HM Prison & Probation Service

HMP Bedford

A response to the HMIP inspection: 27 July to 6 August 2026

HMIP report published: 26 October 2026

Submitted: 23 November 2026

Introduction

HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) and HM Inspectorate of Probation for England and Wales are independent inspectorates which provide scrutiny of the conditions for, and treatment of, prisoners and offenders.

They report their findings on prisons and young offender institutions, and on the effectiveness of probation and youth offending services across England and Wales, to the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS).

In response to the report, HMPPS and the MoJ are required to draft a robust and timely action plan to address the priority and key concerns.

Action plans provide specific steps and actions to address these concerns that are clear, outcome-focused, measurable and achievable, with clear accountability and appropriate timescales for completion.

Action plans are sent to the relevant inspectorate and published on the GOV.UK website. Progress will be monitored regularly through local, regional and national governance structures.

Priority concerns and actions

No.	Concerns	Response: Action taken / Planned	Responsible owner	Target date
1	The rate of violence was too high. Behaviour management systems were ineffective in promoting positive behaviour or deterring poor behaviour.	Challenge, Support and Intervention Plan (CSIP) effectiveness will be reviewed to ensure that appropriate interventions are proactively identified and support for prisoners who commit violent acts is provided, drawing on relevant work from Psychology Services and the Central Safety team.	Governor	March 2027
	As above	The prison will improve staff confidence to tackle low-level poor behaviour through the development and delivery of bespoke training and supervision from Supervising Officers (SOs) and the Guidance, Performance & Support team (GPS).	Governor	May 2027
	As above	Monthly assurance checks will be introduced, these will be conducted by Residential Custodial Managers, to ensure the incentives policy is fair, proportionate and effective in promoting positive behaviour. Assurance findings will be fed back through the performance meeting.	Governor	March 2027
	As above	The use of Community Payback as an award given by adjudicators will be encouraged, and levels of use will be	Governor	April 2027

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		monitored through the adjudication standardisation meeting.		
	As above	As part of the re-profiling exercise, the prison will explore the feasibility of introducing designated safety officers whose role would be to proactively address the drivers of violence.	Governor	July 2027
	As above	The identification of those in debt will be improved through reception and induction screening, along with security intelligence analysis. The prison will also improve the support available to those identified, through referrals to appropriate educational opportunities, including entry level 3 budgeting and level 1 personal budgeting and managing money.	Governor	March 2027
	As above	The prison will explore the introduction of accredited and non-accredited violence reduction initiatives.	Governor	July 2027
	As above	Basic Custody Screening Tool 1's (BCST) will be used to gather intelligence during the reception and induction process and commission proactive CSIP referrals if necessary.	Governor	February 2027
	As above	The safety analyst will complete analytical training to enable them to effectively produce products that enhance	Governor	June 2027

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		the prison's understanding of the causes of violence for discussion at the safety meeting monthly.		
2	Living conditions were poor, with many living in overcrowded cells and significant maintenance issues remaining unresolved. Communal areas were often dirty and ineffective pest control contributed to widespread vermin.	Residential standards will be improved through a programme of intensive cleaning, utilising the 5 Step Cleaning programme. Residential staff will have access to visible examples of expected cell, wing and communal area standards.	Governor	March 2027
	As above	Pest control contracts will be managed robustly through the GFSL fortnightly & monthly meetings. The effectiveness of pest control methods will be assessed seasonally and methods adapted as required.	Governor / GFSL (FM Provider)	May 2027
	As above	The prison will ensure that cleaning officers are briefed on the requirements of the role by issuing them with a list of expectations and assuring compliance through management checks by SOs.	Governor	February 2027
	As above	A manager responsible for the 'Clean & Decent' agenda will be introduced, to drive standards and upskill the SOs within the residential group.	Governor	January 2027

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No.	Concerns	Response: Action taken / Planned	Responsible owner	Target date
	As above	After approval from the Establishment Investment Proposal (EIP), bids for funding will be submitted for the refurbishment plan outlined in the Sustained Improvement Support Plan (SISP) to improve decency standards within the prison which includes: • Refurbishment of all cellular accommodation with the exception of B wing • Refurbishment of Healthcare • Workshop Restructure for Purposeful Activity • Bio-Metric System, Gate & Visits • Main Kitchen Replacement • E Wing Replacement/ Refurbishment • Reception Remodelling	Governor	August 2027
	As above	The prison will commence delivery of a training plan for staff in relation to food hygiene, to ensure food service areas are clean and well managed, with the support of the catering team.	Governor	June 2027
	As above	The prison will identify and address barriers to completing pre-occupancy checks, ensuring cells are fit for occupation and ready for prisoners as part of the first night and induction process. Assurances will be conducted by residential managers.	Governor	March 2027

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3	Prisoners did not access education, skills and work early enough. This was a particular problem, given the high turnover at the prison.	Initial education assessments will be completed promptly by delivering inductions in a single location.	Governor / People Plus	September 2027
	As above	The prison will address barriers preventing prisoners on D Wing from attending maths and English assessments i.e. suitability of location, perceptions of safety etc through prisoner led forums.	Governor	September 2027
	As above	Allocation and sequencing processes will be reviewed to identify the causes of delays and reduce the time prisoners wait to access education, skills and work, drawing on information from all relevant departments. This will include sharing learning and good practice from comparable establishments.	Governor	April 2027
4	Attendance at education, skills and work was not sufficiently high.	The prison will review the reasons for interruptions to activity and ensure that appointments are scheduled (where possible) during non-work time, to limit the impact on attendance	Governor	April 2027
	As above	The prison will identify suitable options for work, skill and education for those who are self-isolating or vulnerable via in cell learning and work.	Governor	March 2027

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No.	Concerns	Response: Action taken / Planned	Responsible owner	Target date
	As above	The prison will develop a workplace for those who are living on the Vulnerable Prisoner (VP) wing.	Governor	March 2027
	As above	The prison will review the pay policy to ensure that attendance at purposeful activity is appropriately incentivised.	Governor	April 2027
5	The curriculum was not sufficiently broad or ambitious, particularly for prisoners with high levels of prior attainment.	The annual delivery plan will be reviewed and improved, including strengthening provision for prisoners with higher prior attainment.	Governor	Completed
	As above	The whole-prison reading strategy will be embedded through joint working between education, library and residential teams, promoting reading on wings and providing targeted support for emerging readers. Participation and progress will be reviewed regularly by the Head of Education, Work and Skills and the findings discussed at the Reducing Reoffending meeting in order to identify gaps and improve access.	Governor	January 2027
	As above	Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) funding will be used to enrich purposeful activity and accredited educational courses.	Governor	March 2027

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	As above	The prison will explore opportunities for external organisations and charities to support or fund accredited courses.	Governor	April 2027
	As above	The work offer for prisoners will be expanded by utilising two additional instructors to provide low skilled work for prisoners including Prisoners Convicted Of Sexual Offences (PCOSOs).	Governor	September 2027
	As above	The prison will map non-accredited courses and ensure that they complement education, skills and resettlement pathways.	Governor	April 2027
6	The quality of teaching, training and assessment was not consistently effective, particularly in workshops and work activities.	The prison will work with the local Industries team to improve the quality and consistency of teaching, training and assessment. Quality assurance checks will be introduced and a clear curriculum established, including accredited qualifications where relevant.	Governor	August 2027
	As above	The prison will engage with local employers through workshop visits and curriculum discussions to align training with industry standards and employment needs. Employer feedback will inform practical tasks and assessments, with agreed improvements reviewed through education, skills and work meetings.	Governor	December 2027

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7	Public protection arrangements had significant weaknesses. The interdepartmental risk management meeting was poorly attended and did not routinely review all high-risk prisoners approaching release, and the required mail and telephone monitoring was not always carried out.	Attendance at the Interdepartmental Risk Management Team (IRMT) meeting will be improved by reissuing terms of reference specifying mandatory departmental representation, nominating deputies and scheduling meetings in advance. Attendance will be recorded in the minutes, with unexplained absences escalated to functional heads and recurring gaps to the Governor.	Governor	April 2027
	As above	The IRMT agenda will be amended to ensure that it includes all mandatory points and that all high-risk prisoners are brought to the meeting for discussion with enough time to take action where needed.	Governor	December 2026
	As above	Mail and PIN phone monitoring will be improved, with the introduction of a dedicated staff group, to ensure required public protection controls are completed consistently and identified risks are effectively managed. New regional assurances have been introduced to cover child safeguarding and public protection.	Governor	June 2027

Key concerns and actions

No.	Concerns	Response: Action taken / Planned	Responsible owner	Target date
8	Many prisoners were unable to contact family and friends during their first few days in custody.	The reception SO will ensure those who are eligible receive a reception phone call promptly and that PINs are added without delay. This will be assured on the second day during induction.	Governor	April 2027
	As above	Reception and Induction staff will be briefed on the process for new receptions and public protection restrictions, ensuring that it forms part of the induction for new reception officers.	Governor	April 2027
	As above	The prison will publish a clear process to all staff about early communication expectations, particularly surrounding second day phone calls.	Governor	December 2026
	As above	Pre-occupancy checks will be embedded. This will include ensuring that access to telephone calls is available once public protection checks have been completed in a timely manner.	Governor	June 2027
	As above	The prison will explore how to re-introduce the Listener scheme by working with the local Samaritans branch to share learning from similar complex local prisons.	Governor	August 2027

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9	Drug availability and use were high. A quarter of random mandatory drug test results were positive for illicit substances.	The prison will embed the Security tripartite weekly meeting, and target disruption of the illicit economy. A standing agenda and consistent representation will support joint intelligence reviews, with agreed actions allocated to named owners and progress reviewed weekly to assess the effectiveness of disruption activity.	Governor	Complete
	As above	The prison will work with Drug and Alcohol Group (DAG) to scope the feasibility of an Incentivised Substance Free Living (ISFL) area/wing.	Governor	April 2027
	As above	New windows will be placed in the highest risk ingress areas. New grilles are being manufactured and will be fitted to remaining windows based on further risk.	Governor	August 2027
	As above	Suspicion-based drug testing will be conducted alongside the random testing programme.	Governor	March 2027
10	Relationships between staff and prisoners were too variable. Staff often failed to challenge low-level behaviour and key work lacked quality and consistency.	Staff-prisoner relationships will be strengthened through the setting of consistent expectations of professional standards, professional boundaries and routine challenge of poor behaviour, alongside the delivery of bitesize training for staff. Psychology Services will also support the delivery of training on difficult conversations and managing professional boundaries.	Governor	August 2027

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	As above	The prison will review key work allocation and improve quality through the provision of clear session standards, refresher guidance and examples of meaningful entries. Monthly sampling of records and prisoner feedback will assure that sessions address individual needs, agree actions and follow up progress, with findings used to improve practice.	Governor	March 2027
	As above	Terms of Reference for all meetings will be reviewed to consider whether the prisoner's voice should be included in the form of a representative.	Governor	March 2027
	As above	Introduce more mixed prisoner and staff events to build relationships, including but not limited to academic celebrations.	Governor	March 2027
	As above	The prison will review daily briefings, reinforce prison values and target support so staff can model positive behaviour, with support from the Guidance, Performance & Support (GPS) team.	Governor	January 2027
11	Prisoners arriving late at the prison who were experiencing withdrawal or needed detoxification could not access safe prescribing support. In addition, the	Prisoners arriving late who require detoxification or prescribing support will be prioritised and receive timely clinical assessment.	Governor / Northamptonshire Health Foundation Trust (NHFT)	Complete

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	prison held no out-of-hours storage for critical medicines, which meant that active treatments had to be paused, creating risks to patient care.			
	As above	Out-of-hours arrangements for critical medicines will be introduced so that active treatments are not unnecessarily paused.	Governor / NHFT	December 2026
	As above	The prison will introduce a Healthcare Navigator based in Reception and the First Night Centre (FNC). The role will help to ensure that prisoners can navigate the prison, access healthcare and receive the necessary information as part of early days in custody.	Governor / NHFT	April 2027
	As above	A GP will be reintroduced into Reception to ensure that risks relating to newly received prisoners can be assessed effectively.	Governor / NHFT	April 2027
12	There was limited enrichment available to prisoners during periods of unlock, and many prisoners had little to occupy their time meaningfully.	Peer and staff led structured on-wing activity will be implemented during unlock, through the Structured On Wing Activity (SOWA) role.	Governor	March 2027

No.	Concerns	Response: Action taken / Planned	Responsible owner	Target date
	As above	The prison will use Asset Investment Bid (AIB) funding to improve gym provision and increase prisoner access to constructive activity.	Governor	March 2027
	As above	The regime and support for self-isolating prisoners will be strengthened by identifying individual barriers to participation, agreeing tailored support plans and providing regular staff contact and meaningful in-cell activity. Progress towards supported access to time out of cell will be reviewed regularly.	Governor	March 2027
	As above	The prison will review how prisoner consultation can be used to inform and shape decision-making processes, where appropriate, within the prison. For example, feedback from the Prison Council will be used to influence and support decisions affecting prisoners, ensuring their views are considered when developing and implementing changes to services, regimes, and the wider prison environment.	Governor	May 2027
13	The overall provision to help prisoners maintain contact with family and friends remained limited. Arrangements for booking social visits were inadequate and the timing of secure	As part of the national rollout, an enhanced, public facing on-line booking system will be deployed at HMP Bedford.	Justice Digital	June 2027

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	social video calls did not meet prisoners' needs.			
	As above	The prison will enhance communication to prisoners and families to reenforce the message that visits should not be block booked. This will include: • Notices to prisoners • Updated induction literature • Notices to families within the visits centre	Governor	February 2027
	As above	Where misuse of the booking system, by block booking sessions, is identified, visitors will be advised that they will be required to make future bookings via telephone.	Governor	February 2027
	As above	The prison will increase visits capacity and improve the visits hall environment to support better family contact.	Governor	February 2027
	As above	Improved secure social video call availability will be delivered by introducing weekend and evening calls, to better meet prisoners' needs.	Governor	June 2027