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Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP/YOI Brinsford  
1 New Road, Featherstone  
Wolverhampton  
WV10 7PY

MoJ Ref: SUB 085430

23 February 2021

Dear ██████████,

**HMP/YOI BRINSFORD: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 JULY 2019 – 30 JUNE 2020**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 30 June 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 during the reporting year.

I fully understand the Board's repeated concerns about the handling of prisoners' property and recognise the frustration and distress this causes to prisoners. 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 HM Prison and Probation Service (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 it is anticipated that the draft policy framework will be circulated for wider consultation shortly.

The Prisoner Escort and Custody Services 4 Generation contract also began during August 2020 with a new fleet of vehicles which allow for an additional half box of consumable items to the limit of 7.5kg to be carried for each prisoner on top of the existing agreed volumetric limits. As previously advised, HMPPS is also taking steps 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. While digital improvements are being explored, the nature of that work means that any digital changes are likely to take longer to develop.

You note that the loss of property is further compounded by the poor standard of responses to complaints. A new Prisoner Complaints Policy Framework was implemented on 1 August 2019 together with supporting guidance, incorporating a problem-solving approach at the core of both the submission and response stages of complaints. Responses must address the issues raised and use language which is easy to understand and takes account of any individual needs. Senior managers are required to periodically sample responses, with the sampling amount to be decided locally by the Governor/Director.

Locally at HMP/YOI Brinsford assurance checks are being undertaken regarding property and complaints. An improvement plan has been introduced to improve systems, including appropriate secure accommodation for property, limited access to mitigate loss and a follow-up transporting arrangement for property. Complaints are being monitored through the performance meeting.

Turning to your repeated concerns about the education provider, as outlined in my response of 3 June 2020 a Notice to Improve for Lot 15 (the West Midlands lot, which includes HMP/YOI Brinsford) was formally communicated in May 2020, with the provider (Novus) producing an action plan to improve performance. This plan focuses on the quality and quantity of the Novus provision, with specific actions and targets for the recruitment and retention of staff, as well as the improvement of the quality of provision. These actions are reviewed both locally and regionally alongside the HMPPS National Quality and Contract Management Teams. Weekly meetings are held with Novus to discuss progress and all actions are scrutinised in detail. Monthly meetings are also chaired by the HMPPS Prison Group Director with attendance from the HMPPS Contract Management Team and Ministry of Justice (MoJ) Commercial colleagues, where there are further reviews of progress against the improvement plan.

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, and with a further period of national lockdown, HMPPS will continue to work with Novus on the actions that are achievable despite local or national restrictions. The ongoing review of the action plan has had a positive impact on Novus' recruitment activity, resulting in the four vacancies identified in May 2020, now all being filled. HMPPS will continue to monitor and push for improvements from the provider at both HMP/YOI Brinsford and in the overall West Midlands Lot to ensure learners receive the education and support they need.

I recognise the Board's request that more focus should be given to providing prisoners with basic maths and English skills in a work setting, rather than in a classroom. Plans are in place at HMP/YOI Brinsford to provide outreach support in workshops and work parties to enhance these skills.

It was encouraging to receive your comments that HMP/YOI Brinsford remains a safe prison and that despite a very restricted regime since March 2020, prisoners are treated fairly. I was pleased to read your praise of the chaplaincy team who have contributed significantly to the positive atmosphere at the prison, and the excellent work carried out by the healthcare department.

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/YOI Brinsford.

Yours sincerely

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

**LUCY FRAZER QC MP**

## Annex

### HMP/YOI BRINSFORD: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JULY 2019 – 30 JUNE 2020

#### HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

##### **Education**

###### *Choice of educational courses*

The prison's Learning and Skills Manager is currently engaging in discussions with the local education manager and Novus Lot Manager about the curriculum for the new contract year. The majority of the courses being considered are orientated towards employment both within the prison and also on release or release on temporary licence. These courses reflect both labour market information and input from serving prisoners through a needs' analysis. It is intended that the prison will offer a blended learning route that links education into prison-based academies, where prisoners will be able to gain both practical skills and the underlying knowledge. These academies will also then feed into paid employment within the prison and through partnerships being developed with New Futures Network, potentially into paid employment on release.

The courses under review include barbering, window fitting, catering, landscaping/horticulture, Mentoring Level 2 and 3, carpentry, construction skills and multi-skills (plumbing, tiling, electrical). In addition, to ensure that all prisoners are able to access education, there will be some provision for in-cell study, supported by a structure of study groups and one-to-one tutor time. As mentioned above, existing prison work parties will also benefit from an outreach service for maths and English. All courses will be subject to robust quality management through lesson observations, learning walks and prisoner feedback. Closer links will be formed with the PE staff to build physical education into the curriculum and allow some joint enterprise to take place.

###### *Contracts*

HMPPS take a very pro-active role in managing the Prison Education Framework (PEF) contract. The contract is designed around a hybrid model that acknowledges the role that Governors have in holding the provider to account locally whilst the HMPPS Contract Team can ensure contractual obligations are met both by the provider and the establishment.

The PEF contracts have a range of supplier obligations plus quarterly performance payments linked to the quality of the teaching which require the provider to meet suitable levels of performance or face financial penalties. Service level 3, which is the Teacher Quality Management Plan (TQMP) requires Governors to sign off Novus performance on a quarterly basis. Monthly performance meetings with the use of the Curious Management Information System are used to monitor and challenge performance prior to sign off. During Contract Year 1 (April 2019 - March 2020) HMP/YOI Brinsford did not approve the TQMP for two of the four quarters. Since the introduction of the Notice to Improve, and continued monitoring of performance, the prison has approved all TQMPs for Contract Year 2.

Since the introduction of restrictions by HMPPS, which resulted in all face-to-face education being suspended in adult prisons, we have continued to work very closely with all PEF and Dynamic Purchasing System providers in England to support prisons. This has allowed learning to continue from the start of the pandemic via in-cell activity and learning packs.

However, following the announcement that England will enter a further period of national restrictions, HMPPS has temporarily directed all adult prisons to move into regime Stage 4 with immediate effect.

Education delivery will continue, with prisons working with their providers to ensure that remote learning material is provided to all learners even if the providers are unable to enter the establishment. All education providers are now equipped to provide course materials remotely.

## **Maintenance**

HMPPS Prison Maintenance Group (PMG) is committed to maintaining HMP/YOI Brinsford's infrastructure in good repair. The Governor, Service Delivery Manager and the on-site facilities team continue to meet monthly to discuss any issues of concern. Key performance targets are achieved with planned routine maintenance and reactive repairs continuing to be completed in a timely manner. The prison continues with the Clean, Rehabilitative, Enabling and Decent programme which through regular redecoration helps to maintain a clean and decent environment.

PMG, in consultation with the Governor during 2020-2021, successfully bid for the following projects which are all due to be completed by April 2021:

- Building Management System (Heating and Hot water Systems)
- Repairs to rain water systems
- Enhanced Learning Environment
- Residential Unit 5 Cell Flooring Replacement
- Video Conferencing Equipment

The MoJ is currently undertaking tender visits for site wide cell call and LED lighting replacement. This work, once completed, will improve safety and decency levels across the site. PMG bids for 2021-2022 are currently under development in order to continue with the proactive forward maintenance strategy.