



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP The Mount
Molyneaux Avenue,
Bovingdon,
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HP3 0NZ

MoJ ref: SUB128308

27 October 2025

Dear Chair,

**HMP THE MOUNT: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 MARCH 2024 – 28 FEBRUARY 2025**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP The Mount. I am grateful to the Board for its continued scrutiny and for the time and commitment dedicated to monitoring conditions at HMP The Mount throughout the reporting year, without a full complement of members. 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 saddened to hear that there were two deaths during the reporting year; one of which happened after release and the other, sadly in custody. I recognise these will have impacted both staff and fellow prisoners and I offer my condolences to all their friends and family. I am though, like you, encouraged by the fall in deaths in custody and clearly the work done at the prison to upskill staff and tackle this issue is having a positive impact.

I recognise the Board's continued concerns regarding Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) prisoners. I would like to reassure you that the Government remain committed to making progress in relation to IPP prisoners and ensuring that any steps taken do not compromise public safety. The Justice Select Committee's recommendation to re-sentence IPP prisoners has been carefully considered. The Government does not believe that the necessary balance between public protection and justice for the offender can be achieved through a resentencing exercise, particularly where the independent Parole Board has determined that the individual has not met the statutory release test and remains a risk to the public.

I acknowledge your concern on the matter of support available to IPP prisoners. I am determined to support the rehabilitation of IPP prisoners through the refreshed IPP Action Plan, published on 17 July 2025. This plan places emphasis on effective frontline delivery across both the prison and probation services. It ensures that IPP prisoners have robust sentence plans and are located in establishments appropriate to their current needs. The Action Plan includes measurable targets, including a commitment that 95% of IPP prisoners will be located in a prison appropriate to their priority needs by July 2026. At HMP The Mount, I am pleased to note the establishment of a dedicated wing, 'Willow', in partnership with Creating Future Opportunities (CFO), which offers structured programmes to support life-sentenced and IPP prisoners. On completion of the CFO programme, prisoners may transition to progressive regimes with enhanced facilities and increased independent living. This initiative has received national recognition for its contribution to the rehabilitation of indeterminate sentenced prisoners.

On the matter regarding support available to IPP prisoners following release. I am pleased to say that the Probation Service continues to make strong progress in building the capacity and capability needed to support IPP prisoners as they transition back into the community. Nationally, recruitment has exceeded targets, with over 1,000 new Probation Officers onboarded in 2024/25 and a further 1,300 planned for 2025/26. All IPP prisoners are managed under the Offender Management in Custody (OMIC) model, with collaborative planning between custody and community teams. The service is also working to strengthen relational approaches to rehabilitation, including through the Offender Personality Disorder (OPD) Pathway and the Intensive Intervention & Risk Management Service (IIRMS), which remain available for complex cases. The introduction of resettlement hubs is a positive step in addressing capacity, though further work is underway to ensure these hubs can deliver the relational support model that IPP prisoners benefit from most. The revamped Progression Panel framework is a welcome development, aiming to enhance custody-community connectivity and ensure that IPP prisoners receive consistent, collaborative support throughout their sentence and beyond.

I note your concern regarding the Parole Board's training and understanding of IPP offenders. The Parole Board has taken proactive and commendable steps to ensure its members are well-equipped to understand and manage the unique challenges faced by IPP prisoners. In December 2024, updated guidance was issued and published externally, followed by the establishment of a dedicated IPP taskforce in January 2025. This taskforce includes a diverse cohort of judicial, psychological and psychiatric members, supported by 18 case managers with delegated authority. Members of the taskforce undertake quarterly effective practice sessions, including recent training on mental health and trauma-informed approaches, with input from His Majesty Prison and Probation Services (HMPPS) psychology services and lived experience from former IPP prisoners. The Parole Board's Practice Developer Mentor Model and New Member Inductions ensure that IPP-related issues are embedded in professional development from the outset. The Parole Board has also launched a psychiatric consultancy pilot to support complex mental health cases and continues to strengthen operational collaboration with HMPPS under the IPP Action Plan. Engagement with regional probation forums and stakeholder challenge groups ensures that best practice is shared and delivery remains aligned across the system. The production of quarterly IPP data bulletins and qualitative deep dive exercises further demonstrates the Parole Board's commitment to transparency, learning and continuous improvement in how IPP cases are managed.

I welcome your recognition of the improvements made at HMP The Mount, including the enhanced staffing levels, improved regime and purposeful activity. These developments reflect the commitment of the Governor and staff to delivering a safe and rehabilitative environment.

The Board raised additional areas for development for the Governor's consideration, and the Governor will continue to keep you informed as work progresses. HMPPS's comments in response to the issues raised for its consideration are set out in the attached annex.

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 The Mount.

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

Support Leading Up to and Following Release for Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) Prisoners

HMPPS continues to strengthen its support for prisoners serving IPP, both in custody and during their transition into the community. Psychology Services have expanded their 'through the gate' provision across England and Wales, enabling probation officers to better manage complex cases and provide continuity of care. To further improve reintegration outcomes, a pilot programme was launched in four Approved Premises (APs) in the North West Region, extending the permitted stay for IPP prisoners from 12 to 16 weeks. The pilot demonstrated a reduction in recall rates and improved stability during the critical post-release period. Based on these positive outcomes, the pilot is being extended to 10 additional APs across the estate.

Handling and Compliance for Prisoners' Properties

HMPPS acknowledges the Board's concerns regarding the handling of prisoners' property and recognises the impact that property loss or delay can have on individuals in custody. A national review of complaints and thematic findings has led to renewed emphasis on compliance with the Prisoner Property Policy Framework. Governors and senior leaders have been reminded of key requirements, including volumetric control and the timely transfer of excess property. Central oversight of property assurance is being strengthened through operational reporting lines to Prison Group Directors and Area Executive Directors. This approach is intended to drive improvement by embedding accountability within local leadership structures.

At HMP The Mount, internal property complaints have reduced following the implementation of improved reception and residential processes. However, the prison continues to experience challenges with property transferred from sending establishments. The Prisoner Escort Custody Services (PECS) contract limits the volume of property that can be transported with the prisoner and any excess must be forwarded by the sending prison via courier. This process is time consuming and can result in delays, particularly where packaging and dispatch arrangements are required. PECS contract includes enhanced vehicle capacity and the use of digitally recorded Prisoner Escort Records, which are now embedded as standard practice. These records provide an accurate account of sealed property transferred with the prisoner and assist in resolving disputes. During the reporting year, no property loss attributable to PECS was recorded at HMP The Mount. Consultation is ongoing with establishments to address further recommendations raised in the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman's learning lessons bulletin. The Prison Service remains committed to improving property handling and ensuring that prisoners' belongings are managed with care, consistency, and accountability.

Impact on Rehabilitation During Short Term Transfers

Transfers between establishments are governed by national criteria. Prisoners with 28 days or less to serve should remain in reception prisons, while those between 29 days and 36 months remaining may be transferred to resettlement prisons. Due to ongoing pressures on the prison population, including unprecedented remand levels, establishments have been required to show flexibility in managing cohorts. At HMP The Mount, the preference remains to hold prisoners for longer periods to enable meaningful engagement with education, training and rehabilitation programmes. As the Board acknowledges in its report, short-term stays limit access to vocational courses and reduce opportunities for staff to build relationships that support successful reintegration. The prison though continues to adapt its regime to maximise support for all prisoners, regardless of sentence length.