



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Jake Richards MP
Parliamentary Under-
Secretary of State for
Justice

The Rt Hon. the Lord Foster of Bath
Chair of the Justice and Home Affairs Committee
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0AA

MoJ ref: SUB134795

10 June 2026

Dear Don,

PUBLICATION OF THE IMB NATIONAL ANNUAL REPORT 2025

I am writing to inform you that Jane Leech, Interim National Chair of the Independent Monitoring Boards (IMBs), will publish the IMB National Annual Report 2025 on 10 June. I am grateful for the important independent scrutiny IMBs provide across the custodial estate.

The report identifies a small number of areas of progress, including the expansion of vocational training in the youth estate and the positive reception to in-cell technology in some establishments. However, it also raises a number of interrelated concerns, particularly regarding population pressures and the impact this continues to have on safety, regime delivery and prisoner progression.

The Government recognises these challenges and is taking action to address them. We are working to put the prison population on a more sustainable footing through a combination of capacity expansion and sentencing reform. This includes delivering 14,000 additional prison places by 2031, supported by £4.7 billion of investment, and opening more than 3,000 places since July 2024. Alongside this, reforms through the Sentencing Act 2026 are expected to reduce the prison population by around 7,500 by February 2028, while maintaining public protection and improving outcomes for victims.

We also recognise concerns raised in the report regarding time out of cell, access to purposeful activity and the delivery of effective resettlement support. We are working to improve regime delivery, strengthen education and employment opportunities in custody and ensure that prisoners are better prepared for release, including through closer working with probation, employers and partners.

The report also highlights important issues relating to mental health and the needs of vulnerable prisoners, including older prisoners. We are working closely with health partners to improve

access to timely and effective care, including through the Mental Health Act reforms, and are developing an Older Prisoners Strategy to better respond to the needs of this growing cohort.

Concerns raised in relation to safety, regime and outcomes within the youth estate are also being addressed through ongoing work by the Youth Custody Service to strengthen behaviour management, improve access to education and time out of room, and support more effective resettlement and transition arrangements for children leaving custody.

I have written separately to the IMB National Chair, setting out the Government's full response to the issues raised.

I hope this provides assurance that I take the concerns raised by the IMBs very seriously and that the Department is continuing to take action to improve outcomes for prisoners and across the custodial estate.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jake Richards', written in a cursive style.

JAKE RICHARDS MP