



██████████
Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP/YOI East Sutton Park
Sutton Valence
Maidstone
ME17 3DF

MoJ Ref: ADR 78574

3 June 2020

Dear ██████████,

**HMP EAST SUTTON PARK: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 NOVEMBER 2018 – 31 OCTOBER 2019**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 October 2019. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work in capturing these helpful observations.

I would like to assure the Board that I understand your ongoing concerns with the unutilised refurbished flats at HMP East Sutton Park. The Governor and HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) are keen to permanently open and utilise this semi-independent living facility. Owing to the specific demands of the Covid-19 response, the flats have been temporarily commissioned for use through the payment schemes in place to fund staffing and resources. However, as the Board has identified, it will not be possible to have them permanently operational due to over-capacity across the female estate, together with a lack of long term resources being available to operate the units.

Regarding female prisoner flows and women arriving at the establishment with enough time left to serve, the governance of offender flows in the female estate is different to that of the male estate. The women's estate organises transfers between sites at a local level, whereas transfers in the male estate are now underpinned by the National Allocation Protocol (currently being rolled out and due for completion by 2023). As such, in the female estate, the prison offender manager will determine at which point a woman should move based on their individual circumstances, progress against their sentence plan, and taking into consideration all other relevant factors such as geographical location, and thereafter an agreement between the prisons.

A large number of prisons in the female estate are also multi-functional, meaning that they have a local/reception service alongside a training and resettlement function. When capacity at reception/feeder establishments is pressured, the priority is to create space to receive women from the courts. Women with either shorter sentences or less time to serve are therefore more likely to be selected for transfer than longer-term prisoners. Further, sentencing guidelines may mean that offenders are eligible for the open estate after only a short period of time in closed conditions; likewise they may mean that prisoners move to open conditions with only short periods of time left to serve. Although this does mean that some women are unable to access Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) before their release date, access to other resettlement services is available. The latest published data, taken from the third quarter of 2019, shows a 21% year-on-year increase in the number of releases on ROTL with a particularly steep rise in quarter

three itself (July to September), which is also the first full quarter after the new ROTL policy framework was published. HMPPS will continue to monitor this.

Following on from last year's response about Approved Premises, I can confirm that the National Probation Service continues to make progress on their three-year programme for expansion to increase new placements nationally. Likewise, I am pleased to advise that the first female Approved Premises (AP) opened in South West London in January 2020 and that the Bail Accommodation and Support Service (BASS) is expanding the number of its bed spaces from 550 to 605. The additional bed spaces within AP and BASS will support the increasing number of referrals into both the female and male AP estate.

I appreciate the Board's frustrations with repeated concerns but it was encouraging to receive your comments that the prison is well run and that prisoners are treated fairly. I was pleased to read that there is an efficient personal officer scheme in operation and that staff offer effective support and encouragement as prisoners prepare for release into the community. I was also encouraged by the success of the monthly job fair, the positive and favourable comments about food provision, and of the thorough reception process which includes good arrangements for late arrivals.

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 East Sutton Park.

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

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Prisoners' Property

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 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 is working closely with IMBs and other stakeholders to consult on proposed changes and shape the revised content ahead of wider consultation and publication. 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) take steps to transport all property which falls within the agreed volumetric limits with prisoners when they transfer between establishments. A new fleet of vehicles are 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.