



Ministry
of Justice

Sam Gyimah MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary
of State for Justice

Mr Michael Shirley
Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Coldingley
Bisley, Woking
GU24 9EX

29th October 2017

Dear Michael,

**HMP COLDINGLEY: 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, especially as you were short of members during the reporting year.

I understand your concern about the allocation of disruptive prisoners from local prisons, often from Care and separation Units. The allocation of prisoners into HMP Coldingley follows pathways designed to serve the national population and it is not currently possible to restrict or tighten the acceptance of certain prisoners. Sending prisons have been made aware of the establishment's allocation criteria and if prisoners are being sent outside of this criteria, staff at HMP Coldingley will take this up with the respective prison and possibly arrange for the prisoners to be returned. Although segregated prisoners should be managed back to normal location as soon as safe and practicable to do so, in some cases this may not be possible and the best recourse is for the prisoner to be transferred to another prison. Prisoners who have been segregated for their own protection (such as debt related issues) may believe that remaining in segregation is the safest place for them to serve their sentence and therefore likely to resist the efforts of staff to reintegrate, and may misbehave in order to remain in the segregation unit.

It is acknowledged that good inter personal relationships are fundamental to a well-run prison. Under the new Offender Management model, we will ensure that every prisoner has a dedicated officer who can engage with them one-to-one. These dedicated officers will have a caseload of six prisoners and will act as mentors for their prisoners. They will listen out for problems, support changes in attitudes and behaviour, and defuse tension and frustration. This one-to-one support from a dedicated officer is at the heart of prison reforms making sure that prisoners get the help they need to quit drugs and get the education and skills needed to find work and leave crime behind.

I acknowledge the Board's concerns about prisoners serving sentences for imprisonment for public protection (IPP). There are no current plans to make use of the power in Section 128 of the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO Act), which allows the Secretary of State to change the Parole Board's release test for IPP prisoners. However, I am pleased to inform you that the statutory Parole Board rules have been revised so that, since November 2016, parole panels can release IPP prisoners without progressing to an oral hearing, if it is safe to do so.

Further to my response to the Board last year, HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is focused on giving IPP prisoners the support, opportunities and motivation they need to progress more quickly when they are reviewed by the Parole Board so that they have the best possible prospect for securing release.

HMPPS and the Parole Board have implemented a joint action plan, the purpose of which is to deliver further improvements and efficiencies in the effort to help IPP prisoners' progress towards release. HMPPS have also recently completed a pilot on a new approach to casework, to augment and enhance existing case progression activity specifically for IPP prisoners. This has facilitated closer working with the Parole Board for the more complex cases, to ensure that parole hearings happen on time and with good quality, current risk assessments and reports. HMPPS is now embedding the lessons of the pilot into all its casework processes.

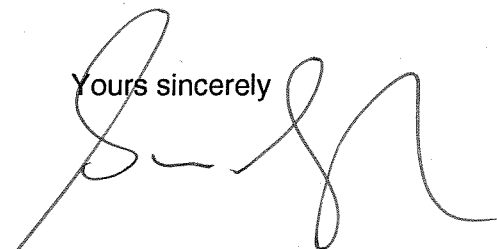
During 2016 /17, 46% of all IPP prisoners considered by the Parole Board were released and 24% recommended for a move to open conditions. Less than a third of cases had a negative outcome. You will be interested to know that the IPP population in prisons was 3,353 at the end of June 2017. This is reduced from 3,528 at the end of March 2017 and 3,683 at the end of December 2016. I hope to assure you that this group continues to achieve release in high numbers, with 576 first time IPP releases in 2016, the highest figure since the sentence was introduced.

I want to assure you that we take your annual reports very seriously and I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your positive feedback particularly for recognising the valuable role of a prison officer and that HMP Coldingley has a great deal to offer prisoners to develop their education, new work skills through high quality workshops and positively prepare for their release into the community. I am pleased that resettlement outcomes are good and a more stable regime is now in place.

I note that positive steps have been taken to assist prisoners with an addiction and I am aware of the ongoing problem caused by the availability of illicit drugs, HMPPS comments in response to this issue and the other issues 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 Coldingley.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sam Gyimah', written over the 'Yours sincerely' text.

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. Work on producing a new prisoners' property framework was delayed so that it could take 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 is feeding into the prisoners' property review. HMPPS now expects to publish the new framework early next year. In addition, the Ministry of Justice Digital Team and HMPPS are looking at the costs and feasibility of digitising the management of prisoners' property. This project is in the initial stages of consultation.

Drugs

HMPPS continues to implement a range of supply and demand reduction measures to address both the availability and use of such harmful substances. This is based on a multi-agency approach working closely with health partners and law enforcement agencies.

We have also introduced new intelligence units in HMPPS which are working with establishments and law enforcement partners to develop intelligence on individuals and organised crime groups linked to the supply of drugs in prisons. To deter and disrupt the use of dangerous drugs, we are the first jurisdiction in the world to have developed a drug test for psychoactive substances which as of September 2016 was available in all prisons. We continue to work with our contracted laboratory to analyse data to ensure we are testing for the most commonly misused substances. In addition, we are currently looking at the effectiveness and feasibility of the use of body scanner technology (to detect items secreted internally or held on the body) to complement existing searching methods.

Following the introduction of the Psychoactive Substances Act (PSA) in May 2016, there has been a number of successful convictions for possession in a custodial setting, including punishments of 14 months imprisonment. In addition to the PSA, the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 was amended in December 2016 to make all third generation synthetic cannabinoids (a group of psychoactive substances commonly found in prisons) a Class B drug. The amendment to the Act provides another powerful tool to charge those found in possession of psychoactive substances and carries a heftier maximum sentence of 10 years' imprisonment.

Drug treatment also has a very important role to play in tackling the problem. Substance misuse services are commissioned through NHS England to provide a range of services. Alongside these treatments, HMPPS is working closely with health partners to provide information, guidance and support to prisoners, visitors and staff on the impact and damaging consequences of drugs.

Telephone Contact with Independent Monitoring Board (IMB)

The Duty Governor locating any prisoner in the Care and Separation Unit is now tasked with the responsibility of contacting the IMB when certain events occur in the prison and matters will be discussed at each briefing.

Releases on Home Detention Curfew (HDC)

Although delays are sometimes not the fault of the prison (as reliance is on external agency submitting reports), a new recording system has been introduced at HMP Coldingley in order to accurately reflect the shortfalls and forecast potential HDC releases earlier on.