



██████████
Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMYOI Aylesbury
Bierton Road
Aylesbury
Buckinghamshire
HP20 1EH

MoJ Ref: SUB 83227

16 November 2020

Dear ██████████,

**HMYOI AYLESBURY: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 APRIL 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 were short of Board members.

I acknowledge the Board's comments about the need to provide improved prisoner employment and vocational training for young adults. I hope to reassure the Board that we are committed to improving the provision of education by creating a Prisoner Education Service (PES) focused on work-based training and skills. The aim of the PES is to increase the number of prisoners who are employed and who hold down a job. The ability to improve prisoners' functional, vocational and life-skills is key to supporting wider rehabilitation and to reducing reoffending on release.

HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) Education, Employment and Industries Group is developing this new PES service and are building it on the reforms made since the Dame Sally Coates review published in May 2016 and the Education and Employment Strategy published in May 2018. These both offer a clear and effective route for prisons to provide crucial education, training and employment skills as well as delivering the right support, incentives and opportunities so that offenders can make positive choices and changes and lead law abiding lives. Additionally, there were recommendations for having a common curriculum, awarding bodies for the most favoured subjects across the whole prison estate and devolving education budgets to Governors from April 2019. This work complements the Government's ambition on offender employment, where the New Futures Network (NFN-the specialist part of the agency which brokers partnerships between prisons and employers) is focused on getting prisoners work.

With regard to measuring employment outcomes for prisoners on release, the prison performance framework in future will include a measure that is focused on prisoner education. Additionally, to help support education, a new HMPPS Management Information System called CURIOUS has been introduced to all prisons. This is a bespoke data system which provides, for the first time, access to reliable information on, for example, mandatory Maths and English assessment results undertaken on reception into custody and prisoner data on qualifications achieved and training undertaken. The Learning and Skills team at HMYOI Aylesbury has reviewed its work provision and education curriculum offer in conjunction with Milton Keynes College (MKC), Public Sector Prison Industries (PSPI) and NFN. HMPPS has provided a helpful summary within the attached annex which sets out the position.

I note the Board's request for a stronger national commitment to rehabilitation across Government and understand the many challenges ex-offenders are faced with finding employment and access to benefits. To enable the rehabilitation of offenders, HMPPS is continuously working across government departments to help ex-offenders access housing, employment, get treatment for addiction and support with mental health. This also includes having a job coach in each prison. My officials are also working with the Department of Work and Pensions to ensure prisoners have timely access to Universal Credit.

In response to the Covid-19 crisis, to support prison leavers at risk of homelessness during the pandemic the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) designed an emergency temporary response scheme. The department is keen to develop longer-term improvements and over the coming months will be reviewing the scheme. HMPPS will use the lessons learned as the agency develops and rolls out wider reforms to probation services over the coming year. Likewise, HMPPS set up seven Homelessness Prevention Taskforces (HPTs) and worked with local authorities and other delivery partners to find suitable accommodation for offenders being released from prisons. HPTs remain active and under the probation reform programme, the agency will be looking at permanently resourcing Regional HPTs to aid future engagement.

Despite the concerns raised in the report, it was encouraging to receive your summary on the improvements made following HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) unannounced inspection in September 2019, resulting in HMYOI Aylesbury successfully moving out of special measures. Additionally, the prison quickly acted on HMIP's findings and developed a strategic approach to equalities, informed by setting up a new team to embed better Equality and Diversity awareness across the prison. I am grateful to the Board for highlighting good leadership demonstrated by the former Governor, Laura Sapwell, who helped steer the prison towards a marked improvement.

I was also pleased to hear that the key worker scheme has been a highly positive development and the decant of 200 prisoners to other prisons went smoothly, ensuring the prisoners left with their belongings. Your positive comments about the BBC programme, The Choir, and the events involving outside speakers such as British professional boxer Anthony Joshua OBE were encouraging and most welcomed.

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 HMYOI Aylesbury.

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

Work, Education and Vocational Training

Work Provision

The Long-Term High Security Estate (LTHSE) Regional Education, Skills and Work team have worked closely with HMYOI Aylesbury to improve the education and work placements on offer. In partnership with Lifecycle (a UK registered charity), a bicycle repair qualification has been introduced and the establishment will work alongside the Hackney Music Trust to provide a regular music centred workshop.

PSPI has recently invested in two new workplaces at HMYOI Aylesbury, most notably a new digital sign making workshop bringing learning opportunities for modern digital equipment and offering real work opportunities similar to that found in the community. PSPI is still supporting the establishment to further develop the delivery from the workshops.

Education Delivery

The take-up of bespoke learning has picked up substantially since September 2020, following the very difficult Covid-19 lockdown phase, with 168% engagement rates against the commissioned delivery (which is against a revised Annual Delivery Plan for Education because of Covid-restrictions). Prisoners are taking the opportunity to engage with the education on offer during this challenging time and alternative methods of support and contact are being explored/deployed, such as in-cell telephony tutorials.

Activities and Vocational Training (VT)

Work to increase the total number of activity spaces available continues, as unfortunately, planning and implementation work has been significantly disrupted by the regime restrictions resulting from Covid-19. There are several external companies that may be able to provide work offers for HMYOI Aylesbury via the NFN Coordinator for the LTHSE, and work is taking place to recruit workshop staff to enable these initiatives to be undertaken. Further improvements are being explored to expand the opportunities for work and development of skills.

The VT provision has been reviewed. This has led to the decommissioning of unengaging activities and planning to replace them with new, more interactive work opportunities. HMYOI Aylesbury has secured support from MKC to utilise soft skills trackers to support and encourage personal development and recognise employability skills within workshops. The reviewed Incentives and Pay policy frameworks will encourage good attendance at activities and an improved work ethic. HMYOI Aylesbury is continually looking for opportunities to improve and enhance the work and education offer, motivating prisoners to attend classes and working with disengaged prisoners. All Instructional Officers (IOs) will attend an IO development course.

Resources

Staff Recruitment / Training

Workforce planning has been devolved to Governors giving them greater responsibility for determining the number of prison officers required to deliver services within their allocated budget. A Resourcing

Recovery Project has been set up to co-ordinate and manage the recovery of recruitment activity across HMPPS' operational roles. The team responsible for the project is working with business areas to analyse the current and future workforce planning needs to predict the future position. HMYOI Aylesbury currently has a prison officer recruitment campaign open with marketing and attraction support to boost applications. An Assessment Recruitment Centre is also in operation in nearby Hemel Hempstead. In addition, HMPPS has invited former prison officers and probation staff to return to the service temporarily and applications are being processed to support the agency through these unprecedented times.

HMPPS would like prison officers to stay and progress in their careers. Induction processes have therefore been improved to ease transition into the job, together with care and support for staff and the offer of additional training. These measures are part of ongoing work with Governors to address local staff retention issues and reduce resignation rates from experienced staff and new recruits. Work to develop career paths and professionalise the service is being worked on and this should provide development and promotion opportunities. As part of the Youth Custody Service professionalisation agenda, all youth justice workers (Band 4s) will be completing the Unitas qualification. This will incorporate the Prison Officer Entry Level Training but will be a Foundation level degree qualification.

Staff Awareness

Key worker training provides improved staff awareness of the challenges faced by prisoners, and enhances their skills in assessing maturity and developing better relationships. HMYOI Aylesbury has started to deliver the HMPPS Banter Workshop, which covers challenging conversations on behaviours of professionals. Staff have found the workshop useful and this will be incorporated as an ongoing objective. A staff awareness package designed by the Diversity and Inclusion team will further support the work that has already been started and the new Staff Mentor role will offer additional support to staff during their first two years of joining HMYOI Aylesbury.

Improvement Works

There has been a huge investment by HMPPS Prison Maintenance Group over the last twelve months and this will continue throughout 2021/22. C wing refurbishment started mid October 2020. It is anticipated that the refurbishment work to A and E wings will be completed by March 2021. However, Covid-19 may necessitate work schedules being deferred. Once A and E wings are reopened, the plan is to move prisoners onto those wings from B and D Wings, so that the showers and serveries on those wings can be refurbished to a better specification. The showers will be to the new Wandsworth specification.

The MoJ is planning for significant project work to take place over the next two of years, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. Smaller local investments under the Major Maintenance Budget include the Control Room Mimic board, roof repairs to the main gate and upgrades to the fire dampers.