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Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Lowdham Grange
Lowdham
Nottingham
NG14 7DA

MoJ ref: ADR80755

10 August 2020

Dear ██████████,

**HMP LOWDHAM GRANGE: 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 am pleased to hear that your newly appointed members have successfully completed their training period and are already regarded as valued members.

I acknowledge once more the Board's ongoing concern for prisoners with mental health and transferring them to an appropriate setting. I would like to reassure you that we are determined to improve the transfer process, ensure delays are reduced and avoid prisons being used inappropriately. The Secretary of State for Justice is committed to working with the Secretary of State for Health (with health partners) to articulate a coherent picture of how healthcare is delivered throughout the criminal justice pathway. Government resources and priorities are currently being directed to the response to Covid-19, but we remain committed to continuing bilateral discussions on this topic when it is appropriate to do so.

We are also continuing to work in close collaboration with health partners to make sure that, where appropriate, vulnerable offenders are diverted away from custody and, where possible, from the criminal justice system altogether. This includes Health and Justice (H&J) partners working together through the Community Sentence Treatment Requirement Programme, to ensure greater use is made of mental health, alcohol and drug treatment requirements as part of community sentences. In addition, revised guidance on the transfer and remission to hospital from prison, to improve the support offered to vulnerable prisoners, will be published later in the year. This will promote timely access to appropriate treatment under the Mental Health Act and should reduce unnecessary delays to treatment. This Government is also committed to legislate to reform the Mental Health Act and is working on producing a White Paper in the coming months.

In addition, NHS England and NHS Improvement are scoping work to closely track and follow up patients on the transfer list through fortnightly communication with case managers to review those individuals on the list. Ultimately, the issue of moving patients within the 14-day period (soon to be a 28-day time frame) to a secure bed involves H&J having close liaison with specialised commissioning to ensure patients receive a timely transfer, and working collaboratively with the health provider. As I am sure you will appreciate, this is subject to capacity of secure hospital beds across the country. H&J will continue to work with HMP Lowdham Grange to scope other potential opportunities to improve the patient quality, service and experience. Still, I am pleased that locally the Board notes greater involvement of the mental health team in terms of the work of the unit, work with the prisoners and their attendance at segregation reviews.

I also acknowledge your ongoing concern about those prisoners who remain in prison serving indeterminate sentences of Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP). Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) remains committed to doing all it can to support the progression of IPP sentenced prisoners and to help them reduce their risk to the point where the independent Parole Board determines that they may be safely released. The work to improve the management and progression of those serving IPP sentences has been underway for some time and is continuing via the joint IPP Action Plan, developed in partnership with the Parole Board. HMPPS is prioritising post-tariff prisoners in accessing rehabilitative interventions which includes Psychology Service led reviews and enhanced case management for those prisoners who have a complex set of risks and needs. Progression Regimes have also been developed at four prisons across the country dedicated to supporting indeterminate prisoners who are struggling to achieve release via the usual routes.

Across the custodial estate, the population of prisoners serving IPP sentences was over 6,000 at its peak in 2012. The latest published figures show the unreleased IPP population stood at 1,969 at the end of June 2020, which is itself a reduction from 2,134 at the end of December 2019 – demonstrating the improvement in opportunities available to IPP prisoners to progress in their sentence. However, it is important to note that, as the unreleased IPP population continues to decrease, those remaining in the prison population present the most complex and challenging cases. Many of these prisoners are still assessed as posing a high risk of committing further violent or sexual offences. HMPPS will continue to work with these individuals to offer them opportunities to reduce their identified risks but ultimately these risks must be addressed before the Parole Board can consider the prisoners' release.

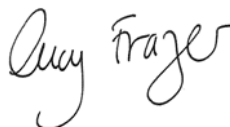
Unfortunately, regime restrictions in response to Covid-19 led to the postponement of the opening of the Wellbeing Centre which will facilitate programmes aimed at helping long-term prisoners. Exceptional Delivery Models (EDMs) to support the recovery plan are a key priority for HMPPS. HMP Lowdham Grange is working proactively to develop Local Operating Procedures based on the EDM requirements, to safely reintroduce regimes.

Turning to some positives captured in your report, it was encouraging to hear about the innovative projects at HMP Lowdham Grange that build positive relations between prisoners, such as the Prisoner Advice Line and the Chaplaincy's Sycamore Tree project, building trust between different communities. It is positive that staff are also keenly aware of prisoners' needs, whether it is providing reasonable adjustments for disabilities, respecting religious practices, or promoting special family day events.

Lastly, with credit to the Director's strategy for tackling recruitment and retention, I am pleased staffing numbers stabilised and it is possible that these efforts have helped bring violence levels down, particularly serious assaults against staff. I note you have raised some local issues of concern in your report which the Director 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 Lowdham Grange.

Yours sincerely



LUCY FRAZER QC MP

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

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Prisoners' Property

It is unfortunate and regrettable that the new Prisoners' Property policy framework is still not published. 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 HMPPS is 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.

The Prisoner Escort and Custody Service 4 Generation new contract started in August 2020, the new fleet of vehicles allow for an additional half box of consumable items to be carried for each prisoner. 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.

Locally, staff will continue with their efforts to follow up any property related complaints.

Prison Operator Contract

The Ministry of Justice has already undertaken extensive work to plan for an effective expiry and transfer of the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract as well as other PFI contracts that are ending in a similar timeframe.

A dedicated project team is working closely with experts from across the department and government, as well as the Special Purpose Vehicles (SPV) and the current prison operator Serco, to manage the expiry of the contract and the safe transition to a new service provider that delivers value for money for the taxpayer and minimises disruption to frontline services.

No decisions have been made on whether the new service provider will be public or private as this decision would be made through the usual business case process. However, if a decision is made to compete, a framework of providers meeting the requirements for the delivery of core custodial service is in place and they would be eligible to participate in a mini-competition to identify the most suitable operator following expiry of PFI contract at HMP Lowdham Grange.