



Ministry
of Justice

Sam Gyimah MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary
of State for Justice

Mrs Wendy Wrigley
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Dear Wendy

**HMP THE MOUNT: 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 was particularly pleased to note that despite the impact of staff shortages and the potential for disruption, the prison ended the reporting year as a safe prison with good opportunities for rehabilitation. Although it is disappointing that the prison has recently suffered a period of indiscipline, I am pleased the incident was brought to a conclusion without any injuries to prisoners or staff and that a restricted and predictable regime, supported by detached duty staff, has helped to maintain stability post incidents.

I am sorry that you did not receive the response to your 2015-16 annual report, from my predecessor, Andrew Selous. The response to your report was sent on 26 June 2016 and I enclose a copy for your information.

I acknowledge that the running of a prison as well as staff/prisoner relationships can suffer when there is a lack of available staff. As the Board may be aware in November 2016 we announced a £100m investment to increase prison officer numbers by 2,500. Recruiting these additional staff will ensure every prison officer is responsible for the supervision and support of six offenders. 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 and get the education and skills needed to find work and leave crime behind.

As part of our ongoing safety agenda we are introducing measures such as tackling the use of drugs, mobile phones and drones, the increase of frontline staff will help improve protection for our staff and overhaul prison safety. To enable this to happen we are improving the support that applicants and new prison officers receive, engaging them throughout the process and supporting them through to the completion of their training and probation. 75 new prison officer mentors are being appointed to lead this work, and at 30 of our most challenging recruitment sites we are giving prison governors greater freedoms to hire the staff right for them, with the expertise and skills they need. In addition in February 2017 the then Secretary of State, Elizabeth Truss, further announced an increase in the starting salary for Prison Officers across 31 sites, of which HMP The Mount is one.

As part of our Prison Officer Retention Strategy all establishments will be given access to an attrition dashboard, toolkit, guidance, and eLearning. The aim of this is to support local action, to tackle attrition, reduce voluntary resignations, and apply a 'self-service approach'. Locally, I am pleased the recruitment of new officers is progressing well at HMP the Mount and the Governor will continue to update you accordingly.

I was sorry to hear there had been two deaths during the reporting year. The Government is committed to making prisons safe, including reducing the number of self-inflicted deaths. Every death in custody is a tragedy and we are redoubling our efforts to make prisons places of safety for those at risk.

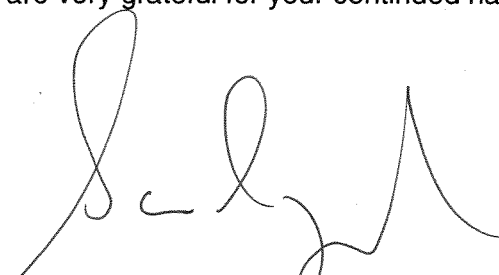
I am pleased to note the Board's observations about the hard work carried out by St Mungo's and St Giles Trust resettlement staff. We do, however, recognise the challenges the Board raises in relation to provision of accommodation for offenders. The Board may be aware that the department conducted an internal review of the probation system. My written statement to Parliament on 19 July 2017 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 CRC 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 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.

It was encouraging to receive your comments about the prison's use of intelligence and subsequent removal of the most violent and threatening prisoners which along with the increase in detection of unauthorised articles, undoubtedly helped make the prison a safer place for which the staff should be commended. I note the Board also recognised the performance of the education department and I too would like to commend the staff for their dedication and commitment for this success.

Additionally, it was pleasing to note the Board's recognition of the prisoner-led counselling initiative, the service provided by the kitchen, and the induction programme for new prisoners. I congratulate the two physiotherapists for their NHS awards.

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 The Mount.



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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Existing Infrastructure

HMPPS recognise that Carillion have not reached the required level of performance at HMP The Mount. Carillion have recently restructured their senior management team across the Eastern Region including the appointment of a new Facilities Manager and are actively participating in the National re-set project which will facilitate improvements in contract delivery.

Funding has been secured for the refurbishment of the shower rooms in five out of the ten wings at HMP The Mount with work already underway on Howard, Dixon and in the Care and Separation Unit. The prison is also working to secure funding for the general refurbishment of all the remaining shower facilities within the establishment, with maintenance work already completed on every wing to ensure there is adequate flow and pressure.

Sentence planning

HMPPS acknowledges the unfortunate situation whereby some prisoners arrive at HMP The Mount without sentence plans. HMPPS continues to review the OASys backlog and has implemented a prioritisation criteria to support establishments to ensure the highest priority cases are completed in full, together with a reduced assessment for lower risk cases thereby ensuring all prisoners have a risk assessment and sentence plan. Alongside the prioritisation policy, HMPPS offered staff an overtime bonus scheme which incentivised completion of additional assessments at those sites identified as holding a back-log of assessments.

Furthermore, there has been a review of Offender Management (OM) in custody and this addresses the issues prisons currently face in completing OASys reports. The new model will transfer the resource for OASys report completion from local/reception prisons to the training/resettlement estate where there is more time for engagement with the offender and to devise the sentence plan. Roll out of the new OM model has commenced within the ten pathfinder sites along with HMP Berwyn. HMPPS is currently working through the schedule for roll out into the wider estate and it is envisaged the new OM model will be in place in all closed prisons by March 2019.

Network Access

HMP The Mount received a bandwidth upgrade during April 2017, following this performance appears to have improved and will continue to be monitored.

Purposeful activity

A great deal of remodelling has been carried out on the workshops at HMP The Mount. Bike maintenance has been relocated to the space vacated by the engineering machinery and workshop 1a expanded by DHL for their expansion project. Workshop 3 has been identified for further expansion in partnership with Sue Ryder and the prison are also currently working with call centre providers to implement an extra 30 activity spaces in the new area.

There are now nearly 1000 activity places, including induction and the Industries and Education & Activities departments continue to work together to create as many extra spaces as possible and Public Sector Prisons Industries also continues to provide work for several workshops.

Care and Separation Unit (CSU)

Dedicated administrative resources have now been put in place and the Rule 45 procedure reinstated to appropriately manage prisoners who refuse to engage with the regime and self-isolate. HMP The Mount now work with Belong London who specialise in conflict resolution and restorative justice. Any prisoners detained in the CSU are triaged by Belong London who assess if there is a need for one of their interventions to help reintegration. Additionally, all prisoners held under the Good Order and Discipline protocol (GOOD) are discussed at the weekly Violence Prevention Forum regarding their possible reintegration and what steps are required to achieve this.