



██████████  
Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Onley  
Rugby  
Warwickshire  
CV23 8AP

MoJ Ref: ADR 78586

3 June 2020

Dear ██████████,

**HMP ONLEY: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 FEBRUARY 2019 - 31 MARCH 2020**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 March 2020. 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 were severely depleted at the beginning.

Following on from my letter to the Board earlier this year, I would like to reassure you that we remain committed to developing our existing staff and retaining the experience and knowledge within our workforce that helps set examples to new joiners. On-the-job training and shadowing is a key component in the journey of a Prison Officer and one that is difficult to teach, but we have been addressing this through recent changes to our Prison Officer Entry Level Training (POELT) programme, and with the implementation of the Prison Officer apprenticeship pilot as mentioned previously.

Once the situation with Covid-19 has settled, the team delivering the apprenticeship programme will continue to work towards rolling out the Prison Officer apprenticeship across the male estate. As noted by the Board, the presence of the Standards Coaching Team at HMP Onley together with the establishment's local POELT mentors proved successful in improving the skills and confidence of our new staff. I understand there has been an improvement in the local retention rate of prison officers during the year which can in part be attributed to these two initiatives. Further comments on the current staffing at HMP Onley are contained in the annex.

Regarding the related matter of recruitment and retention of Instructors, pay for Instructors is based on evidence relating to a number of factors such as comparable and competing labour markets; private sector pay structures; public sector pay policy; recruitment and retention of staff; and budget restrictions set by HM Treasury. We continue to invest in our pay structures and in 2019 increased the starting salary for the Instructors pay band by 3%. Our pay policies allow for incentives to be offered to address any recruitment and retention pressures subject to a business case being submitted by the establishment.

As noted by the Board, a capital bid for new kitchen equipment was submitted and I am pleased to confirm that this was successful. These new items are scheduled to be installed in the coming months, however, as I am sure you will understand, this may be disrupted due to the COVID-19 response. It is also acknowledged that repairs to catering equipment at times has taken too long. Consequently, the

Prison Maintenance Group have been working closely with the facilities management provider (Amey) to improve the repair service associated with the kitchen.

Pest infestation is an issue at the site and a wide-ranging riddance action plan is now in place to tackle this. The programme of works has included extensive baiting, proofing works across the whole site, and a comprehensive increase in pest control activity throughout the calendar year. In addition to the riddance programme, a false ceiling will be installed in the dry store which should significantly improve the current situation. Thanks to a window refurbishment programme and the introduction of new waste bins, I understand that the amount of food waste under cell window areas has significantly reduced which has also aided the riddance programme.

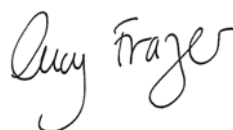
It is unfortunate and regrettable that prisoners' property continues to be an issue. As mentioned earlier this year, the development of the new Prisoners' Property Policy Framework is ongoing. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) are working closely with IMBs and other stakeholders to consult on proposed changes and shape the revised content ahead of wider consultation and publication, and HMPPS will agree with the IMB Secretariat when consultation can take place in the light of the impact of COVID-19.

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.

Despite the issues at HMP Onley, it was encouraging to receive your comments that on the whole prisoners are treated fairly, that relationships between prisoners and staff have shown a distinct improvement, and the general atmosphere in the association areas and on the wings is usually cheerful and cooperative. I was further encouraged to note there has been a significant improvement in the reduction in violence, and an improvement in the efficiency of the healthcare department allowing more prisoners to be seen by staff.

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 Onley.

Yours sincerely

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

**LUCY FRAZER QC MP**

## HMP ONLEY: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 FEBRUARY 2019 - 31 MARCH 2020

### HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

#### **Prisoner Location and Family Visits**

There are complex and wide-ranging issues involved in the allocation and transfer of prisoners. HMPPS is committed to ensuring that prisoners are accommodated as close as possible to their resettlement communities and families, although this is not always possible due to a variety of factors.

As the Board may be aware, the adult male estate is currently being reconfigured, and under reconfiguration HMP Onley will remain a category C Training/Resettlement Prison. However, due to the reconfiguration project providing additional resettlement places in London, it has been modelled that HMP Onley will no longer resettle men to London and will instead provide resettlement for the Midlands only. As all training places are a national resource the prison will continue to provide a service to men more widely for the training phase in their journey, however by 2023 men should spend a longer period of time in the resettlement cohort prior to release and be closer to home.

In the meantime, to facilitate family visits, HMP Onley has negotiated a preferential rate with a local taxi firm for journeys from the nearest train station for prisoners' families. The prison is also exploring the possibility of purchasing a minibus to transport visitors to and from the station that could be driven by a prisoner(s) subject to Release on Temporary Licence conditions. A capital bid will be submitted in the next financial year. Additionally, work is being conducted on a new policy on Video Calls in Prison which looks at how families can stay in contact with prisoners via video when having traditional visits proves difficult and this should facilitate family contact throughout the estate in the longer term.

#### **Transfers of Re-Categorised Prisoners**

Progressive transfers of prisoners are subject to space in the appropriate part of the prison estate becoming available and the speed of transfers reflects this constraint. Current population data shows that there are insufficient training and resettlement places within the estate. This will gradually be addressed as we reconfigure the estate into three main functions: reception, training, and resettlement, and introduce new offender flows to ensure men are held in the right prison at the right point in their sentence to access the support they require. By 2023, the combination of reconfiguration and building new prisons will create much-needed category B and C training places.

Further to the response sent earlier this year, reconfiguration of the estate led to HMP Woodhill re-rolling in Autumn 2019 to become a category B Training Prison (retaining a small category A function). In addition, HMP Manchester started its transition to become a category B Training Prison (retaining a small category A function) in February 2020. Following these initial prison changes, over 1,300 additional category B training places have been created. The transfer of prisoners will however remain a local matter and there is no intention to take central ownership of the movement of prisoners. That is because there are complex and wide-ranging issues involved in allocation and transfer of all prisoners and therefore it is a matter for both sending and receiving prisons to agree so that each prisoner's individual circumstances are taken into account.

#### **Purposeful Activity**

HMP Onley is in a transitional period following the move from one education provider to another. As the Board recognise there has been a significant increase in the number of available activity places from 450 in April 2019 to 624 in February 2020 with plans to increase this to 700 by December 2020. HMP Onley

has also now introduced a dry lining workshop, a flooring workshop, and a call centre. The prison has also commissioned the education provider to open a further vocational workshop by December 2020.

### **Staffing Stability**

Further to the response sent earlier this year the staffing position at HMP Onley has improved and, the additional support provided through payment plus and detached duty now ended.

In respect of the Board's concerns about locational allowances for prison staff, as you may be aware, pay for all operational prison staff is considered on an annual basis by the independent Prison Service Pay Review Body (PSPRB). PSPRB makes their recommendations based on evidence relating to comparable and competing labour markets, private sector pay structures, public sector pay policy, recruitment and retention of staff, budget restrictions set by HM Treasury, and the UK economy growth and inflation forecasts. Our annual pay proposals to the PSPRB support recruitment and retention to enable HMPPS to attract the right calibre and retain experienced Prison Staff to provide operational stability by providing a meaningful pay offer to staff, including progression pay to those below the maximum.

London allowances is something that we no longer pay, however in some establishments, that are deemed 'hard to recruit' for, we have introduced pay incentives based on evidence such as workforce statistics and economic factors to address recruitment and retention challenges. We continue to review the number of establishments in scope for these payments based on the evidence. We have changed policies to incentivise prison officers to apply for promotions so that they continue their career with the service rather than look elsewhere. HMPPS would like to reassure the Board that we remain committed to developing our existing staff and retaining the experience and knowledge within our workforce that helps set examples to new joiners.

### **Prisoner Complaints**

Further to the response sent earlier this year, the new Prisoner Complaints policy framework that became effective on 1st August 2019 advocates that all complaints submitted by prisoners are investigated and dealt with according to the urgency of the matter raised, within the required timescales. Where it is not possible to give a full reply within the required timescale an interim reply can be given. These replies must be informative and give an indication of when a full reply can be expected.

An evaluation of the revised process and its implementation and application is being undertaken to evaluate outcomes. This will focus on evidence of its impact on the quality of responses to complaints, whether prisoners feel there has been procedural justice, whether there has been a reduction in disproportionality and if outcomes for prisoners have improved, leading to fewer appeals and less litigation.

More locally, the management at HMP Onley believe that as staff become more experienced and confident that the quality of responses is improving. The prison has held two awareness days for all staff on the concept of procedural justice and how to build this approach into all of their communications. A senior manager now also conducts a quality check on 10% of complaint responses and provides feedback to individuals.

### **Prisoner Sentence Progression**

#### OASys reports

Further to the response sent earlier this year, the introduction of the Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) model included a review of resourcing across the estate. This new resource model included staffing for OASys assessments in training and resettlement prisons. As staffing has been increased for the roll-out of OMiC, over the last year we have seen a reduction in the backlog across the estate. We

have also introduced a national OASys taskforce to support prisons in clearing the backlog of assessments.

HMP Onley will continue to receive prisoners without an initial OASys, but is now resourced for this work. There were 125 initial OASys reports outstanding at HMP Onley in February 2019. Significant progress has been made over the last year and in March 2020 this backlog had been reduced to 31.

*Thinking Skills Programme and Resolve courses*

Further to the response sent earlier this year, HMP Onley still hope to facilitate nine programmes during 2020/21, a mix of both the Thinking Skills Programme and Resolve courses, subject to demand/need and COVID-19 disruptions.