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Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Garth
Ulnes Walton Lane,
Leyland, Preston
PR28 8NE

MoJ ref: ADR 081120

5 October 2020

Dear ██████████,

**HMP GARTH: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 DECEMBER 2018 – 30 NOVEMBER 2019**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 30 November 2019. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work in capturing these helpful observations, especially as you continued to be short of Board members for the second consecutive reporting year.

I appreciate the Board's concerns around category B training prisons. HM Prison and Probation Service's (HMPPS) Reconfiguration Project is working to rebalance the adult male prison estate and has already created additional category B training places with the re-role of HMP Woodhill in September 2019 and HMP Manchester in February 2020. Whilst progress to transition the prisons has been impacted by Covid-19, when both prisons have fully transitioned this will add approximately 1300 category B trainer places to the estate. In the current climate, training prisons are viewed as a national resource and will, therefore, receive men from across the country. However, as part of reconfiguration modelling, HMPPS is increasing access to the resettlement cohort where men could spend up to the last 24 months of their sentence held in a prison closer to home. This allows access to vital services and helps build or maintain family ties.

Further to my response earlier this year regarding prisoners serving indeterminate sentences of Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP), The Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act abolished the IPP sentence in December 2012 and that abolition was not applied retrospectively. This was due to the Government at the time taking the view that it would not be right or appropriate to retrospectively alter sentences that had been lawfully imposed prior to their abolition, as these sentences had been imposed with risk management issues in mind. Many of these prisoners are still assessed to pose a high risk of committing further violent or sexual offences, and therefore, cannot be released en masse. Consequently, it remains the case that those serving IPP sentences will be released only when the independent Parole Board conclude that the risk to the public is safely manageable in the community under probation supervision.

In addition to the HMPPS and Parole Board joint IPP Action Plan, HMPPS has developed Progression Regimes at four prisons across the country which are dedicated to progressing indeterminate prisoners struggling to achieve release via the usual routes.

The Offender Management in Custody model continues to be rolled out across the estate and includes a new Key Worker role which allows for more dedicated time to provide support to individual prisoners, including those serving an IPP sentence. A key purpose will be to engage prisoners in their rehabilitation and the coordination of their sentence. At HMP Garth, all men with an IPP sentence are now reviewed monthly by a member of the psychology team and there is close working with their offender manager to identify key concerns and provide a suitable pathway for the individual. Where HMP Garth is not able to provide the necessary pathway, a transfer to an appropriate site is pursued. The IPP Psychology lead at the prison regularly discusses with the Governor the best ways to support the IPP agenda.

The latest published figures show the unreleased IPP population stood at 1,969 at the end of June 2020. This is a reduction from 2,039 at the end of March 2020 and 2,134 at the end of December 2019. This is good progress and it is important to note that as the unreleased IPP population continues to decrease, there is a growing proportion of the most complex and challenging cases remaining in the population, and therefore, the current release rate may not be sustainable. As many of these prisoners 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 them opportunities to reduce their identified risks. I can assure the Board that HMPPS remains committed to doing all it can to support this cohort of prisoners in their progression and efforts to reduce their risk.

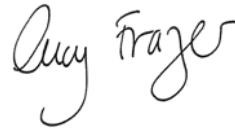
Regarding the accessibility of acute mental health beds in outside hospitals, the 2011 Prison Transfer and Remission Guidance has now been refreshed and amended following a comprehensive consultation process during summer 2019 and is awaiting publication as the planned release was impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Additionally, new mental health service specifications have been published for low and medium-secure hospitals. The Provider Collaboratives for adult medium and low secure care give local ownership to providers for the whole pathway, including the interface with the criminal justice system, and resource for their own populations, enabling them to make commissioning decisions to improve and integrate services. In respect of high secure care, a strategic commissioning plan will be developed by April 2021. This will describe the clinical model, pathways and capacity required for implementation during 2021/22.

I note that some of the Board's concerns are repeated issues. I was, therefore, encouraged to receive your comments about the Governor and senior management team's continued efforts towards maintaining and developing positive standards of management and care of prisoners. The reflection of the improved effectiveness of resolution of prisoners' complaints is pleasing. I was further encouraged to note that there is a proactive Equalities Team, that violence within the prison has been well contained by staff and helped by a consistent use of the privileges system together with the introduction and development of the key worker scheme, and that HM Inspectorate of Prisons follow-up inspection identified positive changes leading to improved scoring in most areas. I was also impressed to learn about the innovation of the workshop instructors who created a new lighting system that was recognised with a national award and which is now being supplied to other prisons.

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 Garth.

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

Annex

HMP GARTH: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 DECEMBER 2018 – 30 NOVEMBER 2019

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Prisoners' Property

It is unfortunate and regrettable that prisoners' property continues to be an issue. As the Board may be aware, the development of the new Prisoners' Property Policy Framework involved a large project undertaken in summer 2019. Following the conclusion of the project, HMPPS has worked 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, who proposed meetings take place with Board members in April. In light of the pressures placed on Boards by Covid-19, HMPPS agreed with the IMB Secretariat to pause this consultation until August and September. This work is now moving forward again, and the feedback received from IMB members at these meetings 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 new Prisoner Escort and Custody Service 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 be carried for each prisoner on top of the existing agreed volumetric limits. 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.

HMP Garth Specialist Units

The Beacon Unit is a well-established facility with a strong reputation throughout the Long Term and High Security Group of prisons. The relationship with the commissioners is very strong and there are no concerns about the continuation of the service. The Residential Support Unit has recently moved to E-wing to increase capacity. This is an embedded facility supporting those men who may struggle in mainstream location. This unit is within the baseline funding and there no plans to change its function.

The Building Hope Unit, however, has been a source of concern in terms of funding. Discussions are underway in relation to future resourcing, and the concept and benefits of the unit will need to be further researched to ensure that the operating model is fit for purpose.

Staffing

Recruitment and retention

HMP Garth's annual turnover of staff is slightly lower than the national average and HMPPS has little difficulty in filling vacancies as they arise. HMPPS continues to make improvements to all aspects of recruitment, training and retention processes to ensure we attract the right people with the right skills, however, it is acknowledged this cannot replace the invaluable experience we have lost over recent years. In October 2016, the Government published the Prison Reform White Paper which included a programme to recruit an additional 2,500 Prison Officers to increase the number of frontline staff to improve the security and safety across the Prison estate. Since October 2016 we have recruited more than 4,700 additional prison officers and staffing levels are now at their highest since 2012.

The Ministry of Justice Resourcing, Marketing and Attraction team continue to tailor HMPPS' attraction and communications to address different employment markets and continue to seek to attract a more diverse candidate pool. In addition, HMPPS has now invited former prison officers and probation staff to return to the service temporarily and applications are being processed to support us through these unprecedented times. HMPPS would like prison officers to stay and progress their careers. We have improved our induction processes to ease transition into the job, provide care and support for our staff and offer additional training. These measures are part of the work we are doing directly with Governors to address local issues and ensure experienced staff and new recruits remain in the service.

An independent Occupational Psychologist undertook a review of the prison officer recruitment process and job analysis and evaluation of the role itself. The report findings and recommendations were combined to create a new enhanced, efficient recruitment service to deliver ongoing volume recruitment for prison officers, managed through the Prison Officer Recruitment Programme. The Prison Officer Entry Level Training course has been redesigned recently and is now a Level 3 Custody and Detention Apprenticeship, taking new officers in the region of 12-18 months to complete. The apprenticeship was due to be rolled out across the estate in May 2020 but has been put on hold due to the Covid-19 pandemic. During this period all Officers will still receive the new and enhanced curriculum associated with the apprenticeship. HMPPS hopes to re-launch the apprenticeship in 2021.

Prison Officer Pay

Prison Officers pay is considered on an annual basis by the independent Prison Service Pay Review Body (PSPRB), based on evidence relating to private sector pay structures, public sector pay policy, recruitment and retention of staff, workforce statistics and the UK economy growth and inflation forecasts. The PSPRB consider the views from HMPPS alongside the evidence submitted from the trade unions and submit these recommendations for final approval and sign off by the Government. HMPPS also continues to incentivise and reward good and outstanding performance through non-financial rewards. The 2020 PSPRB Report was published on 22 July 2020. All but one of its recommendations was accepted by the Government and will result in an uplift to pay points for all prison officer grades of 2.5%. Changes to our policies have been made to incentivise Prison Officers to apply for promotions so that they continue their career with the service rather than look elsewhere. Work to develop clear career paths and professionalise the service is being worked on and this should provide development and promotion opportunities for experienced staff. This will aid motivation and help with supporting and mentoring new staff.