



Ministry
of Justice

Sam Gyimah MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary
of State for Justice

Mrs Nicola Curl
Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Norwich, Knox Road
Norwich, Norfolk
NR1 4 LU

3rd September 2017

Dear Nicola,

**HMP NORWICH: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 MARCH 2016 – 28 FEBRUARY 2017**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 28 February 2017. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for all the hard work that has been put into capturing your helpful observations.

I sincerely apologise for the delay in responding to the Board's email from 30 November 2016, I provided an update to the MP on the local recruitment pilot at HMP Norwich on 16 December 2017. Please note an updated letter was also sent to the IMB Chairs on 10 January 2017, reiterating that this Government is determined to ensure that Prisons are appropriately resourced to deliver safety, security and reform.

I understand the Board's continued concerns for staffing levels at HMP Norwich. There is no intention to operate with insufficient staff and as a result the recruitment of new officers is in progress. In November 2016 HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) announced a £100m investment to increase Prison Officer numbers by 2,500. I can assure the Board that HMP Norwich will be receiving a share of the 2,500 additional staff, however I am unable to provide an exact figure at this stage. HMP Norwich is currently running a reduced but predictable regime which does not impact the Prisoner activities and work or family ties, including visits.

It was encouraging to receive your comments about the prisoners at HMP Norwich receiving fair treatment. I am pleased that the Prison Staff and Management continue to strive to provide a decent and humane environment, despite extremely difficult circumstances.

It is positive that the Board acknowledges that the Britannia café in the grounds of HMP Norwich provides good work experience for Cat D prisoners although I understand it is not ideal that accredited qualifications are not available for prisoners working in the Britannia café.

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 and the Governors 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 Norwich.

Yours sincerely



SAM GYIMAH MP

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Staffing

Locally at HMP Norwich the current staffing levels are improving and ten new Prison Officers have started (June 2017) and a further ten Prison Officers are identified to begin their training (August 2017), which will take the prison close to full staffing levels. To date all new recruits have completed their training. The Governor reassures the Board that there are no issues about staff retention as the majority of staff leave on promotion or retirement.

The Prison Officer Retention Strategy in HMPPS, requires that all establishments will be given access to an attrition dashboard, toolkit, guidance and eLearning. This aims to support local action to reduce attrition, voluntary resignations and to encourage a self-service approach, where establishments will be given the opportunity to take part.

Use of Force

The use of force levels at HMP Norwich have remained consistent. Approximately 40% of incidents logged are guided holds, the use of ratchet cuffs as a de-escalation technique and the minimum use of force. The intention at HMP Norwich is to always use the minimum amount of force necessary to see a successful resolution to any incident.

Decency Agenda

The Governor understands the Board's concern for the sufficient time required by the Equalities Officer. The Governor has provided assurance there is more time detailed for the Equality Action Team (EAT) meeting's preparation and attendance has improved. Locally at HMP Norwich the current training priorities are the Five Minute Intervention (FMI), Suicide and Self Harm (SASH) and the annual mandatory refresher courses. The prison is looking at how to raise the Mental Health awareness training for Staff.

The length of time prisoners spend in the Gym has improved and there is a commitment to retain Gym Officers delivering Physical Education, they will not be redeployed. The enhanced prisoners at HMP Norwich have extended time out of cell to reward their good behaviour.

Prisoner Forums

Residential forums now take place monthly and are led by Supervising Officers and Functional Heads will also attend. There are plans to expand the current Prisoner Reps within Norwich and the Local Discharge Unit (Cat C) side is looking to form a Prison Council

OASys Reports

The Governor acknowledges the Board's issues about the backlog of Offender Assessment System (OASys) reports. In HMP Norwich there is currently a backlog of 50 OASys documents. However the new staff resource has allowed for the Prison to plan and allocate resources to reduce this.

Complaints

The Board's issues about the time taken to answer complaints has been addressed by the prison and a new system is now in place providing accountability for complaint responses and PIN Phone accounts. The Governor is confident this will improve response times accordingly.

Prisoner Escorts and Transfers

HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) have no intention for prisoners at HMP Norwich to be inappropriately segregated long-term. There are instances where delays in court sittings, traffic conditions and adverse weather conditions have a detrimental impact on Prisoner arrival times. If a late arrival is unavoidable the escorts are required to ensure that the receiving Prison is informed of the delay and an agreement is arranged for the safe receipt of any late Prisoners. The Prison Escort and Custody Service (PECS) monitors all aspects of the escort contractor's performance and failure to meet the agreed levels will be raised for improvement with the contractor. Just to note if the Prison is unable to receive the Prisoner from the Court, PECS are advised to deliver the Prisoner to an alternative establishment prior to departure. The aim is to maintain the Prisoner decency by ensuring they are placed into a Prison environment and not using operational police cells.

In HMP Norwich the intention is to work with difficult prisoners to attempt to re-integrate them back into the main Residential Wings, however when this is not appropriate transferring the Prisoner out to another Prison is considered. HMP Norwich has received good support regionally to ensure transferring prisoners out is achieved and generally the time taken has reduced.

The transfers of Prisoners is subject to the space available in the appropriate Prison and the speed of transfers reflects this. HMPPS remains committed to making the most effective use of the estate to support Prisoners' needs, including by seeking to hold prisoners in the most appropriate security conditions and in prisons that are able to meet the need presented by their individual case. As part of the prison reforms HMPPS will be reorganising the existing estate so that it is used as effectively as possible ensuring Prisoners are held in environments that match their needs and risk, and address the current imbalance in the estate between capacity and demand for certain prison places.

On a regional level, The Eastern Prison Group Director states that at HMP Bedford, C Wing has re-opened and will be taking Prisoners from their own courts which should reduce the amount of Prisoners being received into HMP Norwich following re-direction and therefore allowing them to be processed safely.

Contracted Services

Following the previous reporting period the Board has continued concerns about the Community Rehabilitation Company's (CRC) Through the Gate (TTG) Service at HMP Norwich. Action has been taken to improve the TTG service provided, the CRC has taken over from the sub-contractor (from 1 June 2017). Tripartite meetings taking place, chaired by the Contract Management Team including the CRC and HMP Norwich are being used to monitor the services being delivered. The Contract Management Team will continue to closely monitor and robustly manage providers to make sure they fulfil the contractual commitments.

A comprehensive review of the Probation System to improve outcomes for offenders and communities while ensuring public protection remains the top priority has now been concluded. The findings will be published.