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Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Littlehey
Perry
Huntingdon
Cambridgeshire
PE28 0SR

MoJ Ref: SUB 83059

9 November 2020

Dear ██████████,

**HMP LITTLEHEY: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 FEBRUARY 2019 – 31 JANUARY 2020**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 January 2020. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work in capturing these helpful observations. I have noted the Board continues to have a reduced complement of members and hope the recruitment drive proved successful.

I understand the Board's ongoing concerns around overcrowding in the estate and prisons not operating to their Certified Normal Accommodation levels. I want to reassure the Board that we are committed to reducing crowding across the prison estate. In the year to March 2019, the proportion of prisoners held in crowded accommodation was 22.5%, down from 24.2% in the previous year, and levels of around 25% experienced since 2004.

As mentioned in last year's response, the wider problem of crowding in prisons is a longstanding issue that will not be easily addressed. The added capacity from HMPs Berwyn and Stocken, and at the former HMP Wellingborough and HMP Glen Parva sites (due to open in 2022 and 2023) will help with overcrowding. Reducing overcrowding is a central aim of the estate modernisation vision and the 10,000 additional places, which are in addition to places already announced at the new prisons at Wellingborough (to be named HMP Five Wells) and Glen Parva and the completed houseblock at HMP Stocken, will allow us to build further places that are not crowded.

Under our plans for the prison estate, additional capacity will be provided through our new prisons (which will be modern, decent, uncrowded prisons), and the creation of purpose-built house-blocks to manage the projected population increase and transform the estate.

I have noted that many of the Board's concerns raised in the report are repeated issues. It was therefore encouraging to hear that HMP Littlehey continues to be a safe, fair and decent prison, that self-harm incidents have been on a reducing trend, and social care has been a very positive area at the establishment which is particularly important considering the age demographic of the prison's population.

I was further pleased to note the improved monitoring of equalities data, the continued celebrating of cultural events throughout the year, the refurbishment of the visits hall, the good education provision as recognised by Ofsted, and that HMP Littlehey maintained its position as the overall number-one-performing physical education department in the Prison Service.

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. HM Prison and Probation Service (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 HMP Littlehey.

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

HMP LITTLEHEY: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 FEBRUARY 2019 – 31 JANUARY 2020

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Disabilities Adjustments and Older Prisoners

Further to last year's response, HMP Littlehey is currently developing its Older Resident Strategy with many of the matters being addressed in the prison's Equalities Strategy, due to be finalised and published in December 2020. The prison will also consider learning for staff around dementia and other age-related diseases.

Currently HMP Littlehey has two designated units, offering 240 rooms to accommodate the older cohort of the prison's population. As the Board has already acknowledged, HMP Littlehey has excellent social care provision. The prison is making some adaptations for residents that require support in showers and has access to specialist lifting equipment for wheelchair users. The establishment has also recently introduced technical support aids such as 'falls alarms' so that staff on the units can be immediately alerted in the event a prisoner has a fall in their cell and cannot access the cell bell. These alarms are active 24 hours per day and are an additional safety measure.

Regarding the model for operational delivery (MOD) for older prisoners, each new prison will have four disabled-access cells per houseblock and three low-mobility cells per floor so prisoners unable to use stairs are not bound to the ground floor and can integrate easily with other prisoners. Key elements being considered for the existing estate include cells/rooms for those with reduced mobility, level access across the site, and provision of lifts in all buildings to ensure all areas of the prison are accessible. Other measures include surface finishes known to aid way-finding and orientation for those with reduced cognition or visual impairments (colour and signage); additional grab points in toilets and shower areas with dedicated shower rooms with space for carer assistance; and adjustable furniture in cells/rooms and kitchenette areas to accommodate wheelchair use.

Men Convicted of Sexual Offences Framework

Following on from last year's response, the framework entitled 'Improving Outcomes for People Convicted of Sexual Offences' is now more accurately described as a 'position paper', because it addresses the organisation's position regarding its work with this group. Although it was drafted last year, operational reasons prevented its wider dissemination until recently. The paper was distributed across HMPPS for consultation in August, following which a final version will be circulated by the end of this year.

Prison Officer Training

Our new Prison Officer Custody & Detention apprenticeship incorporates learning around prisoners with a range of needs, including learning difficulties. The new apprenticeship was due to be rolled-out across the estate in May 2020 but had to be postponed due to Covid-19 and therefore we are now planning to roll-out the new apprenticeship to all new Prison Officers from April 2021.

We want prison officers to stay and progress their careers and have improved our induction processes to ease transition into the job, provide care and support for our staff, and offer additional training. These measures are part of the work we are doing directly with Governors to address local issues and ensure experienced staff and new recruits remain in the service. At HMP Littlehey, the prison has staff engaging in the Autism Awareness pathway and has a senior-grade Dementia lead who has access to specialist support networks.

Work to develop clear career paths and professionalise the service is being worked on and this should provide development and promotion opportunities for our experienced staff. This will aid motivation and offer greater reliance across the system, with new staff being supported and mentored, and longer direct contact time with prisoners through the Key Worker scheme.

Prisoners' Property

It is unfortunate and regrettable that prisoners' property continues to be an issue. Further to last year's response, the development of the new Prisoners' Property Policy Framework has been delayed by the pandemic. Discussions ahead of consultation with IMB members began with the IMB Secretariat in late February 2020, who proposed meetings take place with Board members in April. In light of the pressures placed on Boards by Covid-19, HMPPS agreed with the IMB Secretariat to pause this consultation. This work is now moving forward again and a meeting with IMB members took place in August. Consultation with operational colleagues is also expected to resume soon. The feedback received at the meeting with IMB members will be considered alongside the comments received from other stakeholders, with the intention that the revised draft policy framework will be circulated for wider consultation at the end of 2020. While digital improvements are being explored, the nature of that work means that any digital changes are likely to take longer to develop.

HMPPS would like to reassure the Board a robust complaints system is in place. A complaint or appeal submitted in one prison might involve an incident which occurred in a previous establishment, or during transit between one prison and another. The establishment where the prisoner is located at the time they submit a complaint or appeal is responsible for ensuring that a response is provided within the required timescales. The establishment where the prisoner was located and is the site of where the complaint occurred will be responsible for providing the actual response to the complaint.

All actions should be recorded to ensure a clear audit trail is available if required. Any documentation which is related to the complaint and will assist in providing a comprehensive response should be sent at the same time as the complaint in order to expedite matters. Requests for information and replies should pass through the Business Hub Administrator of the respective prisons. To avoid delays, it is essential that respective prisons agree at an early stage which of them is responsible for providing the substantive response (and paying any proposed compensation if it is upheld) when responding to complaints about loss of or damage to prisoners' property. If agreement cannot be reached, the complaint should be referred to the relevant Prison Group Director/Director's line manager as soon as possible. The responsibility for referring the complaint rests with the prison where the complaint was initially lodged.