



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Holme House
Holme House Road
Stockton-On-Tees
TS18 2QU

July 2025

Dear Chair,

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

Thank you for your Board's annual report on HMP Holme House. I have read it with care and would like to express my appreciation to you and your fellow members for your continued monitoring and valuable insight throughout a year of considerable change and challenge for the establishment. I am particularly grateful for this given that you were operating below your recommended complement of members.

I was saddened to hear that there were seven deaths in custody during the reporting year, five from natural causes and two from apparent self-harm as well as a death following release from custody. These are difficult events for fellow prisoners, staff and family to deal with and I offer my condolences to all those impacted. I was heartened to read of the support provided to those in the prison by the Samaritans following these events. I also want to stress to the Board that any recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman are taken very seriously and I am reassured by your report that action has been taken in response to findings.

I appreciate, given that this is a repeated concern, the Board's ask for reassurance that major capital works to address the longstanding issues with the roofs at HMP Holme House will be funded and carried out during 2025. I can confirm that an Outline Business Case has been submitted for a proposed roofing project covering the laundry, workshops, gym and visit areas. You will appreciate that there are a number of competing infrastructure priorities across the estate and His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) will assess these considering the risk to life, decency and capacity. It should be noted that these works will be complex and lengthy, requiring significant investment and major operational planning. I do though recognise the impact the current situation is having on the regime and efforts to progress this bid will continue.

I acknowledge that the decision to re-role Holme House to a Category B Reception, Training, and Resettlement Prison has made for a challenging transition, which resulted in some frustrations for prisoners. However, I was encouraged by your observations around the commitment of staff in delivering the changes, efforts to maintain stability and that the daily regime has evolved to meet the needs of a Category B establishment. While staffing levels remain below target, I understand that the situation is steadily improving. I was also pleased to read your positive comments on the reception and induction process and the improvement made to the incentives scheme to ensure greater consistency.

I note you have raised some local issues of concern in your report which the Governor will continue to keep you updated on as work progress. HMPPS's comments in response to the one issue you raised for its consideration in the report is set out in the attached annex.

The Lord Chancellor and I are grateful for the dedication of Independent Monitoring Board members. Your contribution plays an essential role in supporting decency, accountability and improvement across the prison estate. Thank you again for your work on behalf of HMP Holme House.

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

Education Outcomes at HMP Holme House

Although, there were disruptions in education delivery due to the early release scheme and the prison re-role; over the most recent reporting year, there has been improvement.

Performance data shows that educational performance for vocational course delivery has been maintained at a good standard over the last two years. Maths provision has slightly increased this year, whilst a slight decrease in English has been noted which is in line with national trends. There is a pleasing increase in the quality of teaching and learning during 24/25 compared to 23/24. The supplier was able to deliver against over 95% of the delivery plan over both years and there was a fall in education sessions being cancelled due to the supplier.

The beginning of 2024/25 highlighted that education attendance rates were approximately 7% higher than in the same period the previous year, reaching 75% during the first quarter. Learners were entering with stronger baseline skills in English and Maths. However, this initial progress was not sustained. The introduction of early release schemes and the transition to a remand population caused significant disruption. These changes led to a marked decline in both attendance and course completion, particularly in English and Maths, where continuity is essential for learner success. Despite these challenges, there were more course starts in 2024/25 than the previous year. Notably, a higher number of prisoners remained on their courses, even though early releases impacted retention. The overall achievement rate increased from 86% in 2023/24 to 93% in 2024/25, with more learners successfully meeting their learning aims despite release prior to final assessment in some cases.

Specific interventions were implemented to support these outcomes:

- All prisoners are now invited to Careers Advice and Guidance and induction sessions on arrival, with non-attendees followed up individually on the wings. Employment goals and existing skills are assessed early to inform personalised employment pathways and targets. Learners are encouraged to participate in workshops, particularly those who have prior engagement in English and Maths.
- Behavioural expectations around education have been reinforced and linked to the incentives process to improve attendance and engagement. A fast track system has also been introduced to ensure timely education completion and better monitoring to improve efficiency.
- Curriculum content and quality has been enhanced through improved sequencing and themed learning. Learning walks and assessment demonstrates improved knowledge retention and engagement. Creative enrichment programmes such as the “Perfume Stories” initiative and poetry workshops have also contributed positively to prisoner engagement and helped shift attitudes toward learning.

While challenges remain in supporting remand prisoners and those subject to early release, the education strategy at HMP Holme House continues to adapt with the clear aim of achieving improved outcomes.