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Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Lancaster Farms  
Stone Row Head, Off Quernmore Road  
Lancaster  
LA1 3QZ

**Moj ref:** SUB 90183

16 August 2021

Dear ████████,

**HMP LANCASTER FARMS: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 February 2020 – 31 January 2021**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 January 2021. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work in capturing these helpful observations during what has been an unprecedented period and as you continued to operate with a reduced complement of Board members. I was saddened to hear there was one death in custody during the reporting year as a direct consequence of the pandemic. Every death is a tragedy and any recommendations from the Prison and Probation Ombudsman are always taken seriously.

Throughout the pandemic HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) has been capturing and sharing lessons learned and we continue to gather and share a range of information, including feedback from scrutiny bodies, staff, those in our care and the voluntary sector. We are feeding learning into prison safety and wellbeing initiatives, regime redesign, and planning and ongoing mitigations for prisoners. Prisons are also using lessons learned from the pandemic to adapt provision, reinforce fair and decent behaviours, and to show visible leadership.

HMPPS' Scrutiny and Intelligence Unit also routinely reviews external scrutiny and internal assurance reports to draw out good practice and themes which are communicated to prisons and more widely across HMPPS. They also identify where lessons could be learned or implemented more effectively. Good practice and the areas requiring improvement are reported each month to the Prison Performance Committee to further ensure best practices and lessons learned are maintained among prisons. This covers all aspects of HMPPS' response to the pandemic including in-cell education, secure video calling, personal protective equipment and testing and other infection reduction measures. My letter to Dame Anne Owers details much of HMPPS' pandemic response to date and is available from the IMB Secretariat.

Further to last year's response regarding self-harm, I understand the Board's ongoing concerns particularly around those who frequently harm themselves. Revised and improved Introduction to Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention (SASH) training has been rolled out for new and existing staff. Additionally, HMPPS has developed new safety training due to be launched soon and is developing an enhanced mental health training package for staff supporting complex individuals. This will include the impact of learning disability or autism, brain injury, substance misuse and trauma for on mental health.

Following the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on the delivery of key work, HMPPS is now supporting establishments to resume regular key work sessions across the estate. This gives staff dedicated time to provide support to individual prisoners and build effective relationships with those in our care. HMPPS has recently rolled-out a revised version of the Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) case management system used in prisons to support people at risk of suicide and self-harm. This should provide a better framework for supporting those at risk of self-harm through a more tailored and multi-disciplinary support model that focuses on the needs of the individual.

Other initiatives include the Wellbeing Plan that was mentioned in last years' response. This provides ideas for in-cell activities aimed at improving wellbeing including mindfulness and physical exercises. Our partnership with the Samaritans continues and we have committed to awarding a grant of £500k annually that supports the Listeners scheme through which selected prisoners are trained to provide emotional support to their fellow prisoners. During the pandemic we have worked hard to maintain the Listener service wherever infection control measures permit, and to provide access to Samaritans by phone when face-to-face interactions with Listeners are not possible. We have also funded Samaritans to develop a postvention support service (the actions taken to support the community/family/persons after someone dies by suicide), providing additional help and guidance to prisons in the period following a self-inflicted death. This has been successfully piloted and we are now developing plans for national roll out in 2021-22.

NHS England has supported a review of mental health delivery at the prison by the current provider. The review recommended the implementation of enhancements to the service, including new models of care, enhanced staffing and additional resources. These recommendations have been approved, and the provider will move forward with the enhancements outlined. NHS England will continue to monitor the development of mental health services at HMP Lancaster Farms as plans are implemented.

Although it has been a very challenging reporting period for everyone concerned, it was encouraging to receive your comments about a member of the nursing staff being awarded the Florence Nightingale Nurse of the Year award for 2020; the excellent work of the education department with 20 pieces of work submitted to the NOVUS exhibition at the Liverpool Tate Gallery; and continued programme of maintenance including cell redecoration and replacement of flooring.

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 Lancaster Farms.

Yours sincerely,

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

**ALEX CHALK MP**

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

**Intra-Prison Transfers**

HMPPS understands the Board's concerns around transferring prisoners between prisons on Fridays. The establishment works closely with HMPPS' Population Management Unit at Headquarters to schedule intra-prison transfers to be received midweek and Friday's are not routinely days on which transfers are received. However, population pressures leading into a weekend at local prisons in the North West, which serve the courts, can result in men being received at short notice. These transfers are not direct from the courts but due to overall capacity management in the Prison Group Directorate and such transfers are kept to a minimum and their time of arrival is dependent on the availability of vehicles from the contractor.

**Prisoners' Property**

Further to last years' response, the new framework is due to be published later this year. The framework will provide greater direction and standardisation on a national basis and has been designed with procedural justice at its core. It strengthens guidance on known problem areas such as volumetric control and seeks to ensure prisoners' property is managed efficiently, effectively, consistently and with care and respect.