



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Ranby
Retford
Nottingham
DN22 8EU

MoJ ref: SUB128309

27 October 2025

Dear Chair,

**HMP RANBY: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 APRIL 2024– 31 MARCH 2025**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Ranby which I have read with care. I understand that during the reporting year you encountered some operating challenges with only a quarter of Board members. However, despite this, you have managed to maintain weekly visits to the prison which is impressive. Your hard work and dedication in producing this report is truly appreciated.

I was saddened to read that there were four deaths in custody during the reporting year. I recognise these will have impacted both staff and fellow prisoners and offer my condolences to all their friends and family.

I recognise the Board's repeated concern regarding overcrowding and the frustration regarding the delays in the building of the new house blocks. These have been delayed due to a funding review of expansion projects, as well as longer than expected enabling workings owing to some complex service diversion issues. His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is committed to delivery of 14,000 additional prison spaces by 2031 consisting of the construction of four new prisons, as well as the expansion and refurbishment of the existing estate and temporary accommodation.

I acknowledge that you are again flagging the issue of prisoners with complex mental health issues being located in the Care and Separation Unit (CSU). This is sometimes necessary to ensure safety, the prison works closely with its health provider to safely manage those pending transfer to secure units and through the Safety Intervention Meetings ensures there is multidisciplinary oversight. I would like to assure the Board that progress is being made in improving mental health transfers. The Mental Health Bill, which completed Committee Stage in the House of Commons in June, is a positive step forward on how vulnerable prisoners can be properly supported. It will introduce a statutory 28-day time limit for the transfers of prisoners to hospital. Improvements to the referral process, data monitoring and oversight from the Mental Health and Justice Strategic Advisory Group will further address the barriers preventing timely transfers.

Despite the ongoing issues with mental health transfers, I was pleased to receive your comments about the professionalism and care shown by staff working with challenging and complex prisoners in the CSU.

I recognise your concern around course availability and the impact of this on prisoners meeting their sentence plan objectives. The Prison Education Service core education contract commenced in October

2025 and following a comprehensive needs analysis of the prison population, HMP Ranby have commissioned a new Annual Delivery Plan which will determine the next 18 months of curriculum. Whilst there are no plans to standardise the curriculum offer, HMP Ranby can commission bespoke services to support the delivery of qualifications within industries and work using the Dynamic Purchasing System.

The national changes in Offending Behaviour Programmes and the move to the new Building Choices programme has resulted in some difficulties with course availability. I am pleased to report though that facilitator training is currently underway for the roll-out of the new programme which will increase availability.

I was pleased to read your comments about the work at HMP Ranby to support ex-military veterans and their family through the 'Care after Combat' meetings and that you had observed that this work was helpful. This is valuable work, and I welcome this initiative.

I was also encouraged that you noted a significant improvement of the complaints department which is a key service in resolving prisoner issues, and the recognition of the hard work and professionalism of staff working in this department. I was also happy to note that the laundry is now functional. This is an important facility, and I am pleased that you observed this was work enjoyed by prisoners.

HMPPS comments in response to other issues raised in your report are set out in the attached annex and the Governor will continue to keep you informed of progress at a local level.

The Deputy Prime Minister and I appreciate the valuable role undertaken by members of Independent Monitoring Boards throughout the estate. We extend our gratitude to you for your ongoing dedication on behalf of HMP Ranby.

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 RANBY: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 APRIL 2024– 31 MARCH 2025

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Overcrowding

It is not possible for the operational capacity to be reduced at HMP Ranby due to national population pressures which is an ongoing challenge. Whilst there was an improvement in the population headroom following SDS40 and other capacity measures, these spaces were filled almost immediately due to population pressures within other regions and in the reception prison estate. The current modelling shows significant increases in population throughout the remainder of 2025 and early 2026.

Creating headroom and reducing overcrowding remains a priority for HMPPS and we will continue to do everything possible to reduce overcrowding across all the prison estate.

Resettlement and progression

As noted by the Board the churn of prisoners with a short time to serve on their sentences is an ongoing challenge for the Offender Management Unit (OMU) at HMP Ranby. For eligible cases, assurance processes are in place to monitor and ensure prisoners have a sentence plan to work towards. Where cases are not eligible for Sentence Planning by the OMU, Prison Offender Managers (POMS) identify 'soft sentence plan targets' at the earliest opportunity, in order that the prisoner can engage in meaningful sentence plan work at the earliest stage.

A National Review of Pre-Release Teams (PRT) has been launched and remains underway, to assess and improve service delivery for individuals preparing to leave custody. The review aims to define core activities, evaluate team structures and resources, and identify gaps and opportunities in service delivery.

Positively, PRT staff within the East Midlands can complete Personal Wellbeing CRS referrals including at HMP Ranby, which aims to increase the resettlement support given to prisoners. In addition, HMP Ranby has created a Resettlement Officer to provide support for housing calls and referrals for high-risk cases outside of the East Midlands, who are out of scope of PRT contracted work.

Staff experience

It is recognised that the proportion of inexperienced staff has continued to rise at HMP Ranby and HMPPS are committed to ensure that inexperienced staff feel safe, supported and valued. The development of inexperienced staff is one of the immediate priorities of the Enable Programme which is comprised of a set of training packages intended for prison officers between 6 and 18 months into service, to build their capacity further. In the longer term, the programme will review the foundation training offer for new staff to focus on experimental learning over a 12-month period.

Additionally, The Capability Oversight Function is being established to assure the quality of training products, create a training performance measure, and support prisons with the quantity and quality of training delivery. This will be tested alongside a regional delivery model pilot to test the viability of a regional approach to developing capability, in parallel to testing a site-by-site model in Enable early adopter prisons. As part of this pilot, localised annual capability priorities will be identified at establishment level and local capability plans will be developed to support the development of capability in local staff.

Ingress of Illicit Substances

HMP Ranby has a range of specialist equipment to deter the ingress of illicit substances including x-ray body and baggage scanners and Enhanced Gate Security. Locally, HMP Ranby have submitted a bid to install window grills on cell window to improve the physical security of the prison.

Drone ingress is a challenge and HMP Ranby have invested in additional night staff to patrol the grounds to detect drone activity. Longer term, working closely with the police to intervene and disrupt criminality and pursue prosecutions where possible will act as a further deterrent to prevent ingress.

Canteen

The HMPPS Operational Contract Management acknowledges the Board's concerns regarding canteen order accuracy and refunds, which remain a priority for the service and a key focus of performance management. The contract management team continues to work closely with the supplier to review these issues and identify opportunities for improvement. The team is currently working on improving its delivery model and innovations are being planned that will in turn improve the end user experience and provide opportunities to prevent order accuracy failures and refund issues. This includes working with HMP Ranby to establish a local workshop to give greater flexibility and control at a local level.

A pilot on site DHL canteen workshop has been implemented to serve HMP Ranby directly. This should improve communication and reduce the frequency of canteen issues. This change will continue to be monitored and managed by HMP Ranby and DHL.

Prisoners' Property During Transfers

HMPPS note the Board's concerns about the handling of prisoners' property. Careful consideration is being 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. Governors and other senior leaders have been reminded of the most important property handling points. This includes the need to ensure compliance with volumetric control limits. Compliance with volumetric control is important since any property within those limits transfers with prisoners when they move establishments. The Prisoners' Property Policy Framework mandates that Governors must ensure that property complaints and disputes are investigated thoroughly and efficiently, with prisoners being offered appropriate compensation where items have been lost or damaged.

Locally, at HMP Ranby, additional oversight of property complaints is in place with appeals being shared with the Governor or Deputy Governor. A dedicated Operations team of Custodial Managers has also recently been implemented which will improve consistency in this area.