



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP/YOI Kirklevington Grange
Kirklevington
Yarm
TS15 9PA

MoJ ref: SUB135352

26 June 2026

Dear Chair,

**HMP KIRKLEVINGTON GRANGE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR
01 JANUARY 2025 – 31 DECEMBER 2025**

Thank you for submitting the Independent Monitoring Board's Annual Report for HMP/YOI Kirklevington Grange. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your continued commitment to independent monitoring and for the balanced and thoughtful account provided during the reporting year.

I was very sorry to learn of the death in custody during the reporting period. Every death in custody is a tragedy and my condolences are with the family and friends of the individual affected. All deaths are subject to independent investigation by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman and it is important that these processes are completed thoroughly and appropriately.

You raise understandable concerns about the length of time taken to progress this case, particularly in relation to outstanding toxicology results and the resulting delay to the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman's investigation and the inquest process. I recognise the impact that such delays can have on bereaved families, as well as on staff and prisoners and the importance of these processes being completed in a timely way. However, these delays are not unique to this establishment and reflect wider pressures within the system. The Government remains committed to working with the Chief Coroner, local partners and other agencies to support improvements in the efficiency of the coronial process, while ensuring that investigations are thorough and robust.

I was encouraged to note the consistently positive findings throughout your report. The Board's view that HMP/YOI Kirklevington Grange remains a safe place in which to live and work, alongside the very low levels of violence and self-harm, is particularly reassuring. I also welcome the strong focus on rehabilitation and resettlement, including the extensive use of Release on Temporary Licence, meaningful employment opportunities and the high proportion of prisoners leaving with accommodation in place. In addition, the quality of healthcare provision, positive staff-prisoner relationships and the breadth of support for neurodivergent prisoners and individual needs further reflect a well-run and purposeful environment. These strengths, supported by effective partnership working, provide a strong foundation for continued delivery.

The Board's observations highlight the importance of maintaining a stable, respectful environment in supporting progression and release. This is particularly evident within the open estate, where effective risk management and strong relationships are critical to enabling opportunities such as release on temporary licence. The Governor will continue to keep you informed of progress in relation to the issues you have raised. Responses to matters raised for HMPPS.

The Deputy Prime Minister and I remain grateful for the valuable role played by Independent Monitoring Boards and thank you for your continued commitment on behalf of HMP/YOI Kirklevington Grange.

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

Recruitment Timescales and Vetting Delays

Security vetting is a critical component of recruitment within HMPPS, ensuring that all staff meet the standards required to work safely within custodial environments. These checks assess individuals against a range of legislative, security and integrity requirements. In recent years, pre-employment processes have been strengthened, which has contributed to longer clearance times. This has coincided with a significant increase in recruitment activity across HMPPS with volumes rising by approximately 30% compared to previous years.

Action is being taken to improve these timescales. This includes increasing staffing capacity within vetting teams, deploying additional temporary resource and overtime, and strengthening local capability through Vetting Contact Points. Recruitment to expand vetting teams began in 2025, with new staff continuing to enter post to support improved processing times. Work is also ongoing to improve forecasting of recruitment demand, enabling better planning and management of peak activity with processing times beginning to improve, with some evidence of quicker turnaround in recent cases. While vetting timelines remain longer than desired, these measures are expected to support continued improvement while maintaining the necessary level of assurance.