



Ministry
of Justice

Sam Gyimah MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary
of State for Justice

Mr Harry Chandler
Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Littlehey
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2 September 2017

Dear Harry

**HMP LITTLEHEY: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 FEBRUARY 2016 – 31 JANUARY 2017**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 January 2017. 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 to hear of the continued problems experienced with the IT systems and in the retention of new recruits and I appreciate the increased pressure this has put on the remaining Board members. The IMB Secretariat have been informed of these issues and will respond to you direct.

I understand the Board's concerns regarding pre-release resettlement facilities for the sex-offender population. Although I am pleased to read the situation has improved since last year, improvement is still required and I understand that the contracted Community Rehabilitation Company (BeNCH) is now working successfully in partnership with the prison to support those being released from custody.

Nationally you may be aware that the department conducted an internal review of the probation system. My written statement to Parliament on 19 July set out the action we have taken as a result of the review and the further work we are now doing. We have agreed changes to Community Rehabilitation Company contracts to reflect more accurately the fixed costs of delivering services to offenders, and this will enable providers to focus on the delivery of core operational services. We recognise, though, the concerns that have been identified about aspects of probation services and we are doing further work to consider improvements we can make to the delivery of rehabilitative services.

I also share your concerns about the demands placed on HMP Littlehey and the wider estate by the ageing prison population. The current over-50 prison population has increased by over 30% over the past four years and is expected to further increase, mainly as a result of the offences that tend to be committed disproportionately by older offenders.

We are currently working to fill gaps in our knowledge about the particular health and social needs of older prisoners so we can determine how best to meet these requirements. This work will include seeking expert advice on what changes we may need to make to the prison estate or regimes. We will expect to have made further progress by September 2017 and I will ask my officials to liaise with the IMB and Lay Observer Secretariat so that you are kept informed of any future developments in this area.

The demographics of the prison population and its impact on the health and social care needs of prisoners in all establishments is routinely reviewed through annual Health Needs Assessments by NHS England. These assessments help design and commission health services to allocate resources to Local Authorities to meet their social care responsibilities as they effect prison populations.

Locally, the Cambridgeshire Prisons Local Delivery Board includes representation from all Local Authorities responsible for delivering social care into the Counties prisons and this includes HMP Littlehey. The Board regularly reviews the performance of providers in meeting the social care needs of prisoners. Regarding the associated issue of the End of Life Suite at HMP Littlehey, I understand that the Board have already been provided extensive information on why the suite has not been commissioned and I can further affirm that this is a local decision in conjunction with the regional NHS Commissioner.

In respect of prisons operating at their Certified Normal Accommodation levels, the Government recognises that our prisons are overcrowded and reducing overcrowding is a central aim of the estate modernisation plan. We are investing £1.3 billion to build modern establishments with up to 10,000 new (uncrowded) Category C prison places replacing older crowded accommodation and better education facilities by the end of this Parliament. In the meantime, and as explained last year, we will only crowd where it is safe and decent to do so.

It was encouraging to receive your assessment that despite the pressures that crowded prisons bring, there is, in the main, a positive relationship between staff and prisoners at HMP Littlehey, and that the prison attempt to establish a welcoming and understanding environment for prisoners with a comparatively safe environment with low levels of violence and that appropriate emphasis is placed on treating prisoners with fairness and decency.

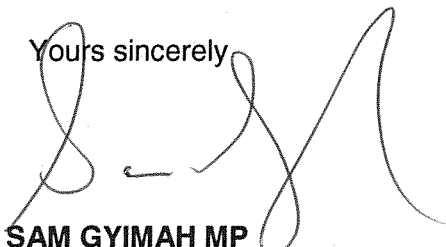
I also note your positive observations on the high standards of the reception and induction procedure, along with a reduction in the use of the Care and Separation Unit (CSU). The high engagement of education facilities at HMP Littlehey, with 92% of eligible prisoners engaged is impressive and the number of prisoners undertaking A-Level and University courses is particularly pleasing.

You also have asked what authority Governors will have to make improvements within their prisons. The Prison Reform agenda will empower Governors by giving them the tools and resources they need to drive forward reform. The reforms will give Governors more freedom on how they deliver their regimes and as of 1 April 2017 they have been empowered with greater power over service provision in their prison; greater authority to determine how to spend their budget in order to deliver their strategy and authority to do their own workforce planning. We have provided more information on what is being done to improve facilities management at HMP Littlehey in the attached annex.

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 Littlehey.

Yours sincerely



SAM GYIMAH MP

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Facilities and maintenance

The maintenance contractors (Carillion) and HMPPS have made concerted efforts to get the facilities at HMP Littlehey to a decent standard with significant work carried out in the shower areas and a bid in place to improve the heating system.

HMPPS acknowledges that the current accommodation block laundry facilities are no longer fit for purpose particularly in light of the increased amount of washing now required and discussions are underway with the contractors to change the equipment. Regarding the TV system, unfortunately the signal distribution generators have failed on a number of occasions and therefore work is currently in progress to replace the faulty equipment.

To support the completion of general maintenance, a small amount of painting is now being completed by prisoners and this will in time be extended to other tasks.

Loss of prisoner property

HMPPS understands the importance of property to prisoners and strive to ensure it is managed as effectively and efficiently as possible. It is in the interests of both prisoners and staff that property is dealt with promptly, fairly, and with attention to detail. A review of the Prisoners' Property policy is currently taking place alongside a national project to reduce HMPPS' annual litigation expenditure. A national cost reduction project began in early 2017, with work streams focusing on improving the handling of claims and preventing the causes of litigation. This work will feed into the prisoners' property review. We expect to issue a revised policy during 2017.

At HMP Littlehey a local protocol has been put in place and information provided to staff and prisoners. Monitoring of property issues will be undertaken at the monthly Performance Meeting and Senior Management Team meeting.