



Ministry  
of Justice

**Sam Gyimah MP**  
Parliamentary Under-Secretary  
of State for Justice

Mr Graham Oliver  
Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Oakwood  
Oaks Drive  
Featherstone  
Wolverhampton  
WV10 7QD

3 September 2017

Dear Graham,

**HMP OAKWOOD: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 APRIL 2016 – 31 MARCH 2017**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 March 2017. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for all the hard work that has been put into capturing your helpful observations, especially as your Board continues to be short of members.

I am pleased that despite the current national problems retaining good quality experienced staff, management at HMP Oakwood have implemented a number of initiatives including recruitment based on an applicant's suitability for the role in addition to ability. Additionally, a number of local initiatives have been introduced to engage with staff to better understand the pressures and difficulties faced in order to assist where possible. Currently the percentage of operational staff-in-post is on par with the set targets, the number of nurses has increased and work continues by the Chaplaincy to raise the profile of prison ministers and fill current vacancies.

I am also pleased that the Board's concerns about resettlement are being addressed. Three of the most powerful factors helping to keep ex-offenders from re-offending are a good job, strong family ties and a stable place to live. Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) makes all of them easier to achieve, therefore we are currently and carefully considering with practitioners how to improve access to purposeful ROTL without undermining public safety and confidence. It is encouraging HMP Oakwood are also taking positive action towards resettlement with a large percentage of prisoners in work and education related activities.

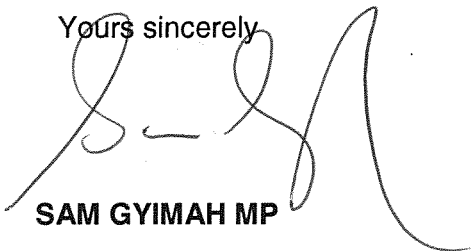
It was encouraging that you consider prisoners to be treated fairly and humanely and to read of the prison's continued practice of involving prisoners in managing their own affairs. The increase in the number of Listeners, the development of the Help and Support Line, and the ongoing development of the Prisoner User Voice Council along with the Your Consultation Group are all positives.

I was pleased to read of the cheerful and welcoming reception that prisoners receive on arrival at the prison and of the work by the admissions team, especially in the processing of a large volume of prisoners from HMP Birmingham following the disorder there.

I note you have raised some local issues of concern for this area which the Director at HMP Oakwood will continue to keep you aware of as work continues along with the other concerns raised in your report. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) comments in response to the issue raised in your report about property is set out in the attached annex.

Given that the Board has not raised any formal issues for me to respond to, it remains for me to thank the Board once more and The Justice Secretary and I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for 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 Oakwood.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. Gyimah', written over the typed name.

**SAM GYIMAH MP**

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**HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report**

**Prisoners property**

HMPPS understands the importance of property to prisoners and strives 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 and HMPPS expects to issue a revised policy during 2017.