



Ms Camilla Poulton  
Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Pentonville  
Caledonian Road  
London  
N7 8TT

2<sup>nd</sup> October 2017

Dear Camilla,

**HMP PENTONVILLE: 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. HMP Pentonville has had a number of very unfortunate events which have been well documented, the most notable of which was the tragic homicide that took place in October 2016. Along with the Board, I too would like to commend the staff at HMP Pentonville for their professionalism and dedication throughout this reporting period. The rise in the number of deaths in custody, irrespective of cause, is very concerning but again I applaud the conduct and professionalism of the staff through these traumatic and challenging times.

Safety and security is of paramount importance to HM Prison & Probation Service (HMPPS) and it is understandable the Board have raised concerns regarding the maintenance contract at HMP Pentonville, provided by Carillion, which also includes the repairs to the windows and is invariably linked to safety at the prison. Further to my letter to the Board dated 6 December 2016, we recognise that Carillion have struggled to reach the required level of performance. We continue to manage this robustly through the contractual process. Carillion have recently restructured their Senior Management team across London and are also actively participating in the National re-set project which will facilitate improvements in the contract delivery going forward.

Regarding the replacement of the cell windows, I acknowledge the threats posed from the condition of the existing windows that continue to put the safety of staff and prisoners at risk. In an effort to mitigate against those risks, the contractors have adopted a prioritised project plan and liaise closely with the prison's Senior Management Team in an effort to ensure vulnerable and sensitive areas of the establishment are prioritised.

Although Carillion's performance has been unsatisfactory, it should be noted that the age and condition of the prison continues to present challenges to Carillion's maintenance team. These issues extend to the complexities of maintaining the original Victorian drainage system which necessitated the replacement of a section of underground pipework which was found to be the source of the problems referenced in the report. Furthermore, significant work was undertaken in repairing the plumbing infrastructure which contributed to the problems with the showers on several wings.

HMPPS together with the MOJ Commercials Team have consequently undertaken a lessons learned review of the problems experienced in an effort to mitigate against any repetition of the problems experienced. Additionally, HMPPS are also working closely with Carillion to ensure that they are better able to respond to wider issues more effectively and expedite urgent repairs at site level when required.

In respect of the publication of Ministerial responses to IMB Annual Reports, I understand that this has now resumed. The Board can be assured that we wholeheartedly believe in transparency and the temporary cessation of the publication of Ministerial responses was due to a technical IT issue, namely the website transfer.

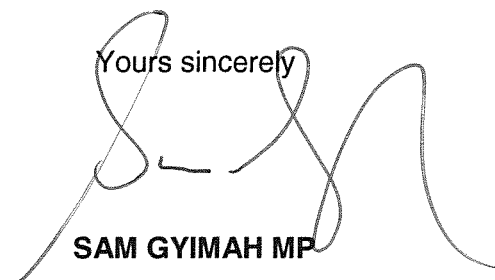
HMPPS comments in response to other issues raised in your report are set out in the attached annex. I also note you have raised some local issues of concern. HMPPS' comments to some of those concerns can be found in the attached annex and the Governor will continue to keep you aware of other issues as work continues.

Despite the unfortunate nature and outcomes of recent events and the Board's numerous concerns, it was nevertheless encouraging to receive the positive comments on several areas of the prison, particularly the improved security measures, the work of the Segregation Unit, the increased use of the library, and the discernibly raised standards in the communal areas together with the new garden and pond built by Daycare.

I also note the other positive comments made by the Board which include the Peer Mediator scheme introduced by the Safer Custody Team, improvements in the visits facility including the décor, the downward trend in complaints received, the general cleanliness of the prison and brighter décor, and the introduction of Job Fairs to assist prisoners nearing their release dates.

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 Pentonville.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sam Gyimah', with a long, sweeping tail extending to the right.

**SAM GYIMAH MP**

## HMP PENTONVILLE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 APRIL 2016 – 31 MARCH 2017

### HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

#### **Cells**

##### *Overcrowding*

As part of our reforms, the long-term goal is to reduce overcrowding while maintaining sufficient capacity to manage the demands of the courts and the sentenced population as efficiently as possible. Prisons are not expected to operate above their operational capacity and this is under constant review taking into account population fluctuations and capacity across the entire estate. We ensure that the level is set to reflect the provision of safe and decent accommodation, the operation of suitable regimes, and that levels of crowding in prisons are carefully managed.

Furthermore, the occupancy of cells is determined locally by the Governor of each establishment and where cells designed for single occupancy are doubled-up, such use is certified by the relevant Prison Group Director (PGD) in accordance with Prison Service Instruction 17/2012 which provides clear guidelines for determining cell capacities. Cells will only be shared whereby a PGD has assessed them to be of adequate size and condition.

##### *Cell conditions*

Cell cleanliness checks are completed regularly by managers and any faults reported to the maintenance contractor accordingly (Carillion). Furthermore all toilets have been descaled and cleaning materials are readily available to the prisoners. Additionally, HMPPS are working closely with Carillion to implement a planned programme of decoration and to ensure any faults reported within the cells are responded to within the timeframes defined in the Contract. We are hopeful that the actions being taken on decoration, improved fault response times, and the on-going Cell Window replacement programme will contribute towards better living conditions for all prisoners within the establishment.

#### **Patrol dogs**

The dogs currently being used at HMP Pentonville have been redeployed from other regions of the country on detached duty. However, the Prison Group Director has recognised that patrol dogs are a useful resource in certain circumstances and consequently nine patrol dog handlers have been recruited to be deployed on a risk assessed basis around the region as required. These dogs and their handlers will be in place by Autumn 2017 and will be deployed to HMP Pentonville subject to need.

#### **Care of Young Adults**

HMP Pentonville is a very busy local prison and it is acknowledged that young adults would be better accommodated in the youth estate. Consequently the Prison Group Director intervenes where possible to transfer such prisoners to the youth estate to assist the Governor. Unfortunately it is not possible to put a cap on the number of Young Adults held at HMP Pentonville as they are directed to the prison by the courts and the figure fluctuates according to the number of young adults remanded into custody. HMP Pentonville however have improved their systems for transferring Young Adults at the point of conviction. Additionally the Governor has also directed that convicted young adults with outstanding charges will be transferred to the youth estate to help control the overall Young Adult population at HMP Pentonville. Unfortunately there is no further funding available to provide additional staff for young adults whilst detained therein, however specialist agencies provide a service to Young Adult's whilst at HMP Pentonville which they can continue as their sentence progresses.

### **Imprisonment for Public Protection prisoners beyond tariff**

HMPPS recognises there is an imbalance in the current estate in relation to the needs of the varied prisoner population. As set out in the Prison Safety and Reform white paper, there is excess capacity in the number of local prison places and a shortage in the training and resettlement estate. The training estate for sentenced prisoners is being expanded and improved so that supply meets demand, enabling commissioners to target programmes and interventions to aid prisoners in their reform journey.

This transformation is being facilitated by the current reconfiguration of HMP Holme House and the scheduled reconfiguration of HMP Highdown. Both of these establishments are transitioning from local to training prisons and in turn will increase the size of the training estate by over 2,400 places. Further projects will still be required over the coming years to address the structural imbalances of the prison estate, however through this work we are creating a system where prisoners will be placed at the right level of security in prisons with regimes that are effective in meeting their needs.

### **Prisoner 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. We expect to issue a revised policy during 2017.

### **Smoking cessation**

HMPPS fully appreciates how difficult quitting smoking can be for some prisoners. HMPPS' policy is therefore to move to a smoke free environment only when it is operationally safe to do so and appropriate smoking cessation services are in place. This includes nicotine replacement therapy, behavioural support training, electronic cigarettes, and vaping devices available for prisoners to purchase on the canteen. HMPPS and its partners recognise how challenging it can be for some individuals and we are therefore committed to ensuring prisoners are adequately supported in the change.

### **Visitor information on the telephone booking service**

It is unfortunate that a substantial number of visitors were refused entry for failing to meet the identification requirements at HMP Pentonville. The telephone booking service is an old system and at the point of build, and in accordance with the then approved national standard, the decision was taken at the time to allow for differing requirements at establishments with varying security requirements.

HMPPS accepts it is the establishment's responsibility to provide adequate information to visitors in whichever format is deemed acceptable. Although some sites produce information leaflets or pre-print such requirements on the reverse of Visiting Orders prior to posting the information to the intended visitors, not all prisons have the requisite equipment. The Prison Visits Booking web portal however provides accurate information and includes confirmation emails. HMP Pentonville will endeavour to assist visitors seeking information as best as they can.

### **Availability of trained listeners**

HMP Pentonville endeavours to ensure there are trained listeners on all wings, however due to the transient population the number of listeners is constantly changing. Issues regarding cordless Samaritans phones, namely signal and reception issues from the base stations, are currently being resolved.

### **Learning opportunities for vulnerable prisoners**

Increased education outreach will be provided by Novus in the new curriculum starting in August 2017.

**Safer Custody Staffing**

The Safer Custody team has been allocated a Supervising Officer as an additional resource which should allow for regular review meetings to be held.