



Mr Robert Edmondson-Jones
Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Leeds
Armley
Leeds
West Yorkshire
LS12 2TJ

10 July 2017

Dear Robert,

**HMP LEEDS: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 JANUARY 2016 – 31 DECEMBER 2016**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 December 2016. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for all the hard work that has been put into capturing your helpful observations, particularly as you have been short of Board members during the reporting period. I apologise for the delay in responding to your report.

I was pleased to read that, despite the challenges faced by the prison, staff treat prisoners with humanity and respect and seek to identify and eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation. I am very grateful for the commitment and dedication of officers at HMP Leeds. Like the Board, I commend their swift actions when dealing with incidents of self-harm and violence. It was particularly encouraging to receive your comments about the impressive quality and standard of education services, ranging from formal classroom activities through to specialist vocational skills.

Although your report does not raise any specific issues for my attention, I would like to assure the Board that safety in prisons is fundamental to the proper functioning of our justice system and a vital part of our reform plans. As you will know, a comprehensive strategy for safety and reform in prisons was set out in the White Paper published in November 2016. We are investing over £100 million per year to recruit an additional 2,500 prison staff by the end of 2018. The increase in staff numbers will provide the capacity for prison officers to provide dedicated support to around six prisoners, each on a one-to-one basis, which will help them build constructive relationships with prisoners and help turn lives around.

We are investing an immediate £14 million in ten prisons which have seen a sharp rise in violence and self-harm. This will provide more than 400 extra staff who will be given more time to directly supervise prisoners. HMP Leeds will be one of the prisons to receive this further investment. We will also launch a campaign to increase the number of armed forces personnel becoming prison officers, introduce a new scheme to attract top graduates and give governors greater flexibility over recruitment so they can address staffing shortages quickly.

I note you have raised some local issues of concern in your report which the Governor will continue to keep you aware of as work continues. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) comments in response to other issues raised in your report are set out in the attached annex.

The Justice Secretary and I appreciate the valuable role played by members of Independent Monitoring Boards throughout the estate and we are very grateful for your continued hard work on behalf of HMP Leeds.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Sam Gyimah', written in a cursive style.

SAM GYIMAH MP

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Psychoactive Substances and Drugs

HMPPS does not tolerate drugs in prisons and there are a range of robust measures in place to detect substances including physical searching, cell searching, x-ray machines, surveillance and detection dogs. We are also trialling new and innovative security measures such as the use of body scanners to stop prisoners from concealing contraband within their bodies to evade detection.

To address the use of psychoactive substances, we have introduced new laws including the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016, making it a criminal offence to supply and possess psychoactive substances in prisons, carrying a maximum sentence of two years' imprisonment and an unlimited fine. We have also developed an innovative new programme of mandatory drug testing (MDT) for psychoactive substances and are continuing to work with our contracted laboratory to analyse data to ensure we are testing for the most commonly misused substances.

Drug treatment also has a very important role to play in tackling the problem. Substance misuse services are commissioned through NHS England to provide a range of services. Alongside these treatment providers, HMPPS is working closely with health partners to provide information, guidance and support to prisoners, visitors and staff on the impact and damaging consequences of drugs.

Locally, a new substance and alcohol misuse strategy has recently been produced, providing a framework for the effective management and development of substance misuse services. In addition, dedicated drug strategy meetings have been introduced to encourage a whole prison approach to tackling drug misuse. This work is exploring the link between psychoactive substances and serious incidents within the prison.

Mobile Phones

HMPPS is committed to tackling the threat posed by mobile phones in prisons and has a programme of work in place to prevent mobile phones entering prisons and to detect and disrupt their use. HMPPS has rolled out a range of technology to prisons to strengthen searching and security in response to the risk mobile phones in prison represent. These include signal blocking technology and portable mobile phone signal and hardware detectors.

On 3 August, the Telecommunications Restriction Orders Regulations 2016 came into force. Since the introduction of the legislation, more than 150 illicit devices have been disconnected.

The management of security intelligence at HMP Leeds has recently been reviewed and has led to the introduction of a new security and intelligence strategy. Since being implemented the strategy has seen a reduction in the number of mobile telephone finds. The CCTV installation across the residential wings is now complete and an upgrade to the CCTV in visits is scheduled to commence shortly.

Staffing

In addition to recruitment efforts to increase the number of prison officers HMPPS is doing more to reduce attrition rates across the estate. In the 12 months to 31 December 2016, officers with 10 - 14 years of service made up the largest group of all band 4/5 prison officers who left during that period.

In respect of these established staff, whose experience is recognised as valuable, the commitment to higher staffing levels are set to improve the supervision of prisoners, operational resilience and staff engagement with prisoners; all of which will improve prison safety and encourage experienced staff to stay.

Work to develop clear career paths and professionalise the service is being worked on and this should provide development and promotion opportunities for our experienced staff to ensure that they continue to feel valued and supported in their career progression. This will aid motivation and offer greater reliance across the system. This will be reinforced by the mentoring of new staff, longer direct contact time with prisoners through the key workers and greater confidence in working in safe, decent and secure working environment through the extra staff commitment.

Procurement

Your report notes that procurement difficulties have resulted in delays in the provision of basic items such as toilet rolls, pillows, towels, clothing and specialist kitchen wear, as well as raw materials for the workshops and the repair of equipment in the workshops.

Kitchen

The refurbishment of the kitchen was delayed due a number of factors, including changes in scope to ensure a fit for purpose facility that met the establishment's needs. As the Board will be aware, the project was completed in February 2017; the kitchen now has state of the art equipment and is producing good quality meals which are tasted daily by the duty governor.

Toilet Rolls and Pillows

Pillows and mattresses are stocked in bulk at Branston to ensure continuity of supply. Mattresses and pillows are most commonly ordered through the inventory by establishments, whereby they can set their own threshold for a new stock order to be triggered. There have been no supply issues at Branston as there is always between one and two months' worth of stock available, whilst the supplier is also contracted to hold one months' worth of stock to cover any unexpected increases in demand. Branston only usually deliver to each establishment once or twice per month, which may cause short supply issues if the inventory threshold is set too low. Branston, however, is able to accommodate emergency deliveries to establishments outside of their normal schedule if this is requested.

HMP Leeds has no record of any issues with the supply of toilet rolls or pillows during the Board's reporting period; had procurement difficulties been experienced, these items would have been purchased from local suppliers to ensure the needs of prisoners were met.

Prisoner Clothing, bedding and towels

In the last 12 months there have been issues around supply and demand, but following a review these problems have now been addressed. Prisons will continue to raise any issues with the operational team at HMPPS Public Sector Prisons Industries. HMP Leeds has strived to ensure that all orders have been met and, where necessary, has used external suppliers to provide goods, such as safety boots for the kitchen workers.

Workshops

There have been no issues that would affect the supply of raw materials to the workshops in the period covered by the Board's report, but specific examples should be escalated by the workshop leaders in the prison. HMP Leeds has two members of staff who can undertake basic repairs on the equipment in the workshops. If more complex repairs are required, equipment is returned to Branston and replacements arranged.

Dental Chair

Due to the procurement guidelines, there was a delay in purchasing the dental chair. Had the chair been a planned purchase, rather than an immediate one, this would have been something that the prison could have worked on procuring over time. As HMP Leeds had a limited number of approved budget holders this impacted further on the delay. Action has now been taken to ensure there are more staff at the prison able to approve items. As soon as the necessary agreement was in place to purchase the chair, it was ordered and shipped over from Europe. The dental chair was installed within three weeks of the order and has been in operation for several months now.