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Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP The Mount
Molyneaux Avenue
Bovingdon
Hemel Hempstead
Hertfordshire
HP3 0NZ

Moj ref: SUB 90258

19 August 2021

Dear ██████████,

**HMP THE MOUNT: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 MARCH 2020 – 28 FEBRUARY 2021**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 28 February 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.

Firstly, I would like to offer my condolences to the Board for the loss of former member ██████████ ██████████, ██████████. I was also saddened to hear there was one death in custody during the reporting year. Every death is a tragedy and any recommendations from the Prison and Probation Ombudsman is always taken seriously.

I note the Board's concerns about Offending Behaviour Programmes. As acknowledged by the Board, delivery of programmes was severely curtailed due to the pandemic. During the summer of 2020, Interventions Services developed the Alternative Delivery Format (ADF) which was approved by the Correctional Services Accreditation and Advice Panel. This allowed small group and one-to-one formats, including some remote delivery, to be used to deliver accredited programmes. Due to social distancing measures HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) has not been able to deliver programmes to their usual group sizes. Whilst the ADF model led to reduced volumes, it nevertheless allowed HMPPS to deliver programmes in the majority of prisons where risk assessments and safe systems of work permitted. HMPPS has been prioritising programme delivery based on prisoners approaching release or parole date.

For current allocation to programmes and delivery, HMPPS now has an emerging dataset of those prisoners who are fully assessed and waiting for a programme in custody. HMPPS is building up intelligence of those who are referred and awaiting assessment to better understand the demand, and this will inform evaluation work. I can assure the Board that the Ministry of Justice and HMPPS are committed to evaluating accredited offender behaviour programmes and have an ongoing programme of evaluation which includes studies to assess effectiveness. In January 2021 we published a reoffending impact evaluation for Resolve, which is a violence programme for medium risk men, and a copy of the report can be found on GOV.UK -

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/957855/RESOLVE_report.pdf.

Turning to the Board's concerns about prisoners with mental health problems, where a prisoner has a severe mental health need that cannot be treated in prison and warrants detention under the Mental Health Act, they should be transferred to a secure hospital. It is, however, recognised that across the country this can take too long, and was further exacerbated throughout 2020 and the early part of 2021 due to Covid-19 cases. NHSE&I are continuing to address this as part of the Restoration and Recovery of services across the healthcare sector. For the longer term, a White Paper titled Reforming the Mental Health Act, was published on 13 January 2021 providing a commitment to introduce a statutory time limit of 28 days for transfers to mental health hospitals from custody. A new independent role will also oversee the transfer process to help reduce unnecessary delays. In addition, NHS England and Improvement published new good practice guidance on 10 June 2021 which sets out the timeframe for completing the assessment, transfer and remission of individuals detained under the Mental Health Act in more detail - <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/guidance-for-the-transfer-and-remission-of-adult-prisoners-and-immigration-removal-centre-detainees-under-the-mental-health-act-1983/>

Locally at HMP The Mount, the change in healthcare provider during the reporting period did initially cause some issues, however, the prison and healthcare leadership teams have worked hard to address these as we come through the pandemic. The processes in place for identifying and referring prisoners are more effective now that the team has been embedded.

I appreciate the Board's continued concerns regarding prisoners serving indeterminate sentences (IPP). I would like to reassure you that HMPPS remains committed to doing all it can to support their progression and efforts to reduce their risk to the point where the Parole Board determines that they may be safely released. This commitment, by means of a bespoke and regularly refreshed action plan, has in recent years delivered a substantial reduction in the number of IPP prisoners who have never been released. That number stood at 1,722 at the end of June 2021, a reduction from 1,969 at the end of June 2020. This is very good progress considering that the population of unreleased prisoners serving IPP sentences was at its highest in 2012 with over 6,000. It is important to note that, as the number of IPP prisoners who have never been released continues to decrease, the proportion of those who remain in prison who committed more serious offences and whose cases are complex grows. These prisoners are still assessed as posing a high risk of committing further violent or sexual offences and have a complex set of risks and needs. These must be addressed before the Parole Board can consider release. This is not a simple task, and we continue to work with these individuals to offer them opportunities to reduce their identified risks.

Although the pandemic has had a significant effect, it was encouraging to receive your comments about the marked improvement of maintenance at the site and the development of in-cell learning packs by the education team which has been put forward as good practice to other establishments.

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 The Mount.

Yours sincerely,



ALEX CHALK MP

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Shower Facilities

Last year HMPPS allocated funding for two showers on Ellis and Lakes units to be refurbished, however, three have now been refurbished. This year, £150k (including VAT) has been allocated for shower refurbishments on A and D wings. This work has not yet started but all other showers have been deep cleaned as part of the Clean and Decent project and are now of a better standard than before. Shower deep cleans are completed by the prison's cleaning teams supervised by the Decency lead. New products have been introduced which have helped improve the condition of the shower facilities. The use of these new products is now part of the prison's cleaning routine.

Healthcare Provisioning

HMPPS acknowledges there were some difficulties experienced during the transition between providers and this was due to a number of factors. However, as mentioned above, the prison and healthcare leadership teams have worked hard to address the issues and the healthcare team has coped well with the pandemic and the vaccination programme.

All bidders for prison healthcare services are invited to receive feedback on their bids, and the NHS Commissioner also invites successful and unsuccessful bidders to provide feedback on the operation of the tender process. Service users are involved in the procurement of services and are able to influence the appointment of providers.