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

MoJ Ref: ADR 78569

29 May 2020

Dear ████████,

**HMP DOVEGATE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 OCTOBER 2018 – 30 SEPTEMBER 2019**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 30 September 2019. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work in capturing these helpful observations, especially as you continued to be short of Board members during the reporting year and as this resulted in some limited monitoring. I am also sorry to hear about your concerns with the IMB recruitment process, these have been forwarded to the IMB Secretariat who will respond to you directly on this matter.

I fully understand the Board's concerns about prisoners' property, the ageing prison population and those prisoners with mental health issues. It is unfortunate and regrettable that prisoners' property continues to be an issue. The development of the new Prisoners' Property Policy Framework is being informed by a project which was undertaken in summer 2019, involving stakeholders across HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) and the escort services. The project involved visiting 14 prisons, consultation with staff and prisoners, and engagement with external stakeholders such as the Independent Monitoring Board Secretariat and Prisons and Probation Ombudsman. Its purpose was to support the policy review and identify areas where immediate and more long-term changes may be required to improve operational practice. HMPPS are working closely with IMBs and other stakeholders to consult on proposed changes and shape the revised content ahead of wider consultation and publication. My officials tell me that HMPPS will agree with the IMB Secretariat when consultation can take place in the light of the impact of COVID-19.

The Prisoner Escort and Custody Service (PECS) takes steps to transport all property which falls within the agreed volumetric limits with prisoners when they transfer between establishments. A new fleet of vehicles is being provided through the PECS 4 Generation contract which starts in August 2020. These new vehicles will be able to transfer an additional half box of consumable items for each prisoner e.g. products purchased in the prison shop. In addition to this, HMPPS is considering what more can be done to encourage prisoners to send out or dispose of excess items to reduce the amount of their property that cannot transfer with them. Steps are also being taken to ensure a consistent approach when prisons forward on any excess items to prisoners at their new establishments after transfers have taken place.

Regarding the ageing population, the Ministry of Justice and HMPPS remains committed to developing effective responses to the needs of older prisoners. This includes the work to respond to the joint HM Inspectorate of Prisons and Care Quality Commission thematic report '*Social care in prisons in England and Wales*', as well as the production of the Model for Operational Delivery (MOD) for Older Prisoners. The MOD was designed to support Governors and Prison Directors in running efficient and effective

services, providing information and best practice examples on what distinct services might need to be considered and how any barriers to accessing these services for older prisoners might be overcome. The MOD will be refreshed during 2020 which will help to inform local commissioning decisions. It is also considered that prisoners should be managed based on their individual needs not solely based on their age, as it is important to ensure that these needs are catered for within the policy for prisoners with social care needs, and, in the long term, through replacing older, inefficient capacity with modern facilities.

In addition, ongoing work is enabling HMPPS to better predict and manage the allocation of older prisoners, and ensure the development of effective care pathways through the prison system. This should therefore provide an opportunity to develop adapted regimes in prisons with large populations of older people. Locally, I understand that HMP Dovegate makes every effort to meet the needs of these individuals and house them on the same wing, so that they can associate together. The prison has also created an age forum that meets regularly to discuss concerns and a social care lead is working in partnership with agencies to support the needs of the older population.

Turning to your concerns about mental health, NHS England Health and Justice Commissioners have been working with the Mental Health team in NHS England to improve the system for transfers and remissions of adult prisoners to mental health hospitals. New performance metrics have been developed by NHS England using the Health and Justice Indicators of Performance (HJIP) to monitor patients being assessed under the Mental Health Act (MHA). This enables Commissioners to track the assessment and waiting periods for transfer and therefore enables them to both identify prisons that are under pressure and then take action where necessary. Nationally, all providers are assessed for compliance with the service specification for secure care; an NHS Benchmarking Audit of transfers and remissions took place in October 2019 to identify and address difficulties and delays in the system. The Provider Collaborative evaluates current and future capacity requirements to ensure those who require transfer to a secure mental health bed remain a priority so that treatment is received in an appropriate environment as soon as possible. In addition, I understand that NHS England is developing a whole-pathway approach to the care of offenders. This includes diverting offenders from prisons and the criminal justice system where appropriate, and reconnecting those leaving custody with health services in the community.

I was pleased to receive your comments that progress has continued with the prison providing a settled and calm atmosphere and good standards of facilities, cleanliness and tidiness. It was encouraging to read that incidents of violence, assaults on staff and self-harm have decreased and that staff recruitment and retention is working well, creating positive relationships with prisoners. It was also reassuring to note that healthcare services are good and that the hard work of staff, for example to reduce waiting times, was recognised and commended. I am also particularly grateful for the remarkable end of life care given to a terminally ill prisoner who chose to remain in prison.

I note you have raised some local issues of concern in your report which the Prison Director will continue to keep you aware of as work continues.

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 that reads "Lucy Frazer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

LUCY FRAZER QC MP