



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Lindholme
Lindholme
Doncaster
DN7 6EE

MoJ ref: SUB126632

18 August 2025

Dear Chair,

**HMP LINDHOLME: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 FEBRUARY 2024 – 31 JANUARY 2025**

Thank you for the Board's annual report on HMP Lindholme, which I have read with care. It provides a clear and thoughtful account of the key issues facing the prison. I am particularly grateful for the dedication shown by you and your colleagues in producing such a thorough report, especially while operating below the recommended board members.

I was saddened to read that there were three deaths in the reporting year. I offer my deepest condolences to their friends and family. All deaths in custody are taken very seriously and I was encouraged to read your observations that the prison ensures all recommendations from Prisons and Probation Ombudsman reports are collated into an action planned and regularly reviewed.

I recognise the Board's concern regarding the serious and sustained ingress of illicit substances at HMP Lindholme and the pressure this places on the prison's ability to function as an effective training establishment. HMP Lindholme faces a unique security challenge due to its physical structure. Unlike purpose-built prisons, the site's origins as a Royal Air Force base mean it lacks certain design features that can mitigate modern security threats. This makes it particularly vulnerable to drone-enabled smuggling, which has become the most significant route for contraband. Despite this, the Governor and his team have demonstrated significant resilience and resourcefulness, deploying intelligence-led patrols, search routines and a dedicated search team which operates daily. These local measures are being used to maximum effect, but the sheer scale and persistence of the drone threat continue to stretch the prison's capacity. The prison has previously trialled a drone detection system which, although initially promising, proved ineffective against the increasingly advanced technology used. However, recent evidence suggests a shift in the types of drones being used, with less sophisticated models now appearing more frequently. This offers a renewed opportunity to reassess the viability of reintroducing detection technology.

Nationally, His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is investing over £40 million in physical security measures across 34 prisons this financial year, with around £10 million set aside for anti-drone interventions including netting and secure windows. This is being complemented by a strategic programme of work to explore new technologies, update legislation where appropriate and strengthen staff capability. Our work remains intelligence driven and highly coordinated across Government, law enforcement and international partners. Within this broader programme, HMP Lindholme's security vulnerabilities continue to be reviewed actively and collaboration with law enforcement remains a key strand of the local strategy.

The Board's concerns regarding the continued use of single cells to accommodate two prisoners are well noted. This practice, while never ideal, is governed by clear operational standards and is only pursued where decency and safety can be assured. At HMP Lindholme, several layers of assurance are in place to monitor conditions in shared cells. Staff carry out daily checks to ensure security and maintenance standards are upheld. Decency reviews are conducted weekly and managers undertake monthly inspections of a representative sample of cells. Where issues are identified, these are logged through the appropriate facilities management system to ensure timely rectification. Furthermore, the prison has sought to improve living conditions by ensuring cell fans are provided and that domestic services such as laundry access are available and equitable. More importantly, the prison continues to review Cell Sharing Risk Assessments regularly and any incident involving violence or concerns about prisoner welfare automatically triggers a reassessment. This ensures that those in shared accommodation are housed appropriately and that safety remains paramount.

The Board rightly highlights the importance of progression through the prison estate and the need for meaningful resettlement opportunities to support rehabilitation. At present, HMP Lindholme is housing a higher number of resettlement prisoners than originally envisaged. This is part of a wider trend across the estate, reflecting current population pressures and the need for flexibility in how capacity is configured. Nevertheless, efforts are underway to rebalance this. The recent opening of HMP Millsike has added substantial new resettlement capacity to the estate. This is already improving the ability to progress prisoners out of training prisons such as Lindholme, and its impact is expected to grow in the months ahead.

More broadly, a review of the configuration of the adult male estate is underway, including a reassessment of the balance between Category C and D places. This work is being informed by the recommendations of the Independent Sentencing Review, which may lead to further changes in how offender progression is managed across the system. Our commitment remains clear, that is; to provide every prisoner with access to the right intervention, in the right setting, at the right point in their sentence journey. Lindholme is playing a vital role in this, and I am encouraged by the determination of the team to uphold rehabilitative outcomes despite systemic pressures.

I welcome the Board's recognition of the ongoing national and regional efforts to improve outcomes for IPP prisoners. It is particularly encouraging to note the positive impact of Lindholme's quarterly prisoner forum and the Board's view that the associated action plans are both comprehensive and achievable.

The Governor will continue to keep you informed on the local issues raised in your report as work progresses. HMPPS's response to the matter raised for its consideration is provided in the attached annex.

The Secretary of State and I greatly value the important role played by Independent Monitoring Boards across the estate and we are sincerely grateful to you and your team for your continued dedication and hard work on behalf of HMP Lindholme.

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 LINDHOLME: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 FEBRUARY 2024 – 31 JANUARY 2025

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report.

Prisoners Awaiting Transfer to Secure Hospitals

The Board has raised concerns about the resources available to manage prisoners who have been assessed for transfer to secure hospital settings but are awaiting placement. This is a longstanding issue that involves complex coordination across multiple agencies.

NHSE North East & Yorkshire has recently recommissioned its Non-Custodial services into a single regional contract, now delivered by the same provider responsible for healthcare at HMP Lindholme. This alignment is expected to improve communication between custody and community mental health services, streamline patient pathways and reduce unnecessary custody for individuals better served in clinical settings. To help manage waiting patients and address system delays, a number of key mechanisms are in place. A fortnightly escalation meeting is held with providers and commissioners to discuss high-risk or delayed cases. In parallel, work is underway to standardise data reporting, align regional practices and use emerging trends to inform targeted improvement efforts. Additionally, quarterly contract reviews now include data on transfer and remission times, enabling greater scrutiny and helping to identify inefficiencies within the system.

Crucially, NHSE and its partners have launched a pilot project at HMP Leeds in collaboration with HMPPS, secure hospitals and Provider Collaboratives. The aim is to create a more seamless and timely transfer pathway for individuals requiring secure mental health care. This includes establishing clear trigger points for initiating clinical discussions, empowering clinicians to escalate cases at an earlier stage, promoting multi-disciplinary team decision-making and encouraging clinician-to-clinician dialogue to resolve disagreements quickly and effectively. Following the completion of this pilot, the learning and tools developed will be shared with HMP Lindholme and other establishments. This is expected to strengthen local decision-making and reduce the number of prisoners awaiting clinically indicated transfers.

It is important to note that while NHSE Health & Justice oversees commissioning within prisons, responsibility for secure mental health bed capacity lies with other parts of the system, specifically NHSE Specialised Commissioning for high secure beds and Provider Collaboratives for low and medium secure placements.