



Chair
Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Garth
Ulnes
Walton Lane
Leyland,
Preston
PR28 8NE

MoJ Ref: SUB135248

24 June 2026

Dear Chair,

**HMP GARTH INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
1 DECEMBER 2024 – 30 NOVEMBER 2025**

Thank you for submitting the Independent Monitoring Board's Annual Report for HMP Garth. I appreciate the openness of your observations and the sustained scrutiny provided by the Board throughout the reporting year. Your report continues to give a clear account of how national policy and local operational pressures are experienced in practice at HMP Garth and I am grateful for the challenge and assurance this provides.

I was saddened to note that there were five deaths in custody during the reporting period. Each death represents a profound loss and has a lasting impact on families, fellow prisoners and staff. My condolences are with all those affected. Every death in custody is subject to independent investigation and any recommendations arising are taken seriously to ensure learning is identified and acted upon. Strengthening safety, responding to vulnerability and reducing the risk of future loss of life remain central priorities for His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) and for the leadership at HMP Garth.

I address below the issues you have raised for Ministers.

I understand your frustration with the ongoing issue relating to indeterminate sentences for Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) prisoners, and the profound uncertainty, distress and sense of injustice experienced by those serving those sentences, including those who have never been released and those who have been recalled. The Board has raised this concern repeatedly, and it is right that it continues to be challenged given the seriousness of its impact on individuals and their families. The Government's approach is now firmly focused on delivery rather than policy intent alone. A refreshed action plan for IPP prisoners was published in July 2025, placing a stronger emphasis on frontline delivery within prisons and the Probation Service. For the first time, this approach is underpinned by measurable national targets and strengthened oversight arrangements, improving transparency, consistency and accountability in progression activity. This focus on delivery is supported by significant legislative change. Recent reforms have reduced the qualifying period for licence termination, introduced automatic licence termination in defined circumstances and created new powers enabling the Secretary of State to support re-release following recall where risk can be safely managed. Further changes due to come into force in June 2026 will shorten qualifying periods further and allow earlier review where licences have not initially been terminated.

HMP Garth is engaging well with this national framework with progression arrangements for prisoners serving indeterminate sentences strengthened through structured panel oversight and clearer local accountability. Transfers are actively scrutinised to ensure individuals are located in establishments capable of meeting their needs and access to specialist psychological outreach and offending behaviour interventions has improved. Each case is monitored with offender managers and progress is escalated where delays arise. This represents a more disciplined and transparent approach to supporting safe progression.

I recognise your concern regarding the condition of facilities at HMP Garth and the constraints this places on the establishment. During the reporting period, maintenance work has included resurfacing the visits roof, repairs to the secure corridor ceiling and a bid has been approved for fire safety improvements, including a new fire alarm system with in-cell detection and fire dampers. Locally, the establishment has also redeployed staff to support general maintenance tasks, including refurbishment of showers. Alongside this, the clean, rehabilitative, enabling and decent approach is being used to improve in-cell living conditions with improvements delivered on D wing and further work underway on C wing. I acknowledge that significant challenges remain, including issues with air handling, building management systems and decaying flooring, which has resulted in a loss of accommodation spaces. The establishment continues to seek further investment to address these infrastructure pressures. Given the level of demand and available funding, works are prioritised carefully, focusing on risks to life, capacity and decency.

I understand your ongoing concern about the ingress of illicit items and their impact on safety and stability at HMP Garth. I remain focused on these issues by direct oversight of a national LTHSE Taskforce. This is an ongoing challenge, and targeted funding has been used to strengthen the establishment's ability to prevent and disrupt the entry of illicit items. This includes expansion of the dedicated search team to support intelligence-led searching activity, increased mandatory drug testing, and the use of additional general-purpose dogs to strengthen tactical capability. Investment has also been directed towards addressing drone-related supply routes. Physical security measures, including window grills and anti-drone wires have been installed in areas identified as presenting higher risk, with further protective measures underway and planned. In addition, directorate funding has supported the introduction of dedicated safety roles to strengthen operational oversight and staff capability in managing high-risk situations linked to illicit items. I acknowledge that some of this funding is time-limited and that sustaining progress will require continued prioritisation.

I was encouraged to read your positive comments on the progress made in supporting prisoners with neurodiverse needs at HMP Garth. In particular, it was reassuring to note the increased awareness among staff, supported by targeted training and specialist input and the Board's observation that this work is beginning to improve understanding and day-to-day management of neurodivergent prisoners. This focus on recognition and reasonable adjustment is an important step in ensuring fair, safe and humane treatment for all those in custody.

I note you have raised some issues of concern for the attention of HMPPS in your report and comments in response to these matters are set out in the attached annex.

The Deputy Prime Minister and I are deeply appreciative of the oversight brought by members of Independent Monitoring Boards to improve the estate, and we extend our sincere thanks for your ongoing commitment on behalf of HMP Garth.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James". The script is cursive and elegant, with a large initial 'J' and a long, sweeping tail on the 's'.

Lord Timpson
Minister for Prisons, Probation, and Reducing Reoffending

HMP GARTH INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 1 DECEMBER 2024 – 30 NOVEMBER 2025

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Staffing Levels, Retention and Regime Stability

Staffing stability remains central to the delivery of a safe and consistent regime at HMP Garth. Retention has improved and is currently at its strongest position for over two years, reflecting sustained local and national action to improve staff experience, wellbeing and resilience. Operational delivery has been strengthened through enhanced induction arrangements and the New Colleague Mentor scheme, which place greater emphasis on local training, expectations and practical skills. These measures are intended to support staff confidence, reduce early attrition and promote more consistent practice on residential wings. To maintain stability during periods of operational pressure, detached duty arrangements and attendance measures remain in place and are monitored at a national level. In addition, the establishment has benefited from the long-term high security estate (LTHSE) transfer scheme, with experienced officers reinforcing capability, leadership presence and mentoring capacity. The Enable programme continues to be embedded to support relational practice and contribute to longer term workforce stability. The staff well being work completed at Garth through having a dedicated lead has been identified as best practice and is being rolled out now to all prisons in the LTHSE.

Long Term Segregation and the Care and Separation Unit

The management of segregation at HMP Garth is subject to regular multidisciplinary oversight to ensure that its use remains necessary, proportionate and justified. All prisoners held in segregated conditions are reviewed routinely, with continued separation authorised only where no viable alternative exists. Within the LTHSE, the Pathways to Progression initiative provides specialist operational, psychological and mental health support aimed at reducing reliance on prolonged segregation and promoting psychologically informed practice. The central Pathways to Progression team supports establishments through advice, supervision and training, as well as case specific consultancy when prisoners present with complex needs. Staff working in the care and separation unit are carefully selected and are supported through structured psychological supervision. Designated psychologists provide input for prisoners requiring additional support, and neurodiverse needs are addressed through individualised management plans. Where a prisoner may require transfer to an alternative secure environment, including hospital, cases are progressed with healthcare partners. While decisions regarding admission rest with the National Health Service, HMPPS continues to work collaboratively to improve access and manage risk during periods of delay.

Access and Care for an Aging and Disabled Population

HMP Garth acknowledges the limitations of an estate that was not designed to accommodate an aging and physically infirm population. While structural constraints remain, a range of operational measures are in place to support access to essential services and mitigate barriers for disabled and older prisoners. Healthcare provision has increasingly shifted towards wing-based delivery. Clinicians routinely conduct clinics on residential units, and prisoners can be contacted directly in their cells where mobility or access is restricted. Treatment hatches on residential wings support timely access to medication, and a wing-based medication model improves accessibility for prisoners with reduced mobility and contributes to good levels of compliance.

Operational support is further provided through a staffed buddy scheme delivered with voluntary sector partners, enabling trained prisoners to assist with daily tasks such as collecting meals. Regular older prisoner forums, chaired by senior leaders, provide a structured opportunity for prisoners over the age of

50 to raise concerns and influence local response. Two on wing clinical rooms are used in a planned and prioritised manner to support chronic disease management, routine health reviews and longer appointments where clinically appropriate. Older prisoners are treated as a priority cohort, with healthcare structured around scheduled clinics, monitoring of long-term conditions and individualised care planning. At an estate level, accessibility and infrastructure needs are informed by condition data and considered alongside wider demands across the prison estate. In relation to HMP Garth, a number of bids have been submitted to support improvements to infrastructure and access. These are prioritised against available funding, with focus given to risks to life, capacity and decency.