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Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP/YOI Bedford  
St Loyes  
Bedford  
MK40 1HG

MoJ Ref: SUB84558

15 January 2021

Dear ██████████

**HMP/YOI BEDFORD: 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, especially as you were short of Board members during the reporting year. I was saddened to hear there were three deaths in custody, including one just outside your reporting period; every death is a tragedy and my officials take recommendations from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman very seriously.

I recognise the Board's concern about improving educational opportunities and the need to increase meaningful activities. As set out in the Education and Employment Strategy (May 2018), significant changes to the delivery arrangements for prison education took full effect from 1 April 2019. From that point, governors took control of their establishment's education budget, determined the curriculum on offer, how it is structured /organised and decided who their education providers will be. Prison governor's commission core and bespoke education provision through two new routes: the Prison Education Framework (PEF) and the prison education Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS). The PEF enables governors to call on suppliers from the framework to deliver the principal elements of their curriculum. The DPS enables governors to commission innovative, specialist or one-off education provision for their establishment.

The establishment of a core common curriculum, using four common Awarding Organisations allow these qualifications to be used exclusively in seven subjects (maths; English; ICT; ESOL; catering and hospitality; construction, planning and the built environment; cleaning and facilities management). This enables prisoners who start a qualification in one prison to be able to complete it at another rather than starting again as they move across the prison estate.

We have also introduced the New Futures Network (NFN) whose role is to broker partnerships between prisons and employers that help more prisoners do a working day during their time in custody, on release on temporary licence and in employment on release. In doing so, NFN also looks for new opportunities for introducing good quality purposeful activity in prison for prisoners to gain the skills necessary for employment on release.

We, however, recognise the need for change and improving prison education is a Conservative Party election manifesto commitment. The aim of the Prisoner Education Service (PES) is to increase the number of prisoners who get and keep jobs. The ability to improve a prisoners' functional, vocational and life-skills is key to supporting wider rehabilitation and reducing reoffending on release. We want prisoners to benefit from an inclusive service which combines the best of further and higher education with bespoke

careers guidance, meaningful work opportunities and specialist support for individuals with additional needs.

We are working to develop this new service and would like to establish it building on reforms made since the Coates review in 2016 and the Education and Employment Strategy. Both provided a clear and effective route for prisons to provide prisoners with crucial education, training and employment skills as well as delivering the right support, incentives and opportunities so that offenders can turn their back on crime for good.

Locally at HMP/YOI Bedford a wide range of courses have been added to the Annual Delivery Plan through the in-cell prospectus. The courses have been selected based on local market information and seasonality. In conjunction with the educational offer, the Independent Advice and Guidance contractor has been working with the education provider and the prison to better prepare prisoners for release. A number of local and national employers who wish to employ prisoners on release from HMP/YOI Bedford have been signed up.

I note the Board's concerns about staffing at HMP/YOI Bedford and hope I can assure the Board that we will continue to recruit officers to ensure safe and decent prisons. The Government is fully committed to maintaining staff numbers in prisons and has, since 2016, increased overall staffing in all prisons. Additional officers have been provided to support the implementation of Offender Management in Custody and for enhanced security measures. Responsibility for workforce planning and decisions on the number and grade of staff working within a prison establishment is delegated to prison governors who determine the number of officers required to deliver services within their allocated budget.

HMP/YOI Bedford suffers from a higher than average rate of officer turnover and attrition and has also found it difficult to attract custodial managers which has exacerbated the shortfall. I recognise that recruiting and retaining staff at the prison is more challenging than in some other parts of the country due to a competitive local labour market. A market facing supplement is currently provided that has raised prison officer pay to provide a more attractive offer. The past year has proved particularly difficult for prison officer recruitment as the pandemic prevented the attraction and selection of new prison officers for nearly six months. A Resourcing Recovery Project has been set up in the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) Resourcing team to co-ordinate and manage the recovery of recruitment activity across HM Prison and Probation Service's (HMPPS) operational roles. The team is working with business areas to analyse the current and future workforce planning needs to predict the future position.

I would like to assure the Board that we continue to review our practices and do all we can to recruit the right people with the right skills through increased advertising and market facing supplements. The MoJ Resourcing, Marketing and Attraction team continue to tailor our attraction and communications to address different employment markets and continue to seek to attract a more diverse candidate pool. In addition, HMPPS has now invited former prison officers and probation staff to return to the service temporarily and applications are being processed to support us through these unprecedented times.

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. 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.

Following the introduction of restricted regimes due to Covid-19, we have brought in new technology to introduce secure video calling to prisons. The roll-out started in May 2020 and secure video calling is now

available in all public sector prisons, including all female prisons and young offender institutions. Over 50,000 calls have been made to date and take up is increasing weekly. Video calls are enabling prisoners to have much wanted face-to-face contact with family and friends at a time when physical visits are restricted. They also provide opportunities not possible before; prisoners reconnecting with family overseas, as well as with elderly and disabled relatives who find it hard to travel. We also hear stories of prisoners meeting their newborn children, seeing toddlers take their first steps and being reunited with pets. Special moments can make all the difference at this time and 97% of prisoners who have had a video call say it has had a positive impact on their mental health. Where face-to-face visits can safely be delivered once the current restrictions are lifted, and remain the preference, no prisoner will be asked to substitute that for a video call.

The In-Cell Telephony project has provided a phone in cells in over 60% of the estate to date. Funding has been approved for HMP/YOI Bedford to receive in-cell telephony. Installation is currently taking place and it is anticipated that the prison will have in-cell phones within the next 12 months. Communal wing phones will continue to remain in place in the prison.

I note the Board's continued concerns about prisoners securing accommodation when leaving prison. It remains a priority for us to help make sure prisoners have somewhere safe and decent to live, which is paramount in helping them to avoid reoffending. Further to my response of 13 January 2020, we have put in place an Exceptional Delivery Model for Through the Gate to take into account reduced access to prisons and prisoners, and revised safe systems of work during the pandemic.

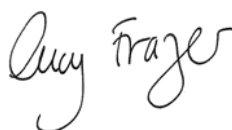
We have set up seven Homelessness Prevention Taskforces to work with local authorities and other partners to find accommodation for offenders released from prison. Currently the taskforces are still active and we are considering how to continue the work that they have carried out during the pandemic in the long-term. The MoJ secured £8.5 million to support those who are at risk of being homeless following release from prison to help them to move on to permanent accommodation. The scheme initially ran between 18 May and 31 August 2020 and provided up to 56 nights' accommodation per individual but was reinstated on 22 October 2020. This support will run until 21 January 2021 and following the most recent national lockdown announcement consideration is now being given to further extension. We also continue to deliver the commitment to provide 200 additional bed spaces in Approved Premises.

Despite the concerns raised in your report, it was encouraging to receive your comments that the conditions in the prison have generally improved, which you attribute to the vision and commitment of the Governor and senior leadership team. I was pleased to hear about the excellent work that has been done in collaboration with local police to reduce 'throwovers' into the prison and the efforts to make the environment cleaner and improve decency.

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 HMPYOI Bedford.

Yours sincerely



**LUCY FRAZER QC MP**

## HMP/YOI BEDFORD: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JULY 2019 – 30 JUNE 2020

### HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

#### **Prisoners' Property**

It is disappointing 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. As previously advised, 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 and September 2020. We are pleased to be able to confirm that this consultation exercise did resume in August 2020. The feedback received from those members will be considered alongside the comments received earlier this year from other stakeholders, and comments from the operational engagement which is now taking place. There has been a slight delay in us being able to circulate a revised draft policy framework because of the need to ensure sufficient operational engagement. We anticipate the draft framework will be circulated for wider consultation at the beginning of 2021. While digital improvements are being explored, the nature of that work means that any digital changes are likely to take longer to develop.

#### **Facilities Management (FM) Response Times**

The HMPPS Prison Maintenance Group (PMG) has in place a number of measures to ensure prompt responses to FM related services. Communication between PMG and the establishment is good, with weekly and monthly meetings being held to discuss related matters and to enable the escalation of concerns. Both meetings are attended by key stakeholders and projects and investment works, of which there are many, are tabled weekly.

Whilst some progress is being made towards achieving the required outputs, it is recognised that this remains an area of challenge at HMP/YOI Bedford. PMG will ensure that consistent monitoring continues to be applied to ensure that performance continues to improve with appropriate challenges being made where necessary.

#### **Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT)**

HMPPS note the Board's views that the ACCT approach is not fit for purpose. The HMPPS review in 2015 of the ACCT process did find it to be fit for purpose, but recognised issues around ineffective implementation on a local level. We are currently in the process of developing an updated version of ACCT which will be rolled-out in due course following a pause in these plans while efforts were focused on responding to the pandemic. The updated ACCT was subject to a pilot and HMPPS Psychology evaluation, which included interviews with both staff and prisoners, and a series of prisoner focus groups.

The revised ACCT document has a number of other work strands associated with it. This includes work to update our ACCT and wider safety training and providing detailed user guidance for staff. When developing both the training and ACCT user guidance we have considered and reflected on wider issues which are important in getting the ACCT process right, but which are also relevant to broader safety issues too. This includes principles around procedural justice, considering the underlying needs that are driving behaviour and ensuring these are met (including involving clinical staff in the ACCT process where there is an identified clinical need linked to self-harm or suicide thoughts or behaviour), and the importance of relationships and meaningful interactions between staff and prisoners.

We would also like to clarify that the sole purpose of ACCT is only to support prisoners who are at risk of self-harm and suicide. As mentioned, providing effective support to prisoners who are at risk of self-harm will of course include considering underlying needs that may be driving behaviours, however, the purpose of ACCT is not as an escalation route for other issues. It is also not intended to predict risk, but instead to ensure support is in place to reduce and mitigate this based on known information. It is for this reason that we have ensured our work related to ACCT covers these broader issues, so that a more holistic and preventative approach may be taken towards safety.

## **Violence**

The Challenge, Support and Intervention Plan (CSIP) case management approach is mandated across the adult estate and provides a framework for managing violence that is centred around the individual and their specific needs to help them manage and move away from violent behaviours. CSIP represents a whole prison approach and works alongside other processes in response to violence to ensure that there is equal focus on supporting individuals to change, rather than relying solely on punitive measures to change behaviours.

CSIP provides the framework for staff to take a multi-disciplinary approach by drawing on the range of skills and expertise from across the prison to work with the individual to help them manage their behaviour and achieve their goals in a non-violent way. Central to the CSIP process is a case manager working with the prisoner to understand what is driving behaviour, and collaboratively agreeing actions and goals in order to reduce the risk of violence. Actions can be owned by both the prisoner and/or staff, and communication throughout the CSIP process is key, as staff and the prisoner work through the process together, rather than the process being applied to the prisoner without them having the opportunity to input and shape their CSIP plan.

The Safety Diagnostic Tool provides staff with a wealth of information about a prisoner's custodial history and this tool is being used alongside CSIP by prisons to help inform who may benefit from proactive case management, to prevent violence rather than waiting for an individual to become violent.

Locally the senior leadership team at HMP/YOI Bedford has recently reviewed the prison's Purpose, Vision and Key Priorities. Reducing Violence is one of the key priorities and each function within the prison has a part to play in making this happen. A new Head of Violence Reduction has been appointed and is engaging well with colleagues and key business partners to reduce violence. The prison's monthly Safety Committee and weekly Use of Force governance meetings are now very well attended and there are better outcomes than in the past, including specific learning outcomes for staff.

Violence Reduction Peer Mentors have been appointed and work collaboratively with the Head of Violence Reduction and Head of Residence to improve safety outcomes. Regular consultation forums, chaired by the Head of Violence Reduction, are being held with the Violence Reduction Peer Mentors to look at ways in which violence can be reduced. All age groups attend, including Young Adults as they are more likely to be involved in violence at HMP/YOI Bedford.

## **Library Services**

Prisoners have limited secure access to the internet via the Virtual Campus (VC) allowing access to GOV.UK sites as well as several other sites including some BBC content. Job search facility and applications can be accessed via the VC. There are currently no plans to open the internet up to prisoners fully due to the many potential security issues this would incur.

Suffolk Libraries, the Provider at HMP/YOI Bedford, is looking to implement a library management system which will enable the monitoring of usage within the library function and improve wider participation. Suffolk Libraries will provide training for staff to deliver this. Stock is reviewed regularly to ensure it is

relevant to prisoners' needs and digital material is also included in the budget to support learners. Staff have access to online training to support learners needs and IT training is given to assist with any issues. The library's aim is to provide limited and safe access through IT to support prisoner's employment and education needs.

### **Lessons Learned as a Result of Covid-19**

HMPPS recognises the importance of drawing lessons from stage 4 and stage 3 regime restrictions to inform the plan for recovery activity going forward as well as any post-Covid arrangements. A number of reviews have been undertaken by various departments to understand the mechanics of our response to the pandemic. The aim of these is not only to simply shed more light on the actions that have been taken, but also inform a more effective model in responding to the continuous community restrictions as well as outbreaks in prisons.

Whilst recognising some positive effects of the lockdown, such as decrease in prisoner on prisoner violence, we are fully aware that maintaining lockdown can have significant negative impact on prisoner's wellbeing and mental health. That is why it remains our commitment that we offer as generous regime as possible whilst relying on public health guidance in ensuring that our prisoners and staff are as protected as much as possible from the risk of Covid-19 transmission. This is clearly shown in our response to the National Restrictions period between 5 November and 2 December 2020. With the lockdown being introduced in the community we have put necessary measures in place to stop the spread of Covid-19 but did not revert to full prison-wide lockdown. Establishments were allowed to maintain their Covid-safe Stage 3 regime unless there was clear necessity to restrict regimes further, e.g. based on Outbreak Control team advice.