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Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Bullingdon
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MoJ Ref: SUB 83336

17 November 2020

Dear ██████████,

**HMP BULLINGDON: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 JULY 2019 – 30 JUNE 2020**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 30 June 2020. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work in capturing these helpful observations, as I note you were short of Board members during the reporting year.

Whilst I am pleased that the Board welcomes the increase in prison officer numbers, I understand your concern that HMP Bullingdon has lost many experienced officers and that it will take time to build up the level of experience and knowledge amongst the staffing group. A review of the recruitment process for prison officers, evaluation of the role and job analysis were undertaken by an independent Occupational Psychologist. The job analysis indicated that having previous prison experience was not a prerequisite to be a successful prison officer and that any prison-specific knowledge needed is embedded throughout the Prison Officer Entry Level Training (POELT) course and practiced during probationary period. Several core behaviours and strengths were identified as being critical for successful performance which were brought together to form a new Success Profile. These included skills such as interpersonal and communication skills, a strong work ethic, and the ability to take personal responsibility for actions. Across the prison estate, Human Resources Business Partners are speaking to staff to establish their reasons behind leaving and where possible, encouraging staff to remain in service.

To co-ordinate and manage the recovery of recruitment activity across operational roles within HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), a Resourcing Recovery Project has been set up. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) project team is working with business areas to analyse current and future workforce planning needs to predict the future position. Locally, due to an improving rate of retention, the proportion of uniformed staff at HMP Bullingdon with less than two years' service has reduced, and the prison is currently running a cluster job campaign with HMP Grendon with marketing and attraction support to boost applications.

I hope to reassure the Board that ensuring prison officers stay and progress their careers in the prison service is our priority, as we know our hard-working officers play a crucial role in keeping prisons safe and transforming offenders' lives. The Marketing and Attraction team is targeting candidates with life skills and who have experience dealing with a broad range of people, for example, those who have served in the armed forces, and those who have worked in retail and hospitality. Through the attraction of new talent, alongside developing existing staff and encouraging internal career progression, this will help towards improving capability and offer staff clearly defined career paths. To support HMPPS through these unprecedented times former prison officers and probation staff have been invited to return to the service temporarily.

Regarding the Board's concern about staffing levels within the probation service, it is recognised that the workloads for many probation officers are too high. A Probation Workforce Programme is underway to unify Probation to bring services together under the National Probation Service (NPS) from June 2021. The Probation Workforce Strategy was published in July 2020, the three-year overview details ambition for a positive, inclusive and diverse workforce and sets out how HMPPS will invest this across prisons and the community in six areas; skills, recruitment, retention, diversity, leadership, and wellbeing. Likewise, the agency is committed to recruiting 1000 trainee probation officers over 2020/21, with an additional 530 already in training in June 2020. Once they qualify, this will increase the current probation officer workforce by 29%, which will make a real difference to the NPS and, the trainee officer cohort size will further increase. Alongside this work, HMPPS is working closely with NPS regions and specialist recruitment agencies to address employment market challenges, particularly in difficult to recruit areas, and is working towards a new approach to raise professional standards and fully recognise probation qualifications.

Turning to the Board's other issue regarding maintenance, over the past 10 months HMP Bullingdon has seen a lot of positive change and a new Service Delivery Manager was appointed in January 2020 to monitor and oversee the work of the contractor. A new Technical Site Manager has also joined Gov Facility Services Limited (GFSL) team. HMPPS Prison Maintenance Group (PMG) continues to track GFSL's performance through monitoring the Reactive Maintenance backlog which as of 4 November 2020 there are 98 Reactive Work Orders (RWOs). GFSL have provided assurance that they will be working towards reducing the backlog over the coming months. During the Board's reporting year, 3,481 Planned Preventative Maintenance and 7,579 RWOs were dealt with. PMG has supported GFSL by providing additional funding to increase the number of engineers on site and £99,000 spent on upgrading the serveries in C, D and E Wings. An additional £265,000 has been spent on general repairs and maintenance work at the prison since April 2020 to October 2020.

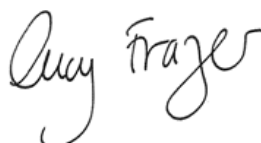
It was encouraging to receive your comments on the completion of the new video suite, in-cell telephones, the new weekly safety intervention meeting, and the much-reduced backlog of offender assessment system reports. I was pleased to hear that educational and other achievements were celebrated and prisoner families able to attend the ceremonies held. I am pleased that English for Speakers of Other Languages courses are available for foreign national prisoners and the Discrimination Incident Reporting Form process has been reviewed internally to ensure prisoners concerns are appropriately addressed.

Your positive comments on the handling of Covid-19 were encouraging to hear. HRH The Princess Royal visited HMP Bullingdon on 29 September 2020 and spoke highly of the staff for their service during the pandemic. I would also like to express my sheer gratitude to the Hidden Heroes for their work behind the scenes and who continue to work courageously on the front line.

Details on HMPPS's approach to staff retention and training is set out in the attached annex, along with their comments in response to the Board's other issues raised for their attention. I note there were some local issues of concern raised 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 Bullingdon.

Yours sincerely,



LUCY FRAZER QC MP

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Staff Retention and Training

Prison Staff

A recent review of the POELT course has seen changes to the content and structure. The new Success Profile view of what 'good' looks like enables the POELT teams to build on those specific behaviours over the course of the training. Improvements to the recruitment process have also been implemented, focusing on reducing both the time and cost to hire and ensuring the right people with the right skills are attracted.

Since October 2019, to support staff retention and to develop professional skills and qualifications, many new recruits have been enrolled onto the Apprenticeship in Custody and Detention (C&D) course. The apprenticeship route will also help with the wider aims of professionalising the workforce, increasing social mobility and moving towards a more diverse and capable workforce. HMPPS aim is for all new prison officers across the adult estate in England to be enrolled onto the C&D apprenticeship. Once the situation with Covid-19 has settled, the team delivering the apprenticeship programme will continue with the national roll out. HMPPS plans to recruit over 100 Apprenticeship Coaches to be placed in prisons to provide support when the apprenticeship is relaunched next year.

Locally, new staff at HMP Bullingdon are supported by a POELT mentor prior to their training. Post training they are assigned a line manager to provide meaningful contact offering practical and emotional support alongside the mentor. HMP Bullingdon actively manages the mix of staff by ensuring new officers work within experienced staff groups. The POELT mentor has also developed a training matrix for new staff to help monitor an individual's confidence in carrying out operational tasks and additional training offered if required. Experienced staff are given opportunities to deputise to aid their development and regular staff moves are made within different work areas to develop capability. All staff are offered an exit interview before they depart from the prison and feedback is reviewed at workforce planning meetings and appropriate actions taken.

Probation Staff

A three-year NPS Recruitment and Retention Strategy is being developed, which will help support the recruitment needs of the NPS over the coming years. The strategy will enable better planning of recruitment and supporting staff to enable them to thrive. This includes reviewing the approach to recruiting trainee probation officers and implementing a more streamlined and agile system, which enables to recruit people in to the service more quickly. This will help grow staffing levels significantly, create a varied talent pool of staff and a flexible and innovative recruitment model.

The strategy also looks at addressing local and regional employment market challenges, in areas like the region that covers HMP Bullingdon, where it has previously been difficult to recruit. It will also help find practical solutions to ensure existing staff talent is retained and building an environment that promotes diversity and equality for all.

The Probation Workforce Programme is developing new practice standards, qualification, curriculum and Continuous Professional Development framework that enables practitioners to develop and progress. It also will provide a sustainable, modernised approach to learning and development, giving probation staff the skills they need to meet the demands of their roles.

Prisoners' Property

It is unfortunate and regrettable that the new Prisoners' Property policy framework has not been published. The project involving 14 prisons has been concluded and HMPPS is working closely with stakeholders to consult on proposed changes to the policy. 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 2020. The feedback received from IMB members is being considered alongside the comments received earlier on in the year from other stakeholders, with the intention that the revised draft policy framework will be circulated for wider consultation at the end of this year.

The loss of property during transfers continues to be a concern which HMP Bullingdon is addressing with individuals and will continue to actively chase sending establishments for outstanding property. There are many different constraints with managing property between prisons especially regarding transport and the allowance that SERCO permits. With every case of loss of property an investigation is commissioned by a manager which is then reported to the Governor. HMP Bullingdon acts on lessons learned and makes internal improvements to processes to ensure that standards are raised and, when appropriate ensures prisoners are compensated fairly. The overall volume of complaints relating to property has decreased this year supporting that this has been effective (a five-month 2020 snapshot; 44 received in April, 32 in May, 29 in June, 28 in July, and 28 in August).

Prisoner Escort and Custody Service (PECS) confirmed that in the last 12 months they have not received any complaints relating to loss of property at HMP Bullingdon. 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. PECS 4 Generation new contract started at end of August 2020. The new fleet of vehicles have an increased capacity to facilitate an additional half box of property for consumables to the limit of 7.5 kg.

Provision for Older Prisoners

It is recognised with the increasing older prisoner population, both the MoJ and HMPPS need to be prepared for how they can provide safe, decent and suitable services, accommodation and support for prisoners of all ages. The Model for Operational Delivery (MOD) for Older Prisoners gathers together key evidence, relevant literature and good practice examples from across the estate to aid Governors in their planning, so that they can cater for the needs of older prisoners. The MOD was developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including the Prison Reform Trust, RECOOP (resettlement and care for older prisoners' organisation) and the Association of Members of the Independent Monitoring Boards. While it cannot alone address the physical limitations of parts of the estate, the MOD does provide a means of improving the services and care commissioned and provided for older men, including those with acute levels of need. HMPPS is working with Governors and Directors to help them make best use of the MOD as part of the move towards a reconfigured prison estate.

As recognised by the Board, the designated cells in the Inpatient Unit do have wider doorways and are, therefore, used to locate prisoners with mobility difficulties there. Quite often many of these individuals will have other social care needs and/or medical needs which will make the Inpatient Unit a more suitable location in order to receive the relevant care that is required. HMP Bullingdon accepts there are a minority of prisoners who would prefer to be located elsewhere and, as identified by the Board, have been precluded from doing so. At present Finmere and Edgcott Units are the only areas where individuals can freely access all the services they need without the use of stairs. Alteration work would be necessary to make other wing areas equally accessible and the cost of the work required, together with the issues around the reliability of existing provision of water and electrical services, make this unviable at the present time. However, the Governor will continue to explore possible options.

In terms of wheelchair provision, Oxfordshire County Council Social Care Department has been able to provide the prison with wheelchairs that can fit through a standard cell door. Occasionally, prisoners have

arrived at HMP Bullingdon with their own wheelchair, but have not been assessed as needing social care provision by the Council. In those cases, HMP Bullingdon is unable to provide an alternative wheelchair.

The regime available on the Inpatient Unit, like on all other wings, is currently temporarily restricted due to Covid-19. However, prisoners have access to showers, exercise and telephones in line with other units. Other areas such as visits hall, gymnasium, reception, video conferencing centre and most workshops can all be accessed from the Inpatient Unit. The lift on the walkway enables access to services on the upper level and the lift access in Healthcare.