



Mr Tim Norman
Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Gartree
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Market Harborough
Leicestershire
LE16 7RP

20 July 2017

Dear Tim,

**HMP GARTREE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 DECEMBER 2015 – 30 NOVEMBER 2016**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 30 November 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 the Board has continued to operate with a shortage of members during the reporting period. I am sorry for the delay in you receiving a reply.

It was encouraging to receive your positive comments about the cooperation that staff have shown to the Board and the hard work and efficiency of the IMB clerk in supporting the Board in their monitoring role. I am also pleased to read of the professionalism of prison staff when managing serious incidents efficiently, calmly and humanely.

I commend HMP Gartree for introducing valued working opportunities and offering formal qualifications. I am pleased the Board have recognised the good practice of the Braille, woodworking and textile workshops and that the gardens department has expanded. I do, however, understand the Board's ongoing concerns about the quality of purposeful activity available.

Our vision for prisons set out in the 'Prison Safety and Reform' White Paper, published in November 2016, also included our plans for education and employment. Offenders must be working, learning and reforming, so when they leave prison they can be useful members of society. Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), through ONE3ONE Solutions and Public Sector Prison Industries (PSPI), will continue to work hard to support this aim. As part of the new arrangements, governors will have greater authority and accountability for managing their workshops. Improved outcomes will be achieved as offenders leave prison able to find work, support their families and ready to turn their lives around.

Locally at HMP Gartree, the current availability of external contract work has suffered from a lack of continuity. The prison is, therefore, engaging with PSPI and employers to find new contracts for employment and workshops. The prison will continue to improve the learning and attainment of qualifications available in the workshops and focus on this as part of the reducing reoffending strategy over the coming years linked to the Prison's Performance Agreement. Ensuring adequate continuity of work suitable for the workshops remains the overriding priority with in-cell activity also provided where possible. As part of a comprehensive safety strategy, distraction packs are used on wings for those prisoners who are risk assessed as requiring an in cell activity.

I recognise the Board's continued concerns about the impact of lost property on prisoners and that this is the topic of a large number of complaints to IMBs. A review of the national Prisoners' Property policy was postponed to take into account current work on reducing litigation claims related to prisoners' property. However, a revised policy is expected to be issued in 2017. In the meantime, prisoners will continue to be encouraged to send items out, or have them disposed of, when they are above their volumetric control limits. The contractor will continue to decline to transport any property that exceeds the limits as accepting additional property reduces the number of prisoners who can be escorted and the effectiveness of service.

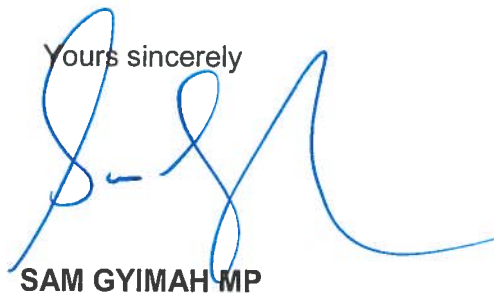
HMP Gartree is aware prisoner property is an important issue and now immediately identifies any property issues with all arriving and departing prisoners. Delays in responding to complaints can unfortunately occur due to the need to fully investigate the circumstances of the loss but interim responses are provided when such delays occur.

I am sorry to hear of the problems experienced by the Board with the Criminal Justice Secure Mail computer package. I understand the new contractor has introduced a number of improvements which are now starting to have an impact. Further improvements to be made in the course of the year will include increasing the size of the mailbox.

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. 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 Gartree.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S-Gyimah', is written over the typed name 'SAM GYIMAH MP'.

SAM GYIMAH MP

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Illegal Substances

HMPPS does not tolerate illegal substances in prisons and there are a range of robust measures in place to detect such 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, new legislation has been introduced, the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016. This makes it a criminal offence to supply and possess psychoactive substances in prisons, carrying a maximum sentence of two years imprisonment and an unlimited fine. An innovative new programme of mandatory drug testing (MDT) has been introduced for psychoactive substances and work continues with the contracted laboratory to analyse data, ensuring the testing for the most commonly misused substances.

There will be a range of new measures introduced to further tackle this issue. These include improving searching capability, enhancing the drug testing regime, trialling new technology to block methods of conveyance, and reducing the demand for illegal substances through more purposeful activity and joint commissioning of health and treatment services.

HMPPS also remains vigilant to all incidents involving drones and take the threat they pose to prison security very seriously. Legislation has been introduced to further strengthen our powers, making it illegal to land a drone in prison or to use a drone to drop in contraband. Anyone found using a drone in an attempt to get contraband into prisons can be punished with a sentence of up to two years. Furthermore, we continue to explore innovative methods to tackle the threat posed by drones to prisons, including technology to detect and block drones, the increased use of physical security and working with drone manufacturers. Locally at HMP Gartree, the prison is developing a strategy to combat this issue with national and Directorate led initiatives also employed as they become available.

HMP Gartree is determined to address the issue of contraband entering the prison by utilising a number of intelligence and surveillance options. The layout of the visits hall has been changed to enhance supervision and, following a recent review by the Long Term and High Security Directorate, a full refresh of visits and communications CCTV has been advised and will include external cameras in vulnerable areas susceptible to throw overs. Additional searches have also been put in place of prisoners entering the segregation unit and communal areas and the East Midlands Dog team have assisted on numerous operations searching both prisoners and staff.

Staffing Levels

Prisoner demographic

The increase in prisoners arriving at the prison earlier in their sentence due to the need for space in local prisons has presented challenges. However, these risks are being managed effectively. Population management is a priority area for the new Long Term and High Security Directorate, and provides an opportunity to develop and improve population flows and progressive pathways, both into and from the

establishment. The new Directorate also increases the potential options for the management of those prisoners who are significantly disruptive.

Recruitment

HMPPS recognise nationally that there is a need to strengthen the frontline to overhaul prison safety, and rehabilitate prisoners in order to reduce reoffending. Recently, the Government announced a £100 million investment to increase prison officer numbers by 2,500. Staffing levels at HMP Gartree have also been reviewed and a number of increases in staffing resources approved.

HMP Gartree is part of a national recruitment process running a national marketing campaign in 2016-2017 for all public prisons across the country. A refreshed campaign has been launched recently in line with the launch of the new HMPPS Agency. We are also investing in a better induction system and are supporting new recruits through a formal mentoring scheme, from the moment they begin training through to completion of their probation period. 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 in order to reduce the level of attrition.

The pending closure of HMP Glen Parva will also release a number of experienced staff who are anticipated to then transfer to HMP Gartree.

Staff wellbeing

The Governor provides a supportive approach to absence management to enable staff to achieve a return to work or alternatively remain on duty in a temporary alternative capacity should an appropriate opportunity exist. A weekly meeting with functional heads addresses any concerns and includes the support mechanisms available to the individual such as the Occupational Health Advisor, Occupational Health Practitioner, the completion of the stress risk assessments, back to work plans, referral to physiotherapy and counselling.