



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Erlestoke
Erlestoke
Devizes
SN10 5TU

MoJ ref: SUB128499

27 October 2025

Dear Chair,

**HMP ERLESTOKE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 APRIL 2024 – 31 MARCH 2025**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Erlestoke and for your continued oversight, dedication and scrutiny throughout the reporting year. Your observations provide valuable insight and are appreciated as part of our collective efforts to support improvement and maintain standards across the prison estate.

I was most saddened to learn during the reporting year, three men died. I offer my sincere condolences to their families and friends. The recommendations of the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) are taken seriously. We remain committed to learning from such tragic events, and we will respond as required following receipt of the PPO reports into these deaths.

I fully recognise the Board's concern around the growing number of older and more vulnerable individuals in custody and the challenges this presents. I would like to reassure the Board of the extensive collaborative work between Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust, His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) and Wiltshire Council to meet the complex needs of this cohort. Social care referrals are managed by the Safety Team and the monthly Social Care Meeting ensures timely oversight. The Memorandum of Understanding with Wiltshire Council has been reviewed and the Governor or Deputy Governor personally attends multi-disciplinary meetings for complex cases to minimise delays and ensure adequate provision. Nationally, strategic work is being approached to address the needs of older prisoners, following recommendations from the Independent Sentencing Review. This will be published in due course and will set out long-term solutions to ensure humane and fair treatment for this growing population.

I understand the Board's continued concern around mental health provision and complex needs. To address this, Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust has embedded an Integrated Mental Health Model at HMP Erlestoke, ensuring access to care through a specialist, multi-disciplinary approach. The service is responsive to emerging needs and when a patient shows signs of relapse, support is increased through regular reviews. The Mental Health Bill, currently progressing through Parliament, introduces a statutory 28-day time limit for transfers from prison to hospital. This places NHS England's best practice guidance on a legal footing and alongside operational improvements, aims to reduce delays and deliver swifter access to treatment. The Mental Health and Justice Strategic Advisory Group, chaired by NHS England's National Medical Director for Mental Health and Neurodiversity, will oversee implementation, agree a joint work plan and hold partners to account. The Bill also includes reforms to prevent courts from detaining people with severe mental illness in prison as a place of safety, end the use of 'remand for own protection'

under the Bail Act and improve access to treatment under the Mental Health Act. The Chief Medical Officer's forthcoming report will provide further recommendations to strengthen mental health care in custody.

I remain deeply concerned about the plight of those serving Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentences. The refreshed IPP Action Plan, published in July 2025, places renewed emphasis on effective frontline delivery and includes measurable targets for transparency and accountability. Our latest IPP Annual Report outlines the specific outcomes delivered. At HMP Erlestoke, IPP prisoner representatives and an IPP forum have been introduced to support this cohort. Progression Panels, attended by the Senior Probation Officer, assess referrals to the Progression Regime. Suitability is determined by the Head of Progression Regime and a Forensic Psychologist with spaces offered based according to sentence plan objectives and readiness to engage. Where insufficient IPP prisoners meet the criteria, Life Sentence and Detention for Public Protection prisoners may access the regime to maintain its ethos and culture. Regionally, a robust governance structure monitors the Area approach to IPP progression. A monthly IPP Progression Board coordinates multidisciplinary work and oversees the local iteration of the national Action Plan. It monitors performance against national targets and initiates staff training to embed policy into practice. Nationally, the number of unreleased IPP prisoners fell by 14% and the number of recalled IPP prisoners fell by 6% in the year to June 2025. The re-release of 602 recalled IPP prisoners in 2024, the highest ever, reflects the impact of these reforms.

I acknowledge the Board's concern regarding the food budget. Budgets for prisoner food have increased incrementally, rising from £2.18 per prisoner per day in 2022–2023 to £3.01 in 2024–2025. Budgets for 2025–2026 have been increased in line with inflation funding received by HMPPS. Governors retain the flexibility to manage their overall budget and may supplement food provision if needed. At HMP Erlestoke, the Farms & Gardens team has developed a growing plan with the Catering Manager to supply fresh produce to the kitchen. Soup has been introduced at lunchtimes to increase portion sizes and reduce waste. A self-service breakfast offer allows prisoners to determine their own portion size of cereal. These initiatives improve nutrition, reduce waste and support prisoner wellbeing. I am committed to ensuring that collaborative work continues between catering managers and public health partners to promote healthy eating and share good practice across the estate.

I am encouraged by the progress the Board has recognised. I am pleased that you have noted the increase in direct releases and moves to open conditions for IPP prisoners who have participated in the Progression Regime. I am proud that you have acknowledged the work of the dedicated substance misuse officers on the Drug Recovery Wing and the rich programme of activities they have developed. I am also heartened by the significant decrease in unemployed prisoners and the improvements made in allocating individuals to purposeful activity spaces. These are important steps forward.

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, as work progresses, in regard to the local issues of concern which have been raised.

The Deputy Prime Minister and I appreciate the valuable role undertaken by members of Independent Monitoring Boards throughout the estate. We extend our gratitude to you for your ongoing dedication on behalf of HMP Erlestoke.

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 ERLESTOKE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 APRIL 2024 – 31 MARCH 2025

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Constant Watch Cell

Although the new houseblocks are currently on hold, each has been designed to include a dedicated observation cell with improved sightlines, enhanced privacy and safer environments for individuals at risk. Funding has been secured to refurbish the existing constant watch cell at Erlestoke with works scheduled for completion this financial year. MOJ Property Services has commissioned alterations to the Constant Watch Cell in the Care and Separation Unit, including changes to furniture to eliminate blind spots and improve staff visibility. These works are being delivered in collaboration with the establishment and project colleagues and are expected to be completed within this financial year.

Healthcare Building

While there are currently no bids with Estates for a full replacement, a series of improvements have been planned and funded to address the most pressing issues. Funding has been granted for roof repairs in the 2025/2026 financial year with internal decoration to follow. Safety rails and fencing have been installed to support roof access and repairs. MOJ Property Services have removed redundant equipment from the roof to prevent water ingress and will undertake further sealing and repairs to the internal guttering system. Additional works will include ceiling and wall repairs in staff areas and redecoration of damaged zones. To maximise available space, the establishment has converted a former officer locker room into a confidential consultation room and is utilising additional clinic space in the Silbury Hub. Further space will be repurposed once racking works are completed in the main store room. Although a new healthcare building was not included in the Small Secure Houseblocks project, each new unit will include a treatment room and dispensary. Pharmacy storage capacity has also been enhanced following a joint assessment with the Governor.

Environmental risks associated with the healthcare environment are captured on both the prison and Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust risk registers and are discussed regularly with NHS England and HMPPS at Local Delivery & Quality Board meetings. Oxleas NHS foundation trust continues to conduct regular Infection Prevention Control audits with findings shared with operational partners.

Hospital Escorts

A joint HMPPS and NHS England review of escort, bed watch and constant supervision is underway with recommendations due by March 2026. This will inform future resource models and improve access to care. HMPPS is actively engaging with the NHSE Specialist Care Pathway group to improve access to specialist services and drawing on learning from the Airedale telemedicine pilot to reduce the need for hospital escorts. Dialogue with local NHS Trusts, including University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust is ongoing to explore joint working opportunities. At HMP Erlestoke, the Resourcing Team works collaboratively with healthcare colleagues to plan hospital appointments in line with the agreed profile of 10 escorts per week. Emergency appointments are facilitated according to clinical priority. Cancelled escort data is monitored via the Local Delivery & Quality Board and action is taken to address contributing factors.

Nicotine Replacement Therapy

Nicotine Replacement Therapy is currently available for prisoners to purchase via the canteen list, although it is not automatically provided on arrival. There is no current one-to-one provision for those wishing to stop vaping. Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust will explore, with NHS England and Public Health colleagues, the feasibility of offering structured support to individuals who wish to cease vaping. This is an important area for development, particularly given the link between vaping and debt.

Access to Essential Medicines on Arrival

At HMP Erlestoke, systems are now in place to administer prescribed medication during the first seven days of arrival, provided the sending prison has supplied signed evidence of the current prescription. Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust works closely with transferring establishments to obtain up-to-date medication information prior to transfer. The establishment continues to experience high levels of arrivals outside of commissioned service hours. In these cases, the priority remains to assess and restart essential medicines as quickly as possible. Handover processes are being strengthened to prevent delays and HMPPS will continue to support improvements in this area.

Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT)

HMPPS welcomes the improvements made in healthcare attendance at first ACCT reviews at HMP Erlestoke. A Local Operational Protocol is in place to support reviews on both weekdays and weekends. When the mental health team is not on site, a registered nurse from the Primary Care Team attends the review. Audits have identified that non-attendance typically occurs when healthcare is not notified of the review. To address this, ACCT timings are now allocated during the daily 07:40 prison handover meeting, which is attended by the Primary Care Team. This information is relayed to the mental health team and confirmed in the 09:00 Duty Governor brief. Healthcare attendance is monitored daily at the Operational Briefing and via the Local Delivery & Quality Board. Duty Governors are required to ensure that all scheduled weekend ACCT reviews are communicated to healthcare colleagues to support attendance.

HMPPS remains committed to ensuring that healthcare input is consistently available during ACCT reviews and will continue to monitor and support improvements in this area.