



HM Prison & Probation Service

Charlie Taylor,
HM Chief Inspector of Prisons
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16th May 2025

Dear Charlie,

HMIP report on an Independent Review of Progress at HMP Erlestoke 22nd to 24th April 2025

Thank you for your Independent Review of Progress report at HMP Erlestoke, whereby you followed up nine key recommendations and four Ofsted themes from your most recent inspection in June 2024.

I am encouraged to note that you have seen good and reasonable progress being made across nine of the recommendations and Ofsted themes and note the following:

- We were pleased that the Inspectorate found that use of force and the use of batons and PAVA spray had all decreased since the full inspection in June 2024. Both weekly and monthly use of force meetings are now consistently held and 100% of incidents are scrutinised with actions taken to address identified inappropriate use of force. We will continue to strive for further improvements, specifically around healthcare attendance at incidents.
- Healthcare governance has improved with better oversight of risk. We will continue to use the monthly Local Delivery Quality Board and Health Improvement Board meetings to drive progress and where appropriate, include prisoner feedback through the reintroduced prisoner healthcare representative role.
- Through the introduction of a prison tracker and a full review of the allocations process we have significantly increased the number of men in purposeful activity. Allocations are now based on a prisoner's aspirations using their identified pathways and we have introduced roll on/ roll off approach across all appropriate courses. We have also introduced a full time Activities Custodial Manager role and increased the number of Activities Officers to drive and monitor attendance at purposeful activity and understand the barriers to engagement so we can improve outcomes for prisoners.
- We were pleased that the work undertaken to improve perceptions of prisoners from ethnic minority groups was acknowledged. We will continue to use the monthly training days to deliver cultural awareness sessions and fully embed the use of prisoner representatives in staff inductions. A full schedule of prisoner forums is now in place with actions captured and monitored through the monthly Diversity and Inclusion meeting. A better range of data is now discussed in these meetings with relevant data shared with the prisoner group. We will continue to identify ways in which we can bring the prisoner voice into discussions and decisions to further support transparency.

In respect of the four key areas and Ofsted themes where you found insufficient or no meaningful 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:

- Although levels of self-harm have reduced since the full inspection in June 2024 the quality of our Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) documents remains poor. We continue to be focussed on the delivery of upskilling sessions via our monthly training day to drive quality improvements and ensure ACCT documents are reflective of risk and identify meaningful actions. Attendance at safety meetings will be closely monitored to ensure actions are monitored and achieved through a collaborative, establishment-wide approach to care.
- We have developed a prison wide reading strategy and will focus on embedding this across the establishment. Although we now understand the reading needs of our population, we will prioritise appropriate interventions for men with identified reading needs. We will review the use of 'Book Nooks' across the establishment to ensure a range of materials for different reading levels and identify ways to further embed reading for progression and pleasure, such as through key working, social visits and the gym.
- We will continue to collaboratively review the regime on the Induction Unit to ensure it maximises time of out of cell and enables prisoners to have earlier access to work and education opportunities. We have commenced a painting programme to refresh the unit and created an additional assurance structure to ensure that cells are decent for new arrivals. This includes improved assurance from senior managers. As part of a review of prisoner workspaces, we have allocated additional cleaners to the Induction Unit so staff have sufficient resource to ensure individual cells are clean and decent and prisoners have the opportunity to engage in improvement activity. We will continue to investigate all opportunities to address the delay to canteen orders within national finance frameworks.

The Governor with the support of the Prison Group Director will continue to progress the full Action Plan covering all the original recommendations.

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

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

Yours sincerely

Chris Jennings

Executive Director

HMPPS South West, South Central & Public Protection

CC: Private Office

Michelle Jarman-Howe, Interim Director General Prisons