



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Frankland
Brasside
Durham
DH1 5YD

MoJ ref: SUB127301

15 September 2025

Dear Chair,

**HMP FRANKLAND: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 01 DECEMBER 2023 – 30 NOVEMBER 2024**

Thank you for submitting your Board's annual report on HMP Frankland. I have read your report with care and I am very grateful to you and your colleagues for the considerable work that has gone into preparing it and capturing a detailed and honest account of the prison's current state with the aim of improving best practices. This is particularly impressive given that you were operating below your recommended complement of members.

I was saddened to hear that there were five deaths in custody during the reporting year. I offer my condolences to all their friends and family. I would again reiterate to the Board that any recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman are taken very seriously. I would also like to acknowledge the terrible incident that happened there in April where three prison officers were attacked and the impact this must have had on those involved in the prison, including your members. Safety of our staff in prison is paramount. Further to an HMPPS review conducted following the incident, protective body armour will now be mandated in the Close Supervision Centres, Separation Centres and Segregation Units in the Long-Term High Security Estate.

I appreciate you drawing my attention to the issue of caring for prisoners living with dementia and whether HMP Frankland or other prisons in the long-term and high-security estate (LTHSE) are the most suitable settings for individuals with such complex physical and mental health needs. Placement in LTHSE prisons is based primarily on an individual's security classification and risk to the public, rather than health condition. Sentencing decisions are a matter for the independent judiciary, who consider all relevant factors, including any neurological or mental health conditions, in accordance with guidance set by the Sentencing Council.

However, I recognise the importance of ensuring that the needs of older and more vulnerable prisoners are considered properly. The independent review of sentencing examined whether the needs for older offenders, including those with acute mental health needs such as dementia, were met by the current framework. It recognised, as you do in your report, the operational challenges of managing those with age-related conditions, particularly given infrastructure constraints. It subsequently recommended both a national strategy to manage older offenders' complex health needs and an expansion of the use of Early Release on Compassionate Grounds for suitable older offenders. The Government has accepted these recommendations in principle and will seek to implement these.

In the meantime, His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) continues to work closely with the NHS and Local Authorities to ensure that those in our care receive the support they need. As you report, HMP Frankland is taking steps to support those with dementia, having implemented a dementia pathway and offering additional support including partnership work with Alzheimer's UK and Age UK.

I was pleased to read about the success story of two prisoners that had spent lengthy periods in segregation being moved to standard accommodation. It was also refreshing to read about the many positive changes in healthcare that you were able to cite as well as impressive work in the arts and education. Prisoners at Frankland receiving 25 Koestler Awards was especially notable and I commend them for their achievements.

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

The Secretary of State and I remain hugely appreciative of the important role played by members of Independent Monitoring Boards throughout the estate and we would like to extend our thanks to you and your team for your continued hard work on behalf of HMP Frankland.

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

Maintenance Contractor

We recognise how important a reliable and responsive maintenance service is for the smooth operation of the prison and the safety and wellbeing of all who live and work there. We are working closely with the maintenance contractor to enhance performance and ensure service delivery meets expectations. Through ongoing discussions and collaboration, we have reinforced key performance indicators (KPIs) such as response time, completion rates and this process is continuing.

To support improvements, we have implemented regular audit and monthly reviews of work and outstanding defects. Clear communication has been prioritised between the management team and facilities management provider, allowing us to jointly address challenges and refine operational strategies. The estates meeting, chaired by the Deputy Governor and attended by senior staff and an AMEY manager, also continues to allow for effective tracking of outstanding issues and escalation where needed.

The specific concerns you raised about kitchen equipment have already been escalated via the agreed national process. We will keep this under review to ensure that the issue is resolved satisfactorily.