



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Littlehey
Perry
Huntingdon
PE28 0SR

MoJ ref: SUB132059

27 February 2025

Dear Chair,

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

Thank you for submitting your Board's annual report on HMP Littlehey. I am very grateful to you and your colleagues for the considerable work that has gone into producing such a detailed and honest account of the year. This is particularly appreciated given your low number of members compared to the recommended complement. I recognise that you continue to have membership challenges and I come onto the specific concerns you have raised later in this letter.

I was saddened to hear that there were eighteen deaths in custody during the reporting period, seventeen from natural causes and one which was self-inflicted. I offer my condolences to all their friends and family and was heartened to read your comments that the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) has frequently commented on the compassion and respect with which the prison approaches end of life care. I note that whilst the PPO acknowledges that the prisoner whose death was self-inflicted gave no indication to staff that he was at risk of suicide, there were issues around staff having adequate first aid training which I am sure that the prison will take steps to address.

You describe your concern at the refusal to extend a member's tenure and the risk this poses to Board viability as the Board move towards 2026 with only two members against a complement of sixteen. I note that you have also contacted me separately about this matter and I am sorry that you have had to chase this given the severity of the membership situation. I have asked officials in the Public Bodies Centre of Expertise team to review this case, and they will come back to you directly with a response very shortly.

You raise frustration that despite repeated efforts, the recruitment process has not met the needs of the Board. The IMB Staff Group is undertaking a full review of recruitment processes, informed by a survey of all Boards conducted in November 2025. Improvements drawn from member feedback and comparisons with similar volunteer recruiting organisations are scheduled for rollout during 2026. The aim is to strengthen every stage from advertising to onboarding so that campaigns can attract and progress suitable candidates more effectively, particularly where the setting presents additional recruitment challenges.

It was encouraging to read that HMP Littlehey remains generally safe and secure with relatively low levels of prisoner on prisoner violence. Your positive comments about the mental health team's consistent

support for those at risk of self-harm, and about the rigour and transparency of diversity and inclusion monitoring are particularly welcome.

Although this was not raised to me directly, I recognise the Board's concern about anticipated changes under the new national education arrangements. His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) has strengthened the wider framework, including screening, assessment, digital access and support for learners with additional needs. Further detail is set out in the annex.

I note that your report has also raised some local concerns. The Governor will continue to keep you informed of any developments regarding these matters. HMPPS comments in response to other issues raised in your report are set out in the attached annex.

The Deputy Prime Minister and I value the important role of Independent Monitoring Boards, and we thank you and your members for your ongoing commitment on behalf of HMP Littlehey.

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

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Clean, Rehabilitative, Enabling and Decent (CRED) teams and maintenance approach

We welcome the Board's positive comments about the effectiveness of the CRED team at HMP Littlehey. The use of CRED teams is available to all prisons and at the discretion of management at each establishment. The alternative available to establishments is the standard five-year painting programme delivered by Government Facility Services Limited or a facilities management provider.

Use of Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) for grounds maintenance

HMPPS recognises the positive impact of the supervised grounds-maintenance work at HMP Littlehey undertaken by men on ROTL, including its contribution to rehabilitation and progression. HMPPS will monitor outcomes from HMP Littlehey and consider how learning may inform practice elsewhere. The Governor welcomed the Board's support for this initiative.

Handling of property during transfer

HMPPS Performance Hub provides management information on total complaint volumes and rates, including a property related complaints per 1,000 prisoner's metric. However, this captures all property complaints and does not separately identify missing property on transfer.

The digital Person Escort Record (dPER) includes a property section that accurately records the number and type of sealed property 'owned' by and transferred with the prisoner and an accurate record of property handover between different Stakeholders. This is now embedded as business as usual. The digital process has assisted with investigations into property that is lost in transit with the Prisoner Escort Custody Services (PECS) supplier. However, PECS receive few complaints about lost property overall and often the issue is not attributed to the PECS supplier.

PECS review complaints during monthly formal meetings with the PECS supplier. During the last 12 months there has been one complaint received from HMP Littlehey but none in relation to the loss of property attributed to PECS. For property delay, in-line with the HMPPS Prisoner Property Framework, if the limit of items allowed in possession has been reached, and if there is no space on the escort vehicle to transport items safely and securely, then responsibility for transfer of any remaining items remains with the sending prison.

Heating and hot-water systems in Woodlands

There is currently no dedicated heating or hot water project in place specifically for the Woodlands site at HMP Littlehey. All requests for estates work submitted by establishments are considered as part of the national prioritisation process. However, demands for maintenance across the prison estate significantly exceed the funding available. As a result, once bids are received, projects must be prioritised carefully to ensure that funding is directed to areas presenting the greatest risk to life, risk to capacity and risk to decency.

Education and training budget changes

There were no notable changes to education budgets during the reporting period covered by the Board's report (1 February 2024 to 31 January 2025). In the following year, there have been no cuts to the national prison education budget, which has increased slightly. However, the cost of delivering high quality education has risen significantly and, the budget has not kept pace with these increases. As a

result, reductions in the volume of Core Education delivery have been necessary from October 2025 with a national reduction of approximately 20–25%, subject to final analysis. A revised funding formula has been applied to ensure a fairer allocation of resources across the estate, taking account of prison population, prison type and regional cost differences. These changes apply only to Core Education contracts and do not affect other education related services, including libraries, careers advice, distance learning or vocational training delivered through prison industries and workshops.

Alongside these changes, broader reforms are being implemented to strengthen quality and impact. These include clearer expectations for screening and assessment, improved support for learners with additional learning needs and the rollout of new digital systems which expand access to secure online education content, reduce repeated assessments and improve the recording of prior achievements and tracking of learner's progress. The Prison Education Dynamic Purchasing System remains available to Governors, enabling them to commission provision that meets the needs of their local prisoner cohort. Analytical work is ongoing to assess the impact at establishment level, and this will support more bespoke reporting in future years.

From a local perspective, the Prison Group Director and Governor have noted that outside the reporting period, a value for money review increased classroom capacity by 63.5 places from 1 April 2025 with a further 26 purposeful activity spaces added within workshops. Plans are also at an advanced stage to open two new workshops that is, television repair and engineering, alongside further expansion of the CRED team, to provide additional purposeful activity and meaningful training opportunities linked to employability.