



HM Prison &
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28 July 2026

Dear Charlie,

HMIP Report on an Independent Review of Progress at HMP Birmingham
22 – 24 June 2026

Thank you for your Independent Review of Progress (IRP) report at HMP Birmingham, which followed up on **eight** priority concerns and **three** Ofsted themes identified during the most recent full inspection.

I am encouraged to note that you observed reasonable progress across **two** priority concerns and **two** Ofsted themes. In particular, I note the following:

- The positive improvements in safety outcomes, including a reduction in self-harm to below comparator levels, a reduction in serious assaults and the absence of any self-inflicted deaths since the previous inspection. Improvements were found to have been made regarding the use of Challenge Support Intervention Plans and enhanced support from dedicated safety teams had strengthened the establishment's approach to violence reduction.
- The significant progress made in improving standards of decency across the establishment. Initiatives such as the 'Big Clean', the introduction of Decency Champions and strengthened oversight through the Clean and Decent Manager have contributed to cleaner living conditions, improved residential environments and higher standards across the prison.
- The progress identified by Ofsted in relation to outreach education and the Reading Strategy. Inspector's acknowledged improved participation in outreach

learning, positive behavioural outcomes for prisoners engaged in education and a range of innovative initiatives designed to embed a positive reading culture across the prison.

In respect of the **six** priority concerns and **one** Ofsted theme where no or insufficient progress was identified, I can confirm that the findings have been carefully considered. The following actions will be taken to address the main issues raised:

- HMP Birmingham will strengthen its response to illicit item ingress by seeking investment in enhanced CCTV, increasing partnership work with West Midlands Police and taking targeted action against trafficking, drone and throwover activity. Staff working in Enhanced Gate Security and Reception scanning will receive further training to improve searching practice and make better use of body-scanning technology. The prison will also review reception processes to reduce opportunities to bypass searches, continue intelligence-led work to prevent corruption and increase the level of suspicion testing being undertaken, to act as a deterrent.
- HMP Birmingham recognises the concerns around acutely mentally unwell prisoners entering custody without prior mental health assessment and the continued delays in transfers to secure mental health hospitals. Some of these issues, including Red Route practices operated by West Midlands Police and the availability of assessment, diversion and hospital beds, sit outside the prison's direct control. However, the prison will continue to work closely with NHS partners, Liaison and Diversion services and regional stakeholders to escalate concerns and press for improvement. These concerns have already been escalated. Within the prison, vulnerable prisoners will continue to be identified, supported and reviewed by the relevant services, and all delayed transfers will be actively monitored and escalated through established governance arrangements.
- HMP Birmingham will improve both the timely induction to education and engagement in regime, through closer monitoring, the setting of clearer performance expectations and taking targeted action to remove barriers to engagement. Attendance at daily induction sessions is to increase to a minimum of 70% of capacity to improve Maths and English assessment completion rates, which in turn will enable more timely allocation to education, skills and work opportunities to take place. The level of 'inactive' prisoners is to be reduced below 30% (of total population), resulting in more prisoners engaging in regime and increased time out of cell. This will be achieved through strengthening allocation processes, improving coordination with residential areas and promoting engagement in purposeful activity so prisoners feel encouraged and supported to attend.

The Governor, with the support of the Prison Group Director, will continue to progress the full action plan addressing all the original priority concerns.

I remain committed to ensuring continued progress against the agreed HMP Birmingham action plan. Through my assurance arrangements, and with the support of the Performance, Assurance and Risk Group, progress will continue to be monitored closely and challenged where improvement is not moving at the required pace.

While I acknowledge that there is further work to do at HMP Birmingham, I am encouraged that progress is being made. I am clear that this progress must be sustained, strengthened and evidenced through continued delivery against the action plan.

Kind regards,

Sarah Chand

Area Executive Director – Midlands

Cc: James McEwen, Director General Chief Executive Officer, HMPPS,
Michelle Jarman-Howe, Interim Director General of Prisons, HMPPS,
Mark Greenhaf, Prison Group Director, West Midlands