



Ministry  
of Justice

Lord Timpson  
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Gartree  
Market Harborough  
Leicestershire  
LE16 7RP

MoJ ref: SUB126642

20 August 2025

Dear Chair,

**HMP GARTREE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 DECEMBER 2023 – 30 NOVEMBER 2024**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Gartree. I am especially grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work given you continue to operate with less than half of your board complement.

I understand the Board's ongoing concerns about the prison's infrastructure and as an update to last year, progress is being made on the fire safety project which is due to complete by the end of the 2025/26 financial year. A comprehensive review of the showers is being planned to identify defects and target capital funding bids effectively and as identified a Genox machine is now in place to purify the water supply at source to tackle legionella. The Board can be assured that funding has been actively pursued to replace outdated heating systems and reduce the reliance on temporary heating. A site-wide boiler replacement scheme is due to be delivered in this 2025/26 financial year capital programme. It is recognised that the prisoners located on the over 50's Unit were affected when issues with the heating became protracted. All prisoners were offered a move to an alternative location, but this was declined and therefore additional blankets were provided.

The infrastructure of our prisons is overseen by the HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) National Services Estates who provide the capital maintenance funding, with the Ministry of Justice Property managing many of the funded projects, as well as overseeing the local facilities management maintenance provider contracts. Additional projects at HMP Gartree, including window replacements, window grilles and anti-drone wire site wide are in development. Should funding be approved it is expected delivery of the grilles and wires would be able to commence this financial year, with window replacements starting in the 2026/27 financial year. A business case has also been submitted for a replacement fire alarm system, but this is at an early stage and projects of this scale are complex and will require taking many places offline which will need to be carefully considered.

The challenges posed by the rising older prison population over recent years, with their complex health and social care needs and the physical design of some prisons are acknowledged. This is why the new prison places being built have been designed with accessibility in mind and will significantly increase the number of adapted cells for those with mobility and physical disabilities. The recommendation made by the Independent Sentencing Review to produce a strategy for older prisoners is also welcomed and we will work with partners to publish our strategy in due course. I note that HMP Gartree does accommodate older prisoners primarily in H Wing on the over 50's Unit, however older prisoners are accommodated and managed in all areas of the prison, with any adaptations needed considered on a case-by-case basis.

The six prisoners that currently need social care is delivered in tandem between Leicestershire County Council and the healthcare provider Practice Plus Group (PPG) which works effectively. The prison also has four disabled cells. Based on current demand there are no plans to increase the capacity for older prisoners.

I can assure the Board that all service providers are continually assessed as per their contractual obligations with the use of various benchmarks and mechanisms to identify and address performance. It is recognised that during the reporting year the healthcare provision at HMP Gartree transitioned from Nottinghamshire Healthcare Foundation NHS Trust to PPG whose contact started on 1 March 2024. This resulted in staff recruitment being paused which did result in staffing levels impacting on delivery. These have been mitigated through contingency planning with the night shifts covered since the new contract began and the vacancy rate reducing from 50% to 31% by the end of the Board's reporting period. To clarify, the responsibility for monitoring healthcare performance remains with NHS England through established contract and performance management processes. However, regionally PPG healthcare also internally scrutinises all aspect of the care provided locally. A Clinical Quality Visit to the prison was conducted by NHS England in November 2023 and an action plan was developed to improve service delivery. PPG took over responsibility of the action plan in March 2024 and actions have been completed across pharmacy, infection prevention and control, complaints, staffing and patient engagement. The MoJ and HMPPS does not have access to healthcare data to provide the comparisons the Board asks. However, I can provide assurance that NHS England will ensure that the Board has access to the relevant healthcare performance data.

I do recognise that vulnerable people across the prison estate continue to experience delays in accessing the specialist mental health care and treatment they need in a secure hospital and healthcare providers are seeing prisoners with more complexities. In March 2025 the Care Quality Commissions regulatory report on the Mental Health Act 1983 found inpatient services in the UK lacked sufficient bed. NHS England are maintaining oversight, with weekly clinical case discussions for those who are awaiting transfer and delays are being escalated to the Mental Health Provider Collaborative who have the responsibility for the commissioning secure mental health beds. A recently established Mental Health and Justice Strategic Advisory Group is being developed to improve oversight of the transfer process and deliver solutions to address the common causes of delay. The healthcare provider at HMP Gartree is also working with prison staff to increase the use of the Wellbeing Centre to support patient needs and a neurodiversity project commissioned by NHS England is providing funding to the healthcare team to enhance support for prisoners with complex needs. In addition, progress is being made with the Mental Health Bill which has now been introduced in the House of Commons and we are working with other departments to create an implementation plan which sets out the operational improvements necessary to commence these reforms 18-24 month post Royal Assent.

The Government is very mindful of the specific challenges faced by those serving Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentences and is determined to support the rehabilitation of IPP offenders. A refreshed IPP Action Plan was published on 17 July 2025 in our IPP Annual Report that puts an important emphasis on effective frontline delivery in our prisons and the Probation Service. This is the most effective way to help prisoners at HMP Gartree to reduce their risk so that they can progress towards safe release and staff locally are being upskilled to support prisoners through their sentence plan. We have also implemented reforms to the IPP licence period which commenced on 1 November 2024, when the licences for 1,742 IPP offenders in the community were terminated. Further reforms were implemented on 1 February 2025, when the reduced qualifying period for consideration of licence termination was introduced, resulting in around 600 referrals being made to the Parole Board.

Despite the challenges a Long Term and High Security Estate (LTHSE) prison faces, it was reassuring to receive your comments that prisoners at HMP Gartree are treated fairly, have positive relationships with

staff and that they report that they feel safe. I am personally focused on reducing violence in the LTHSE. It is encouraging that there continues to be a drive to provide a consistent regime and that changes during the year have improved prisoners access to work, education and time out of cell as these are important for a prisoner's rehabilitation. I also welcome the recognition given to the library initiatives and that prisoners have the opportunity to mentor their peers.

I note you have raised some local issues of concern in your report which the Governor will continue to keep you aware of as work continues. HMPPS comments in response to other issues raised in your report are set out in the attached annex.

The Lord Chancellor and I appreciated the valuable role played by members of Independent Monitoring Boards throughout the estate and we are incredibly grateful for your continued hard work on behalf of HMP Gartree.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James', written in a cursive style.

**Lord Timpson**  
**Minister for Prisons, Probation, and Reducing Reoffending**

## **HMP GARTREE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 DECEMBER 2023 – 30 NOVEMBER 2024**

### **HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report**

#### **Prisoners' Property**

The handling of prisoners' property is an area which HMPPS is currently giving further attention. Careful consideration is being given to the findings in the IMB national thematic report on how property loss impacts on prisoners, as well as those received from Independent Prisoner Complaint Investigations following a thematic review of the property complaints they have received in the last five years. It is recognised that compliance with volumetric control limits is important, since anything within those limits will transfer with them and Governors and other senior leaders have been reminded of the most important property handling points. Whilst the National Facilities List provides a framework for consistency with minimum items in part one, Governors retain discretion over the additional items in part two. However, recent efforts across the LTHSE have agreed some commonality around the management of volumetric control and discretionary one-off purchases which will be implemented later this year. Further work is also due to be undertaken to scope the impact of a common facilities list within the LTHSE which has previously been considered among prison leaders.

#### **Kitchen Heating**

The heating boilers in the kitchen were replaced during the 2024/25 financial year and repairs to the air handling unit and heating coil have also taken place to ensure adequate heating and air circulation for both staff and prisoners in this area. Despite this work and delays in sourcing contractors for faulty kitchen equipment, there have been no impact on food preparation, service or delivery.

#### **Prison Budgets**

HMP Gartree will continue to receive appropriate budgets and capital funding to maintain a safe, secure and decent environment for both staff and prisoners. Staffing budgets are allocated based on the approved staffing model of the prison and non-pay costs, such as food prisoner clothing and cleaning, are allocated using a unit cost approach to ensure essential needs are met. To assist prisons to manage key operational costs, additional investment has been made across the prison estate for the 2025/26 financial year to address non-pay cost inflationary pressures, for example the daily food allowance has risen to £3.12. Governors also continue to have discretion to adjust their individual budgets locally to meet operational needs and these measures collectively will help ensure that HMP Gartree continues to operate to expected standards of safety and decency.

#### **Maintenance Projects**

All projects which have been allocated funding are set out in the Minister's letter. However, HMPPS is committed to delivering sustained improvement in living conditions across the prison estate to promote a safe and secure environment that facilitates genuine rehabilitation. To do this HMPPS will be continually reviewing the investment required across the estate and proposals will be informed by recent condition surveys that assessed the fabric, cells, and critical assets at each prison. These will inform maintenance registers, which can be prioritised against future capital budgets to make best use of the funding available.

#### **Healthcare Complaints**

The Ministry of Justice and HMPPS are not responsible for the commissioning of healthcare services in prison which is the responsibility of NHS England and the Welsh Government. Healthcare complaints also fall into that remit and use a separate healthcare complaint process which are not seen by HMPPS staff

due to medical in confidence. Healthcare complaints received by the local healthcare provider are reported to NHS England commissioners and the Nursing and Quality Team for review. This reporting also includes additional narrative detailing themes, investigation outcomes and recommendations, as well as actions taken and timeframes to provide assurance of improvements made and lessons learned. The provider averages around 16 concerns raised by patients monthly which are dealt with in five days with a one-to-one discussion offered to resolve the issues patients may have with their care. Where these progress to a complaint, which average three per month, the provider has 60 days to investigate and provide a written response. The Board can be assured the provider takes all concerns and complaints seriously and there is a dedicated patient engagement lead that will review themes to ensure the right information and actions are taken.

### **Purposeful Activity**

Further to the budget funding mentioned above, the Board can be assured that HMP Gartree is able to offer work to all prisoners. Decisions about the curriculum that is delivered via the current and future education contract rest with the Governor and is reviewed annual based on a needs analysis of the prison population. The Governor also has the flexibility to determine the pay rates above the minimum level that prisoners receive for work and education at their prison which is also reviewed annually to ensure fairness.

### **Drones**

HMPPS is working hard to deter, detect and disrupt the use of drones across the prison estate, including investing over £40 million this year in physical security, such as anti-drone measures. Trials of anti-drone wire solutions are also underway in the LTHSE, and further technological and legislative measures are being explored, alongside upskill prison staff and joint operations with the Police and the National Crime Agency. However, we cannot share all of the counter drone tactics as this would be playing into the hands of the sophisticated serious and organised criminals who seek to undermine the security of our prisons. Locally HMP Gartree will continue to be proactive in identifying risks, building intelligence and responding to drone threats. The LTHSE prisons are also supported by a regional team which has resulted in some positive results leading to the arrest of those involved in drone incursions.

### **Fire Safety**

A Crown Premises Fire Safety Inspectorate (CPFSI) visit to the prison that took place on 14 November 2024 was the result of a complaint and did not result in a formal report. The visit concluded positively with the CPFSI determining a further visit to the prison would not be required in the near future. To provide further assurance to the Board, fire safety is included in the induction for all new staff and operational staff are trained to respond to cell fires. There is also a programme for all occupied buildings to undergo a fire evacuation simulation annually and the facilities management provider completes a weekly test of all fire alarm call points.