



Ministry  
of Justice

Lord Timpson  
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Huntercombe  
Nuffield  
Henley-On-Thames  
RG9 5S

MoJ ref: SUB117448

15 September 2025

Dear Chair,

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

Thank you for submitting your Board's annual report on HMP Huntercombe. I appreciate the time and commitment that you and your fellow members have dedicated to producing such a thoughtful and considered account, particularly in light of the ongoing challenge of operating with several vacancies. I very much enjoyed seeing the establishment first hand on my recent visit to HMP Huntercombe.

I recognise the Board's frustration in repeatedly raising its concerns around the reliability of the heating and hot water system at the establishment. I am pleased to report that the MOJ has produced a business case to cover full replacement of the boiler system and hot water ring main across the entire site. In accordance with public sector procurement requirements, His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) has subsequently initiated market engagement on this project. It is currently inviting expressions of interest to assess supply options, costs and delivery timeframes for the project. A finalised package of work will then be submitted for approval and prioritised against capital funding.

I appreciate the concern the Board raises around a segregation cell being out of action for a significant period of time as a result of a broken door. I can confirm that the broken door in Segregation Cell 5 was replaced, and the cell returned to operational use on 27 May 2025. Unfortunately, the delay was due to performance issues with the contractor, which I am pleased to report have now been resolved.

I note your concerns around maintenance of kitchen equipment and am glad to be able to update that following delays caused by contractor issues, a full survey of the kitchen began in June and was completed in July of this year. This has enabled HMPPS to authorise the required repairs and equipment orders. A new comprehensive maintenance contract is now in operation. This will provide assurance of long-term upkeep of kitchen facilities at HMP Huntercombe.

Whilst I recognise there are still improvements to be made, it was encouraging to receive your comments about the generally safe environment observed across the establishment, the fair and humane treatment of prisoners and the constructive relationships between staff and prisoners across all wings. I was also heartened to read about some of the innovative work that the prison is doing, including the development and wider roll out of the Stoic programme and its involvement in the Getting Court programme. As you state, engaging with young people to make positive lifestyle choices is extremely important in preventing future crime.

I recognise that your report highlights several local matters requiring attention and I am assured that the Governor will continue to keep you informed as efforts to address them progress. A more detailed response from HMPPS to the issues raised for its attention has been provided in the attached annex.

The Lord Chancellor and I remain deeply appreciative of the important contribution made by Independent Monitoring Boards across the prison estate, and we are sincerely grateful for the continued dedication your Board has shown in supporting HMP Huntercombe.

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

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

#### **Adherence To Policy Frameworks**

HMPPS acknowledges the Board's concerns regarding prisons adhering to agreed procedures, particularly in relation to property and Foreign National Offenders (FNOs).

HMPPS has taken steps to reinforce compliance with the property policy. Governors have been reminded of key expectations under the Prisoner Property Framework, including adherence to volumetric control and the need for robust local management checks to minimise errors. Nationally, HMPPS is reviewing findings from the recent thematic report on property loss, as well as complaints data from the Independent Prisoner Complaints investigations. This review aims to identify where processes can be tightened and accountability improved.

Regarding the management of FNOs, HMPPS is currently updating the Early Removal Scheme (ERS) policy. The revised framework will include a new ERS Decision Record Sheet to guide staff and record rationale in a standardised way. This will support consistent and transparent decision-making across the estate. The updated framework is expected to be published this year.

The Home Office oversees the legal framework to deport FNOs and has clarified that the rescinding of an Annex C and its replacement with an Annex D does not affect a prisoner's eligibility for deportation. In relation to some decisions on eligibility being rescinded, this could be due to other factors coming to light, e.g. pending prosecutions or confiscations orders being in place that need to be resolved prior to an individual being deported. Individuals' deportation would still be pursued but it would be unlikely they were deported within their ERS period due to the outstanding matters.

#### **Property Transfers Between Prisons**

The Board raises important concerns around the effectiveness of the property transfer system during inter-prison moves. Prisoner Escort and Custody Services (PECS) contractors remain responsible for transporting prisoners and their property in accordance with the agreed volumetric control limits. The enhanced fleet introduced under the 2020 PECS contract includes additional storage to accommodate up to 7.5kg of consumables per person. Furthermore, PECS has embedded the use of the digital Person Escort Record (dPER), which provides a detailed and auditable record of property transferred. Monthly formal review meetings between PECS and the Ministry of Justice continue to track complaints, though none have been received from HMP Huntercombe over the last 12 months relating to property loss attributed to PECS.

Locally, the prison has responded to the issues by creating an Operations Supervising Officer post to coordinate with sending establishments and improve oversight of incoming property