



Ministry  
of Justice

**Alex Chalk MP**  
Parliamentary Under-Secretary  
of State for Justice

██████████  
Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP/YOI Drake Hall  
Eccleshall  
Staffordshire  
ST21 6LQ

**MoJ Ref:** SUB 86747

6 April 2021

Dear ██████████,

**HMP/YOI DRAKE HALL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 NOVEMBER 2019 – 31 OCTOBER 2020**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 October 2020. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work in capturing these helpful observations, particularly as you continue to be short of Board members and the Covid-19 pandemic impacted on your ability to gather information.

I understand the Board's ongoing concern about the residential accommodation on Richmond and Plymouth units. Since the previous refurbishments undertaken in 2019, improvements have continued during the 2020/21 financial year. Site wide residential kitchenette refurbishments have taken place, as have locally funded repairs to the external fabric cladding of Plymouth and Richmond. Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic HMP/YOI Drake Hall has also continued to maintain basic standards, keeping units clean and well ventilated as a priority. However, it is acknowledged that Plymouth and Richmond should ideally be replaced with more suitable accommodation and in August 2020 HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) set out in its action plan response to do so following HM Inspectorate of Prisons inspection visit. This confirmed that the replacement would be subject to funding, as well as being dependent upon the strategic review of the women's estate. Whilst funding is not available yet to replace existing places such as Plymouth and Richmond, as well as the boiler house and library roof at HMP/YOI Drake Hall, these remain in the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) Estates project pipeline for the future.

It is recognised that the backlog of maintenance within the prison estate remains a concern and this is why £156 million has been committed during 2020/21 to address the most immediate issues across the prison estate, targeting fire safety and other critical systems, worn out boilers and electrical systems, and refurbishing some cells, showers and serveries. The recent spending review also provided a total of £315m in capital funding in 2021/22 which will allow HMPPS to invest further in improving the condition of the existing prison estate. In the meantime, HMP/YOI Drake Hall and HMPPS Prison Maintenance Group are continuing to do its best to maintain the existing buildings to a reasonable standard and it is appreciated that the Board have recognised the work locally to make improvements. This will continue through routine maintenance, prompt reactive repairs, as well as planned painting and general decoration supplemented by prisoners. Various window replacements are also planned for the 2021/22 financial year as well additional work to further improve fire safety. However, the bids to undertake site wide residential shower and toilet refurbishments have so far been unsuccessful.

In addition, it is acknowledged that further investment is needed in the women's prison estate to provide better conditions that support effective rehabilitation and meet the projected rise in the prison population. While custody should remain the last resort for women, plans have been announced to deliver up to 500 additional places in existing prisons. In the event that these additional places are no longer required, this will enable HMPPS to close older, poorer quality capacity in parts of the women's estate which is an established aim of the custodial element of the Female Offender Strategy. HMPPS has also begun looking at what changes may be needed and is developing long-term plans for the women's custodial estate to ensure it is fit for purpose. Plans will be set out in summer 2021 and stakeholders will be invited to feed in to these plans as they are developed.

Despite your concerns, it was reassuring to receive your comments that the prison is effectively managed and provides a safe environment. I was pleased to read that the prison has positively supported the women in their care through the Covid-19 pandemic via a range of initiatives, with women continuing to be treated decently and with humanity. It was encouraging to note the positive cooperation of women with the restricted regimes and their messages of thanks to staff for supporting and keeping them safe. I too am grateful for the hard work and commitment of everyone working at the prison throughout this difficult time. I was also encouraged that the equalities team has continued to function well, raising awareness through events to ensure protected characteristics are respected.

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. 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 Drake Hall.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Chalk'.

**ALEX CHALK MP**

## HMP/YOI DRAKE HALL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 NOVEMBER 2019 – 31 OCTOBER 2020

### HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

#### **Prisoners' Property**

Further to the update provided in June 2020, following a pause in the development of the new Prisoners' Property Policy Framework project due to Covid-19, a meeting with IMB representatives took place in August 2020. The feedback received from those IMB members were considered alongside the comments which were received from other stakeholders and subsequent operational engagement. The draft framework has now been shared with some key stakeholders, including the IMB representatives that were previously consulted, and this will be followed by wider consultation shortly.

It is encouraging that the number of applications about the loss of property on transfer to HMP/YOI Drake Hall has reduced since the last reporting period from 13 to just four. The PECS 4 Generation contract also began during August 2020 which includes a new vehicle fleet with an increased capacity to facilitate an additional half bag of property for consumables to the limit of 7.5kg. As previously advised, HMPPS is also continuing to take steps to ensure a consistent approach when prison staff forward on any excess items to prisoners at their new establishment after a transfer has taken place.

#### **Healthcare Accommodation**

Following on from last year's response, a bid was submitted to MoJ estates for funding for a bespoke Mental Health building, but this unfortunately was unsuccessful and there has also been no change to the capacity within the existing infrastructure to accommodate increased mental health provision. However, a further bid has been resubmitted by the HMPPS Service Delivery Manager for the forthcoming financial year for consideration which has the full support of the Governor. Despite the concern, it is encouraging that the healthcare needs of women at HMP/YOI Drake Hall are well met and that an increased mental health staff will allow for greater provision in the future.

#### **Resettlement**

As the Minister indicated earlier, the MoJ and HMPPS remain committed to improving resettlement opportunities for all women. The MoJ Female Offender Strategy published in June 2018 launched an ambitious programme of work to improve these outcomes and make society safer by tackling the underlying causes of offending and reoffending. The announced plans to deliver additional places will increase the resettlement opportunities for women by providing greater access to open conditions. It will also provide valuable modern, purpose-built accommodation within the closed estate to improve the custodial experience for women and their resettlement needs.

In the meantime, it is important that the capacity within the women's estate is used effectively to serve the courts and HMP/YOI Drake Hall will work with any women sent to them to provide good rehabilitative outcomes. Despite the impact that short sentences can have on the rehabilitation of women, it is acknowledged that prisons can provide greater benefits to women who have longer left to serve due to staff having a longer period in which to be able to assist them with resettlement support. However, this year has been challenging with the prison's capacity reduced to allow a Positive Unit and Reverse Cohort Unit to operate. In addition, the prison was unable to accept transfers for a period of time due to the Covid-19 pandemic as guided by Public Health England. It remains the case that prison offender managers continue to determine the point at which a woman should move based on their individual circumstances. However, HMP/YOI Drake Hall will also continue to work closely with Population

Management Unit at HMPPS headquarters to identify suitable women for allocation to ensure that the prisons population can be maintained at the agreed capacity.

**Offender Management in Custody (OMiC)**

Agreement to proceed with implementation of Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) in the women's estate was announced on 19 October 2020, along with the men's open estate. Implementation of OMiC in the women's estate is planned to commence on 30 April 2021 which will greatly improve the way HMPPS support and case manage women through their sentence. The OMiC model for women is bespoke and reflects the evidence around the differences of rehabilitating and reducing the likelihood of re-offending for this group, as well as recognising the different challenges and opportunities in the women's estate.