

Urgent action to rapidly improve HMP Woodhill

16.4.2026 - | Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

Specialist staff, tougher disciplinary action and bolstered security measures will be deployed at HMP Woodhill to reduce violence, combat drugs and improve safety.

- Action plan to target violence, drugs and poor conditions at Buckinghamshire jail.
- Extra staff support, training and security measures to help stabilise the prison
- Education, rehabilitation and preparation for release to be strengthened

The Government has launched a comprehensive action plan to address serious failings at the jail after His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) issued an Urgent Notification in March.

Inspectors found high levels of violence, with drugs far too easily available and some of the highest rates of self-harm in the estate.

In response, Ministers have acted to roll out a comprehensive plan to improve safety and conditions, strengthen staff capability and deliver better outcomes for prisoners.

This includes a new safety strategy to better spot and support those at risk of self-harm, while stronger security measures including new physical barriers such as wires and window grilles will be installed to stop the flow of illicit items using drones.

Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending, Lord James Timpson, said:

The prison crisis we inherited has left too many jails struggling with violence, drugs and poor conditions.

This action plan sets out the decisive steps we are taking to improve safety, tackle drugs and drones, and get more prisoners into the education and training they need to leave crime behind.

We are putting more staff on the ground and backing HMP Woodhill with the investment it needs to improve, as we continue to fix the broken prison system we inherited to deliver punishment that works to cut crime.

A new living unit will also be introduced – where offenders are incentivised to keep off substances – helping reduce the demand for drugs. This is in addition to recruitment of specialist staff dedicated to supporting prisoners dealing with addiction.

The action plan also sets out refurbishments and a renewed focus on cleanliness to improve conditions. Meanwhile rehabilitation efforts will be strengthened through greater access to the education and work opportunities offenders rely on to turn their lives around.

A new governor appointed in 2025 has already begun work to stabilise HMP Woodhill, supported by regional and national teams, including a dedicated taskforce focused on improving performance across the Long Term and High Security Estate.

More widely, the Government is building 14,000 extra prison places - with more than 3100 already delivered - and reforming sentencing to ensure punishment cuts crime and dangerous can always be locked up to keep streets safe.

Notes to editors

- The Urgent Notification process was introduced in 2017 to ensure immediate action is taken to address the most serious concerns identified by inspectors.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/urgent-action-to-rapidly-improve-hmp-woodhill>