



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Isle of Wight
Albany Newport
Isle of Wight
PO30 5RS

September 2025

Dear Chair,

**HMP ISLE OF WIGHT: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
1 JANUARY 2024 to 31 DECEMBER 2024**

Thank you for submitting your Board's annual report on HMP Isle of Wight. I have read your report with care and 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.

I was deeply saddened to read that six prisoners died during the reporting year. Five of these deaths appear to have been from natural causes, subject to the coroner's final confirmation. The sixth, which was self-inflicted has been investigated by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman and I note that both the initial and final reports made no recommendations. Any death in custody is a tragedy and I offer my sincere condolences to the families and friends of those who have lost their lives.

I fully recognise how vital it is to ensure that prisoners with serious mental health needs are transferred to secure hospital as swiftly as possible. Delays can have a profound impact on the wellbeing of some of the most vulnerable people in our care.

The Mental Health Bill, introduced in November 2024 establishes a statutory 28-day transfer time limit for prisoners requiring hospital treatment. The Bill has now completed Committee Stage in the House of Commons, and detailed work is underway alongside the Department of Health and Social Care, the Welsh Government and Home Office to prepare for implementation 18–24 months after Royal Assent.

Alongside this, NHS England has commissioned a Health Needs Assessment focused specifically on the needs of prisoners at HMP Isle of Wight, which will help ensure that services are aligned to demand. To strengthen oversight and accountability, the Mental Health and Justice Strategic Advisory Group has been established. Chaired by NHS England's National Medical Director for Mental Health and Neurodiversity, the group brings together health and justice partners to improve data monitoring, address barriers to transfer and support delivery of the 28-day time limit. I remain committed to ensuring these reforms deliver meaningful improvements for prisoners with acute mental health needs.

I was encouraged to read about positive practice at the prison. The introduction of the Independent Prisoner Complaint Investigations ambassadors' scheme, for which HMP Isle of Wight was chosen as one of the first sites, demonstrates a strong culture of fairness and transparency. It is pleasing that materials developed locally have already been adopted nationally. I also welcome the Board's observations about the education department, which highlight the value of peer mentors and the commitment of staff to fostering achievement. The example of a prisoner who has progressed from initial disengagement in

Maths to preparing for an A-level and supporting others as a peer mentor is a powerful reminder of the role that education can play in rehabilitation.

His Majesty 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 informed of progress at a local level.

The Lord Chancellor and I are grateful for the valuable role played by members of Independent Monitoring Boards across the estate, and we thank you and your colleagues for your hard work on behalf of HMP Isle of Wight.

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

Security Gate

The Parkhurst vehicle gate was returned to operational capability in May 2025. Funding has also been allocated for the replacement of vehicle and pedestrian gates at both Albany and Parkhurst during the 2025/26 financial year, and work is progressing with the involvement of MoJ Property Services and Government Facilities Services Limited (GFSL), with a view to completion in-year. I note that a business case has also been submitted for enhanced gate security in line with other establishments in the Long Term and High Security Estate. This is currently subject to approval.

As the Board will appreciate, bids for capital projects must be prioritised carefully given that demands across the estate exceed the funding available. HMPPS prioritises works based on risk to life, risk to capacity and decency. That said, I understand the Board's concerns about illicit items and the importance of aligning gate security with national standards and I can assure you that these factors will be considered when assessing future investment.

Probation Staffing

I recognise the continued challenges at HMP Isle of Wight relating to probation staffing. Recruitment and retention remain a central priority for the Probation Service. Between 2020/21 and 2023/24, 4,582 trainees were onboarded nationally, many of whom have now qualified and taken up posts. In 2024/25 the Service exceeded its trainee target of 1,000, and the Lord Chancellor has committed to a further 1,300 trainees in 2025/26. Between March 2024 and March 2025, probation staffing increased by 610 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) nationally, including 319 additional probation officers.

In the South Central region, staffing levels rose by 9% over the past year, reflecting the positive impact of recruitment campaigns. At a local level, I note that the prison has supported probation delivery by loaning staff as Prison Offender Managers (POM) under the national emergency delivery model. While these staff cannot replace the capacity of fully qualified probation officers and their redeployment places strain on core duties, I am grateful for the flexibility shown. HMPPS continues to pursue long-term solutions through its dedicated Recruitment and Retention Strategy and is developing a new overarching strategy this year,

Family Visits and Workshop Facilities

I note the Board's concerns about the condition of some of the workshops and family waiting facilities. While there are no formal approvals for capital works at this stage, indicative plans are in place for the refurbishment of the laundry to commence in 2026. I am also aware that MoJ Property Services continues to consider the case for wider investment, considering disused spaces on the estate which, with minimal investment, could deliver improved opportunities for prisoners and better facilities for visitors and staff.

In the meantime, the prison has taken practical steps to maintain service delivery. This includes supporting the development of prisoner work parties managed by GFSL to expand local repair capacity and putting contingency arrangements in place to repurpose staff training and meeting rooms as temporary visiting centres should the current facilities become unusable. While these are not permanent solutions, they demonstrate the establishment's determination to safeguard family contact and meaningful work opportunities within the limits of available resources.

Safety

As you have raised in your report, we remain concerned by levels of violence and risks to staff and prisoner safety, both at HMP Isle of Wight and across the LTHSE. Since the conclusion of the annual report, we HMPPS have also taken the decision to introduce a dedicated Executive Director for the LTHSE and tackling the drivers of violence and improving staff and prisoner safety is a top priority.