



Ministry  
of Justice

**Lord Timpson**  
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Lancaster Farms  
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1 November 2024

Dear Chair,

**HMP LANCASTER FARMS: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 FEBRUARY 2023 – 31 JANUARY 2024**

Thank you for submitting your Board's annual report on HMP Lancaster Farms. Having read your report with care I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your huge amount of work that has been put into capturing your extremely valuable observations. This is all the more appreciated given you were short of experienced members and I am thankful for each and every member for their contributions.

I was deeply saddened to hear two prisoners died during the reporting year, which is a tragedy. I offer my sincere condolences to their friends, family and colleagues. I would like to reassure the Board that we act on all recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman and I discuss these at every opportunity.

I fully understand and share the Board's continued concerns about specialist settings for prisoners with mental health issues. There is a role for the Government on this and we at the Ministry of Justice are working with the Department of Health and Social Care to introduce the Mental Health Bill as soon as possible. This will include a range of reforms to support people suffering with severe mental illness in the criminal justice system and aims to speed up access to specialist inpatient treatment so that those affected are able to access the timely care they need. I do recognise that some prisoners are experiencing delays in accessing secure inpatient hospital settings but I want to reassure the Board that the placement of prisoners into segregation during this wait will only take place following a risk assessment involving clinicians at the prison, but may be considered appropriate where a prisoner is deemed a risk to themselves or others. NHS England Health and Justice North West continues to maintain oversight of those prisoners in the region that are waiting. Any delays are being escalated both regionally and nationally, given this is a widespread issue which is not just being experienced at HMP Lancaster Farms. NHS England are working strategically across the systems to improve the pathways into treatment. It is though pleasing to read that the range of mental health care support services at the prison have increased in response to prisoners' needs.

I do sympathise with the Board's continued concerns for prisoners serving indeterminate sentences for public protection (IPP), but hope the Board are now aware that the IPP sentence has been reformed in the Victims and Prisoners Act which gained Royal Assent on 24 May 2024. On 5 September 2024 the Lord Chancellor announced the timings for these changes which will provide a clear pathway to a definitive end to the licence and sentence. From 1 November 2024, anyone who was released on an IPP

licence for the first time five or more years ago and has spent at least the last two years of that period continuously in the community without being recalled will have their IPP licence terminated without the need for a review by the Parole Board. The Secretary of State will also have two new Risk Assessed Recall Review powers allowing the 2-year period after someone is re-released from a recall not to be reset and to re-release people who have been recalled at any point without referring the case to the Parole Board. I hope the Board will welcome that there is also support for those in custody, with the HMPPS Director General of Operations commissioning Area Executive Directors for England and Wales, (as well as the Long-Term High Security Estate, the Women's Estate, and Contracted Prisons) to develop operational IPP delivery plans. These directly target front-line delivery to support those serving IPP sentences to work to achieve the objectives within their sentence plans and move towards a future sustainable release. The IPP prisoners located at HMP Lancaster Farms, are also continuing to have their progression supported via the local IPP policy, which manages each prisoner on an individual basis to reduce their risk.

Turning to the Board's funding request to maintain the environment within prisons, it may be helpful if I clarify that all project bid requests are being considered, but HMPPS is having to prioritise the works very carefully to make best use of the funding focusing on risk to life and risk to capacity and decency, given demands for maintenance are much greater than the funding available. HMPPS is continually reviewing the investment required across the estate, using recent condition surveys which assessed the fabric, cells, and critical assets at each prison to inform priorities against future capital budgets. Hopefully the Board will be pleased that there are currently two capital projects in design and development at HMP Lancaster Farms, with the aim of commencing delivery this financial year. The first being fire safety improvements across the prison and the second an upgrade to cell doors in the Segregation Unit. In addition, the Small Secure Houseblock programme has begun early works on the delivery of the 240 new single-occupancy cells which will be in self-contained 60-bed units, each with their own association space, pharmacy, dispensary and kitchen servery.

Although the Board's concerns are repeated matters, I was nevertheless reassured to receive your comments that prisoners are treated fairly, humanely and with decency and respect within a safe environment. I was really pleased to note that there are good relationship between staff and prisoners, as well as positive attitudes shown by staff working with the most challenging prisoners in the Segregation Unit. I was also encouraged to read about the increased time prisoners are now receiving out of cell to engage in the education, skills and work opportunities that are on offer as this provides them with a greater chance of success once released from prison.

I note you have raised three 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 Secretary of State and I are hugely appreciative of the valuable role Independent Monitoring Boards play throughout the estate and we are very grateful to you and your team for your continued hard work on behalf of HMP Lancaster Farms.



**Lord Timpson**  
**Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending**

## **HMP LANCASTER FARMS: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 FEBRUARY 2023 – 31 JANUARY 2024**

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

#### **Prisoners' Property**

The emphasis must remain on prisoners complying with volumetric control limits, since any property within these limits will be transferred with them by the Prisoner Escort and Custody Services (PECS) suppliers, including items which are exempt such as legal papers. During the last 12 months there have been no complaints received from HMP Lancaster Farms regarding the loss of property attributed to PECS. It is not possible to transfer with a prisoner all the excess property which they might have accrued above volumetric limits. Where the limit of items allowed in possession has been reached then responsibility for transfer of any remaining items remains with the sending prison and there has been a requirement since the introduction of the Prisoners' Property Policy Framework for prisons to transfer any excess items within four weeks. However, the Board's concerns are recognised and HMPPS is aware of the problems around property and continues to look at what further can be done.

#### **Staffing Detached Duty**

Recruitment and retention actions continue to strengthen the operational line which has resulted in improvements in the staffing position amongst Band 3-5 Prison Officers nationally. This has included incentivised recruitment schemes where applicants are offered additional remuneration to locate to 'hard-to-staff' sites, and the Prison Officer Alumni Network, where former staff have been fast tracked back into the service. National Detached Duty (NDD) continues to be deployed as one option to support short term resourcing particularly at prisons experiencing staffing challenges. NDD is approved and governed by the HMPPS Operational Resourcing and Stability Panel (ORSP) where it is necessary for the safety and stability of the prison. The process to determine where the supply of NDD is taken remains unchanged and is determined each month following an in-depth validation process, taking account of non-effective staff at prisons and is approved by Prison Group Directors (PGD) and Area Executive Directors operational judgement before consideration at the wider ORSP panel. The threshold for supplying NDD is adjusted dependent on available supply against current demand with the current threshold at 99% of a prisons target staffing. HMP Lancaster Farms would not be a supplier of NDD based on their staffing position but have been supplying one Prison Officer which is a local decision approved by the PGD. HMP Lancaster Farm's own weekly Regime Management Plan meeting monitors staffing levels with mitigations put in place to prevent curtailments to the regime which have significantly reduced with no plan closures in 2024 due to improved staffing recruitment and retention.

#### **Prisoner Allocation**

HMPPS has continued to strive to maintain offender flows despite population pressures across the entire adult male prison estate during the Board's reporting period. The remand population has grown to unprecedented levels because of the courts backlog and previous industrial action taken by the Criminal Bar Association. This impact has been felt in the training estate and because of these pressures affecting the northwest in particular, prisons have been asked to show flexibility with their prisoner cohorts. It is acknowledged that there is a large proportion of prisoners at HMP Lancaster Farms from the Greater Manchester and Merseyside. This has impacted on the prisons ability to provide its resettlement provision and ensure family ties are maintained which has been exacerbated by the length of time some individuals have left to serve when arriving at the prison. However, it is pleasing that the Board commends the

prisons innovation and good practice in resettlement planning. The prison is striving to improve the resettlement outcomes for its population to aid successful reintegration into the community through its education, skills and work opportunities, substance misuse interventions and housing and employment support. To help reduce the pressure on prisons places, on 12 July 2024 the Lord Chancellor announced temporary changes to standard determinate sentences. The HMPPS Capacity Management team will also continue to work with HMP Lancaster Farms to review and support alignment of their population with Offender Flows. There are wide-ranging considerations involved in transferring prisoners, and where practicable, prisoners are accommodated as close as possible to their home probation region to maintain family ties. Whilst this is a priority, it is not always possible due to a variety of factors including the wider population pressures, security concerns or specific sentence planning needs which can only be met at certain prisons.