



Ministry
of Justice

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Joe Ms. Askwith

**HMP/YOI EASTWOOD PARK: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 NOVEMBER 2015 – 31 OCTOBER 2016**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 October 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 year. I am sorry for the delay in you receiving a response.

It was encouraging to receive your comments that women at HMP/YOI Eastwood Park are being treated fairly, humanely and with compassion by staff, sometimes in very challenging circumstances. I was also encouraged by the improvements since last year's report, particularly with regards to transfers to hospital for mentally ill prisoners.

I was also pleased to read about the considerable progress that has been made in both education and purposeful activity, and the innovation displayed by managers in their drive to provide opportunities that would be attractive and purposeful for the women while in prison and on release.

I fully understand the Board's continued concern over the rise in deaths in custody. There were 12 self-inflicted deaths in the female estate in 2016, a significant increase on the five which occurred in 2015. Every death in custody is a tragedy and strenuous efforts are being made to learn lessons from each one.

The Independent Advisory Panel on Deaths in Custody and the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) have recently published reports in response to the tragic rise in deaths of women in custody. These reports contain a total of 58 recommendations which we intend to action. I have recently attended a meeting with the Director and Governors of the women's prisons where the issues of suicide and self-harm were discussed.

In his report, which followed the death of one woman at HMP Eastwood Park, the PPO recommended that the Director of Women's Prisons needed to assure himself that the broader implications for safety at Eastwood Park, and even beyond, had been fully addressed. In response to this recommendation the Director of Women's Prisons commissioned an independent review of the Kinnon Unit (Residential 8) at HMP/YOI Eastwood Park. The review was tasked to provide the Governor and Director of Women's Prisons with an overview of the operation of Kinnon Unit and the services provided for stabilisation and detoxification to women who come into HMP/YOI Eastwood Park. The review took a broad and independent view on health provision and the operational delivery of residential services including liaison between agencies and communication across all parties. It was designed to look at whether what is being

delivered adequately meets current need and the operating environment maximises opportunities to address all aspects of transition into custody, health need, safer custody and social integration. This report highlighted some serious issues within the Kinnon Unit which are being addressed. An action plan has been produced and is being monitored by the Director of Women's Prisons and the Governor of HMP/YOI Eastwood Park.

A comprehensive strategy for safety and reform in prisons was set out in the White Paper published in November 2016. Safety in prisons is fundamental to the proper functioning of the justice system and a vital part of our reform plans. We have an ambitious agenda to modernise the prison estate, improve education and empower governors, so that we can tackle issues like drugs and violence which are key to cutting reoffending and keeping staff and prisoners safe.

We are rolling out new training across the prison estate to support our staff to identify risks and triggers of suicide and self-harm and understand what they can do to better support prisoners at risk. This involves awareness training for prison staff on supporting prisoners with mental health issues. To support governors and prison staff across the estate, we have also put in place specialist safer custody leads in every region to provide advice to prisons and to spread good practice on identifying and supporting prisoners at risk. HMP/YOI Eastwood Park is one of the prisons that has been given some additional funding for safer custody work.

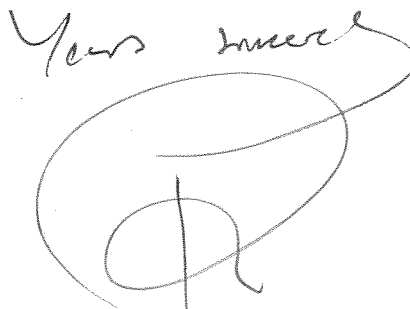
NHS England and Public Health England are closely involved in the suicide and self-harm project which was established last year to drive forward a programme of activity with the aim of reducing the number of self-inflicted deaths and the levels of self-harm within prisons. Their involvement will ensure that issues such as mental health are fully considered.

I note your request that staffing levels at the prison are increased without delay. 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. HMP/YOI Eastwood Park is one of the 10 pathfinder prisons that will be first to introduce key workers for prisoners. Requests for additional staffing resources at HMP/YOI Eastwood Park have been made and once funding has been released recruitment will take place.

We are doing more to ensure this planned staff uplift is complemented by reductions in the level of attrition of existing staff. This includes investing in a better induction system and supporting new recruits through a formal mentoring scheme, from the moment they begin training through to completion of their probation period. New recruits will receive additional training in areas specific to the needs of women offenders ensuring they are supported and enabled to complete their role to the required standards.

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/YOI Eastwood Park.

Yours sincerely


DR PHILLIP LEE MP

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Provision of Treatment Specific to women

Following the changes to the women's custodial estate from a geographical to a functional model, work has been ongoing to commission programmes of work to encourage closer working between the prisons, better sharing of best practice and an opportunity to have a more cohesive and gender-specific approach to the management of women in custody. This programme includes work streams on: Health and Wellbeing; Being Trauma Informed; Transitions (the management of significant points of change during the custodial journey such as entry into custody, remand to convicted, transfer to another prison, and preparation for release); Families and Children; Decency; and Domestic Violence. This work will help to ensure that prison regimes are better focussed on the specific needs of the women they hold.

Attendance of the IMB at Segregation Reviews

The Governor has noted the Board's concerns about attendance at segregation reviews and will put in place a process to address this. Introducing regularity into the process will give the meetings some predictability which has previously hampered the attendance of IMB members. It is hoped that there will be a considerable improvement on attendance in the coming year.