



[REDACTED]
Joint Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP High Down
Sutton
SM2 5PJ

Moj ref: SUB 90181

18 August 2021

Dear [REDACTED],

**HMP HIGH DOWN: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 JANUARY 2020 – 31 DECEMBER 2020**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 December 2020 and undertaking the role of Joint Chair. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work in capturing these helpful observations, especially as you were short of Board members. I was saddened to hear there were four deaths in custody; every death is a tragedy and my officials take recommendations from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman very seriously.

I acknowledge the Board's concern about the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on the mental health and well-being of prisoners, and on the ability to make progress in their sentences. I would like to reassure the Board that we have taken these issues seriously and, throughout the pandemic, these have remained our priority. A range of methods to meet the mental health needs of people in prison have been adopted. This includes the use of telephone consultations, digital technology so that psychiatrists were able to conduct assessments via video link and the development of a Covid-19 mental health screen with the International Committee of the Red Cross. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) Safety team is working to ensure that safety, including concerns for the potential rise in violence and self-harm, is at the forefront of the recovery plan. A range of products have been produced to support Governors in devising and implementing local safety and welfare plans designed to mitigate these risks. Furthermore, a work stream dedicated solely to wellbeing has been initiated and establishments are being supported to restart regular key work sessions in the closed estate. In addition to this, HMPPS continues to work closely with the Samaritans and has renewed the £500,000 grant for the Listener scheme for 2021-22.

As Covid-19 restrictions ease and prisons work towards the recovery road map, the Governor and her team will be considering how best to support the people in prison. I am pleased to announce that the healthcare provider has recently reintroduced psychology group work and Listeners are now supporting individuals held in segregation. Over the coming months more prisoners will be trained to be Listeners. Peer supporter roles have been introduced for Safety, Violence Reduction, Equalities (including support for older prisoners) and Mental Health, and these roles are currently being filled. NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE/I) rolled out telemedicine technology in prisons where appropriate, to enable healthcare providers to continue the pathway of care through remote consultation. The benefits of this technology are currently being evaluated by the University College London and this will inform further work on how this service supports people in prison.

Regarding sentence progression, the team at HMP High Down are tackling the backlog of offender assessment system reports with support from sessional workers and staff in other prisons. Despite the restrictions over 2020/21, 200 parole hearings have been completed during the past 12 months. The campaign to recruit into the current vacancies in the offender management unit will hopefully be completed by September 2021. Face-to-face contact has now resumed, and this will increase over the coming months.

On 26 June 2021 we saw the launch of the new Probation Service. As part of this unification, responsibility for the delivery of immediate resettlement needs and pre-release services previously carried out in prisons by the Community Rehabilitation Companies moved to Regional Probation Directors (RPDs) and to Commissioned Rehabilitative Service (CRS) providers commissioned by RPDs. This will now mean a Head of Resettlement within all Probation regions will be responsible for overseeing the Resettlement provision, including those services being delivered in prisons and they will be working with Heads of Reducing Reoffending. As part of significant long-term investment in the new Probation Service, from Spring 2022 additional dedicated time and resource will be provided to enable probation practitioners to deliver pre-release activities to all people leaving prison. The annex attached to this response covers information about the resettlement service.

Turning to the Board's repeated concerns about those that remain in prison serving indeterminate sentences of Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP). I wish to reassure the Board that HMPPS is doing all it can to support their progression and reduce risk to the public. This is not a simple task, as part of the psychology work stream consultancy/case file reviews are conducted on all priority IPP prisoners in custody where they have failed to make any progress after two or more post-tariff parole hearings. This cohort has been expanded to include all short tariff prisoners (less than two years), irrespective of previous hearing outcomes. These reviews reinvigorate cases that are not progressing and, where necessary, with consultation, practitioners agree and identify appropriate progression pathways.

There are currently 69 Lifers / IPP prisoners located at HMP High Down. Individualised plans are developed based on their identified needs and risks. These prisoners can be prioritised for a transfer to open conditions to access a progression opportunity, providing they meet the criteria. Across the custodial estate, the population of unreleased prisoners serving IPP sentences was 1,722 at the end of June 2021, reduced from 1,969 at the end of June 2020.

Turning to some positive comments captured in your report, it was encouraging to hear that prisoners found staff to be helpful and supportive during the pandemic. I was pleased to read that despite the challenges brought about by Covid-19, prisoners were actively involved in making personal protective equipment for NHS staff and a range of Diversity and Inclusion awareness events were held at the prison. Likewise, I applaud the commitment and dedication of staff who went the extra mile during unprecedented times.

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 High Down.

Yours sincerely,



ALEX CHALK MP

HMP HIGH DOWN: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JANUARY 2020 – 31 DECEMBER 2020

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Body Worn Video Cameras (BWVCs)

The next generation of BWVCs will be rolled out early 2022 which will see a substantial uplift for public sector prisons. The aim is to equip each establishment with a sufficient supply of BWVCs for every prison officer on duty (Bands 3 – 5 and to include a surplus for other roles). The cameras will have a pre-record facility to constantly record and overwrite footage, which is saved once the recording function on the camera is activated. This helps to capture the build-up of spontaneous incidents and to record evidence. A review of the current BWVC Prison Service Instruction 04/2017 is being undertaken to formulate a new policy framework that reflects the new best practice.

HMP High Down currently has a reasonable amount of BWVCs to equip the prison officers with, and they are regularly reminded to wear and activate them. Compliance is being monitored weekly at the Use of Force Development meeting.

Mental Health Transfers

A senior prison manager and senior healthcare manager meet weekly to review each person located in the healthcare unit to ensure relevant actions are undertaken for each individual and the referral waiting time to a secure mental health hospital is monitored.

Nationally, due to positive Covid-19 cases, throughout 2020 and the early part of 2021 there have been delays in admission to secure mental health hospitals which NHSE/I are continuing to address as part of the Restoration and Recovery of services across the healthcare sector.

In terms of improving efficiency across the pathway for transfers and remissions, new performance metrics will be implemented during 2021-22 to monitor the secure hospital process. The strategic direction continues to be the maintenance of existing hospital bed capacity, not an increase, albeit with improved geographical distribution. More broadly, the Reforming the Mental Health Act White Paper published on 13 January 2021 builds on recommendations made by Professor Sir Simon Wessely's Independent Review in 2018 and provides a commitment to introduce a statutory time limit of 28 days for the transfer process and a new independent role to manage the transfer process. Additionally, the Transfer and Remission of Adult Prisoners Guidance published on 10 June 2021 provides more detail which will reduce the length of time prisoners have to wait for treatment.

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/guidancefor-the-transfer-and-remission-of-adult-prisoners-andimmigration-removal-centre-detainees-under-themental-health-act-1983/>

Progressive Transfer Backlog

Transfer requirements are not made by the escort contractor(s). The contractor is tasked with the collection and delivery of Inter Prison Transfers (IPT). All IPT bookings are made between the Population Management team and the prison through the booking system.

Prisoners categorised as a category C are therefore correctly located at High Down. When prisoners are categorised as category D, they are added to a waiting list for a suitable transfer to another establishment. The number of transfers to open prisons is expected to increase in the coming months.

Recategorisation

The HMPPS Reconfiguration Project is a whole-system approach across the adult male prison estate. It aims to rebalance existing capacity and planning for the best use of new-build capacity (as it comes online) to ensure there is a sufficient supply of suitable prison places to meet demand. Over time, reconfiguration will reduce local reception prison places and increase much-needed category B training places. It will also help to smooth transition from prison to the community by increasing category C capacity and access to resettlement places. HMPPS remains absolutely committed to ensuring reconfiguration takes place safely and stability of the prison estate remains a priority. No prison will re-role until it is safe and operationally possible. As part of this, the Kirkham unit funded by reconfiguration will provide the final additional activity places. The Governor and all stakeholders are involved in the readiness processes to ensure that the courts currently serving HMP High Down only transfer prisoners to HMP Wandsworth.

The Governor and her staff are committed to successfully transitioning HMP High Down to a category C training/resettlement establishment and is supported by a Reconfiguration Lead. As the Board is aware, approximately 79% of the prisoner population at HMP High Down are category C. Upon the easing of restrictions, the regime for the category C population will be broadly similar to the regime of a reception/resettlement prison holding category B and C men, as is required of its current function. This will continue until the remaining serving courts are moved to HMP Wandsworth. When both prisons are ready and it is safe to do so, the regime in HMP High Down will start to move towards a 100% category C resettlement/training prison.

Purposeful Activity and Offending Behaviour Programmes (OBPs)

HMP High Down has moderate intensity offending behaviours programmes (OBP) team, although affected by the pandemic restrictions, in the future they would be in the position to increase places. It is worth noting that HMPPS reviews OBPs annually and other activity provided across the estate and seeks to adjust delivery to meet the identified needs of the population. Where additional needs are identified as part of the population reconfiguration HMPPS will look to consider options for further or move investment should there be sufficient need to deliver a particular accredited programme. Accredited programmes are designed for those with medium or higher risk of reoffending. Not everyone eligible is suitable for accredited OBP. Individuals identified at HMP High Down as requiring a programme that is not available locally will be considered against agreed prioritisation principles and identified for potential transfer to an appropriate specialist delivery site which will depend on the programme required.

There are currently insufficient work activity places to meet the population. The Governor and her team are looking at introducing new work and maximising existing activity places. The funded new workshop is anticipated to open in late 2022 and will provide approximately 90 additional activity places. HMP High Down is currently moving in a direction of part-time working for all men, to increase the number who can access activities. When prisoners are not working, they will be able access to in-cell activities. As the Covid-19 restrictions lessen, there will be increased allocation to activity places and larger group sizes for OBPs will be facilitated. Additionally, the re-role will see a decline in the population by 90, which will free up more space in terms of programme / activity opportunities.

Prisoners' Property

Nationally, following a pause in the development of the new Prisoners' Property policy framework 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 Secretariat and the IMB representatives previously consulted, and the comments received are being considered.

The framework is to be published later this year, which will provide greater direction, 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.

HMP High Down recognises that improvements in the management of property is needed. The Head of Operations is currently reviewing the process from the arrival of property in HMP High Down, through to the issuing of property, to ensure greater governance and accountability. A new process for the review of compensation claims for missing property will shortly be introduced at the prison, increasing the level of investigation required by a manager to resolve property issues in a timely manner. HMP High Down will also review its property policy to ensure it is in line with the new Prisoners' Property policy framework, once this is published. Additionally, HMP High Down will be looking at current procedures to ensure compliance with the national policy framework(s) and will continue to consider individual requests from convicted prisoners recognising there may be exceptional circumstances to be taken into consideration due to the current pandemic.

New Probation Service (continued)

Staff who were delivering the 'Through the Gate' services and were allocated to the Probation Service as part of unification will remain in the prison and continue to deliver the current services not available via Commissioned Rehabilitative Service (CRS) including un-convicted men and finance, benefit and debt services.

In the pre-release phase, CRS providers will deliver resettlement interventions to support obtaining accommodation and the transition from prison to community. These support sentence management activities are completed by the probation practitioner. The CRS service will be available to all individuals released from resettlement or non-resettlement prisons.