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Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Northumberland  
Acklington  
Morpeth  
NE65 9XG

MoJ ref: ADR 79708

6 July 2020

Dear ██████████,

**HMP NORTHUMBERLAND: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 JANUARY 2019 – 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 continued to be short of Board members during the reporting year. I am also sorry to hear about your concerns with the IMB recruitment process; my office has asked the IMB Secretariat to respond to you directly.

I understand the Board's concern about the lack of inpatient healthcare facilities and support for end of life care at HMP Northumberland, especially given the high proportion of older prisoners. NHS England and NHS Improvement has included planning to enhance primary care services across the prison estate as part of its response to Covid-19 and at HMP Northumberland this specifically includes scoping to develop a form of 24-hour healthcare provision. The feasibility of such an approach is currently being ascertained across the prison health partnership so this is in the early stages. However, it should be noted that NHS England and NHS Improvement commission primary care services, not acute care as provided in the hospital setting. As such, 24-hour healthcare provision may not necessarily reduce the number of prisoners requiring escort to hospital during the night, as in most cases such incidences are unavoidable. As is the case in the community, out of hours provision is available to the prison with an on-call doctor and emergency services can be used where required.

The Board also rightly indicates that some category C prisons do have an inpatient facility, such as HMP Holme House. Although Holme House was previously a category B local prison, it remains the case that the majority of category C prisons do not have inpatient facilities, as HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) historically took the decision, when it was responsible for healthcare, not to routinely provide these in category C prisons. In the meantime, inpatient care can be provided for prisoners from HMP Northumberland as part of the wider regional provision at HMP Durham and HMP Holme House where space allows, or at an outside hospital as an escorted patient.

Whilst HMP Northumberland does not have a palliative care suite or designated area to manage individuals, palliative care support is and always has been available and can be commissioned as and when required. The prison also continues to work with its partners to support its population with end of life and palliative care. In addition, in 2018 HMPPS and the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) launched guidance explaining how to set up peer-to-peer schemes along with a supporting toolkit, as peer support can help individuals who are approaching end-of-life, including those who are under the age of 50. The Dying Well

in Custody Charter also provides information for prisons to better provide for those with palliative or end-of-life care needs, including transferring them to a prison that is better equipped to meet these needs.

I also recognise the Board's concern about the consistency of the Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) Model within private and public sector prisons. In private prisons, HMPPS aims to continue to support and encourage Offender Management Units whilst minimising changes to the provider's staff. The contractual changes required to replicate public sector prisons would be significant and complex, due to offender management not being specified in current contracts. Privately managed prisons therefore deliver the full OMiC model in terms of both key work and case management but use a different staffing solution to public sector prisons.

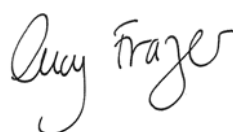
The planning and deployment of the staff resources required to implement OMiC was managed by the Divisional Implementation Boards. Privately managed prisons were represented and were put in the final phase in the proposed roll out of OMiC. Although the decisions about Probation Officer staffing levels within prisons are based on many factors, currently there is a national shortage of qualified Probation Officers, which has contributed to the shortage of these in both public sector prisons and privately managed prisons. Locally, HMP Northumberland continues to manage the roll out of OMiC professionally and in a way that demonstrates an equitable service to prisoners and the public alike.

Despite your concerns, it was reassuring to receive your comments commending the prison's efforts to reduce violence and drugs, and the emphasis now placed on pre-empting violence. I was pleased to note that prisoners are treated fairly and humanely, as well as there being outstanding support for those who are vulnerable or challenging. It was encouraging to hear about the good diversity and inclusion work such as the Inside Out Club, and the efforts being made to address the needs of veterans, older and transgender prisoners. I am further encouraged that the improvements to the fabric of the prison reported last year have continued and that the standard of living accommodation is commended.

I note you have raised a local issue of concern about the accommodation in the Segregation Unit which the Director will continue to keep you aware of as work continues. HMPPS comments in response to the other issue raised in your report about education and resettlement is 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 Northumberland.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lucy Frazer".

**LUCY FRAZER QC MP**

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

### HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

#### **Education and Rehabilitation**

The MoJ Education and Employment Strategy (May 2018), set out changes to the delivery arrangements for prison education and a new national education allocation funding formula approach was developed for the Prison Education Framework (PEF) and Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) commissioning arrangements which started on 1 April 2019. Since then prisons have had control over their own education budget and the freedom to commission bespoke provision aimed at addressing prisoner and employer needs. In addition, the MoJ is in the process of creating a Prisoner Education Service focussed on work-based training and skills to strengthen the current education and careers guidance offer to ensure more prisoners can sustain employment on release. The New Futures Network, the specialist part of HMPPS that helps businesses fill skills gaps and prisoners find employment on release will in due course continue its work with prisons to help utilise their existing workshop facilities and to explore and develop new opportunities for future work, as this activity has been paused while prisons operate restricted regimes due to the Covid-19.

In addition, to hopefully provide reassurance to the Board an additional £22 million per annum has been invested in to the remaining life of the Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) contracts to deliver an enhanced Through the Gate resettlement service to those leaving prison to prepare them for release. However, at the present time resources and work priorities are currently being directed to respond to Covid-19. To manage this HMPPS has put in place an Exceptional Delivery Model (EDM) for CRC services to cope with high levels of staff absences and adhere to the social distancing guidance. CRCs are currently operating under an approved EDM which focuses first on managing the risk posed to the public by our most complex and dangerous offenders.

Locally, HMP Northumberland continually reviews the educational and vocational needs of its prisoner population and since the reconfiguration of the prison estate began these needs have altered significantly. However, whilst there will always be a degree of transition when there is a change in supplier such as the recent education contracts, the introduction of the PEF and DPS has enabled HMP Northumberland some flexibility to meet the growing needs of its short-term population. The prison also remains committed to delivering exceptional services as outlined in its contract and is working with HMPPS and the Contract Management Team to identify opportunities to enhance delivery and meet prisoner needs to support the successful resettlement and reintegration of its population upon release.