



Ministry  
of Justice

Lord Timpson  
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Kirkham  
Freckleton Road  
Preston  
PR4 2RN

MoJ ref: SUB132057

27 February 2026

Dear Chair,

**HMP KIRKHAM: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 JANUARY 2024 – 31 JULY 2025**

Thank you for sharing your Board's annual report on HMP Kirkham. I appreciate the care and commitment you and your colleagues have shown in collating this insightful report. I noted that you continued to operate with several vacancies and ended the reporting period with one member less than at the start. I hope these pressures ease during the course of the current year.

I was deeply saddened to read there were two deaths in custody during the reporting period. Every death in our care is a tragedy, and I extend my sympathies to those at the prison impacted by the deaths and the friends and family of the deceased. I note both deaths are subject to ongoing investigations by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman, any subsequent recommendations made will be treated with the utmost importance.

Acute prison capacity pressures are well documented, and I recognise the impact various early release schemes have had on HMP Kirkham. Whilst the Standard Determinate Sentence 40 Initiative (SDS40) provided the intended medium-term relief to the system, this was only ever a temporary change as a bridge to a more sustainable solution. That is why this Government has overseen the passing of the Sentencing Act, which takes forward recommendations from the Independent Sentencing Review. The new Progression Model is a key part of delivering a more sustainable solution to the prison capacity crisis to ensure there are always enough places for the courts to be able to send people to custody in order to keep the public safe. SDS40 will therefore be replaced as we start to implement the new Sentencing Act.

To ensure appropriate staffing levels, work has recently been completed as part of HM Prisons and Probation Service's (HMPPS) Workforce Delivery Project to review the underpinning staffing model for adult public sector prisons, including HMP Kirkham. This review has included consideration of the impact of prisoner cohort complexity, physical infrastructure, and a number of other factors that affect daily resourcing requirements. This work is ongoing and subject to affordability decisions. I am therefore unable to comment on any site-specific planned resource changes at this stage.

Turning to education budgets, whilst there have been no cuts to the national prison education budget, the cost of delivering high-quality education has risen significantly in recent years, and I recognise that any increases have not kept pace with rising costs. Consequently, some reductions in the volume of Core Education delivery have been necessary from October 2025. Subject to final analysis, we anticipate a national reduction in delivery volume of around 20-25%. A revised funding formula has also been applied

to ensure fair allocation based on prison population and regional cost differences. This redistribution means that some prisons will see greater delivery reductions, while others will see increases. Open prisons such as HMP Kirkham may therefore see changes in their education and purposeful activity budgets as a result of these adjustments. While I recognise that this can impact the breadth of curriculum and opportunities for purposeful activity, the aim of the revised funding approach is to ensure fairness and alignment with current operational realities across the estate.

In addition to the Annual Delivery Plan commissioned at site level for Core Education, the Prison Education Dynamic Purchasing System remains available to Governors to commission provision to meet the needs of their local prisoner cohort. Core Education delivery reductions are only applicable to contracts and do not affect other education services such as libraries, careers advice, distance learning or vocational training delivered through industries and workshops. We are also investing in digital infrastructure, new assessment tools, and specialist staff to ensure that every pound spent delivers the greatest possible impact for learners.

I appreciate the Board's concerns about short and long-term prisoners at resettlement prisons. Following Royal Assent of the Sentencing Bill, together with the findings of the Independent Review of Criminal Courts (when available), a HMPPS Estate Configuration Review will consider the implications of these changes. This will inform future requirements for the entire prison estate, the function of prisons and offender flows, and will consider what more can be done to improve rehabilitation and reduce reoffending.

I am grateful to the Board for extending an invitation to visit HMP Kirkham. My calendar for visits is quite full at the moment, particularly for the first quarter of this year. Whilst I cannot promise a visit, I have tasked my team to explore the possibility of visiting HMP Kirkham at some point during 2026.

I appreciate that HMP Kirkham has been impacted by wider capacity pressures across the estate. It was therefore reassuring to note how well the prison dealt with the extra pressures and I would like to commend everyone at HMP Kirkham for their commitment and resilience. Staff should also take pride in their approach to the complaints system which was regarded as best practice by HM Inspectorate of Prisons. I was also very encouraged by the increased Release on Temporary Licence employment opportunities and heartened by the opening of a second workshop by the Recycling Lives initiative.

Issues raised for the attention of the Governor will be addressed locally who will continue to keep you aware of progress 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 sincerely appreciate the value and scrutiny brought by Independent Monitoring Boards throughout the estate. We would like to thank you for your ongoing dedication on behalf of HMP Kirkham.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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

## HMP KIRKHAM: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JANUARY 2024 – 31 JULY 2025

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

#### **In-Cell Technology**

It remains the intention to pilot the use of mobile PIN phones that could be used in those parts of the open estate without in-cell/room telephony. It is hoped approval will be received soon and a pilot can commence at HMP Leyhill.

HMPPS' in-cell technology programme, Launchpad, has now been delivered in 19 public sector prisons and Young Offender Institutions, reaching a total of approximately 12,900 prisoners and children. Launchpad is modernising the prison estate, helps promote prisoner autonomy, and improve wellbeing by allowing prisoners to self-serve and providing access to digital tools that support rehabilitation. Launchpad roll out is prioritised where it can deliver the greatest operational and rehabilitative benefit. All Launchpad funding has so far focused on the closed estate. Open prisons do not currently have Launchpad and currently there are no plans to expand Launchpad into HMP Kirkham. Any decisions on future delivery will be taken as and when funding becomes available and consider several factors such as the need to alleviate operational and capacity pressures together with the specific needs of different prisoner cohorts.

#### **Prisoner Cohorts and Allocation**

HMPPS recognises the Board's interest in ensuring appropriate transfers to open conditions. HMP Kirkham already assess all transfer reports and determine whether individuals are suitable for placement at the prison. Headquarters' teams will continue to work closely with HMP Kirkham on population pressures and suitability criteria. This will support safe, appropriate progression for prisoners while ensuring the open estate is used effectively.