



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Ranby
Retford
Nottingham
DN22 8EU

MoJ ref: SUB137736

4 September 2026

Dear Chair,

**HMP RANBY: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
1 APRIL 2025 – 31 MARCH 2026**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Ranby. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your continued resilience and commitment in monitoring the establishment and capturing your helpful observations, particularly in the context of ongoing vacancies. Despite these challenges, the Board has demonstrated a strong commitment to fulfilling its duties through its regular presence and scrutiny.

I was saddened to learn that four prisoners died during the reporting year. Although the report states five deaths occurred during the reporting period, my officials and the Governor reliably inform me that it was in fact four. I offer my condolences to their friends and families and would like to reassure the Board that recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman are taken very seriously.

I recognise the Board's ongoing concerns regarding the construction of the new houseblocks at HMP Ranby. Delivering additional prison capacity remains a priority for this Government. Prior to entering the main works contract, further work was required to confirm cost implications, affordability, and value for money in line with standard governance and financial controls for a project of this scale. The project remains on track to open in April 2027. I can confirm there was no decision to delay or reschedule the project.

I appreciate the Board's continued concerns about the management of prisoners with complex mental health needs and the ongoing use of the Care and Separation Unit (CSU). Work is ongoing at both national and regional levels to improve the timeliness of transfers to secure mental health settings. NHS England's Mental Health and Justice Strategic Advisory Group is overseeing progress towards the introduction of statutory transfer timescales, alongside strengthened monitoring and accountability arrangements. In the Midlands, Provider Collaboratives have developed and are implementing targeted plans to increase capacity, improve care pathways, and accelerate access to appropriate beds. Delivery against these plans is subject to regular review by NHS England's specialist commissioning teams.

Locally, commissioners continue to convene regular multi-agency forums to support the assessment and progression of individual cases. However, the availability of suitable secure mental health beds remains a significant constraint. In some instances, external factors, including temporary pauses on admissions within receiving services, have further impacted transfer times.

I would like to assure the Board that the use of segregation for prisoners with complex mental health needs is not undertaken lightly. It remains a measure of last resort and is subject to multidisciplinary oversight. Delays in transfer for some individuals during the reporting period are a matter of concern and continue to be escalated with senior NHS England commissioners. As outlined above, work is ongoing to address these challenges and ensure that prisoners receive care in the most appropriate setting at the earliest opportunity.

I acknowledge that course availability can affect prisoners' ability to meet their sentence plan objectives. Many prisons have seen changes in the volume of provision delivered through the Core Education contract since October 2025, largely driven by inflationary pressures and changes to the funding formula to better reflect population need and regional differences. This reduction applies only to core education and does not affect other services, such as libraries, careers advice, distance learning or vocational training. We remain committed to ensuring that education provision delivers maximum value, supports purposeful activity and contributes to reducing reoffending, with delivery and outcomes closely monitored.

In relation to offending behaviour programmes, the transition to the Building Choices programme required the phased withdrawal of legacy provision which temporarily reduced course availability while recruitment and training were undertaken. HMP Ranby has now implemented Building Choices and delivery is expected to increase in the coming year. This will be supported by realigned regional resources to meet the identified level of need.

I was pleased to read your positive comments on the full-time working regime which is providing prisoners with a more realistic and engaging working environment. It is particularly encouraging to note that this approach has been well received by prisoners, who are benefiting from both the experience and the opportunities it provides. I also welcome your observations that staff have worked tirelessly to manage complex daily challenges, that relationships between staff and prisoners remain generally positive, and that prisoners are treated with courtesy and respect with concerns addressed in a timely manner.

I note that you have raised a number of local issues of concern in your report which the Governor will continue to keep you updated on as work progresses. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) comments in response to other matters raised are set out in the attached annex.

The Lord Chancellor and I are deeply appreciative of the oversight provided by members of Independent Monitoring Boards in helping to improve the estate, and we extend our sincere thanks for your ongoing commitment at HMP Ranby.

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

Crowding and Capacity

We recognise that crowding can make it harder to deliver safe and stable regimes together with the additional pressure this places on staff. HMPPS continually monitors prison conditions and takes places on and offline depending on safety, stability, staffing levels and maintenance requirements.

As set out in the December 2024 *Ten Year Prison Capacity Strategy*, we have committed to delivering an additional 14,000 prison places by 2031. HMPPS is investing £4.7 billion over the Spending Review period (2026/27 to 2029/30) to support delivery and have already delivered approximately 3,100 prison places. Alongside increasing capacity at record pace, the Sentencing Act 2026 will place the prison population on a more sustainable footing and enable further long-term reforms.

Prisoner Churn

In the configuration plans for 2027, HMP Ranby is modelled to have a primary function as a Category C training prison (approximately 60%), with a secondary resettlement function (approximately 40%). We recognise that the churn of prisoners with short periods left to serve continues to present challenges for establishments such as HMP Ranby, particularly in delivering meaningful rehabilitation, progression and resettlement outcomes.

Whilst wider population pressures have eased compared with previous periods, shorter-sentenced cohorts remain a feature of the current system. In response, HMPPS is focused on improving cohort alignment, supporting timely prisoner movement, and ensuring individuals are placed in establishments best suited to their sentence length and needs. We are also working to protect the rehabilitative role of prisons by managing the population mix and prioritising those with sufficient time to benefit from interventions and programmes. This remains an ongoing priority, and we will continue to work with prisons such as HMP Ranby to mitigate these challenges and improve outcomes.

To manage the mixed population and high churn, HMP Ranby has taken action to co-locate resettlement services within a single residential unit, prioritised for short-term prisoners. To support stability and progression for those serving longer sentences, these individuals are prioritised for full-time work allocations.

Inexperienced Staff

The Enable Programme recognises the increasing proportion of inexperienced staff and is taking targeted steps to strengthen capability and support retention. A key focus of this work is reform of the foundation training for new prison officers. The programme is redesigning the current offer to introduce a 12-month, experience-led training model, placing greater emphasis on practical, on-the-job learning. This approach is intended to better prepare new staff for the realities of the role, while providing sustained support during their first year in service. By building confidence and competence over time, the revised foundation training aims to ensure that new officers feel more capable, supported and likely to remain in post.

Alongside this, the Enable Programme has introduced national core capability packages to support officers as they progress beyond their initial training. These packages are targeted at staff with six to 24 months' experience and are designed to build capability across 16 core operational and behavioural

areas. This structured, continued development focuses on a key stage of service where retention risk is highest. By investing in early-service officers and strengthening their skills and confidence, the Prison Service aims to ensure staff feel supported in their roles and remain engaged in their careers. There are currently six packages available nationally.

Locally, a Band 4 new colleague mentor is assigned to support and guide inexperienced staff when they return from training, recognising that there are limits to how far initial training can prepare staff for the realities of the operational environment. To complement this, a local programme of follow-up training is planned over the first 12 months of service, providing opportunities to reinforce operational learning and enable reflection in a safe learning environment.

Illegal Substances

Prisons have multiple routes through which drugs can enter, influenced by factors such as security measures, geographical location and the prisoner cohort. Across the estate, HMPPS has invested over £40 million in new physical security measures to tackle the contraband that fuels violence in prisons. This includes £10 million on counter-drone capabilities.

A range of countermeasures and initiatives are already in place. These include X-ray body scanners in all adult male closed prisons to search prisoners, enhanced gate security at 58 closed male prisons to search staff and visitors, and drug trace detection equipment across the public estate to screen items such as incoming mail. Dedicated search teams are equipped with specialist tools to detect and retrieve illicit mobile phones. Prisoners found smuggling contraband face disciplinary action, including additional time in custody and the loss of privileges.

HMP Ranby has deployed additional local resources to strengthen detection and prevention, including the training and deployment of dedicated search team staff. A ring-fenced recovery officer role has also been introduced to enhance the substance misuse service, including the delivery of interventions such as auricular acupuncture, self-management and recovery training (SMART), peer-led groups, and one-to-one support.

Canteen

HMPPS operational contract management acknowledges the Board's concerns regarding canteen order accuracy and refunds, which remain a priority and a key focus of supplier performance management. Overall contract performance remains strong, notwithstanding the local issues reported at HMP Ranby.

Over the past three months, approximately 14,000 orders have been processed at HMP Ranby, of which 146 were recorded as containing errors (1.04%). Of these, 82.5% were resolved within seven days, demonstrating improvement through local supplier engagement. HMPPS' contract management team continues to work closely with the supplier to address these issues, identify further opportunities for improvement, and provide ongoing support to the establishment.

Work is also underway to improve the canteen delivery model, with planned innovations to enhance the end-user experience and reduce order inaccuracies and delays in refunds. This includes the establishment of a local workshop at HMP Ranby to provide greater flexibility and operational control. Although implementation was originally planned for phase one of the rollout, it has been delayed due to other local commitments associated with the implementation of the working week. HMP Ranby is now scheduled to be included in phase three, between October 2027 and October 2028. This is expected to improve communication and reduce the frequency of canteen-related issues.

Prisoners' Property

HMPPS fully recognises the importance of prisoners' property and is committed to ensuring it is managed with care and respect. HMPPS has carefully considered both the Independent Monitoring Board's national thematic report on the impact of property loss on prisoners and the thematic review by Independent Prisoner Complaint Investigations of property complaints received over the past five years. These findings were also considered alongside consultation with prison staff on the issues raised. A revised version of the *Prisoners' Property Policy Framework* was published on 17 November 2025. This includes strengthened guidance on sending excess property, handling prisoners' laundry and completing cell clearance certificates, which have been identified as common areas of difficulty.

HMPPS remains committed to improving the management of prisoners' property and continues to identify further opportunities for improvement. Additional quality checks are now undertaken on complaints relating to lost property to ensure that, where appropriate, compensation is applied correctly. Reception processes have also been reviewed and strengthened to ensure that property issues arising from transfers are promptly identified, recorded and communicated to the sending establishment, enabling any subsequent complaints to be handled effectively.