



Chair
Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Lowdham Grange
Lowdham Grange
Nottingham
NG14 7DA

MoJ ref: SUB136896

8 September 2026

Dear Chair,

**HMP LOWDHAM GRANGE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
1 FEBRUARY 2025 – 31 JANUARY 2026**

Thank you for submitting the Board's annual report for HMP Lowdham Grange. I appreciate that this will have been a particular challenge given the low membership numbers, which are far below your recommended complement. Your report provides a balanced assessment of both the progress that has been made and the challenges that remain.

I was very sorry to learn that there was a death in custody during the reporting year. Every death is a tragedy and my condolences are with the family, friends and all those affected. All deaths are subject to investigation by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman and any recommendations will be carefully considered. I note the Board's comments regarding the number of deaths at HMP Lowdham Grange and the importance of ensuring lessons continue to be learned.

I recognise the Board's concerns regarding prisoners with severe mental health needs who remain in segregation whilst awaiting transfer to more appropriate therapeutic settings. Although delays in accessing secure hospital placements remain a challenge nationally, improvements have been made following the transfer of healthcare services to Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. Mental health staffing has improved significantly; additional psychiatric provision is now available and dedicated healthcare and psychology staff are providing greater support for prisoners with complex needs. Weekly multidisciplinary reviews have also been strengthened to support decision making and care planning for those held in segregation. NHS England continues to work with secure mental health providers to improve the timeliness of transfers into appropriate treatment settings.

I also acknowledge the Board's concerns regarding workforce experience levels. I was encouraged that His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons found in May 2026 that HMP Lowdham Grange was fully staffed and no longer reliant on detached duty staff. The prison has introduced six New Colleague Mentors to support inexperienced officers and has strengthened leadership development, coaching and staff wellbeing arrangements. While I recognise that experience levels remain a challenge in some areas, these measures are helping to support recruitment, retention and workforce development.

I share the Board's concerns regarding the continued impact of drugs and violence within the prison. Additional resources have been introduced, including expanded search capability, specialist dog handling resources and further drone mitigation measures. The prison is also developing a Drug Recovery Wing

and an Incentivised Substance Free Living Unit, with delivery due to commence in July 2026. Alongside this, violence reduction arrangements have been strengthened through enhanced safety processes and targeted interventions.

I was pleased to read the Board's positive observations regarding improvements to reception and induction arrangements, healthcare provision, social visits, offender management and resettlement support. I also welcome the progress noted in education and vocational training, the re-establishment of the prison council and improvements in complaints handling. These developments provide an important foundation for continued progress.

Issues raised in your report that fall within local operational responsibility will continue to be addressed by the Governor, who will keep the Board informed of progress. Responses to matters raised for the attention of HM Prisons and Probation Service (HMPPS) are set out in the attached annex.

The Lord Chancellor and I appreciate the invaluable contribution of members of Independent Monitoring Boards to improve the estate and we extend our thanks for your continued dedication on behalf of HMP Lowdham Grange.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Catherine'.

Catherine McKinnell MP
Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Cohorting and Violence Reduction

Cohorting was introduced across Category B prisons within the long-term and high security estate (LTHSE) in response to rising levels of violence. By reducing the number of prisoners unlocked at one time, the approach aims to improve staff to prisoner ratios, support safer and more manageable conditions and strengthen staff confidence and relationships with prisoners. As cohorting was introduced alongside a range of other safety measures, assessment of its impact remains ongoing. However, staff assault rates across Category B prisons within the LTHSE, including HMP Lowdham Grange, showed a downward trend between December 2025 and March 2026. Establishments continue to review and adapt cohorting arrangements according to local staffing levels, violence data and operational requirements, while wider evaluation of cohorting and other taskforce measures continues.

Prisoner Property

A revised Prisoner's Property Policy Framework was published in November 2025. The revised framework includes strengthened guidance on the management of excess property, prisoner's laundry and cell clearance procedures, which have been identified as common areas of concern. The Prisoner Escort and Custody Services (PECS) contract includes increased vehicle capacity to allow for additional property within agreed limits. In addition, the digital Prisoner Escort Record is now fully embedded and provides an auditable record of property transferred with prisoners and handed between agencies. At HMP Lowdham Grange, property management has been identified as an area requiring further improvement. A formal review was commissioned by the Deputy Governor in April 2026 and operational quality assurance arrangements have been strengthened. Additional management oversight has also been introduced through the Early Days in Custody process to improve governance and assurance around reception and property management.

Staffing Levels within the LTHSE

HMPPS recognises that sickness absence and demands associated with hospital bed watches and constant supervision requirements can affect operational delivery. To help address these pressures, the prison has increased management visibility, expanded New Colleague Mentor support, strengthened coaching and development opportunities and maintained structured attendance management and staff wellbeing arrangements. The Workforce Delivery Project has recently completed a review of staffing models across the adult prison estate and this work is progressing through implementation planning.

Developing a Stable and Experienced Workforce

Prison officers currently sponsored through the Skilled Worker route are able to remain in post and applications for extensions will continue to be considered in line with current policy. HMPPS is also continuing to prioritise domestic recruitment and maintains ongoing recruitment activity across establishments with staffing requirements. Workforce levels continue to be monitored through national and local workforce planning arrangements to ensure prisons remain appropriately resourced and able to manage future staffing requirements. HMPPS remains focused on recruitment, retention and professional development to support a stable and experienced workforce.