



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for
Justice

Andy Slaughter
Chair of the Justice Select Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

MoJ ref: SUB125604

8 July 2025

Dear Andy,

PUBLICATION OF HMIP ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25

I am writing to inform you that Charlie Taylor, His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons, published his annual report 2024-25 on Tuesday 8 July 2025. A copy of the report can be found on HMIP's website at [Annual reports – HM Inspectorate of Prisons](#).

I wholeheartedly agree with the credit given to prison staff involved in delivering the early release scheme policy which involved a huge amount of work in creating some vital headroom to deal with the capacity crisis. I am also pleased to see positive practices were highlighted in the thematic report 'improving behaviours in prisons' which included evidence of good leadership, motivation and creative incentives when dealing with problematic behaviours. However, I acknowledge there remains much work to do to improve prisoner outcomes across the system. As mentioned in our response to the 2023/24 report published last September, we inherited a prison system in crisis, where prisons were on the edge of collapse. This is evident from the concerns raised within the report, which I take incredibly seriously.

It was disappointing to see four Urgent Notifications (UN) during this reporting year. In the case of HMP Wandsworth the initial action plan was delayed by the pre-election period but was published as soon as possible after the General Election.

The remaining UNs at HMPs Rochester, Manchester and Winchester, were issued during my tenure and I have taken them very seriously. I asked officials to strengthen our UN response to increase Ministerial oversight and to assure myself that the planned action drives the necessary improvement. When a UN is invoked, I am keen to visit the prison and meet with prisoners, staff and Governor to see firsthand the concerns that led to the UN and urgent progress made to address those challenges. I have already visited HMP Manchester and HMP Winchester to do just that, and I intend to visit HMP Rochester at an appropriate time, when doing so will support, rather than distract from their ongoing improvement. I also receive regular updates from senior leaders on progress and barriers, helping to maintain momentum and remove obstacles where needed.

This strengthened approach is already delivering tangible improvements. At HMP Winchester, a new, experienced Head of Healthcare has been appointed, and all mental health vacancies have been filled. At HMP Manchester, failed CCTV components have been replaced, searches have increased, and a project is underway to replace windows and install new security netting. At HMP Rochester, a full cell audit has been completed to inform refurbishment plans, the Local Security Strategy has been revised, health

representatives have been introduced on each wing, and a new Head of Health and Wellbeing has been appointed.

To support long-term, sustainable improvement where there have been significant concerns, such as UN prisons, HMPPS has developed a sustained support offer for the prisons of greatest concern (including HMPs Wandsworth and Winchester) which will receive prioritised, long-term central support. Progress will be overseen by the Director General of Operations. Rochester and Manchester will continue to benefit from targeted, structured external support to ensure HMIP's concerns are fully addressed.

While challenges remain, I was encouraged by HMIP's recent Independent Review of Progress at HMP Wandsworth, which found good or reasonable progress against five of the concerns. This reflects the positive impact of the new Governor and the reduction in violence and self-harm.

I would also like to set out some of the other actions we are taking across the estate to address broader concerns raised in HMIP's report. For instance, to help drive down demand for drugs and support recovery, we have increased the number of prisons with Incentivised Substance Free Living Units (ISFL) to 85. These wings are our primary means of steering offenders away from drugs, and they provide a supportive environment and additional incentives for any prisoner who wants to live drug-free in prison. The impact and process evaluations of ISFLs are currently underway and results from these evaluations will be published later this year.

We recognise the high rates of self-harm across the estate and are addressing this through the ACCT (Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork) case management process, which provides tailored support based on individual risks and needs. All frontline staff receive suicide and self-harm prevention training, with additional specific training for those in key risk assessment and case management roles. We also partner with Samaritans to deliver the Listener scheme, where selected prisoners are trained to offer peer support, and support post-incident response.

We recognise the challenges prisons are facing in providing purposeful activity. The capacity crisis in the prison estate has had an impact on the ability of many prisons to support purposeful activity. Despite these challenges, as we set out in our manifesto, this Government is committed to working with prisons to improve access to purposeful activity.

Improving reading and literacy rates is a key priority, and every prison now has a reading strategy. We work with Shannon Trust and National Literacy Trust to test ways to improve literacy. Achievement rates have increased from previous years, with the number of prisoners achieving a full or partial grade in functional skills courses increasing by 21% in the year to 31 March 2024.

I hope you are assured that we take the Inspectorate's concerns seriously, and we are committed to improving prisoner outcomes.

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