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Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMYOI Cookham Wood  
Sir Evelyn Road  
Rochester  
Kent  
ME1 3LU

MoJ Ref: SUB 85038

10 February 2021

Dear ████████,

**HMYOI COOKHAM WOOD: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 AUGUST 2019 – 31 AUGUST 2020**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 August 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.

I acknowledge that the Board is still concerned about the lack of hospital beds for children and young people (CYP) diagnosed with mental health conditions and the transfer waiting time. As outlined in my response of 1 May 2020, NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE/I) and HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) are considering ways to improve the pathway and placements for this cohort. NHSE/I commissioners are working with the health providers locally to improve their strategy for managing CYP with very complex needs. For CYP awaiting a transfer, individual support plans are developed to provide enhanced support.

A Reforming the Mental Health Act white paper was published on 13 January 2021, which builds on recommendations made by Professor Sir Simon Wessely's Independent Review in 2018. The white paper committed to take forward the Review's recommendation to introduce a statutory time limit of 28 days for transfers to mental health hospitals when someone becomes unwell in custody or experiences a relapse in an existing condition. Locally, the regional Commissioner at the time of writing has confirmed there are currently two individuals requiring a transfer under the Mental Health Act although the number can change on a daily basis. There are dedicated staff available at the establishment to offer emotional support and ensure CYP can access therapeutic services.

I also acknowledge your concern about the delays in transferring 18-year olds to the young adult estate. It is recognised that delays often arise when Governors consider the impact on stability and security, and have to enact additional planning for certain individual CYP, who are to transition into their establishment. Work is ongoing to streamline transition arrangements, and this includes the setting up of a transitions' working group. The new policy framework for transitioning 18-year olds from the CYP Secure Estate will help formalise the current process and aid safe and timely transfers. Whilst the framework awaits publication, where youth establishments encounter difficulties with a transfer, staff will liaise with the Placements Team within the Youth Custody Service (YCS). The Governor will also monitor HMYOI Cookham Wood's transition progress and escalate issues to the relevant adult estate accordingly. NHSE/I are also working with providers of health services on site to develop specific interventions to prepare young people for the experience of transition to the adult estate.

I note the Board's request for an urgent review of court procedures to avoid children enduring long periods in custody while on remand. We ensured throughout this pandemic that youth cases have been prioritised and regularly reviewed, especially cases that involve youths in custody. I would like to reassure the Board that HM Courts and Tribunals Service in conjunction with the judiciary are working to prioritise trials involving youth defendants, and youth cases will be continually reviewed to ensure that they remain a top priority.

In response to the Board's comments about HMYOI Cookham Wood's regime, since September 2020 when restrictions eased, a proactive approach was taken to increase time out of room. Unfortunately, HMYOI Cookham Wood experienced a recent outbreak of coronavirus, so to limit the transmission of the virus the Governor has had to immediately review the regime again to ensure that risks are manageable. It is the priority of HMPPS to maintain the safety and wellbeing of those in custodial settings. HMPPS plan for easing restrictions (and re-introducing them where necessary) will be guided by public health advice alongside an operational assessment of what can be safely implemented. As I am sure the Board will appreciate, as soon as it is safe and appropriate to do so a regime recovery plan will be implemented through a bespoke Exceptional Delivery Model. Ongoing discussions with partner agencies and unions about the delivery of education lessons / purposeful activity during the recovery stage will continue.

Regarding your comments about apprenticeships, unfortunately given the structure of many apprenticeships, whereby a certain number of hours spent with an employer is necessary, it is not always possible to guarantee a CYP will be eligible for release. It is also important for CYP and employers to be able to ensure continuity and if a CYP has been placed away from home and/or is serving a short sentence, this continuity cannot be guaranteed. YCS is pursuing ways of making education and vocational delivery more flexible and attuned to the needs of CYP. YCS is retendering learning services to a revised specification and establishing with the Department for Education ways in which the new T-Levels courses can offer quality vocational qualifications.

Turning to some positive comments captured in your report, it was encouraging to hear that staff are caring in their work and are sympathetic to the CYP needs. I also note your praise to the Novus educational staff for their contribution during the reporting year. I was pleased to hear there continues to be an excellent range of release on temporary licence opportunities on offer at HMYOI Cookham Wood.

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 HMYOI Cookham Wood.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lucy Frazer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**LUCY FRAZER QC MP**

## HMYOI COOKHAM WOOD: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 AUGUST 2019 – 31 AUGUST 2020

### HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

#### **Long Sentenced CYP / Additional Care**

To improve the quality of sentence plans and working relationships with Youth Offending Teams (YOT), department managers now attend complex reviews and provide quality assurance. HMYOI Cookham Wood is committed to improving sentence planning further and is currently introducing a resettlement file for all CYP to have in their possession which will include all necessary documents such as their sentence plan. Unless it is considered inappropriate, families will also be provided with a copy along with the YOT and Custody Support Plan officer. This will help to improve collective team working and the support for CYP.

In order to keep staff and CYP safe an Enhanced SECURE STAIRS (ESS) Team, comprising of colleagues from across YCS, psychology and NHSE/I have been mobilised at pace to provide a blanket of support and advice. This takes particular account of the vulnerabilities of CYP with complex needs.

Cookham Wood's Enhanced Support Services have ensured that those CYP with a particular risk and needs have an ESS, and where necessary, advice and support is sought from the multi-agency Critical Case Pathway, including NHSE/I, YCS and Psychology Services.

#### **Phoenix Unit**

In December 2020 Phoenix unit was closed. Funding has been approved for the refurbishment of the unit repurposing it as an outreach day care unit for those individuals with complex needs. This new unit is planned to open this year. The scope of work includes window replacement, installation of in-room shower pods, new flooring and wall plastering. This project is anticipated to be completed at the end of March 2021 subject to Covid-19 restrictions and is hoped will address the points raised in section 5.1 of your report.

#### **In-room Facilities**

It is recognised the importance of having in-cell telephony across the estate as it allows easier access to family/friends and other support frameworks. The In-Cell Telephony project has now completed just over 60% of the estate, which includes HMYOI Cookham Wood.

Funding has been approved for HMYOI Cookham Wood to be equipped with in-cell devices (additional to the telephony system). The devices will have a content hub which includes notices, blogs, account balances and restricted YouTube content. The vision is to add educational activities and a self-service platform to the devices. Implementation rollout is imminent with a completion date set for March 2021, subject to Covid-19 restrictions.

#### **Education Block**

The YCS has approved funding (2020/21) to create a secure walkway from the residential block to the education block. It is anticipated that this project will be delivered this year and will enable timely controlled access from accommodation to education.