



HM Prison &
Probation Service

HMPPS Business Strategy 2026 to 2029



Brilliant people, resilient services

Foreword

Since becoming the Chief Executive Officer of HMPPS, I have seen first-hand how our staff show resilience, compassion, and professionalism in all that they do. I have spent time listening to colleagues and leaders across our services, and to partners who work alongside us. What I keep hearing is very clear - we have courageous people doing extraordinary jobs.

Everything we do contributes to reducing reoffending and protecting the public. They go hand in hand as we help people change their behaviour for the long term. Rehabilitation and building good relationships between staff and people in our care are key to this. They help build trust and support safer communities. I am proud to lead an organisation made up of people who do demanding work, often under intense pressure.

I also have to be honest about the challenges we are facing, bold about the changes we need to make, and unite us in our commitment to progress.

My ambition for staff working in all our settings in the next 3 years is simple: HMPPS **to perform better and deliver more** - more safety and security, more quality services and more skilled people. We will do this by investing in the tools, skills and capability of our people so they can focus on what matters most, and by stabilizing the system to create better conditions and manageable workloads.

I thank our staff for the hard work and commitment they show every single day, and I look forward to, together, fostering **brilliant people, resilient services**.

James McEwen,
Director General Chief Executive Officer, HMPPS.



Introduction

This strategy sets our direction for the spending review period (2026 to 2029), including how HMPPS will deliver MoJ priorities. We will do this through our responsibilities to protect the public and reduce reoffending, with a sustainable and effective prison and probation service, as well as delivering ministerial priorities of building a high-performance culture.

Our purpose

HMPPS delivers the sentences of the courts across England and Wales in prisons, probation, youth custody, and other contracted services, while working closely with partners and supporting victims. Our role is to reduce reoffending and protect the public.

Probation Service: serves communities and works in partnership to manage, engage and support people to change their lives. We do this by delivering services that protect the public, support victims, rehabilitate and reduce reoffending.

Prisons: serve the public by keeping in custody those committed by the courts. Our duty is to look after them with humanity and help them lead law-abiding and useful lives in custody and after release.

Youth Custody Service: protects the public by providing safe and secure accommodation for children and supporting their positive development whilst in secure settings, to reduce reoffending.

We now have the opportunity, through implementation of the Sentencing Act, the Our Future Probation Service Programme, the Prison Implementation Programme and significant investment secured through the spending review, to build resilient services following years of capacity and workforce pressures.

This will enable us to become a more productive service that successfully reduces reoffending and protects the public by performing better in areas such as safety, security and rehabilitation. Staff will feel safe, valued, well-trained and supported. They will also have the right skills, technology and confidence to do their jobs well. Becoming more productive means stabilising the system, ensuring there is sufficient capacity in prisons and manageable workloads in probation, giving staff the time to focus on what matters most.

We have purposely set a 3-year timeframe so that we are funded and realistic about the progress we can make over this spending period. Beyond the 3 years, we have high expectations for HMPPS to become an increasingly modern and innovative service.

We are proud to work closely with our partners and suppliers across the criminal justice system. By collaborating well, managing our contracts effectively, and building strong relationships with organisations in the private, voluntary and community sectors, as well as other government departments and agencies such as health services, we make the most of their strengths and new ideas. This helps us improve our services and deliver better outcomes.

We will track delivery by setting ambitious yet realistic and affordable objectives in our annual business planning cycle, enabling everyone to understand their role in helping HMPPS to become a higher performing organisation.

Vision

Everything we do contributes to reducing reoffending and protecting the public.

We will perform better and deliver more – more safety and security, more quality services, and more people skilled and able to do their best work.

This means:

- People have safe and secure environments in which to work.
- People have the tools they need to lead, whilst feeling respected and supported.
- Workloads enable a focus on rehabilitation.
- Services are run at a high standard, consistently.



Enablers

We will achieve our vision by:

1. Enabling people to do their best.
2. Creating space and time for resilient services.



1: Enabling people to do their best – ensuring strong leadership, safer working environments, professional development and access to modern technology.

Our people are central to our vision. We want to recruit and retain a diverse and experienced workforce that is clear on what is expected of them and that leads well. We also want to help them to make use of digital systems, data, and AI-enabled tools. This applies to all staff, in their varied roles across all HMPPS settings.

We strive for professionalism, which means building a culture of integrity, respect, leadership and accountability. HMPPS must be a great place to work, where people feel they belong, with a strong sense of purpose, and confidence in their expertise. We maintain a strong commitment to staff safety and wellbeing, with zero tolerance for bullying, harassment, and discrimination.

We are committed to creating a positive, supportive culture with strong leadership by:

- Setting the highest professional standards through implementation of HMPPS's [Professional Standards Review](#) (2025) and tackling bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimisation through our new independent service.
- Attracting and retaining exceptional talent by recruiting high quality staff whose values align with ours. This includes our commitment to recruit at least 1,300 additional new trainee probation officers in 2026-2027.
- Prioritising wellbeing by creating conditions that help staff feel well and do well, supporting their health, and giving them a sense of security and purpose. This will drive a healthier, more engaged and resilient workforce.
- Investing in capability, leadership and development at every level. For example:
 - The Enable programme is our dedicated HMPPS programme that will transform prisons workforce through a new integrated approach to training, development, leadership, and support for staff.
 - The internal probation professional register will recognise and assure the skills of qualified staff and will be expanded to Probation Services Officers. This sits alongside the probation strategic Learning Plan to raise standards and investment in leadership development for Senior Probation Officers who play a pivotal role in delivering sentencing reforms.
 - Later this year, the Government will also publish a consultation on introducing external regulation of probation, to strengthen public understanding and provide formal recognition of the status of probation

practitioners, enhancing confidence in the workforce and securing parity with other recognised professions.

- There will be a review of the training provided to directly employed newly recruited Youth Custody Service (YCS) staff, as well as the approach to YCS induction, succession planning and leadership development.
- Building digital and AI literacy to reduce administrative burden for everyone. This includes improvements in high pressure areas such as Offender Management Units, to support staff working on sentence management and case administration.

Investing in modern technology and better data is vital for HMPPS to improve outcomes for people throughout their time in prison or on probation, as well as for our staff. We will replace legacy systems such as the National Offender Management Information System (NOMIS), strengthen and secure our infrastructure, and design tools and services that meet staff needs. This will allow us to make better informed decisions, improve performance, and measure outcomes more effectively.



2: Creating space and time for resilient services - ensuring we have the capacity to meet growing demand.

Recent system pressures, such as running out of adult prison places and managing excessive probation caseloads, have put a strain on our staff, leading to short-term fixes that have added to the complexity of our services. We appreciate how our probation practitioners, prison staff, colleagues in offender management hubs and headquarters teams have responded positively to implement operational changes to create short term capacity solutions. We are focused on ensuring they have sufficient resources and recognition.

A resilient system means we can balance demands for prison places, probation caseloads and youth custody services, by ensuring there is enough capacity. In practice, this means having enough people and prison spaces and working environments that are safe and secure. We are focusing on the following priorities to get the foundations right.

The Sentencing Act will bring in major reforms including:

- the progression model for prisoners serving standard determinate sentences
- a presumption to suspend short prison sentences of less than 12 months (with some exceptions), and extending the maximum length of suspended sentence orders to three years
- a new model for recall for those on standard determinate sentences, including a standardised length of 56 days
- changes to how we manage foreign national offenders, with earlier deportation

We are also investing in a new staffing model for prisons to closely monitor and address the resource impacts arising from changing population needs.

We are committed to the existing prison build programmes to deliver 14,000 additional adult prison places (as part of the 20,000 prison places programme) as set out in the [MoJ 10-year Prison Capacity Strategy \(2024\)](#). We have an ambition to secure new land in readiness should further prison builds be required in future. Buying new land could allow us to capitalise on planning reforms and to start to build new prisons faster.

We will safeguard the supply of prison places through maintenance to minimise the number of places lost through disrepair and provide decent accommodation for every prisoner.

The youth estate sustainability challenge is about ensuring we have the right capacity, in the right places, with the right services, so we can provide safe, child-centred and productive care for increasingly complex children and young people. This requires not only sufficient bedspace but child-friendly physical conditions. The longer-term ambition is to move towards a youth custodial system that sits closer to the evidence base of what works to deliver better outcomes: smaller, therapeutic and more familial settings, located closer to home and designed around integrated care. Achieving this will depend on working collaboratively with key partners, including the Youth Justice Board, local authorities, health and education providers.

The Our Future Probation Service (OFPS) programme is addressing the imbalance between staff available and workload, to help deliver a probation service that is more effective and able to cope with workload pressures. Through implementation of the Sentencing Act, and delivery of measures to reduce workloads, the Probation Service will be supported by:

- reducing the administrative burden by simplifying processes and removing unnecessary tasks
- making the job easier by investing in new technology that will allow practitioners to spend more time on meaningful work. This includes Justice Transcribe to record and summarise probation supervision conversations, Manage People on Probation (MPOP) for practitioners to access information in one place, and the Assess Risks Needs and Strengths (ARNS) assessment tool designed around up-to-date evidence and modern user needs
- focusing on what matters and tools for effective supervision
- focusing probation resource on those who present the highest risk

We are expanding the use of electronic monitoring (tagging) to support effective supervision of individuals in the community and to reduce reoffending. We are also increasing community accommodation for individuals with no housing upon release from prison.

What will success look like?

Overall, our success is in achieving better outcomes: reducing reoffending and protecting the public through effective rehabilitation.

Better performance is an aim everyone in HMPPS should share. While improvement will be driven by the people working day to day with prisoners and those on licence and community sentences, we all play a role in achieving this aim.

We recognise for our staff that their everyday practices and activities are complex, and that a better performing organisation looks and feels different across our settings, for example:

- **In YCS:** We will address the immediate performance challenges in our public young offender institutions (YOIs), including improving education provision, wider activities, time out of room and reducing violence. We will also take steps towards our longer-term ambition of moving towards an evidence-led purpose-built child-centred estate.
- **In prisons:** We will continue to improve the safety and security of our environments, with a reduction in drugs and violence, where staff build excellent relationships with prisoners and deliver high-quality key work, and with regimes providing access to purposeful activity that reduces risk and supports rehabilitation.
- **In probation:** We will deliver sentences of the courts in a timely way that inspires rehabilitation and public confidence, focusing on culture, leadership, accountability, and systematic support. We will improve the quality of assessment, planning, and risk management, deploying digital and capacity enablers to support practitioners.

While our system is large and complex, we believe there are a small set of metrics that are good indicators of whether we are being successful, and these are set out below:

YCS (Public YOIs)

- Assaults (on staff and child-on-child)
- Education hours
- Time out of room

Prisons

- Assaults (on staff and prisoner-on-prisoner)
- Self-harm incidents
- Purposeful activity
- Key work quality
- Staff resignation rates
- Prison capacity

Probation

- Assessment and planning quality
- Risk management quality
- Unpaid work completions
- Accredited programme completions
- Staff resignation rates
- Probation capacity

Joint prisons and probation

- Housed on release
- Employment

The last metrics are shared to encourage joint working between prisons, probation, and local authorities.

While other measures remain essential to core business, the above metrics are considered to provide a more rounded and meaningful view of performance at both local and regional levels. It remains implicit and central that reducing drugs in prison, improving security, and public protection continue to be of high importance across the system.

There will always be scope for further research and evidence, however there is a general consensus on existing evidence among academics and policymakers on 'what works' in prisons and probation to protect the public, reduce reoffending and support rehabilitation. We will make improvements to how this information is shared and translated into practice.

We will also improve how we diagnose what's stopping us from achieving our goals, target and coordinate our improvement interventions more effectively, and focus more on finding and sharing what drives good practice and strong performance.

What's next?

Moving forward, HMPPS Chief Executive Officer and the HMPPS Leadership Team (HLT) will be accountable for this strategy and for ensuring it is delivered successfully. We will align our resources and investment through Spending Review allocations and detailed in-year business planning, supported by our continued effort to prioritise fewer change projects with greater impact, minimising the change load for all staff.

This strategy will help senior leaders across HMPPS act with clarity, focus on getting the basics right, and drive meaningful improvements in performance. It will also guide leaders in shaping evidence-based priorities to make the case for longer term investment. We hope that all staff will look to this document for a clear steer on HMPPS priorities and feel motivated to play their part in becoming a better performing organisation.

The strategy will be our primary reference point when communicating our focus and priorities to both internal and external stakeholders. All plans and priorities should flow from this strategy to support consistent and effective implementation.

The strategy will be reviewed at the end of the 3-year period, to ensure it remains relevant and agile around upcoming challenges and opportunities.

For any questions on business strategy and/or business planning, please contact hmppsstrategy@justice.gov.uk.