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Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Wakefield
5 Love Lane
Wakefield, West Yorkshire
WF2 9AG

MoJ Ref: ADR 78929

12 June 2020

Dear ██████,

**HMP WAKEFIELD: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 MAY 2018 – 30 APRIL 2019**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 30 April 2019. I am sorry to hear of the problems experienced around the recruitment of suitably qualified volunteers and so my office has asked the IMB Secretariat to respond to you directly. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work and commitment in capturing these helpful observations despite being very short of Board members.

I am also extremely grateful to the Board for monitoring the conditions of a prisoner with mental health issues who was held in segregation and for intervening as and when they did. Situations such as these demonstrate the determination and dedication of all those supporting the process, which in turn enabled the prisoner to be transferred and receive treatment in hospital. Thank you to all involved.

Turning to the Board's concerns about the delays in transferring prisoners with serious and acute mental health conditions to a mental health hospital, the Secretary of State for Justice is committed to working with the Secretary of State for Health (and 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 the Covid-19 crisis, but we are committed to continuing bilateral discussions on this topic when it is appropriate to do so. To improve the support offered to vulnerable offenders already in custody, revised guidance on the transfer and remission to hospital from prison is to be published later in the year. The new guidance will promote timely access to appropriate treatment under the Mental Health Act and reduce unnecessary delays to treatment. This Government is committed to legislate to reform the Mental Health Act and as such is working to produce a White Paper in the coming months.

In addition, in 2018 the Long Term and High Security Estate (LTHSE) implemented a Pathways to Progression initiative jointly led by senior operational and clinical managers working within the LTHSE. A major strand of this project is improving and aligning joint working with NHS partners, including secure forensic health settings. We have subsequently seen across the LTHSE improvements in engagement between prisons and particularly high security hospitals, which has benefitted several individuals by facilitating swifter and more meaningful pathways between prison, hospital and vice versa.

I am sorry to hear you were misinformed last year that the introduction of key workers had already resulted in lower than expected levels of violence at HMP Wakefield. Although this remains one of the aims of the key worker scheme, at the time of your report their impact had not yet been seen. It is

however encouraging to hear that over the same reporting period for 2019/20, with the key worker role fully embedded, HMP Wakefield has seen a reduction in overall violence by 21%. Although the Ministry of Justice Data and Analytical Services are monitoring trends in violence statistics of prisons delivering key work, I am sure you will appreciate that it is still considered too early to observe the full impact of key work.

I recognise the Board's concerns relating to Indeterminate Sentences for Public Protection (IPP) sentences. HM 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 that 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 to access rehabilitative interventions, including Psychology Service led reviews and enhanced case management for those with a complex set of risks and needs. Progression Regimes have also been developed at four prisons across the country (at HMP Warren Hill, Buckley Hall, Erlestoke and Humber), which are dedicated to supporting indeterminate prisoners who are struggling to achieve release via the usual routes.

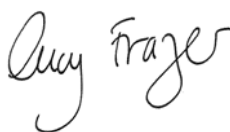
Across the custodial estate, the population of prisoners serving IPP sentences was at its peak in 2012 when it numbered over 6,000. The latest published figures show that the IPP population stood at 2,039 at the end of March 2020, which is itself a reduction from 2,315 at the end of June 2019 - demonstrating the improvement in opportunities available to IPP prisoners to progress in their sentence and an increasing number of releases in recent years. It is important to note that, as the unreleased IPP population continues to decrease, of those remaining an increasing proportion are the most complex and challenging cases, meaning the release rate will not be sustainable. As I am sure the Board will understand, many of these prisoners still pose a high risk of committing further violent or sexual offences, and have a complex set of risks and needs. These must be addressed before the Parole Board can consider release. This is not a simple task and HMPPS continues to work with these individuals to offer opportunities to help lower their risk to the public.

Turning to some of the positives captured in your report, it was encouraging to read your comments that you continue to be impressed by the regime and by the professionalism of staff who not only demonstrate courage on a daily basis but also treat prisoners with dignity and humanity. I am pleased to note the smooth transfer to the new education provider and to hear the many teams that the Board has commended for organising purposeful activity, resettlement and intervention programmes.

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 Wakefield.

Yours sincerely



LUCY FRAZER QC MP

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Prisoners' Property Framework

It is unfortunate and regrettable that prisoners' property continues to be an issue. 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 e.g. 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.

The development of the new Prisoners' Property Policy Framework (informed by a project undertaken in summer 2019) 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. HMPPS are working closely with IMBs and other stakeholders to consult on proposed changes and shape the revised content ahead of wider consultation and publication. In the light of the impact of COVID-19, HMPPS will agree with the IMB Secretariat when consultation can take place.

Staff Security Clearance

All staff who work within HMPPS, must pass an Enhanced Level clearance as a very minimum requirement and delays are not currently being faced at this stage of the process. There are certain roles that require additional National Security Vetting levels (NSV), such as Counter Terrorism Checks, and these are necessary for the LTHSE.

To provide some further clarity regarding the process of gaining clearance, Shared Services Centre Limited the provider undertakes HMPPS Enhanced Level checks and administers the NSV check (with the check itself undertaken by a third party United Kingdom Security Vetting - who are the sole Government agency supplying the check).

NSV is a process that has no defined timescales and, although expectations are set that it typically takes a circa of two months, applications can often take some significant time to complete. HMPPS cannot influence these checks to be done expeditiously. Whilst admittedly frustrating, these checks are a necessary part of the process in ensuring the safety of the applicant, staff and individuals in HMPPS care.