



██████████
Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Featherstone
New Road
Featherstone
Wolverhampton
WV10 7PU

MoJ Ref: SUB85676

25 February 2021

Dear ██████████,

**HMP FEATHERSTONE: 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 you were short of Board members during the reporting year. I was saddened to hear there was a death in custody; every death is a tragedy and my officials take recommendations from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman very seriously.

I was pleased to read that some major improvements have been made to the residential wings at HMP Featherstone, however, I note the Board's continued concerns that much of the accommodation is below standard. There has been an improvement in the service provided by Amey which has also resulted in a refocus on work related to safety and decency further supporting the ongoing Covid-19 situation. The Governor or Deputy Governor chair monthly Estates Planning meetings to prioritise and escalate identified work and maintain momentum. The appointment of a new Site Manager in 2020 has provided increased stability and improved stakeholder relationships. These improvements have resulted in HMP Featherstone being removed from the Performance Improvement Plan process that was in place at a regional level.

Consideration is being given to an expansion programme at HMP Featherstone. The options are yet to be confirmed but should this be given the go ahead, significant improvements to the infrastructure and existing fabric would be required to support any expansion. Extensive refurbishment of the showers in the Gym and those on House Unit 5 have commenced and will be completed before the end of the 2020/2021 financial year. Once completed the shower facilities on House Unit 5 will be comparable to the high standard of showers on House Unit 6. Refurbishment work on other house units have also been undertaken. The ventilation work was delayed due to the pandemic but is due to commence shortly and will be completed prior to the end of this financial year. Significant roofing repairs across the site have also been completed with further areas subject to bid approval for 2021/2022.

Work is also being undertaken to improve the control, efficiency and reliability of the outdated heating system. A programme of work has been undertaken in the kitchen to replace broken and/or aging equipment to bring this area up to current standards. The environment in the kitchen is much improved and the new Catering Manager will continue to drive up standards.

Due to ongoing concerns raised locally and through reviews conducted by the HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) National Contract Management Team about education provision, a Notice to Improve

the West Midlands lot, (which includes HMP Featherstone) was formally communicated in May 2020. Action plans to improve performance have been produced by Novus and the prison. This plan focuses on the quality and quantity of the Novus provision, with specific actions and targets for the recruitment and retention of staff, as well as the improvement of the quality of provision. These actions are reviewed both locally and regionally alongside the HMPPS National Quality and Contract Management Teams. Weekly meetings are held with the provider to discuss progress and all actions are scrutinised in detail, with three levels of sign off. In addition, monthly meetings are chaired by the Prison Group Director with attendance from the HMPPS Contract Management Team and Ministry of Justice Commercial colleagues, where there are further reviews of progress against the improvement plan.

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, we continue to work with Novus on the actions that are achievable despite local or national restrictions. The continued review of the action plan has had a positive impact on Novus' recruitment activity, with their staffing position moving from six vacancies (January 2020) to one vacancy (January 2021.) HMPPS will continue to monitor and push for improvements at both HMP Featherstone and in the West Midlands Lot.

The formal procurement process for all Prison Education Framework (PEF) providers was robust and thorough with Novus, the provider at HMP Featherstone, successfully bidding across various regional lots. The PEF contract itself, has three service levels included, which requires the provider to meet suitable levels of performance or face financial penalties. Service level 3, which is the Teacher Quality Management Plan (TQMP) requires that Governors sign off Novus performance on a quarterly basis. Monthly performance meetings with the use of the Curious Management Information System are used to monitor and challenge performance prior to sign off. During Contract Year 1 (April 19-March 20) HMP Featherstone did not approve the TQMP for three of the four quarters. Since the introduction of the Notice to Improve, and continued monitoring of performance, the prison has approved the TQMP for the first two quarters of Contract Year 2.


HMPPS takes a very pro-active role in managing the contract which is designed around a hybrid model that acknowledges the role that Governors have in holding the provider to account locally whilst the HMPPS Contract Team can ensure contractual obligations are met both by the provider and the establishment.

It was encouraging to receive your comments about the improvements that have been made at the prison. I was pleased to hear that there is a strong leadership and commitment to equality and diversity matters at HMP Featherstone, including celebration of important events and festivals during this difficult time.

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. I am sorry to hear of the problems experienced recruiting new members from under-represented groups. My team have forwarded your concerns to the IMB Secretariat who will respond to you directly.

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 Featherstone.

Yours sincerely,



LUCY FRAZER QC MP

HMP FEATHERSTONE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 NOVEMBER 2019 – 31 OCTOBER 2020

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Impact of Covid-19 on Rehabilitation

Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, HMPPS has drawn together available data, scrutiny and assurance reports, operational experience and service user perspectives from across the system, in order to learn from our responses towards Covid-19. This programme of work has been used to inform safety, wellbeing and stability, recovery, future delivery and reform decisions. HMPPS will also be undertaking a piece of work looking at how we improve future regimes across the estate through engagement with stakeholders including scrutiny bodies and third sector organisations, prisoners and staff at all levels.

Education

Prison education can reduce reoffending and change lives. Managing Covid-19 has had a major impact on delivery but HMPPS are ambitious to build back better and deliver a Prison Education Service that meets the complex needs of prisoners and delivers the right education, work experience and employment support to get many more prisoners job-ready on release. Over the next few weeks HMPPS will be doing significant work to prioritise actions that focus on getting the basics right for short-term recovery alongside more strategic work to deliver overall long-term ambitions and make the case for future investment (for example, an ambition to develop greater capability for digital delivery).

HMPPS will continue to work with the providers to see what more can be done to support and drive innovative practices. There is currently a pilot, funded through innovation monies, that is exploring the impact of interactive learning, on current education delivery.

Rehabilitative Interventions

HMPPS provides a range of opportunities for residents to engage in rehabilitative interventions to enable them to learn new skills to support change and reduce their risk of reoffending. Attendance on accredited programmes is one of the available pathways, as part of a wider rehabilitative offer, although not all residents will be suitable for accredited programmes or ready or willing to engage.

Usual delivery of accredited programmes has been heavily impacted by the pandemic. There was a pause in delivery from March 2020 following public health guidance. Alternative delivery formats have been developed and accredited by Correctional Services Accreditation and Advice Panel to enable provision to re-start safely in smaller groups and on a one-to-one basis and using remote access. However, to adhere to Covid-19 safe operating procedures this results in a lower volume of places than previously.

Programmes re-started throughout last Autumn and as part of the recovery work, HMPPS is carefully prioritising and targeting places to provide them to the eligible individuals who present the highest risk of reoffending and who are nearing release, as well as post tariff indeterminate sentence prisoners. Those eligible individuals who cannot access such work will be prioritised for delivery in the future, again based on risk of reoffending and release.

Key work

Key work in the male closed estate was suspended in March 2020 as extensive restrictions were introduced to manage the impact of Covid-19 in prisons. By the end of April 2020, many prisons had had a significant fall in absence rates, and it was considered appropriate to develop guidance for an adapted delivery model that adhered to the level 4 (lockdown) restricted regimes that were being delivered. Since 12 May 2020, prisons have been working to an Exceptional Delivery Model (EDM), seeking to deliver key

work to identified groups of priority prisoners where it was safe and possible to do so and weekly well-being checks to these groups where it is not.

As prisons moved out of full lock down, a revised version of the EDM was published on the 5 November 2020 to guide prisons on the high-level principles that must be incorporated into local plans for key work delivery. This version provides instruction and guidance to Governors on what will be expected under Level 3, with the aim to increase the delivery of key work where possible and move away from carrying out well-being checks.

HMI Prison has undertaken several scrutiny visits since March 2020 and a theme identified is how valued key work has been for prisoners and staff prior to lockdown in terms of feeling safe, feeling listened to and being able to progress through their sentence. This reinforces the importance of ensuring key work is reinstated across the male closed estate in line with the EDM.

With the further lockdown that commenced 5 January it is expected that all prisons will be operating at regime level 4. Therefore, all vulnerable and priority group prisoners will receive as a minimum a well-being check and, if resources and risk assessments allow, a key work session.