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Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Channings Wood
Denbury, Newton Abbott
Devon
TQ12 6DW

MoJ ref: SUB 085133

10 February 2021

Dear ██████████,

**HMP CHANNINGS WOOD: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 SEPTEMBER 2019 – 31 AUGUST 2020**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31st 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 was saddened to hear there were three deaths this reporting year; every death is a tragedy. My officials take recommendations from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman very seriously.

I acknowledge that despite the concerted efforts from prison and healthcare staff, there are often significant delays in transferring prisoners diagnosed with mental ill health to a secure hospital when the transfer is outside Devon, Cornwall and Wiltshire clinical commissioning group (CCG) catchment area. I am grateful to the Board for providing some background to this. Depending on the originating CCG, different NHS Providers are responsible for not only assessing but providing the secure mental health care which can cause unfortunate delays.

Regionally, the health Commissioner has confirmed that secure transfers remain a priority for NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE/I) South West and the Nursing and Quality team are working with commissioners and the New Care Model Provider Collaborative Leads to establish an effective escalation protocol. There are other workstreams ongoing in the South West which NHSE/I have contributed to and they also support the relocation of HMP Channings Wood's constant supervision cell to a more suitable area to aid privacy.

An Early Days Mental Health Practitioner pilot is taking place across six sites HMPs Emley, Exeter, Lewes, Portland, Winchester and Bristol, which will provide additional support to prisoners during the initial stages of their time in custody. The pilot will be evaluated to build a visual concise display of the steps currently involved in physical and mental health needs assessments (including health screening). It aims to identify where value and non-value-added activities need addressing to align with national legislative, regulatory and regional/ local requirements. The pilot will conclude with a report on the findings, setting out recommendations for short, medium- and long-term cost-effective process and operational efficiencies to improve the patients experience and health outcomes.

Alongside this work, 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.

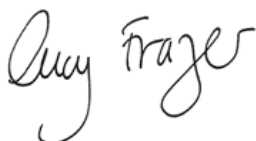
Although the issue remains by no means straightforward, NHSE/I invite the Board to have an open dialogue with them during or after your monitoring activity to provide clarity on health-related issues.

Turning to some positive points captured in your report, it was encouraging to receive your comments that overall HMP Channings Wood is a well-run prison that treats prisoners with fairness and operates within a safe environment. I am grateful to the Board for highlighting the achievements of the Governor, his staff and the Chaplaincy team in managing the prison when it had very early cases of Covid-19. I welcome the supporting family ties initiatives implemented throughout the lockdown and was pleased to learn that the handling of prisoners' complaints continued to improve.

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. HM Prison and Probation Service (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 Channings 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

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Prisoners' Property

It is unfortunate that it has not yet been possible to publish the new Prisoners' Property policy framework. Having completed discovery work by visiting around 15 prisons HMPPS has been 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 February 2020, who proposed meetings take place with Board members in April that year. In light of the pressures placed on Boards by Covid-19, HMPPS agreed with the IMB Secretariat to pause this consultation. A meeting with IMB representatives took place in August 2020 and the feedback received from those members is being considered alongside other contributions. There has been a slight delay in HMPPS being able to circulate a revised draft policy framework because of the need to ensure sufficient operational engagement. That work is now progressing well and HMPPS anticipates that the draft framework will be circulated for wider consultation shortly.

The Prisoner Escort and Custody Services (PECS) provide transportation for custodies and their property. The vehicle fleet is designed to carry the number of custodies it is intended for, together with their property in line with the volumetric limit. The new PECS contract which commenced late August 2020 included a new modern vehicle fleet with increased capacity to facilitate an additional half bag of property for consumables to the limit of 7.5kg. PECS has not received any complaints regarding property involving HMP Channings Wood in the last 12 months.

Self-Harm

Self-harm trends and drivers are monitored as part of HMP Channings Wood's safety strategy resulting in action planning and interventions to reduce self-harm. To support the strategy and ensure that safety is embedded in the culture of the establishment, HMP Channings Wood has increased the number of staff trained in the Assessment Care in Custody Teamwork (ACCT) case management system, and support and supervision is provided regularly to case managers.

HMPPS is planning to commence roll-out of the revised version of the ACCT this year (previously planned for Spring 2020 but paused due to the pandemic). This should provide a better framework for supporting those at risk of self-harm through a more tailored and multi-disciplinary support model that focuses on the needs of an individual.

The Listeners service has continued to be delivered at HMP Channings Wood and is being supported by the Samaritans remotely. Critical individuals considered at heightened risk are closely monitored and receive regular wellbeing checks. The weekly Safety and Intervention meeting coordinates the support provided for these individuals. HMPPS recognises that anxieties around the virus and restricted regimes may increase the risk of self-harm and therefore will continue to work to mitigate this as far as possible. A range of products to support Governors have been produced in devising and implementing local safety and welfare plans, including tailored guidance for supporting specific groups of people in prison whose wellbeing may be more impacted by the Covid-19 measures. This includes older prisoners, those with learning disabilities and/or autism, transgender prisoners, and groups known to be at increased risk of self-harm, suicide, or violence. This has also included guidance on continuing multi-disciplinary working whilst practicing safe social distancing and how to safely conduct wellbeing checks. Purple Visits (family

video calls) have been introduced which provide continued family contact and a variety of distraction packs to support wellbeing and keep prisoners occupied in their cell.

Drugs

The Government has made a firm commitment to tackling criminality in prisons, including the supply of drugs. A £100 million package delivered through the Security Investment Programme aims to disrupt the supply of illicit items into prisons, including HMP Channings Wood, in a number of innovative ways.

HMPPS's first line of defence has been to physically prevent illicit items reaching the wings. At HMP Channings Wood X-ray body scanners are being introduced, along with additional capabilities to prevent the supply of drugs and other illicit articles: including archway metal detectors, additional drug detection dogs and a dedicated search team. This is hoped to be in place by March 2021. Once procurement is complete, the prison will also receive specialist equipment for detecting correspondence impregnated with drugs; closing off a further avenue for supply of illicit substances.

The second line of defence is to prevent those in custody from organising the supply of drugs, by implementing mobile phone blocking technology. HMPPS are installing fixed mobile phone blocking capability at a number of sites within the prison estate, as well as portable blocking and detection capability in dedicated search teams, which can be deployed dynamically in response to identified risks or threats.

These approaches are complimented by a third line of defence from which HMP Channings Wood will also benefit. This has been to invest further in counter-corruption, intelligence-gathering within prisons and creating a Multi-Agency Response to Serious and Organised Crime. These measures allow staff to identify, and take effective action against, those with links to serious organised crime who orchestrate the influx and market of drugs and other contraband within prisons. HMPPS will continue to evaluate the effects these measures achieve in combatting the serious threats posed by illegal substances to offenders' rehabilitation and to prison security.

As identified by the Board, debt is a significant driver and as the regime reopens it is recognised this will have an underlying impact. To counter this, HMP Channings Wood has a debt strategy already in place. Intelligence is also shared at the monthly security meeting and bi-monthly drug strategy meeting to ensure that collaborative learning and structured interventions to combat drugs are planned and delivered. Staff have been trained to use an atomiser to identify incoming mail and parcels containing drugs. Following a risk assessment when there is clear evidence that poses a risk to the prison, staff are authorised to photocopy the prisoner's mail as opposed to handing the original item.

HMP Channings Wood has increased the number of perimeter checks and improved visual deterrents through signage and warnings relating to drone flying. The local community also support the prison by reporting suspicious activity observed and there are strong links with the local police to establish Organised Crime and County Lines activity in the area.

Equality and Diversity

As identified by the Board, HMP Channings Wood has experienced significant staff shortages over the reporting year, which led to a reduced number of hours dedicated to equalities. Steps have now been taken to ensure any redeployment of the equalities officer is approved by a senior manager, which has led to a significant increase in time dedicated to the role and raised its profile within the establishment. Some concerns have featured on the monthly Safer Custody and Equality meeting agenda and are being addressed.

In addition to this, a Diversity and Inclusion staff training package is being developed to enable staff to learn from others and adopt best practice procedures from throughout the estate.