



Ministry  
of Justice

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

Mr Eddie Doyle  
Chair of the Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Risley  
Warrington Road  
Risley  
Warrington  
Cheshire  
WA3 6BP

15 November 2017

Dear Eddie,

**HMP RISLEY: 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 at a time when the Board have been operating at a significantly reduced complement of members.

I understand the Board's concerns regarding staffing levels and the subsequent impact on prison operations including the movement of prisoners. As the Board may be aware, we are investing £100 million to increase the number of prison officers across the estate by 2,500 to deliver new ways of working in public sector prisons. These additional front line staff will help drive forward our reforms to reduce violence, improve standards, and increase the staff to prisoner ratio. HMP Risley will be getting a share of these additional staff and we are also working with governors to help them retain their experienced staff.

As at June 2017 HMP Risley had 202 Full Time Equivalent Prison Officers, an increase from 192 in October 2016. Although this is not a large increase, it will nevertheless help alleviate the issues highlighted by the Board and I am pleased further job offers have been made to candidates. Additionally the roll out of the new Offender Management in Custody model later this year will give the establishment the opportunity to recruit further staff and rearrange its resources accordingly including minimising the need for redeployment of Offender Management staff.

I am pleased to note the Board's findings that prisoners receive a comprehensive interview about their resettlement needs prior to their release. We also acknowledge the importance of co-operation between partner agencies in this process, as the Board indicates, and expect prison staff and internal and external probation staff to work closely to achieve this.

The Board may be aware that the department conducted an internal review of the probation system. My written statement to Parliament on 19 July 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 Community Rehabilitation Company 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 other 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 comments in response to other issues raised in your report are set out in the attached annex.

Aside from the concerns raised, it was encouraging to receive your comments about the safe environment that exists at HMP Risley, the swiftness with which graffiti and damages are dealt with in the Care & Separation Unit, and the generally positive and complimentary comments made by prisoners regarding healthcare.

It was also pleasing to note the Board's comments on the success of the Equality meetings which has resulted in fewer complaints from prisoners, and that prisoners' feel the quality of education provided is good and can improve their employment prospects. I also understand a new education curriculum is about to be introduced to build on softer skills, including art and other vocational workshops.

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 Risley.

Yours sincerely



**SAM GYIMAH MP**

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

**Care and Separation Unit (CSU)**

Prisoners with mental health issues are only held in the Care and Separation Unit (CSU) if there are no alternatives or safer places to accommodate them. The CSU has seen an increase in dedicated staff and benefits from the oversight of a dedicated Safer Custody department. A pro-active mental health team from Greater Manchester West Mental Health Trust provides a daily service including a regular psychiatric service (twice weekly) and other services such as a Learning Difficulties specialist.

Additionally HMP Risley are currently considering commissioning a re-integration style unit for the most vulnerable men providing an alternative and more therapeutic regime to accommodate men in crisis or those who are struggling with the normal regime and would otherwise find themselves in segregation. Although a considerable amount of work will be needed to make this happen and ensure it does not become a vehicle to segregation, work on the project has now commenced.

**Drugs and Mobile Phones**

HMPPS takes seriously the ongoing challenges that psychoactive substances and other illicit drugs pose to our establishments and we continue 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.

Prisons have at their disposal a range of security measures to reduce drugs being smuggled into prisons including physical searching, the use of x-ray machines, CCTV surveillance cameras, intelligence-led searches and drug detection dogs. 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 committed to exploring new technology and are currently looking at the effectiveness and feasibility of the use of body scanner technology (which can 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 have 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.

HMPPS acknowledges that the number of mobile phones and SIM cards seized remains too high and is committed to tackling the threat posed by mobile phones in prisons. Measures are in place to detect mobiles in our prisons, however we are looking at new ways of finding and blocking them. HMPPS has invested £2m in prisons to provide them with modern technology to support the detection of illicit mobile phones. Every prison in England and Wales has been equipped with portable detection poles which can be deployed at fixed points such as in reception, and extra portable signal detectors to use on wings to support searches. We are also due to commence a procurement exercise for updated portable blockers, which will be placed on the procurement catalogue for prisons to purchase from local budgets.

### **Drugs Dogs**

Safer Custody funding has allowed HMP Risley to purchase their own drug dog which is now nearing the end of its training and accreditation. This will enable the prison to target areas more expediently and has already resulted in noticeable changes in prisoner behaviour. The North West Area Search Team also regularly assist with planned operations including intelligence led searches and with visits.