



HM Prison & Probation Service

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Charlie Taylor,
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Dear Charlie,

HMIP report on an Independent Review of Progress at HMP Altcourse 6-8 July 2026

Thank you for your Independent Review of Progress report at HMP Altcourse, whereby you followed up on ten priority/key concerns and three Ofsted themes.

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

- Healthcare leadership and governance have strengthened significantly and effective partnership working with Sodexo is evident. The removal of the regulatory warning notice reflects a sustained improvement in clinical oversight, patient safety and medicine management. The improved GP waiting times and additional staff in Admissions have enabled prisoners to be seen more promptly for health screening and access to care.
- The improved position on positive Mandatory Drug Testing (MDT) rate which was 31% in the six months before the IRP, which is lower than the equivalent period before the inspection (35%). The reduction in positive MDT is due to staff having a clearer understanding of the factors contributing to drug use and supply and better use of intelligence to help identify emerging risks. Investment to reduce the supply of illicit substances had continued. A £2 million programme to improve window security is underway and further technology had been introduced to help prevent the ingress and spread of drugs.
- Education, skills and work provision has progressed and increased the number of activity spaces to meet the needs of the prison population. Allocation processes are more effective, resulting in a higher proportion of prisoners engaged in activities and unemployment levels being relatively low. Suitable qualifications have been introduced across prison industries and most work roles to accredit and recognise the knowledge, and skills prisoners had developed. Progress Trackers and case file notes that referenced the achievement of key work skills, the development of wider

employability skills and comments on the prisoners' attitudes and behaviours whilst in work are seen as good practice. These developments provide a stronger platform for continued improvements going forward.

- The good progress made on the food provision with Sodexo increasing the daily budget for food and using User Voice to gather prisoner feedback about food. The improved picture of prisoner complaints about food, with the lowest rate of all reception prisons, demonstrates the good progress made.

In respect of the four concerns and 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:

- Mental health transfers to hospital remain a significant concern. Although additional staffing has improved care for prisoners who would otherwise have gone to hospital, too many prisoners continue to wait beyond recommended timescales. There are system-wide challenges that are not within the control of the prison, but there will be a continued focus on working in partnership with external agencies, so prisoners receive timely care and are not held in custody inappropriately.
- The Equalities Strategy, which is in place and supported by a needs analysis, will be used to drive improvements. The new Equalities Manager was appointed in April 2026 and will continue to deliver monthly Diversity and Equality Action Team meetings and Prisoner Consultation Forums, with meaningful actions to improve outcomes for prisoners.
- Although outcomes for accommodation on release had improved slightly, too many prisoners were still released without accommodation. Commissioned Rehabilitative Services (CRS) provision at the prison is delivered by Seetec, to support prisoners returning to Cheshire and Merseyside. Due to population pressures, there have been more prisoners from the Greater Manchester area, but the Manchester CRS provider, Ingeus, is only available at the prison for one day each week, limiting the support available to prisoners from that area. We will work with Sodexo, Seetec, Ingeus and Population Management Services to improve this outcome.

The Director, with the support of the Senior Contract Manager will continue to progress the full Action Plan covering all the original priority/key concerns.

I remain committed to ensuring continued progress against the HMP Altcourse agreed Action Plan and I can assure you that through my operational assurance functions and the support of Performance Assurance & Risk Group (PAR) 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,

Robin Seaton

Executive Director, Directorate of Contracted Operational Delivery