



Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Grendon
Grendon Underwood
Aylesbury
HP18 0TL

July 2025

Dear Chair,

**HMP GRENDON: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 01 JANUARY 2024 – 31 DECEMBER 2024**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Grendon. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for the hard work that has been put into capturing your helpful observations. This is particularly appreciated given only 50% of your Board members were active and many of your members were in training during the reporting year.

I was saddened to learn that there was one death in custody during the reporting year, the first such incident since 2019. Every death in custody is a tragedy, and I offer my sincere condolences to the family and friends of the deceased. Please be assured that any recommendations shared by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman following the conclusion of its inquest will be taken very seriously.

I have read your report with care and recognise that you have once again raised concerns regarding delays in transferring men from Grendon after completing therapy, which as you rightly highlight can impact the operation of the therapeutic community. The challenges of managing the national prison population continue to affect the ability to progress men in a timely manner. In May 2024, a dedicated Functional Head for Offender Management and Population Management was introduced at the establishment to address these issues directly. I understand that this has supported a notable increase in progression with a 37% rise in transfers out of Grendon over the last year from 60 in 2023–2024 to 82 in 2024–2025. Transfers to open conditions also increased from 8 to 15 in the same period.

You will be aware that this Government has also taken a number of steps to try to alleviate the capacity challenges that it inherited. Most recently, the Independent Sentencing Review published its findings in May this year, setting out proposals to address prison and probation challenges and support victims so we can ensure long-term, sustainable improvements. The Government accepts most of the recommendations in the review and will be taking the necessary actions to implement these through legislative changes.

I was pleased to read that the Board continues to view HMP Grendon as a safe and supportive environment, with low levels of violence and strong relationships between staff and prisoners. The commitment of staff to safeguarding individuals, including those with complex needs, is clear. I was particularly struck by the positive feedback on the impacts of the therapy provided with one individual noting that, within three weeks at Grendon, he had made progress that had eluded him for five years in previous establishments. I was also encouraged to hear of the skills developed by one man who served

as a drug and alcohol recovery team representative, organising events and supporting peers, helping to prepare for life beyond custody.

I note you have raised an issue of concern in your report for HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) and comments in response to these are set out in the attached annex. The Governor will continue to keep you updated in regard to the local issue of concern that you have raised.

The Lord Chancellor and I continue to value the important role played by members of Independent Monitoring Boards throughout the estate and we extend our thanks for your ongoing commitment on behalf of HMP Grendon.

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

Purposeful activity provision

Your report highlighted the lack of purposeful activity for those men who have completed therapy but remain at Grendon while awaiting transfer and steps have been taken at the establishment to mitigate this. A dedicated workshop and gardens work party now operate in the mornings for this cohort, alongside continued access to work in the main kitchen and an additional gym session. A sustainability work party is also operating in the afternoons, developing green space at the rear of the prison. Men out of therapy are encouraged to take up off-wing jobs and are actively participating in education and personal development activities, including celebration events, diversity initiatives, and health-related programmes. They are also now eligible to apply for wing-based family days. Participation in weekly community meetings is expected, and the out-of-therapy policy and wing constitutions are being updated to reflect these changes. Events such as cultural cafés, creative writing sessions, and the Grendon debate continue to support a healthy and enriching regime.

Building Infrastructure, Sanitation and Overheating

We note that you have raised concerns for the Governor about ongoing issues with building infrastructure in the non-refurbished wings at HMP Grendon, including poor sanitation arrangements.

From a national perspective, we wanted to update that significant progress continues at HMP Grendon on fire safety improvement works and the upgrade of the general alarm system. These works are scheduled for completion by the end of the 2025/2026 financial year and represent a total investment of approximately £25.3 million over the past five years. As part of the fire safety improvement programme, all accommodation blocks are undergoing a full overhaul and recommissioning of the Night-Sanitation system. All wings have now been completed, with the exception of D Wing, which remains on track for completion in October 2025.