



██████████
Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Highpoint
Stradishall
Newmarket
Suffolk
CB8 9YG

MoJ Ref: ADR 80136

10 August 2020

Dear ██████████,

**HMP HIGHPOINT: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 JANUARY– 31 DECEMBER 2019**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 December 2019. 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 note the Board's repeated concern regarding the facilities and maintenance service which, as you report, has a detrimental impact on living and working conditions within the establishment. HM Prison and Probation Service's (HMPPS) Prison Maintenance Group (PMG) have advised that improvements are being driven and a number of core services such as the reactive repair backlog are subject to performance measures and close monitoring. The back log stands at approximately 600 tasks. During 2019-20, 66% of all reported repairs were completed within agreed timeframes, compared to 77% to date for 2020-21.

Officials advise me that GFSL has experienced difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff to work at HMP Highpoint. This has resulted in more site management changes and a continued reliance upon agency and sub-contractor labour to deliver core services. As such, it will remain challenging until GFSL is able to provide full staffing. Still, I would like to reassure the Board that efforts are ongoing to achieve this through active recruitment processes and many staff converting from temporary to permanent positions.

HMP Highpoint has supported GFSL colleagues through decency and handyman working parties where prisoners help with painting, replace flooring and small repairs, such as plumbing, as well as deep cleaning. However, whilst the prison operates under a restricted regime due to Covid-19, the working party has naturally reduced in numbers.

Regarding the handling and transport of prisoners' property, I understand it is unfortunate and regrettable that the new Prisoners' Property policy framework is still not published. Officials tell me the framework is informed by a project involving stakeholders across HMPPS and the escort services. The project involved visiting 14 prisons, consultation with staff and prisoners, and engagement with external stakeholders such as the IMB Secretariat and Prisons and Probation Ombudsman. Its purpose was to support the policy review and identify areas where immediate and more long-term changes may be required to improve operational practice. The project is now concluded and I understand HMPPS officials are working closely with stakeholders to consult on proposed changes to the policy. Discussions ahead of consultation with IMB members began with the IMB Secretariat in late February 2020, and, 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. The feedback received from IMB members will then be considered alongside the comments received earlier this year from other stakeholders, with the intention that the revised draft policy framework will be circulated for wider consultation at the end of 2020.

In the meantime, I would like to reassure the Board that HMP Highpoint has local systems in place to transport property from prisoners who have transferred elsewhere using their own vehicle transport and, where possible, this is carried out on a monthly basis. Likewise, staff at HMP Highpoint will accept all property that is being transported. The backlog of property to be processed and handed out to prisoners has been eradicated and while local efforts to help prisoners with their property are acknowledged, staff continue to experience delays from other establishments.

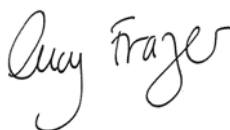
A new fleet of vehicles are being provided through the Prisoner Escort and Custody Service 4 Generation contract which starts in August 2020. The new vehicles will be able to transfer an additional half box of consumable items for each prisoner, such as products purchased in the prison shop. In addition to this, HMPPS is considering what more can be done to encourage prisoners to send out or dispose of excess items to reduce the amount of their property that cannot transfer with them. Steps are also being taken to ensure a consistent approach when prisons forward on any excess items to prisoners at their new establishments after transfers have taken place.

Despite your repeated concerns and understandable frustrations, it was encouraging to receive many positive comments such as the bus organised to collect families from Central London to help with visits, and improvements to the standard of cleanliness on residential units through the decency agenda. I note that you welcome the opening of the bespoke "Unit 16" and that you hope that the work done on this unit with prisoners who find it hard to fit into the normal regime will become a regular initiative. The Governor also reports positive feedback from HMPPS staff and the prisoners themselves. As you may know, the effectiveness of the approach is being formally evaluated. I was also pleased to hear about the Amends programme, particularly in relation to the prisoners who have informed you that it has turned their lives around. Good examples such as these demonstrate the determination and dedication of all those supporting this very welcome initiative. Thank you to all involved.

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 HMP Highpoint.

Yours sincerely

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

LUCY FRAZER QC MP

**HMP HIGHPOINT: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 JANUARY 2019 – 31 DECEMBER 2019**

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Equality and Diversity

HMPPS Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) training is accessible via eLearning on the intranet for all members of staff whether they are direct or non-direct HMPPS staff or operational or civilian members of staff. The decision whether this should be mandatory or discretionary staff training rests locally for each Governor or Prison Group Director to consider.

As part of the Lammy Review and Equality Strategy work, HMPPS D&I team are currently working alongside the Learning and Development team to design further training tools and materials in addition to the current packages which will support staff training. Training for prisoners is also a decision for Governors to make locally and where this is being done establishments are to liaise with the D&I team when developing locally designed training (for consistency and parity across HMPPS).

HMP Highpoint's D&I team conduct training with all new prison officers as part of the two-week induction package. In addition, this team advertises training packages published on the Civil Service Learning (CSL) website for staff. All prison managers in 2019 were required to undertake mandatory Diversity and Transgender training via the CSL website. With regards to prisoners, all new receptions into HMP Highpoint are provided with information and guidance on D&I and the Discrimination Incident Reporting Form process. HMP Highpoint have profiled for 17.5 hours of work to be undertaken by an officer for the D&I team which is in line with national standards. These hours are ring-fenced unless there is a significant operational need. Prior to implementation of the Emergency Regime these hours were being met.

Dentistry

NHS England and NHS Improvement note the Board's comments and share their concern that access to dental care within the prison should be equivalent to that in the community. As I am sure the Board will appreciate, acting on the response to Covid-19 has prevented all access to dental care within the prison estate. The move to restore services is now starting and Care UK will be asked to ensure appointments are offered according to clinical priority and waiting times will be monitored. However, due to Covid-19 restrictions, the dental team are providing care in line with the community model i.e. advice, analgesia and antibiotic prescribing. Urgent face to face appointments will be facilitated if deemed necessary and where the community model does not meet the need.

The new dentistry provider contract will commence from 1st September 2020 and will be overseen by NHS England and NHS Improvement.

Drug Supply

Mandatory Drug Testing (MDT) remains very effective and the only comprehensive means of monitoring drug misuse. A comprehensive programme of work and procurement is underway to improve the effectiveness of MDT, which will include routinely testing for emerging drugs.

HMPPS is undertaking a number of actions to improve the reporting accuracy of MDT and effectiveness of the MDT programme. Two new Synthetic Cannabinoids were added in October 2019 and in January 2020 HMPPS began testing routinely for Tramadol. Subject to available funding, testing for Gabapentin and Pregabalin will commence in due course. A drug prevalence study is currently being undertaken which may result in further changes to the programme.

In addition, HMPPS developed a National Prison Drugs Strategy published in 2019. The strategy supports prisons with guidance to develop and implement Local Prison Drug Strategies to restrict the supply of

drugs, reduce demand through rehabilitative activities and support prisoners to build recovery from substance misuse.

HMPPS is also investing in enhanced gate security as well as X-Ray body scanners for prisons on an unprecedented scale as part of the £100 million investment announced last summer. This investment will help us to go further and move faster when it comes to improving prison security and tackling the drug supply to prisons.

Locally, HMP Highpoint is now equipped with an X-Ray scanner to detect any suspicious incoming mail for the presence of illicit substances and this action has resulted in an increased number of found substances. Psycho-social support is available to prisoners who use substances.

Since January 2020, where there has been a strong indication from a drug dog and/or identified through the scanning of incoming mail, staff will provide prisoners with a photocopy of their mail as opposed to receiving the original copy as it is likely to contain illicit substances. This initiative is being piloted on the North site with a view to expanding it to the South. As well as this, staff at HMP Highpoint are working with regional teams and solicitor firms to identify any fraudulent mail marked under Rule 39 (that cannot be opened by prison staff) but have not been sent by legal professions. This work is ongoing.