



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Lancaster Farms
Stone Row Head
Off Quernmore Road
Lancaster LA1 3QZ

MoJ ref: SUB126719

25 September 2025

Dear Chair,

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

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Lancaster Farms and for your continued oversight, dedication and scrutiny throughout the reporting year, particularly while operating without your full complement of members. Your detailed observations play a vital role in helping us to maintain safe, decent and rehabilitative environments in custody.

I was saddened to learn of the two deaths in custody during the reporting year, both suspected to be linked to the consumption of illicit substances. I extend my condolences to the families and friends affected and I would like to reassure the Board that any recommendations of the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman are taken extremely seriously.

I would like to reassure the Board that its continued concerns around prisoners with complex mental health needs are taken seriously. As you report, the Grizedale unit offers a local model of care built around targeted psychological input, neurodiversity-informed practices and mental health integration within the daily regime. The small size of the unit enables more individualised supervision and therapeutic engagement and allocation to the unit is carefully managed to ensure suitability. While there are no immediate plans to increase the number of specialist units within the local prison estate, a wider national review is underway to assess the demand and capacity for secure and acute mental health services.

The regional commissioning team is also actively working with providers to ensure that internal referral processes are effective and that timely access to clinical assessments is maintained. Where delays occur, escalation routes are used to raise concerns with receiving organisations and track response times against national guidance. Additional oversight is being delivered through the work of a newly established cross-sector advisory group, which is analysing the root causes of referral delays and promoting consistency in operational practices. These developments will inform future service planning and support a more joined-up approach to care for individuals whose needs exceed what can typically be managed within standard custodial settings.

Regarding your concerns around healthcare provision, please be assured that robust governance arrangements are in place to monitor the performance of healthcare providers. At HMP Lancaster Farms, healthcare contracts are overseen through formal quarterly contract meetings chaired by NHS England commissioners, supplemented by regular quality visits. These forums ensure that appointment attendance, waiting times and other performance indicators are addressed collaboratively by healthcare

and custodial staff. The Local Delivery Board remains the central mechanism for joint oversight and the Board is able to attend these meetings at the Governor's invitation. Healthcare providers also participate in local prison meetings, ensuring transparency and accountability in day-to-day service delivery. Direct feedback from prisoners is collected through regular Healthcare Forums and complaints are managed in line with nationally agreed timescales. Regionally, the North West Prisons Partnership Board facilitates shared planning between NHS England and HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). This ensures that prison healthcare services continue to reflect changes in population need and can be developed strategically across the estate.

Maintaining an ageing prison estate presents ongoing challenges and I acknowledge the Board's concerns about the condition of the physical environment at HMP Lancaster Farms. The prison continues to take proactive steps to address these issues within available resources. A decency assurance assessment is now carried out on each wing every month, enabling staff to track and respond to cell-level concerns systematically. Alongside this, a local provision is in place where prisoners, under supervision, carry out minor repairs such as replacing missing door screens and undertaking basic maintenance. This approach not only supports decency but also provides purposeful activity and skill-building for those involved. Where larger-scale improvements are required, the prison regularly submits bids for capital investment under the appropriate schemes and has recently been successful in securing support for targeted projects. These bids are prioritised to ensure that available funding is directed to areas of greatest need. Importantly, HMP Lancaster Farms is also delivering improvements through the Creating Realistic Environments for Decency (CRED) programme. This initiative, run in partnership with Amey, enables prisoners to work alongside estates professionals to refurbish residential areas. One wing has already been completed to a high standard and refurbishment work is now underway on a second unit. This programme is delivering visible improvements to living conditions while also supporting rehabilitation through practical work and training.

It was encouraging to receive the Board's positive observations on the ongoing development of the employment hub and the prison's efforts to increase access to work and training opportunities for men in custody. I was also heartened to read about the physical activity initiatives that are having a positive impact on developing wellbeing and skills. This included the Project 180/Cross Fit rehabilitation programme, the introduction of a park run and delivery of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

HMPPS comments in response to other issues raised in your report are set out in the attached annex. The Governor will continue to keep you updated, as work progresses, in regard to the local issues of concern which you have raised.

The Lord Chancellor and I greatly appreciate the valuable role played by members of Independent Monitoring Boards throughout the estate and we again extend our thanks for your continued hard work on behalf of HMP Lancaster Farms.

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

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Property Handling During Prison Transfers

The handling and tracking of prisoner property remains a live area of operational focus. HMPPS has reinforced key principles with Governors, including adherence to volumetric control limits, which ensure that permitted property accompanies the prisoner when moving between establishments. While the development of a national electronic property card is not currently anticipated due to wider digital programme constraints, the digitally recorded Person Escort Record now includes a property section that logs sealed items and their transfer between custody stakeholders.

Locally, the prison has strengthened its internal processes; staff now conduct all cell clearances with the prisoner's property card in hand and record the process using body-worn video cameras, improving both accuracy and accountability.

Staffing Levels and Regime Curtailments

HMP Lancaster Farms is currently operating above target staffing levels, with 129.5 Band 3 officers in post against a target of 128.0. An additional 6.5 full-time equivalent staff have been provided through the Enable programme. These staffing levels have supported the consistent delivery of the daily regime. There have been very few planned regime curtailments and when they have occurred, they have resulted from unplanned and unforeseeable events such as emergency hospital escorts or operational incidents.

Continuity of Healthcare for Transferred Prisoners

To ensure that prisoners transferring between establishments are not disadvantaged in terms of their healthcare, national protocols are in place. These include the use of medical holds to prevent transfers where individuals are undergoing treatment or are subject to mental health assessments. In every case where a transfer proceeds, healthcare staff complete detailed handover documentation to ensure that care continues seamlessly at the receiving prison. RECONNECT services are also embedded across the region to provide prisoners nearing release with access to healthcare in the community. These services ensure that transitional care needs are met and reduce the risk of disengagement from treatment post-release.

Medication Supply and Contract Delivery

There have been ongoing concerns regarding pharmacy deliveries following the implementation of a new contract. These issues have been added to the site risk register and are being monitored closely. While there has been improvement in contract performance, the provider remains open to sourcing alternative suppliers if further disruption occurs. NHS England continues to work closely with the healthcare team to safeguard consistent access to medication for prisoners at HMP Lancaster Farms.