



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP/YOI Lincoln
Greetwell Road
Lincoln
LN2 4BD

MoJ ref: SUB130985

23 January 2026

Dear Chair,

**HMP/YOI LINCOLN: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 FEBRUARY 2024 – 31 JANUARY 2025**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP/YOI Lincoln. I am once again very appreciative of your and your colleagues' efforts in capturing these helpful observations, especially as you continued to have a significant shortfall of members throughout the reporting period.

I was saddened to hear four prisoners died in custody during the reporting year, with a further death occurring shortly after release from custody. I was heartened to read your comments around the professional wellbeing services offered by the prison to those impacted by the deaths and I extend my condolences to them. I would like to reassure them and the Board that any recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman in their reports will be taken very seriously.

I do understand the Board's continued concerns about the timely transfer of prisoners to mental health facilities. I am pleased to say that the Mental Health Bill received Royal Assent on 18 December 2025. This introduces the statutory 28-day transfer limit to ensure timely transfers and prevent courts from detaining individuals with severe mental illness in prison as a place of safety. The Ministry of Justice is working closely with NHS England to support the national Mental Health and Justice Strategic Advisory Group which is focused on meeting the requirements of the legislation and will report directly to Parliament. The group will have oversight of the transfer process and brings together key partners to identify and deliver solutions to address common causes of delays. NHS-Led Provider Collaboratives for the Midlands also have newly developed action plans to accelerate prison transfers, which includes remodelling of bed capacity and care pathways as well as procurement of additional beds. Progress is being reported to the national group, and the Midlands Health and Justice Commissioning Team continues to engage with the commissioners and providers of secure mental health services bi-weekly to support the timely assessment and transfer of prisoners. I can also assure the Board that prisoners at HMP/YOI Lincoln who are awaiting a transfer to a secure facility receive daily welfare checks from a senior operational manager and healthcare staff, and multidisciplinary reviews take place to determine their individualised care plan.

I can also appreciate your ongoing frustrations about the progress of Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) prisoners. As the Board rightly recognises, the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 introduced significant reforms, such as reducing the point where licence termination is considered and enabling quicker re-release when recalled to custody. As of 30 September 2025 the number of IPP prisoners in custody and those that had never been released before both reduced from the same point the year before. In 2024, which was most of your reporting year, the 619 recalls to custody were the lowest since 2017 and the 602 IPP re-releases following recall, were the highest recorded. We remain determined to support those

serving IPP sentences towards release through a refreshed IPP Action Plan. This was published in the IPP Annual Report on 17 July 2025 and sets measurable targets to ensure transparency and accountability and confirms how we intend to go further. The action plan includes increasing access to Release on Temporary License and expanding the Approved Premises pilot to improve resettlement support. Whilst HMP/YOI Lincoln is not intended to hold IPP prisoners long term, aiming to transfer them to other prisoners that can better meet their needs, the prison is in the early stages of developing a team of keyworkers dedicated to Indeterminate Sentence Prisoners and those subject to IPP. Prison Offender Managers have also received additional training focused on this cohort and quarterly forums and multidisciplinary progression panels have been reinstated under the new policy introduced in July 2025 to ensure IPP prisoners are on the right progression pathway, with access to interventions, at the right time.

Regarding your concerns about the importance of securing accommodation on release, HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is working with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and other government departments on the development of a new cross-government strategy to put us back on track to ending homelessness. Community Accommodation Service (CAS) 3 provision can provide transitional accommodation for up to 12 weeks for prison leavers and those moving on from CAS1 and CAS2, who are subject to probation supervision and would otherwise be homeless. There are also 50 Strategic Housing Specialists, based across England and Wales, one of which is based at HMP/YOI Lincoln. These work with local authorities and Homelessness Prevention Teams to develop and deliver a range of solutions that remove barriers to accommodation. One of these is pre-release panels, which aim to reduce the likelihood of homelessness on release and all the local authorities in the East Midlands are engaging in these. At HMP/YOI Lincoln, the risk of homelessness is identified on reception and referrals are made prior to release to ensure needs are considered by a Resettlement Board meeting, where possible, at 12 weeks, four weeks and one week before release. In addition, there is a duty to refer anyone who is at risk of becoming homeless to the Local Housing Authority of the person's choice under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Whilst I appreciate a number of the issues you raise are repeated ones, it was reassuring to receive your comments about the positive relations between staff and prisoners and that care for prisoners has continued to be fair, humane and respectful. I was pleased to note the high level of professionalism by staff and peer mentors throughout reception and induction providing support in the early days in custody. It was also interesting to read about 'unlock my life-mental health' training for prisoner to support their peers. I was also pleased that there continues to be a varied curriculum with a focus on English, maths and ICT skills for those that need them as well as accredited vocational courses in a range work areas to improve the chances of employment of release.

I note you have raised two local issues of concern which follow on from your report last year 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 Deputy Prime Minister and I really value the oversight role which members of the Independent Monitoring Boards provide to our prisons, and we are very grateful for your continued hard work on behalf of HMP/YOI Lincoln.

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/YOI LINCOLN: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 FEBRUARY 2024 – 31 JANUARY 2025

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Operational Capacity

Capacity is monitored closely by the East Midlands Prison Group across all its prisons, with additional support offered where required for high levels of reception and discharges. At present, HMP/YOI Lincoln is operating at a temporarily reduced capacity due to fire safety improvement works scheduled until 2028. The Board can be assured that where capacity is increased in a prison, the national workforce planning team reviews the staffing offer and increases the resource as appropriate in line with national guidance. Whilst there are currently no plans for new build expansions at the prison, if this were proposed in future, impacts on safety, decency and regime delivery would be key considerations. It remains the case that the East Midlands Prison Group is confident that HMP/YOI Lincoln can effectively manage a changing staffing group with a high level of relatively new staff, but the regime and staffing profiles will be reviewed regularly.

Training Opportunities

There is no national directive requiring completion of educational or vocational training before a prisoner is transferred. However, The HMPPS Education Group works nationally with Heads of Education Skills and Work to ensure progression routes between prisons and within prisons are considered. The new Prison Education Service contract supports continuity of learning enabling a prisoner's work to transfer with them, a list of common awarding organisations ensures all prisons use the same qualification exam boards, and the number of learning hours completed is tracked and monitored on a central IT system. HMP/YOI Lincoln's Annual Delivery Plan has been designed to align courses with those commonly available in receiving prisons, as well as the local and national labour market needs. It is recognised that as a local reception prison, the primary focus is on accommodating prisoners from courts, which may necessitate transferring prisoners to create space. The prison tries to delay moves until critical interventions are completed wherever possible to avoid mid-course transfers, but a minimum period of stay cannot be guaranteed.

Prisoners' Property

HMPPS has now considered carefully the IMB national thematic report on the impact of property loss on prisoners, and the thematic review by the Independent Prisoner Complaint Investigations of the property complaints they have received over the last five years. In considering the reports, consultation with prison staff took place and a revised version of the *Prisoners' Property Policy Framework* was published on 17 November 2025. This includes additional guidance on the sending on of excess property, the handling of prisoners' laundry and the correct completion of the cell clearance certificate, as these were identified as common areas of difficulty. In addition, HMPPS has reminded Governors and other senior leaders of key points around handling property, including the importance of prisoners complying with volumetric limits. Compliance with volumetric control remains of key importance, since property within those limits will be moved with the prisoner when they transfer by the Prisoner Escort and Custody Service supplier and is tracked digitally. Staff at HMP/YOI Lincoln, are trained to accurately log property and maintain an audit trail which is quality assured by the Reception Custody Manager. Where complaints do arise these are logged, tracked and reported to the Senior Management Team. HMPPS remains committed to improving the management of prisoners' property and considers possible areas for improvement on an ongoing basis.

Older Prisoners

It is recognised that there has been an increase in the number of older prisoners in custody in recent years. This has created some challenges for prisons due to the complex health and social care needs and

the physical design of the prison estate. However, the new prison places being introduced across the estate are accessible by design and will significantly increase the number of cells adapted to the needs of those with mobility issues and physical disabilities. A strategy for older prisoners was also recommended by the recent Independent Sentencing Review, and as part of this strategy, how best to use the estate to support older prisoners across all prisons is being considered.

Due to the age of HMP/YOI Lincoln, it was never designed for the current patient demographic. However, the prison has demonstrated its commitment to meeting the individual needs of older prisoners and works closely with the Local Authority Social Care Team to enable them to complete assessments, as local authorities are responsible for commissioning and delivering social care. Reasonable adaptations have been made to support frail, elderly, and disabled prisoners, including installing handrails in showers and cells. There are two disabled cells located on A and E Wings, a lift on A Wing to aid mobility and the care suite is utilised for those with long-term illnesses or disabilities. The Healthcare Provider works closely with the prison to arrange 'open door policies' for appropriate dementia patients, there is in-house neurodiversity support available, and a 'buddy' scheme to support older prisoners with daily tasks. Primary health care also provides an over 50's health check and there is good support from Social Service in-reach teams and Marie Curie for end-of-life care. For prisoners with co-morbidities or complex conditions, these are regularly monitored and discussed at multidisciplinary meetings and if it is felt HMP/YOI Lincoln is unsuitable for them, all efforts are made to transfer them to a prison or other facility more able to meet their needs.

Food Budget

The new *Food in Prisons* Framework which was published in July 2025, prioritises nutrition and supports medical and specialist diets, and promotes dignity, wellbeing, and rehabilitation through food. Assurance visits are conducted by the HMPPS National Food Team to support prisons in areas such as prisoner consultation, reviewing menus, and monitoring food budgets and spending. Quarterly regional forums also bring together senior leaders and catering teams to address challenges being experienced, share best practice, and shape future decisions to improve prison food. At HMP/YOI Lincoln, cost-efficiency measures are being introduced aligned with new menus which are due to launch in February 2026. Healthier cooking methods, such as oven baking instead of frying and reduced oil have been successfully trialled for the new menu and weekly fresh produce sourced from HMP/YOI North Sea Camp is helping the prison to provide healthy food options. Feedback from prisoners will continue to be captured in comments books that are available on each wing and to address portion control concerns, meal services are being monitored with the kitchen manager conducting quality assurance checks.

Maintenance

Any delays in carrying out routine maintenance are managed via the contract escalation process with delays reviewed at a monthly tripartite meeting between the Facilities Management (FM) provider, MoJ Property Operations Management and the Governor. The FM provider has instigated a programme to reduce the number of outstanding work orders and this is having a positive impact with the total number reduced by over 50%. Planned and reactive maintenance continues to be monitored via a monthly validation process and any urgent requests are escalated immediately with the FM provider. A Green Route Approval process is also in place allowing the FM provider to carry out maintenance tasks without the need for approval that are business critical or would result in a breach of health and safety, security or other legislation if not carried out. Fire Safety work, which includes upgrades to the cell call and general alarm systems, commenced on site in February 2025 and is progressing as planned. A plant room legionella mitigation project is awaiting final quotes and is scheduled for completion by the end of the current financial year. The prison has also seconded a Custodial Manager to the MoJ Projects Team as a dedicated single point of contact to ensure the smooth coordination of logistics to maintain prison safety, security, and minimising regime disruption. In addition, bids have been made for three major projects which are a site-wide cell window replacement, high-voltage upgrade, and secondary site-wide pipe replacement. These three projects are being considered for funding in future financial years as HMPPS must prioritise works very carefully to make best use of that funding, focusing on risk to life and risk to capacity and decency.

Heating and Hot Water

It is recognised that the heating and hot water system continues to rely on temporary boilers pending completion of a replacement project of all primary heat delivery which has commenced but is not expected to be completed until approximately 2028. Contingency measures do include portable heaters being deployed where appropriate and safe to do so. However, the prison has established robust arrangements with the FM provider, who is responsible for the maintenance of the temporary boiler systems, to attend the prisons daily briefings to allow issues to be escalated promptly and ensure these are prioritised and restored as soon as is practicable.