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Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP East Sutton Park
Sutton Valence
Maidstone
ME17 3DF

MoJ Ref: SUB 85723

1 March 2021

Dear ██████████,

**HMP EAST SUTTON PARK: 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, especially as the Covid-19 pandemic impacted on your ability to gather information.

I understand the Board's ongoing concern about the progression of women from closed to open prisons, such as HMP East Sutton Park with enough time left to serve to gain the most from resettlement opportunities. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and HM Prison and Probation Service (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.

HMPPS acknowledges that open prisons, such as HMP East Sutton Park 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. It is important that the capacity within the women's estate is used effectively to serve the courts and there is clearly a balance to be struck between allocating women to HMP East Sutton Park and holding them closer to home to maintain family ties and deliver effective resettlement. However, the impact that short sentences can have on the rehabilitation of women prisoners is also recognised. Therefore, there is no criteria setting out a minimum amount of time that a woman must have left to serve in order to transfer to HMP East Sutton Park. In addition, national restrictions on transfers currently remain in place to minimise the Covid-19 virus spreading and to protect those that work and reside in prisons.

As previously indicated in my response to last year's annual report, prison offender managers continue to determine the point at which a woman should move based on their individual circumstances. Implementation of Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) in the women's estate is planned to commence in April 2021 which will greatly improve the way HMPPS support and case manage women through their sentence. All closed women's prisons are also aware of the regime, facilities and opportunities available at HMP East Sutton Park and the prison continues to work closely with other women's prisons and Population Management Unit at HMPPS headquarters to identify suitable women for allocation.

Despite your concerns, it was pleasing to receive your comments that those women that are allocated to HMP East Sutton Park are well prepared for release and are encouraged to make the most of their time in custody. It was reassuring to note that the prison is well run and provides a safe environment, where women are fairly treated and have good relationships with prison staff. I was encouraged to read about the initiatives and festival celebrations, such as Black History Month to develop cultural awareness. It was interesting to read about the work opportunities in the farm and gardens, as well as the farm shop which supplies produce to the local community. I was also pleased to note that the new pods, opening of the refurbished flats and the new disabled bathroom in the main house have provided the women with greater independent living.

I note you have raised a local issue of concern in your report about Covid-19 which the Governor will continue to keep you aware of as work continues.

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 East Sutton Park.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lucy Frazer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

LUCY FRAZER QC MP