



Ministry
of Justice

Lucy Frazer QC MP
Minister of State for Justice

██████████
Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Manchester
1 Southall Street
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MoJ ref: ADR81062

3 September 2020

Dear ██████████,

**HMP MANCHESTER: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 MARCH 2018 – 28 FEBRUARY 2019**

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

I understand the Board's concerns about the use of psychoactive substances within prisons. In April 2019, HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) published the National Prison Drugs Strategy which set out the coordinated approach needed to tackle drugs in prisons and has since been working with law enforcement and health partners to restrict the supply of drugs, such as psychoactive substances, as well as reduce demand and build recovery. The Government also announced last year a £100 million investment in prison security as part of a crackdown on crime behind bars, which is funding equipment such as X-ray body scanners to detect consignments of drugs concealed internally by prisoners. Although it is recognised Covid-19 has impacted progress, HMPPS is continuing to move forward as much as possible with this investment and other activities to deliver the Strategy.

At HMP Manchester any mail suspected of being contaminated with drugs is tested. To tackle items being thrown over the prison wall, an exercise yard known to be targeted was closed. Although the yard has since re-opened, extra staff patrol the yard while it is being used and checks are being made before and after each exercise session to retrieve any suspect items. The prison also has a good relationship with Greater Manchester Police and is working hard to catch those who throw items over the prison wall. In addition, the Long Term and High Security Estate (LTHSE) has arranged a secure mail service pilot for three months with the top five solicitor companies who deal with prison law. This began on the 1 August 2020 and will be used to inform decisions whether to expand the service to all LTHSE sites, including HMP Manchester, to combat those individuals who try to exploit legal privileged mail via Prison Rule 39 to bring drugs in.

I recognise the concern regarding the level of experience amongst prison officers. Whilst HMPPS has undertaken work to improve its recruitment processes and ensure it attracts the right people with the right skills, it of course cannot just replace the invaluable experience lost over recent years. The proportion of band 3-5 prison officers across the estate with less than three years in service at 31 December 2019 was 41.3%, which was no substantial change since 31 December 2018. However, it should be noted that since October 2016, when the Government published the Prison Reform White Paper, the Prison Officer Recruitment Programme has recruited more than 4,700 additional prison officers to bring staffing levels to their highest since 2012. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) Resourcing, Marketing and Attraction team is also

continuing to do all it can to attract a more diverse candidate pool with the right skills through increased advertising and offering market facing supplements, as well as inviting former prison officers to return to the service temporarily to support us through these unprecedented times. Locally, retention of staff does remain an area of difficulty with five leavers a month on average, however, currently operational staffing levels at HMP Manchester are above target. A review of the staff exit surveys has been carried out and the findings shared with the Senior Management Team (SMT) and first line managers who have considered the aspects of the prisons culture which are being attributed as reasons for leaving. In due course these findings will be incorporated into the launch of the local People Strategy.

HMPPS also wants prison officers to stay and progress their careers and work to develop clear career paths and professionalise the service. Work is ongoing to provide development and promotion opportunities to aid motivation to stay. To support new staff in their role, the Prison Officer Entry Level Training (POELT) course has been redesigned as a Level 3 Custody and Detention Apprenticeship taking in the region of 12-18 months which is more practically focussed to instil confidence and competence. There are also plans to recruit 100+ Apprenticeship Coaches in late 2020, who will work in prisons to support new prison officers. In the meantime, as well as the regionally funded POELT mentor, HMP Manchester has assigned a Band 5 Custody Manager as the line manager to all POELTs and is working with residential managers to ensure these new staff receive live feedback as they undertake their role and are given the opportunity to revisit areas of development. In addition, since April 2019, monthly training days have been introduced at the prison to target specific areas that need attention identified by performance data or the SMT.

Turning to the Board's concern about assaults, although across the estate incidents of assaults on prisoners in the 12 months up to December 2019 are down 4% compared to the 12 months to December 2018 and assaults on staff have also decreased by 2% over the same periods, HMPPS agrees that the level of violence in prisons remains too high. Whilst the causes of violence are complicated, factors such as the loss of frontline and experienced staff have limited the ability to provide consistent regimes and develop effective relationships with prisoners. The increase in the use of psychoactive substances over recent years has also had a significant impact. However, these are being addressed by recruiting extra staff which will provide the capacity to fully implement Key Work, allowing staff dedicated time to provide support to individuals that will help to deal with emerging threats and to improve safety. Whilst the challenges that staff face are not underestimated, HMPPS will continue to support them and work with the Police and Crown Prosecution Service to ensure successful prosecutions of those who assault them.

Prisons are also being provided with the tools to improve the way data is used to identify risk, such as the Safety Diagnostic Tool (SDT) which was rolled out last year and provides detailed information from prison to individual level. The Challenge, Support and Intervention Plan (CSIP) has also been developed to provide a consistent national case management model for managing those who pose a raised risk of being violent and is being used alongside the SDT by prisons to identify who may benefit from this proactive case management to prevent violence. Locally at HMP Manchester, the identification of triggers and trends are being developed with work recently undertaken to consider the timings of assaults. A strong link has already been identified between when illicit items thrown over the prison wall are intercepted by staff and a prisoner being assaulted. Assaults on both staff and prisoners have also significantly declined around 50% this quarter since the last and whilst this can be attributed to the restricted time out of their cells due to Covid-19, further work will continue to identify triggers that can feed into actions to help the prison to reduce violence and hopefully ensure the previous levels do not return.

Regarding the request to install secure windows, I can confirm the bid to install safer custody windows has been successful. However, due to other competing priorities within the MoJ capital projects budget, there is no confirmed date yet as to when these works will be able to be scheduled. In the meantime, HMPPS Prison Maintenance Group has made changes to the scope of the contract delivered by the

provider Amey to increase the litter and rubbish collection. The prison is also continuing to challenge the litter culture, as well as ensuring regular cleaning takes place which have resulted in improvements in recent months. It is noted that, whilst the Board commends the efforts made to improve conditions at HMP Manchester with new showers, heating and hot water systems and disabled cells, as well as keeping the prison clean, concerns are raised in the report about delayed repairs and out of use cells. HMPPS comments in response to this matter are set out in the attached annex.

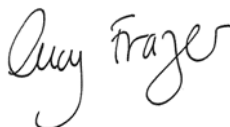
I also understand the reasons for the Board requesting a canteen area for prisoners to eat out of their cells. As part of HMP Manchester's reconfiguration, the prison will be changing to an almost entirely single cell accommodation in the top half of the prison, and as part of the reduction in double cells, wing kitchenettes and dining out tables will be introduced for all residential units. Whilst this reconfiguration has been delayed due to Covid-19, it is hoped the benefits from these changes will show in the coming months and will be just as successful as the kitchen provision installed in the Specialist Intervention Unit that the Board credited in its report.

In respect of the assurances being sought that the handling of prisoners' property is being prioritised, it is unfortunate and regrettable that the new Prisoners' Property policy framework has not been published yet. HMPPS is working closely with stakeholders to consult on proposed changes to the policy following a project in 2019. In light of the pressures placed on Boards by Covid-19, HMPPS agreed with the IMB Secretariat to push consultation with Boards back until August and September. This feedback from IMB members will be considered alongside the comments already received from other stakeholders, with the intention that the draft policy framework will be circulated for wider consultation at the end of 2020. The new Prisoner Escort and Custody Service 4 Generation contract also began during August 2020 with a new fleet of vehicles which allow for an additional half box of consumable items to be carried for each prisoner on top of the existing agreed volumetric limits. In addition to this, HMPPS is looking at what more can be done to encourage prisoners to send out or dispose of excess items to reduce the amount of property that cannot transfer with them. Steps are also being taken to ensure there is a consistent approach when prison staff forward on any excess items to prisoners at their new establishment after a transfer has taken place. HMP Manchester is also undertaking work to ensure all property is accounted for and handled correctly during reception processes and at cell clearances. In November 2019, the cell clearance process was amended to include the requirement for staff to use Body Worn Video Camera's when undertaking clearances. Whilst there is still some work required to embed these processes, the Governor has provided assurance that this will be given sufficient priority to make these improvements.

Despite all the concerns, it was still encouraging to receive your comments that prisoners are treated fairly in the way the prison operates and in interactions with staff. I am pleased that the Board recognises the improvements in decency and living conditions seen since the last report despite the challenges faced with the age and physical design within a Victorian building. I was also pleased to read that the healthcare provision continues to provide excellent care, a wing has been dedicated for elderly prisoners and, whilst there is more work to do on inclusion, prisoners are given a voice to engage about their community.

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. 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 Manchester.

Yours sincerely



LUCY FRAZER QC MP

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Repairs, Maintenance and Prison Conditions

During the reporting year the facilities management provider, Amey, failed to achieve the required Key Performance Indicator (KPI) level for reactive repairs for five consecutive months which resulted in an improvement plan being put in place. However, since the plan was implemented and embedded performance has increased and the KPI has been achieved each month. The Governor is also confident in the working relationship with the new Amey Site Manager who is demonstrating improvements and is continuing to work closely with prison managers to rectify issues as quickly as possible. However, there will always be some level of backlog or delay with repairs due to the age and design of HMP Manchester being a Victorian prison. Some repairs which cannot easily be fixed, may require significant investment that must be bid for or may be outside of the scope of the facilities management contract and require a specialist service provider, such as industries equipment. Regarding the high number of cells out of use these were mostly due to heating issues and vandalised windows in need of replacement. However, the heating issue has largely been resolved now by the installation of new equipment and further improvements to the valves, pumps and controls are due to start this financial year. It is recognised that windows being vandalised continues to be an issue and replacement is slower than expected due to accessibility to carry out repairs at height, however, these are being addressed in batches to maximise the specialist hoists that are required to complete the work.