



██████████  
Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Dovegate  
Uttoxeter  
Staffordshire  
ST14 8XR

**MoJ Ref:** SUB 88262

7 June 2021

Dear ████████,

**HMP DOVEGATE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 OCTOBER 2019 – 30 SEPTEMBER 2020**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 30 September 2020. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work in capturing these helpful observations, especially as you continued to be extremely short of Board members during the reporting year and the Covid-19 pandemic also impacted on your ability to gather information. I was saddened to hear there were three deaths in custody; every death is a tragedy and my officials take recommendations from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman very seriously.

It was encouraging to read the Board's recognition of the provision of additional resources to address homelessness during the pandemic. Accommodation is often the first step in an individual's resettlement journey and fundamental to public protection and health, which is why as part of our response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Justice secured £11.5 million to support individuals at risk of homelessness on their release from prison. This funding has provided up to 56 nights temporary accommodation per individual and supported their move on to permanent accommodation. Regional HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) Homelessness Prevention Teams (HPTs), set up to help find accommodation for those in prison upon release, have been highly successful in securing accommodation and in building new partnerships with local authorities and housing partners.

We are now building on the learning from the Covid-19 emergency scheme, using it in the development of our new Community Accommodation Service. This service will provide up to 12 weeks of transitional accommodation to prison leavers, initially in five regions but with the intention of rolling out nationally. Also under consideration is how best to integrate HPT's into the future landscape of probation to help build on the success to date.

At HMP Dovegate the in-house Community Rehabilitation Company continue to work with local organisations such as Supported Housing Service in Stafford. In addition, Creating Changes Housing in Stoke on Trent, operated jointly with Dawson Homes, is making a concerted effort to provide supported accommodation in Stoke on Trent. Several local authorities within the Midlands have been invited to make bidding applications through the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to provide additional funding for prison leavers to address accommodation and support needs. If successful, this funding will enable local authorities to appoint staff to specifically work with prison leavers and provide additional accommodation.

I appreciate your frustration on the progress to improve property handling within prisons. As mentioned in last year's response to the Board, the development of the new framework project is underway and following a pause due to Covid-19, a meeting with IMB representatives took place in August 2020. The feedback received from those members was considered alongside the comments received from other stakeholders and comments from subsequent operational engagement. HMPPS has now circulated the draft framework with internal and external stakeholders, including the IMB representatives previously consulted, for their comments.

I am pleased to note locally at HMP Dovegate there are now fewer complaints about property following internal transfers with most prisoners now able to pack their own property. For those prisoners moved due to security concerns, their cell is locked off immediately and any property cleared by two members of staff using individual property cards and the appropriate cell clearance form. Each prisoner's property card is available for them to view on the ATM (kiosk system).

The prison continues to work with Geoamey when prisoners transfer to other establishments. Any property remaining at HMP Dovegate, due to it being above the property allowance that can safely be carried by the transport provider, is forwarded to the receiving establishment by means of HMP Dovegate's own delivery transport rather than the postal service. This has improved the service and reduced the risk of items being lost in transit.

Digital improvements such as the electronic property cards in use at HMP Dovegate are being explored nationally but the nature of that work means that any digital changes are likely to be longer-term.

It was encouraging to receive your comments about the positive interactions between staff and prisoners, that staff have good knowledge of the prisoners in their care and the Key Worker system is working well. I was pleased to read measures put in place by the prison and healthcare team were effective in preventing a Covid-19 outbreak during the period of the report and understand Public Health England have complimented the prison and healthcare teams on their management of a subsequent outbreak, as the virus became more prevalent in the wider community.

I was also encouraged, despite the disruption by the pandemic, of the continuation of improvements to the fabric and general cleanliness of the prison, improvements to healthcare provision and the provision of prayers and religious services via Dovegate TV.

I note you have raised some local issues of concern in your report which the Director will continue to keep you aware of as work continues. HMPPS have provided some comments in response to your repeated concerns on race disparity and the use of body-worn cameras as 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 Dovegate.

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**

**Race disparity in the Care and Separation Unit (CSU)**

A review carried out by the Psychology Department revealed that whilst information from the previous 12 months suggested no real concerns about disparity, it was felt important to establish if this perception was present among the residents and to better understand this. As noted by the Board, critical examination of diversity and disparity figures now takes place in the monthly Diversity Equality Action Team (DEAT) meeting and prior to the pandemic, monthly meetings for the Lammy Review and Race Forums were being held so that any discrimination/disparity in treatment could be discussed and resolution sought.

The IMB are invited to attend the Segregation Monitoring and Review Group (SMARG) meeting which is attended by the Equalities Manager and discusses statistics in relation to the population in the CSU.

**Availability of body-worn cameras (BWCs)**

Serco purchased 100 new BWCs which prior to issue required all staff to receive training on the operation and downloading of footage. This requirement was delayed slightly due to the constraints of Covid-19 but as we enter the Recovery Phase this has now been addressed. There are now an average 70 BWCs worn per shift with segregation seen as a priority location. The BWCs have been well received by staff who have already reported that they work well as a de-escalation tool during challenging events resulting in less confrontation.