



Mrs Sue Bird
Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP High Down
High Down Lane
Sutton, Surrey
SM2 5PJ

20 July 2017

Dear Sue,

**HMP HIGH DOWN: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR
1 JANUARY – 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. I am sorry for the delay in you receiving a reply.

It was encouraging to receive your comments about the dedication and goodwill of staff during what I can appreciate were challenging times. I am pleased the arrival of the new Governor and deputy governor have had a stabilising effect on the prison and note the improvement in the procurement of basic items for prisoners, such as kettles and pillows.

Following Michael Spurr's response to your letter of June 2016 in which you outlined your concerns regarding safety, the regime and prisoners' access to facilities and activity, work continues to improve staffing levels across the prison estate. HMP High Down is one of the 31 red sites receiving incentivised payments to attract new prison officers and has appointed a recruitment advisor and administrator who are focused on recruiting new staff. The prison is a pilot site for the Unlocked Graduates programme and should receive a considerable number of officers from this scheme, though I recognise that the extensive ongoing recruitment activity will not result in substantial numbers of new staff at High Down until the autumn. Although the situation is not yet ideal, I understand the closure of a house block and reduction in operational capacity along with lower sickness levels, have helped ease some staffing issues and led to an improvement in staff morale, as evidenced by the increased staff engagement score in the 2016 People Survey. Once the staffing situation has improved as a result of the above initiatives, consideration will be given to a review of the regime to include more purposeful activity and time out of cell. In the meantime, detached duty provision has been increased to support the reopening of a spur and provide stability over the summer period.

I note your comment that you have yet to see any significant changes as a result of HMP High Down being designated as a reform prison and your request for details about how the reform prison strategy will be delivered and measured. I should explain that the prison system is being reformed in order to make lines of accountability clear and to create sharper and more transparent scrutiny. The new operationally-focused executive agency, Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), will be responsible for all operational delivery across prison and probation services and will refocus Headquarters on supporting and not micro-managing governors. The Secretary of State will set standards, commission services and hold them to account.

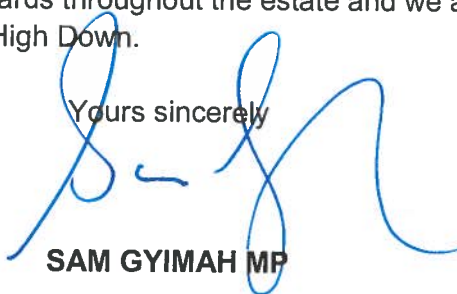
We are building on the lessons learnt from the reform prisons, including HMP High Down. To support the new framework we are introducing new powers for governors, a new commissioning structure and new performance standards. This will create a more focused prison system where governors are clear about what they need to deliver and are empowered to do so, with the freedom to innovate and try new approaches. Empowerment is about giving Governors the ability to make decisions, innovate to be more responsive in meeting the needs of their prison and their prisoners. To be able to deliver real change they must be able to make things happen, which means they must have the authority to make decisions about the staff and skills required, the way the prison is run, the services prisoners need, how they are delivered, and how they spend their budget. That is why we are giving Governors greater control over a wide span of areas including greater freedom to decide how they spend their budget, design their regime and set their staffing levels. I recognise that this greater empowerment of governors is still in its early stages but anticipate that it will result in the delivery of more appropriate regimes and services as local decision making takes effect. At High Down, Commissioners meet monthly with the Executive Governor to discuss performance data, areas of success and concern, and how this should feed in to the future strategy of the prison.

I note the Board's concern about the over population of the prison estate and the difficulties that this creates for the progressive transfer of prisoners to work through their sentence plan and prepare for their release, especially those serving Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentences. We know that our prisons are overcrowded and that some are out of date and we are therefore investing £1.3 billion to reform and modernise the prison estate. We plan to build up to 10,000 new prison places with better education facilities and other rehabilitative services and will also reorganise the existing estate to make sure prisoners are held in environments that better meet their needs and risk. As you know, as part of these changes HMP High Down will become a Category C prison, holding medium and long-term male prisoners, and a project is currently underway to deliver this over the course of 2017. This project will equip HMP High Down to provide a dedicated regime for sentenced prisoners and will involve the construction of new workshop places and other building work necessary to support this population change. In an associated project, HMP Wandsworth is being reconfigured to accommodate the courts currently served by High Down.

In respect of progressive transfer prospects for IPP prisoners, HMPPS and the Parole Board are overseeing the delivery of a joint action plan which covers a range of measures designed to increase opportunities for IPP prisoners to progress. The plan will also look to improve the efficiency and timeliness of the parole process and to alleviate pressure by reducing the number and type of cases the Parole Board have to deal with. A key aspect of the plan has been the establishment of a new central progression unit which aims to augment and enhance existing case progression activity specifically for IPP prisoners. The central unit works closely with the Parole Board for the more complex cases to ensure that parole hearings happen on time and with good quality, up to date risk assessments and reports. IPP prisoners who engage appropriately and take advantage of opportunities continue to secure release.

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 High Down.

Yours sincerely



SAM GYIMAH MP

HMP HIGH DOWN: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JANUARY – 31 DECEMBER 2016

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Impact of drugs and alcohol

HMPPS does not tolerate drugs or alcohol in prisons and there is a range of robust measures in place to detect such substances including physical searching, cell-searching, x-ray machines, surveillance and detection dogs. To address the use of psychoactive substances, new laws have been introduced 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, as well as an innovative new programme of mandatory drug testing for psychoactive substances.

A refurbishment of the four older houseblocks at High Down is ongoing and this includes the installation of grilles to cell windows, something that will not only address the Board's concerns about the outside areas but will also help to tackle the issue of drones.

Treatment also has a very important role to play in helping those who have been identified as having a drug or alcohol misuse problem. Substance misuse services (which include alcohol) are commissioned through NHS England (NHSE) based on the needs of the local population and HMPPS works closely with health commissioners at a local level to provide information, guidance and support to prisoners, visitors and staff on the impact and damaging consequences of drug and alcohol use/misuse. Interventions can include 1-1 work, group work, access to Alcoholics Anonymous and other mutual aid groups and wider access to recovery focused interventions. A full substance misuse and alcohol treatment programme at High Down includes both clinical and psychosocial interventions for all prisoners that require them.

The Government is investing over £100m to recruit an additional 2,500 staff across the estate by the end of 2018 which will help us deal with emerging threats and so improve safety. The new Offender Management model will also provide additional support with a dedicated prison officer to every six prisoners enabling officers to build constructive relationships with prisoners, reduce levels of frustration and, ultimately, reduce levels of violence. This one-to-one support from a dedicated officer is at the heart of our prison reforms making sure that offenders get the help they need to quit drugs, get the education and skills needed to find work and quit crime for good. At HMP High Down a new violence reduction strategy is being implemented, taking a whole prison approach to addressing the causes of violence based on the learning from the Violence Reduction Project.

HMP High Down has not seen a significant increase in the number of prisoners on Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) documents, but a number of initiatives and checks have been introduced to improve the quality of the ACCT process within the establishment, including guidance on the quality of documents, the involvement of family members in the review process and a training plan which is being developed to deliver ACCT Awareness/Refresher training to staff.

Transfer to Secure Units

NHSE acknowledges the pressure on certain categories of adult secure beds. A Mental Health Service Review, which included adult medium and low secure services, commenced during 2016/17, and is considering a number of issues such as the capacity required against a number of criteria including levels

of security, gender, service types and geographical location. A key principle of the review is that these services must be part of the pathway of care and where relevant, this includes prison.

A collaborative group has been set up between NHSE Health and Justice, NHSE Specialist Commissioning, NHSE Secure Care and HMPPS. Its key purpose includes sharing information to measure, analyse and evaluate the supply of and demand for services for offenders with mental health problems within Criminal Justice and Health settings and to identify gaps/areas where new approaches should be encouraged and tested.

NHSE Health and Justice are working on a whole pathway response to mental health to reduce the number of mentally unwell offenders being sentenced to custody, via early interventions in police stations and Courts as well as ensuring that where prison is the most appropriate option for sentencing, that transfers of care are timely and effective.

The Mental Health Team at HMP High Down has a dedicated transfer and discharge coordinator who will continue to facilitate referrals and transfers to hospital.

Vulnerable Prisoners

Work is being undertaken nationally to provide support to prisoners at risk of suicide and self-harm and, following a successful pilot, improved training on suicide and self-harm prevention is being rolled out across the Prison Estate. We are bolstering Regional Safer Custody Teams to support prisons and spread good practice on identifying and supporting prisoners at risk. The Regional Safer Custody Lead undertakes additional assurance checks and provides advice and support to prisons around ACCT compliance where required. They also provide advice to prisons around investigating violence.

The Inreach team at HMP High Down has a training package designed for Healthcare and Care and Separation Unit (CSU) staff that includes information and management techniques on personality disorders as well as the most common mental health conditions seen in prisons. For those prisoners who continuously display anti-social behaviour, the establishment takes a multi-disciplinary case management approach, with prisoners referred to the Complex Case Committee meeting, where a team discuss and put in place appropriate support measures.

A standard operating procedure is also in place for the management of referrals from the CSU, which includes processes for referrals to the Inreach team, the screening and allocation of assessments, attendance at reviews, a continued review of a prisoner's mental state and consideration for those prisoners held in segregation for longer than 30 days.

Sex Offenders

Where a prisoner at HMP High Down requires an accredited offending behaviour programme, and has sufficient time left in custody to complete this, the expectation remains that they would be transferred to a suitable prison that is delivering the required programme. To support this, the Prison Estate Transformation Programme is to reform the prison estate during the current spending review to 2020. It is important that activity to address shortfalls in capacity are co-ordinated and work is already underway to make sure that estate capacity is realigned from 2016 / 2017 to cater for demand for places, including those convicted of sexual offences.

Accredited programmes however form only one component of the services, activities and interventions provided to reduce risk and protect the public. Not all prisoners will benefit from an accredited programme, be willing to attend, or be at a point in their sentence when they will benefit. For some, the risks they pose may be better addressed through other rehabilitative services or activities.