



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Springhill
Grendon Underwood
Aylesbury
HP18 0TL

July 2025

Dear Chair,

**HMP SPRINGHILL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 01 JANUARY 2024 – 31 DECEMBER 2024**

Thank you for your Board's annual report on HMP Springhill, covering the period from 1 January to 31 December 2024. I would like to express my gratitude to you and your fellow Board members for your continued dedication in monitoring the establishment throughout the year and for your valuable insight. This is particularly appreciated given that you are covering two sites and were operating below the recommended complement of members.

I note the Board's concern around the sufficiency of investment in rehabilitation services, particularly in relation to offender management and educational or vocational provision within the open estate. I want to assure you that active steps are being taken to strengthen these areas at HMP Springhill. The establishment is working to align existing work parties with purposeful qualifications that support future employment opportunities, and discussions are underway with several employers to introduce new, skill-focused workshops.

Plans are also in place to reintroduce community work placements for individuals serving longer sentences in open conditions. The current prisoner needs analysis is being refreshed to ensure the establishment is well prepared for the delivery of the new education contract from October. It is also working with external funders to expand vocational training opportunities in areas such as rail infrastructure, demolition and HGV operations.

The funding model for education in the open estate reflects the fact that many prisoners are approaching release and may already have undertaken substantial educational programmes earlier in their sentence. However, prisoners in open conditions continue to have access to education delivery in the community as part of their resettlement journey.

I was pleased to read that levels of self-harm and violence remained low at Springhill and that there were no deaths in custody during the reporting period. I also welcome the Board's recognition of the establishment's effective management of the SDS40 scheme in October, which facilitated the smooth release of around 80 men. Whilst I recognise the Board's concerns around the infrastructure, it was encouraging to read that 41 single cells were provided on time and that men were able to move into these in June 2024.

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, as work progresses, in regard to the local issue of concern which you have raised.

The Lord Chancellor and I remain grateful for the essential work carried out by members of the Independent Monitoring Board. Your role continues to support transparency, accountability and improvement across the prison estate. Thank you again for your continued service on behalf of HMP Springhill.

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

Improving the capacity of outside probation and the effectiveness of interfaces with all relevant agencies

HMP Springhill functions as a national resource, receiving prisoners from across England and Wales. Therefore, delays in ROTL processes are often due to the time required for external agencies, many of which are operating under significant pressures to respond to information requests and contribute to thorough risk assessments. The average wait time for a prisoner to access ROTL is currently around three months from reception. While staff at Springhill have successfully adopted more direct approaches with local partners, challenges remain where assessments rely on wider liaison across regions and police forces.

To address some of these pressures, staffing in the Offender Management Unit (OMU) has been boosted and overtime and enhanced payment schemes introduced to support the completion of OASys assessments. South Central Probation Region has also taken active steps to improve capacity and responsiveness, including the recruitment of a Probation Service Officer dedicated to pre-release at HMP Springhill and the introduction of an in-reach support model with a referral pathway for ad-hoc needs.

At a national level, recruitment and retention remain key priorities for the Probation Service. In 2024/25, the Service exceeded its target by onboarding 1,057 trainee Probation Officers, with a further 1,300 trainees planned for 2025/26. Between March 2024 and March 2025, the overall probation workforce increased by 610 full-time equivalent staff, including a 6% rise in qualified Probation Officers. Over 4,500 trainees have been onboarded since 2020, many of whom are now in post, with the remainder expected to qualify by the end of 2025. These efforts will continue to support the delivery of timely and robust ROTL decisions.

Increased Demand for Mental Health Services from Early Release Schemes

The introduction of early release schemes, such as SDS40, has led to increased prisoner churn and higher demand for on-site mental health services. All individuals in prison, including those held on remand are entitled to integrated mental health support commissioned by NHS England, consistent with the principle of equivalence.

Whilst HMP Springhill's mental health service met its performance targets for 2024–25, the increasing demand has been recognised at both local and national levels. NHS England has commissioned an updated Health and Social Care Needs Assessment (HSCNA), which is expected to conclude in July 2025. This assessment, alongside an internal provider review will guide future commissioning and ensure that emerging needs are met. Feedback from a peer review by the Prison Quality Network for Mental Health Services in June 2025 was positive with patients reporting feeling supported, involved and well represented. Staffing levels were identified as an area for further improvement to meet changing levels of demand.

More broadly, NHS England is working with partners to refresh the national specification for integrated mental health care in prisons and strengthen contractual oversight. These efforts aim to align service delivery with sentence length and site complexity to ensure appropriate access to treatment. The Mental

Health Bill, currently before Parliament, introduces a statutory 28-day time limit for transfers to hospital under the Mental Health Act. An operational implementation plan is in development to underpin this reform.

Condition of the Prison Estate

The Board's concerns regarding the condition of HMP Springhill's estate are acknowledged. Several capital improvements have been secured. Funding has been approved for the replacement of the main kitchen roof, and quotations are being obtained for a new fire and general alarm system. A planning application for the provision of 120 new Category D places is under consideration as part of the wider review of the 14k prison places portfolio. That review is assessing how best to meet estate-wide demand while ensuring value for money for the taxpayer. Any reshaping of the current programme, including expansion of the open estate will be confirmed once decisions are made by Ministers.

HMP Springhill has undertaken local improvements including the implementation of a land management plan and the deployment of a prisoner work party supported by the facilities management contractor to address smaller maintenance issues. Bids for additional works include the imminent refurbishment of showers and toilets in L-Hut and the removal of W-Huts due to decency concerns. Funding has been requested for upgrades to T-Hut facilities, a modular kitchen building, CCTV systems and workshop renovations. These local and national efforts reflect an ongoing commitment to improving safety and decency across the estate.