



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Highpoint
Stradishall
Newmarket
Suffolk
CB8 9TG

MoJ ref: SUB126148

24 September 2025

Dear Chair,

**HMP HIGHPOINT: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 JANUARY – 31 DECEMBER 2024**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Highpoint which I have read with great care and attention. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work that has been put into capturing your helpful observations, especially as you have continued to operate with several vacancies which undoubtedly has placed considerable pressure on your team. I hope my visit to the prison earlier this year proved useful, where I was particularly impressed to witness the work with NetworkRail firsthand.

I was saddened to hear three prisoners died during the reporting year. I offer my condolences to all their family and friends and would like to reassure the Board that recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman are taken very seriously and will be actioned accordingly.

I acknowledge the Board's concerns regarding the handling of prisoners' property and the request for a review. This continues to be an area to which HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is currently giving further attention. Careful consideration will be 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.

As the Board identifies, a common area for problems is when excess prisoner property is forwarded on when a prisoner transfers. It is therefore key that prisoners comply with volumetric control limits, since anything within those limits will transfer with them in line with the current Prisoner Escort and Custody Service contract. HMPPS is focusing on what more can be done to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Framework.

Local efforts at HMP Highpoint to address concerns continue with a review of systems and practices to ensure that prisoners receive their property more swiftly. The Reception Team have implemented an appointments system. This provides prisoners with an avenue to raise issues at the earliest opportunity directly with the team handling their property. There remains a necessity to police volumetric control limits and the prison will work collaboratively with staff and prisoners to ensure issues are managed and resolved.

I recognise the concerns that you have raised regarding the rise in the number of healthcare applications and the ask to investigate the reasons behind this.

An exploration of the applications received indicates that trends are centred around patients not in agreement with the prescribing, requesting medication that is not available in a custodial setting or not indicated as best practice for a particular diagnosis. Locally it has been identified that a high number of prisoners arriving at HMP Highpoint require a medication review to bring medications in line with National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines which can often be a point of contention. In addition to this there remains a national issue regarding the availability of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder medication due to shortages which is an additional source of complaint by prisoners.

There have been no complaints escalated to the NHS England Commissioner, with the healthcare provider resolving issues at a local level. Issues of performance are routinely explored in all contract review meetings with the provider to ensure that patients receive the best possible care whilst at HMP Highpoint.

Whilst I recognise that your report outlines that there is work to do to improve experiences and outcomes at HMP Highpoint, I was heartened to read your commentary on (and witness firsthand) the excellent work carried out by the Reducing Reoffending Team and Senior Management Team regarding the NetworkRail provision. I have long been an advocate of rehabilitation, and the innovative partnerships forged with Keltbray and Lynch are an epitome of this by providing meaningful opportunities for prisoners to change their lives.

I was also encouraged to read your comments regarding the exceptional support provided to prisoners by the Diversity and Inclusion Team and the professionalism and hard work of the kitchen staff ensuring meals are provided whilst dealing with food supplier issues.

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 continue to appreciate the invaluable role played by members of Independent Monitoring Boards and we extend our thanks for your ongoing commitment on behalf of HMP Highpoint.

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 HIGHPOINT: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JANUARY 2024 – 31 DECEMBER 2024

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Government Facilities Services Limited (GFSL)

HMPPS acknowledge the boards concerns and recognise that HMP Highpoint continues to be challenging regarding the delivery of the Facilities Management contract. Whilst we await the full implementation of outcomes (expected by 2026) following the review of national service provision through the Property Transformation Programme, we continue to work with GFSL management to ensure that HMP Highpoint remains a secure, safe and decent establishment. This includes reviewing the management structure with a view to setting up North and South management teams to give more accountability and focus and by continuing to invest in improving the establishment by progressing minor works projects totalling approximately 600k.

Locally, the Governor has strong governance in place to support GFSL. A weekly meeting with GFSL Site Managers allows for concerns to be raised and ongoing projects to be discussed at the earliest opportunity. This allows for potential barriers to delivery to be identified and for necessary action to be taken to ensure that matters are being progressed. In addition to this a monthly meeting is held with Regional and Area colleagues to discuss performance in detail. Whilst backlogs do remain the data shows movement in a positive direction.

Netting

It is acknowledged that the lack of netting has left certain areas of the prison vulnerable to 'throwovers'. Increased checks of the external and internal perimeter and compound were some of the measures that locally the Governor introduced to mitigate some of the risks posed and proved successful in intercepting some throwovers. This work now forms part of the establishments' wider security strategy.

In May 2024 funding was approved to replace the netting for all identified areas, specifically units three, four, five, and ten. The project concluded in February 2025 thus enhancing safety standards across the site and reflects HMPPS continued commitment to maintain a safe, decent and secure environment.