



Ms Sandra Mooney
Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP/YOI Bronzefield, Woodthorpe Road
Ashford, Middlesex
TW15 3JZ

8 December 2017

**HMP/YOI BRONZEFIELD: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 AUGUST 2016 – 31 JULY 2017**

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

I note the Board's request that consideration be given to the effectiveness of the Offender Rehabilitation Act (ORA) 2014. The ORA introduced for the first time the requirement for offenders sentenced to less than 12 months to be released on licence and subject to probation supervision. This was an important measure to tackle the unacceptably high levels of re-offending among this group of offenders who previously were released with no supervision or support. Failure to comply with licence conditions can, of course, lead to recall to custody.

I recognise the particular impact this has had on women offenders because they tend to receive shorter sentences, so following the ORA there was an increase in the number of women offenders being recalled. The Ministry of Justice does not yet have the evidence on whether the ORA has reduced re-offending by offenders sentenced to less than 12 months, therefore, at this time I cannot comment on whether the ORA has achieved its intended objective to better rehabilitate offenders on short sentences.

I share your concern, however, about the impact that short periods of recall can have on efforts to rehabilitate offenders under licence supervision and the effect it can have on things like accommodation, mental health and families. I am clear that recall should be used where there is a need to protect the public from further offending and not for what are sometimes described as 'administrative breaches'. We are, therefore, pursuing measures to help ensure that probation (the National Probation Service (NPS) and Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs)) are given the tools and support they need to keep as many offenders as possible on licence in the community and that recall is focused where it is necessary for public protection. We will continue to explore ways to make sure that recall is used appropriately and proportionately and does not unnecessarily disrupt the effective rehabilitation of offenders on licence, while continuing to play its important role in protecting the public from harm.

I recognise the Board's repeated concerns about making accommodation available for women offenders on release who have no fixed abode. We acknowledge there is still a challenge for women returning to London, with a shortage of available and affordable housing. For this reason, there is now close working between the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), London CRC and the NPS, and directly between the CRC and HMP/YOI Bronzefield, to improve housing outcomes for this group of women.

These issues were discussed in detail at the recent Women Offender Strategy Board chaired by MOPAC, and a number of joint working initiatives were agreed to better understand the key data and information available on housing issues for women offenders.

I am also pleased to note that, as part of the London CRC contract there is currently a Tenancy Support Worker one day a week and a No Fixed Abode (NFA) worker three days a week in HMP/YOI Bronzefield and HMP Downview. The use of Stonham Bail Accommodation Support Service provision, including for Home Detention Curfew, is also being encouraged particularly for those women with very complex needs. On a broader level we are introducing enhanced measures of resettlement which include the recording of employment and accommodation at the start and end of the sentence and at the end of the licence supervision period for any offender. We aim to include this in future publications, for both CRCs and the NPS, once data collection has bedded in.

I fully understand and share the Board's repeated concerns about prisoners with severe mental health problems. NHS England (NHSE) is working with partners across the criminal justice and immigration removal system to improve services for prisoners and detainees with mental health difficulties. NHSE has developed a comprehensive ten point plan that summarises all the work underway. The document, which will be published towards the end of the year, describes a number of initiatives that will improve the pathway to and from prison to mental health hospitals. It includes specific reference to the timely transfer and remission of patients and information about how this will be implemented and sustained.

It was encouraging to receive your comments that HMP/YOI Bronzefield has a positive and proactive approach to equality issues and has demonstrated a zero tolerance approach to all forms of discrimination. I was pleased to read about the positive achievements that have taken place during this reporting period, including the appointment of a new Catering Manager, improvements to the quality of record keeping for assessment care in custody documents and the introduction of body worn video cameras. It was also pleasing to read that the CRCs and the Offender Management Unit work well as a team, to the benefit of prisoners.

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/YOI Bronzefield.



DR PHILLIP LEE MP

**HMP/YOI BRONZEFIELD: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 AUGUST 2016 – 31 JULY 2017**

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Doubling-up of Cells

The current women's prison population pressures are resulting in the provider, Sodexo, being asked to provide additional prisoner places. Therefore, some women are sharing a cell originally designed for one occupant. The Director is currently reviewing a curtain design attached with magnets to the cell furniture that will provide improved privacy without compromising safety.