

Chair
Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Morton Hall
Eagle Road
Swinderby
Lincoln
LN6 9PT

MoJ ref: SUB137798

8 September 2026

Dear Chair,

**HMP MORTON HALL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
1 JANUARY 2025 – 31 DECEMBER 2025**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Morton Hall. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to you and your colleagues for your continued resilience and commitment in monitoring and capturing your helpful observations despite ongoing membership challenges. The retirement of an experienced member is no doubt a great loss and I hope the situation improves going forward.

I understand your concerns about education provision at HMP Morton Hall. Whilst there has been no reduction in the overall national budget for prison education, the establishment did experience a reduction of approximately 42% in Core Education delivery hours between October 2025 and March 2026 compared with the previous six-month period. This was partly due to rising costs affecting the proportion of funding available for delivery through Core Education contracts. Education provision at HMP Morton Hall is planned locally using a needs analysis that considers the learning needs of the prison population, labour market information, and local employment opportunities. This information is used to shape an education, skills and work offer that supports prisoners' rehabilitation and progression and provides an appropriate mix of provision to meet local needs. The Governor and her team will continue working collaboratively with the education provider and external contractors to try to identify new opportunities for activities.

To support delivery against HMI Prison Expectations, education provision at HMP Morton Hall is subject to ongoing quality assurance and performance monitoring by the prison, supported by national contract management and assurance arrangements. This helps ensure that prisoners have access to a high-quality education, skills and work offer that meets local needs and supports positive outcomes.

Turning to the Early Removal Scheme (ERS) in England and Wales, the scheme allows Foreign National Offenders (FNOs) to be removed up to 48 months before the end of the custodial element of the sentence (subject to them serving a minimum of 30% of their custodial sentence). All eligible FNOs serving a determinate sentence and who are liable for removal are considered for the ERS. Home Office staff deal with significant and complex challenges when seeking to return to their country of origin those who have no right to be in the UK. Sometimes the UK's current obligations under international law, such as the Refugee Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights, prohibit us from returning certain individuals despite their criminality. Legal or re-documentation barriers as well as pending prosecutions can frustrate immediate deportation. Despite the barriers faced, the Home Office remains resolute in its

commitment to deport those who would abuse our hospitality and to make our communities safer for everyone. I can confirm there were 3,044 FNO ERS returns to the end of January 2026, which indicates a 13% increase compared to the same period twelve months prior which saw 2,700 removals. I can assure the Board that staff at HMP Morton Hall will continue to facilitate the on-site Home Office Team in a timely manner.

I note you have raised a number of issues for the attention of HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) and comments in response to these matters are set out in the attached annex. Local issues of concern raised for the attention of the Governor will be addressed locally who will continue to keep you aware of progress as work continues.

I appreciate that there remain issues to address at HMP Morton Hall and it was therefore encouraging to receive your comments about the decline in positive mandatory drug tests, the improvements in quality keyworker sessions, and the significant improvement in complaints management. It was also reassuring to note the rehabilitative approach fostered at the prison together with facilitating culturally specific discussion groups regarding mental health problems.

The Lord Chancellor and I deeply appreciate the important contribution made by Independent Monitoring Boards throughout the estate and we are very grateful for your continued hard work on behalf of HMP Morton Hall.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Catherine', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Catherine McKinnell MP
Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Small Houseblock Project

Following the announcement of the 10-Year Prison Capacity Strategy in 2024, the government publicly committed to deliver 14,000 additional prison places, with an aim to do so by 2031. To date, HMPPS has delivered approximately 3,200 places since July 2024. As outlined in the Capacity Strategy, the Prison Supply Programmes (PSP) included over 1,000 overprogrammed places (i.e. beyond the 14k target). This was intended to help manage delivery risks and protect public commitments. Descoping some projects is an expected part of portfolio management, and HMPPS is confident that these do not impact our ability to deliver the 14,000-place commitment.

All projects were assessed against maturity, cost-effectiveness, and deliverability to allow for prioritisation as part of our regular processes. Projects being descoped generally have site-specific challenges likely to increase costs and timelines. Building contingency into the plans protects our overall delivery target and we will always work to protect tax-payer money to ensure value for money across all delivery. Any costs already incurred reflected the development, design, survey, planning and enabling activities necessary to establish whether the scheme could proceed.

Prisoners' Property

Further to the Minister's response last year, HMPPS has now carefully considered the IMB national thematic report on the impact of property loss on prisoners together with the thematic review by Independent Prisoner Complaint Investigations of the property complaints they have received over the last five years. Following consultation with prison staff on the issues raised, a revised version of the Prisoners' Property Policy Framework was published on 17 November 2025 and includes additional guidance on the sending on of excess property, the handling of prisoners' laundry, and on the correct completion of the cell clearance certificate, as these were identified as common areas of difficulty. Compliance with volumetric control remains of key importance, since property within those limits (as well as certain items, such as legal papers, which are exempt from the limits) will be moved with prisoners when they transfer to other establishments.

HMPPS also recognises the difficulties encountered with the current property card functionality within the NOMIS software and how it is not used consistently across the estate. However, at present, digital prisoner property cards are not a prioritisation for digital delivery. HMPPS' current digital focus is necessarily directed towards higher risk and safety critical work, including digital support for adjudications, reducing the risk of release in error, delivery of the progression model, and the wider programme to safely reduce reliance on and exit NOMIS. These areas present more immediate operational and public protection risks and therefore take precedence when allocating limited delivery capacity. The issue of prisoner property will remain captured on the digital backlog agenda and its priority will be reconsidered through formal quarterly prioritisation in line with other demands. The next substantive opportunity to reassess priorities is likely to be in approximately 12 months unless circumstances materially change. HMPPS remains committed to improving the management of prisoners' property and considers possible areas for improvement on an ongoing basis.

Police Liaison Officer

Prison Crime Team Officers, often referred to as Prison Liaison Officers (PLO), provide an investigative function for prison crime referrals. However, dedicated investigative resource varies across prisons in England and Wales and in many areas prisons are supported through local policing structures and do not have dedicated Prison Crime Team/PLO resource.

HMPPS' Crime in Prisons National Team has been supporting HMP Morton Hall to establish a dedicated Single Point of Contact (SPoC) within Lincolnshire Police to expedite crime referrals and strengthen joint working. HMPPS can confirm that Lincolnshire Police has now committed to provide a dedicated SPoC. In addition to supporting the progression of investigations, this role will help to provide guidance to prison staff on evidence handling and crime referral processes, helping to improve the quality of submissions and positive criminal justice outcomes. Additionally, HMPPS appointed a new role of an Area Crime in Prisons Manager earlier this year to support more consistent outcomes across the region.

Recruitment Vetting

Security vetting is vital in HMPPS to ensure individuals can uphold the security and integrity standards expected of their role and ensure that prisons and probation remain safe for rehabilitation to take place. The checks that we undertake are required to assess individuals against a range of legislative requirements and security related factors that are pertinent to anyone working within a HMPPS environment.

As pre-employment checks were made more robust, along with an agency-wide recruitment increase, timescales for clearance have inevitably lengthened. Both the vetting contractor and HMPPS are employing flexible resource allocation and overtime to mitigate delays. In the longer term, funding has been given to resource vetting teams in line with the recruitment increase. This recruitment drive began last summer with the first staff going live on cases from December 2025. With further cohorts taking up post throughout the first half of 2026, HMPPS anticipate an incremental improvement as these staff move to live casework. With regard to forecasting increased demand, HMPPS is working with the vetting contractor to ensure any spikes or increases in demand can be managed appropriately.

Possession of Electronic Items

The possession of electronic items, including Xboxes, is governed by the National Incentives Policy Framework. Following an update, issued on 1 April 2025, prisoners are not allowed to have an Xbox One in possession. All prisons should be adhering to the guidance, subject to local safety and security allowances.

Industrial Washing Machines

There are currently no central bids in place for the consideration of installing industrially-rated washing machines in Torr, Sharman, and Johnson units and the prison is also unable to fund this locally. Whilst all requests from establishments are considered, demand for maintenance across the estate exceeds available funding. As such, HMPPS must carefully prioritise investment to ensure best use of resources, focusing on risk to life, capacity, and decency.

Purposeful Activity

Further to the response in the Minister's letter above, HMPPS has introduced the National Regime Model, creating a national infrastructure for planning, reviewing, and measuring purposeful activity for the first time. Every prison must now deliver a minimum of 60 minutes time in open air per day, 120 minutes time out of cell per day, one quality key work session per month, and they must also set out how they are improving their regime offer year on year.

The Government have also committed to delivering prison education alongside work that can provide the learning they might otherwise lack. With many prisoners having low level of literacy and numeracy, making sure they have the opportunity to acquire these skills alongside relevant vocational training in areas such as construction and hospitality is vital to support them to obtain employment. Investment has been made in the Literacy Innovation Fund which is delivering pilots in 15 prisons targeting those with low literacy levels. HMPPS is developing the Future Skills programme to train up over 2,000 offenders over the next two years in vital industries such as scaffolding and electrics, before linking them up with employers in the local community and guaranteeing interviews on release. Additionally, the Government have changed the law to enable prisoner apprenticeships in catering and construction through partnerships with Greene King and Clipper, with talks underway to open up apprenticeships in other industries.