



██████████  
Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Exeter  
30 New North Road  
Exeter, Devon  
EX4 4EX

MoJ ref: ADR 79703

6 July 2020

Dear ██████████,

**HMP EXETER: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 JANUARY– 31 DECEMBER 2019**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 December 2019. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work in capturing these helpful observations, especially as you were a little short of Board members during the reporting year.

This Government recognises the challenge of securing accommodation for prisoners leaving custody and agrees it is vital that everyone leaving prison has somewhere safe and secure to live. Accommodation enables offenders to hold down a job and reduces the likelihood of them reoffending. I note the underlying issues with local housing authorities highlighted in your report and am grateful for your feedback on both the checkout and departure lounge initiative and for your attendance at these events to ask prisoners about their accommodation. Regarding your comment that 43% of prisoners released from HMP Exeter in April to December 2019 had no fixed abode on release, please be reassured this is not a true reflection of those who had no accommodation on their night of release. Although hostel and supported housing referrals are completed prior to discharge, local authorities will not allocate a bed space prior to release and require the prisoner to attend an appointment in person on release before accommodation can be provided. The percentage of prisoners released without accommodation on their first night of release is therefore lower than 43%.

HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is working collaboratively with other government departments and interested parties to this end. Through the Rough Sleeping Strategy launched in August 2018, the Government has invested up to £6.4 million in a pilot that began in November 2018 to provide improved accommodation support for prisoners on release through a new partnership approach between prisons, probation providers and local authorities to plan, secure and sustain accommodation for prisoners on their release. Lessons from the pilots will be used to inform the future provision of accommodation for prisoners on release from custody.

In addition, seven National Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) Homelessness Prevention Taskforce Teams have been established (six in England and one in Wales), which is an excellent example of collaborative work being done and I hope this will lead to future improvements. We have already invested an additional £22 million per annum into the remaining life of the CRC contracts to deliver an enhanced Through the Gate resettlement service. As I am sure you will appreciate, resources and work priorities are currently directed to the response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Turning to the Board's concerns about staffing retention and recruitment, workforce planning has been devolved to Governors who now have greater responsibility for determining the number of prison officers

required to deliver services within their allocated budget. Since October 2016 more than 4,700 additional prison officers have been recruited and staffing levels are now at their highest since 2012. HMPPS remains committed to recruiting more officers to ensure safe and decent prisons.

We want prison officers to stay in post and progress their careers, and as such induction processes have been improved to ease transition into the job. Alongside this, work to develop clear career paths and professionalise the service is being considered, which should provide development and promotion opportunities for experienced staff, with new staff supported and mentored. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) Resourcing, Marketing and Attraction team have been working closely with HMP Exeter, to support the team in tailoring attraction and communications to address different employment markets and will continue to attract a more diverse candidate pool, and a new recruitment adviser will support the prison with local outreach activity. HMP Exeter has a healthy pipeline of new prison officers to join, although due to Covid-19 restrictions, Prison Officer Entry Level Training (POELT) training had, until recently, been paused.

I understand the Board's concerns about mental health of prisoners. We are determined to improve the transfer process, ensure delays are reduced and avoid prison being used inappropriately. The Secretary of State for Justice is committed to working with the Secretary of State for Health (with health partners) to articulate a coherent picture of how healthcare is delivered throughout the criminal justice pathway. Government resources and priorities are currently being directed to the response to Covid-19, but we remain committed to continuing bilateral discussions on this topic when it is appropriate to do so.

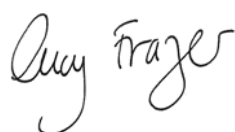
We are also continuing to work in close collaboration with health partners to make sure that vulnerable offenders are diverted away from custody and, where possible, from the criminal justice system altogether. This includes Health and Justice partners working together through the Community Sentence Treatment Requirement Programme, to ensure greater use is made of mental health, alcohol and drug treatment requirements as part of community sentences. In addition, revised guidance on the transfer and remission to hospital from prison, to improve the support offered to vulnerable prisoners, will be published later in the year. This will promote timely access to appropriate treatment under the Mental Health Act and should reduce unnecessary delays to treatment. This Government is also committed to legislate to reform the Mental Health Act and is working on producing a White Paper in the coming months. Details on NHS England and NHS Improvement initiatives in the South West region are provided in the enclosed annex.

I am pleased to hear your positive comments regarding the quality of care provided by the mental health team, the several improvements the prison achieved during the reporting year, in particular, equality and diversity related initiatives. Thank you for acknowledging the hard work of staff and partners working under some challenging circumstances.

I note you have raised some local issues of concern in your report which the Governor will keep you aware of as work continues. I am pleased that funding for various maintenance projects has been secured as part of the MoJ five-year program of work, further details of which are provided in the enclosed annex along with HMPPS comments in response to issues raised for their attention.

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 Exeter.

Yours sincerely



**LUCY FRAZER QC MP**

## HMP EXETER: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JANUARY – 31 DECEMBER 2019

### HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

#### **South West Region Mental Health Initiatives**

The transfer of prisoners with mental illness that require hospital admission has been a priority area for NHS England and NHS Improvement South West. Mental health transfer data is received on a weekly basis and any delays in accessing secure mental health beds are escalated. Following some difficult transfer cases, the South West region is in discussions with Governors, the Provider Collaborative and Health Service providers to better understand the escalation protocol and thresholds for using secure hospital beds outside of the region. A protocol for the rapid assessment and treatment of prisoners within the region is also being launched. This will make beds available in secure hospital specifically for prison transfer where admission is deemed appropriate.

To improve outcomes further, an Annual Prison Transfer and Remission Audit took place in October 2019 to identify and address difficulties and delays in the system. A subsequent Health Efficiency Initiatives project has identified cost effective and innovative proposals to address service issues and increase capacity to meet future healthcare demand. An Early Days Mental Health Practitioners pilot is also taking place across six prisons over 12 months to provide specialist mental health capacity at peak reception hours.

#### **Prison Improvement Funding and the Maintenance Contractor**

##### *Funding*

As part of the MoJ five-year work programme the refurbishment of C wing is nearing completion and the gym showers are now fully operational. Further work through MoJ Projects Team is planned to start in August, to include refurbishment of the showers across the establishment as well as the fire improvement works (currently domestic smoke detector protection is in place). Likewise, the constant supervision cells have been refurbished to ensure those at risk are held in a decent and safe environment. The library roof has been fixed although some decoration work needed. A capital financial bid is required to achieve high level of adjustments to meet disability requirements under the Equalities Act 2010; the Service Delivery Manager will submit to MoJ Projects for consideration. Reasonable adjustments have been made to the shower facility on level 2 of C wing.

Additional funding has been awarded to replace flooring and to carry out some refurbishment works to serveries and staff facilities. Funding for a video conferencing centre has recently been agreed and will form part of the work initially planned for 2021/22.

##### *Quality Assurance*

The Computer Aided Facilities Management System is monitored on a weekly basis and despite high levels of damage reported, reactive repairs are delivered timely and are considered based on risk and staff resource. This is reviewed as part of a monthly tri-partite meeting involving key stakeholders. The original backlog of work at HMP Exeter has now reduced to an acceptable level and outstanding work will be monitored by HMPPS, Prison Maintenance Group on a weekly basis.

#### **Workshops and Industries**

A review has been commissioned to inform future workshop provision linking in to learning, rehabilitation and resettlement opportunities. This review is being informed by a needs assessment and labour market research. In addition, HMP Exeter has approached Public Sector Prisons Industries with a view to sourcing meaningful work opportunities. The Governor will keep you updated of progress.