



HM Prison &  
Probation Service

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22<sup>nd</sup> October 2024

Dear Charlie,

**HMIP report on an Independent Review of Progress at HMP Bedford, 16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> September 2024**

Thank you for your Independent Review of Progress report at HMP Bedford, whereby you followed up eight priority/key concerns and four Ofsted themes from your most recent inspection in November 2023.

I am encouraged to note that you have seen good and reasonable progress being made across six priority/key concerns and one reasonable progress in Ofsted themes, and note the following:

- The report highlights the notable progress achieved in the Diversity and Inclusion area following the appointment of two new leads. Their commitment has enabled greater trust among both staff and prisoners, as demonstrated by a 69% increase in prisoner submission of Diversity Incident Reporting Forms (DIRFs) since the last inspection.
- Since the last visit, there has been a decrease in self-harm incidents. Efforts to identify and understand the underlying causes of self-harm within the prison have improved. The mental health team has also made progress in providing support to prisoners in this area. Collaborative working between safety and security teams resulted in improvements in information sharing and analysis of intelligence, along with newly introduced measures to understand and address the drivers of violence.
- Recent improvements had been made to support prisoners in their early days in custody. Staff and peer workers treated them with respect during the reception and induction period and ensured that first night cells were well-equipped. Time out of cell had also improved for prisoners on induction.

- Whilst there is still much to do, leaders had made improvements to the living conditions on residential units, with regular decency checks completed. The new Care and Separation (CaSU) had recently opened, providing much-improved living conditions for prisoners.

In respect of the two priority/key concerns and three Ofsted themes where you found insufficient progress, I can confirm that all the IRP findings have been carefully considered and steps will be taken to address them as appropriate. This will include the following:

- While efforts to reduce the rates and level of violence had started to show some positive results, prisoner-on-prisoner violence remained high. HMP Bedford will continue to review the regime to enable more effective access to activities and time out of cell. Leaders are also committed to a learning environment for staff to build their confidence in addressing low level poor behaviour.
- Staff and prisoner relationships showed some improvements, however more focus is required to improve the quality of keywork. HMP Bedford will benefit from in-cell launchpad technology, which will greatly assist with the responses to general applications, complaints, and prisoner's basic needs.
- HMP Bedford is conducting a review of the available activities within the prison to align with the needs of the population. This will involve a cost-effectiveness assessment of the workshops and a potential reconfiguration of all activity areas, including a resource review. There will be a refresh of the processes for allocating activities and tracking attendance.
- The prison is currently conducting a needs analysis focused on the existing population and the changes in the Courts it serves. This analysis will inform upcoming curriculum planning. The employment advisory board will play a crucial role in this process, ensuring that the curriculum aligns with local employment needs and opportunities.

The Governor, with the support of the Prison Group Director will continue to progress the full Action Plan covering all the original priority/key concerns.

I remain committed to ensuring continued progress against the agreed HMP Bedford Action Plan and I can assure you that through my operational assurance functions and the support of Performance Assurance & Risk Group (PAR, formerly OSAG) we continue to closely monitor progress.

Whilst I acknowledge that there is still much work to be carried out at the prison, I am encouraged that some progress is being made and that our monitoring of the prison is in line with your findings.

Yours sincerely,

**David Hood**  
**Area Executive Director South East & Eastern**