

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Northumberland
Acklington
Morpeth
NE65 9EX

MoJ ref: SUB137599

2 September 2026

Dear Chair,

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

Thank you for submitting the Board's annual report for HMP Northumberland. I appreciate the commitment shown by you and your colleagues in carrying out your important monitoring role and for producing such a detailed report, given the Board's low membership numbers. Your report provides a balanced assessment of both the progress made during the year and the challenges that remain.

I was saddened to learn that 5 prisoners died in custody of natural causes and one related to drug misuse. My condolences are with their families and friends and I recognise the impact these events have on prisoners and staff across the prison. I note that the prison has continued to strengthen its approach to supporting those at risk of self-harm and was encouraged to read about the introduction of enhanced multidisciplinary arrangements to support prisoners identified as being at risk.

I recognise the Board's concerns regarding the future of the strategic housing worker post and the positive impact this role has had in improving accommodation outcomes for prisoners approaching release. I am pleased that the prison has consistently exceeded its accommodation target and that the role has contributed to strengthening release planning and housing support. While there is currently no additional national funding available for a dedicated strategic housing specialist post at HMP Northumberland, I understand that prison funded provision has delivered positive outcomes and that local arrangements continue to be explored. More broadly, prisoners at HMP Northumberland continue to have access to accommodation support through Commissioned Rehabilitative Services and this support will be further strengthened through the introduction of new Community Support contracts which will provide enhanced pre-release assistance and accommodation support.

I was pleased to read the Board's positive observations regarding improvements to accommodation and living conditions across the prison, despite the disruption caused by reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete remediation works. I also welcome the progress noted in healthcare provision, education, training and employment opportunities, together with the improvements made to release planning and accommodation outcomes. It was particularly encouraging to note the positive findings arising from the recent Ofsted inspection and the prison's continued focus on supporting prisoners to develop the skills needed for successful resettlement.

Issues raised in your report that fall within local operational responsibility will continue to be addressed by the Director, 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 prison estate and we extend our thanks for your continued dedication on behalf of HMP Northumberland.

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

Prison Estate Expansion and Financial Planning

The Small Secure Houseblocks (SSH) project at HMP Northumberland will provide an additional 240 prison places, together with supporting facilities and a new workshop to support prisoner employment. The project is funded through the SSH Financial Business Case, which received Treasury approval in May 2025. Operational cost modelling for the expansion is currently in its final stages and is being developed to ensure that appropriate funding arrangements are in place to support the additional capacity and associated operational requirements as the project progresses towards completion in 2027.