challenges posed by out of area prisoners and a high churn on our prisons. To address the acute pressures facing local prisons such as HMP Leeds, a series of emergency measures were implemented. The End of Custody Supervised Licence (ECSL) scheme facilitated over 13,000 early releases between October 2023 and September 2024, and the SDS40 policy, introduced in September 2024, reduced the automatic release point for certain sentences from 50% to 40%. Other measures such as Operation Safeguard, Operation Early Dawn, and the Temporary Presumptive Recategorisation Scheme (TPRS) have also been introduced to manage capacity and ease pressure on closed conditions. Fixed-term recalls were reformed, and over 3,500 Foreign National Offenders were removed in the second half of 2024, supported by a £5 million investment in specialist staff. These efforts have helped reduce population pressures and improve system flow.

There is strategic oversight of population pressures to coordinate operational decisions and ensure resilience. Estate reconfiguration efforts include strict staffing thresholds, capped contingency crowding, and a commitment to fire safety compliance by 2027. These measures, supported by trade unions and robust governance, aim to stabilise the system and ensure the safe and effective management of local prisons. The opening of HMP Millsike, new accommodation at HMP Rye Hill, and the re-rolling of HMP Holme House will further ease pressure across the estate and improve the situation.

Mental Health Transfers

HMPPS and the Ministry of Justice recognise that vulnerable people in prison who meet the threshold for detention under the Mental Health Act and require a transfer to hospital continue to experience delays in transfers to specialist facilities. The Mental Health Bill continues to progress through parliament. The Bill introduces a new statutory time limit of 28-days for the transfer of patients with a mental disorder from prison and other places of detention to hospital. This time limit, together with operational improvements, aims to reduce unnecessary delays and deliver swifter access to treatment. We are working with the Department of Health and Social Care, NHS England, the Welsh Government, the Home Office and the Youth Custody Service to create an implementation plan which sets out the operational improvements necessary to fulfil our commitment to commencing these reforms 18-24 month post Royal Assent. We are also working closely with our health and justice partners to support the development of the recently established Mental Health and Justice Strategic Advisory Group. This group will improve oversight of the transfer process by bringing together key partners across operational delivery to scrutinise data and intelligence on transfer timeliness, and identify and deliver solutions to address common causes of delays.