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Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP/YOI Stoke Heath  
Warrant Road  
Stoke Heath  
Market Drayton  
Shropshire  
TF9 2JL

MoJ Ref: SUB 082563

19 October 2020

Dear ██████████,

**HMP/YOI STOKE HEATH: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 MAY 2019 – 30 APRIL 2020**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 30 April 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 and the Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the Board's ability to gather information. I was sorry to hear of the ongoing problems experienced recruiting new Board members. The IMB Secretariat will respond to you directly on this issue.

I acknowledge the Board's comment that prisoners should have an opportunity to obtain qualifications in English and mathematics earlier on in their sentence, before they are transferred to a resettlement prison. I hope to reassure the Board that from a national perspective the revised arrangements for prison education, introduced in April 2019, provides prisoners with every opportunity to improve their skills whilst in custody. Prisoners are to be engaged and supported from their arrival in prison to their release to access learning and education that best meets their needs and ensures they can attain their personal, learning and employment goals to help enhance their ability to obtain and retain employment on release.

As part of the Prison Education Framework (PEF) and Dynamic Purchasing System delivery model mentioned in my response to the Board dated 7 January 2020, Governors must ensure that education providers deliver a core common curriculum of English, maths, Information and Communication Technology and English for Speakers of Other Languages. They can then decide upon the other services that will make up their education offer. Governors must also comply with 12 mandates that apply to learning delivered. Under this guidance Governors must commission English and maths provision tailored to the needs of the learners, but with a focus on progression to at least level 2. Common Awarding Organisations are also in place for several curriculum areas including these core subjects. This ensures that prisoners can transfer from one prison to the next without their learning being impacted, which assists with their attainment prior to being transferred to HMP/YOI Stoke Heath.

It might also help if I explain that Annual Delivery plans (ADPs) are developed by individual prisons prior to the commencement of the new educational year. These are completed in conjunction with the education provider and Regional Learning and Skills Managers. Labour market information is also reviewed and taken in to account. ADPs for contract year three are currently being discussed. HMP/YOI Stoke Heath often receive prisoners from HMP Birmingham and HMP Hewell.

These prisons have allocated over 27% of their education contract value on English and maths provision within their ADP to ensure prisoners have an opportunity to obtain such qualifications. This has seen quite positive outcomes in terms of the overall number of prisoners gaining English and maths qualifications prior to being transferred to HMP/YOI Stoke Heath.

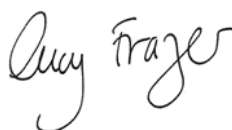
To assist Governors in monitoring English and maths attainment levels, two key performance indicators have been introduced to the second year of the PEF contract. These specifically target achievement and attendance rates, both considered key factors in improving performance in this area. These are locally set targets which empowers Governors to drive the performance of the educational provider. Governors will be able to access real time data on success rates via the 'Curious' Management Information System, which will inform discussions at monthly performance meetings with key stakeholders.

Despite the Board's concerns, it was reassuring to hear that HMP/YOI Stoke Heath remains a safe prison and there are well-developed initiatives in place to support prisoners in addressing their violent behaviour. Your positive comments about the healthcare provision, the offender risk assessment backlog, the work of the Clive Unit and impressive Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) employer feedback are all noted and appreciated. It was also reassuring to hear that staff take equality seriously and there are focus groups held with prisoners.

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/YOI Stoke Heath.

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/YOI STOKE HEATH: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 MAY 2019 – 30 APRIL 2020

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

##### **Employment Outcomes**

HMPPS has implemented an enhanced Through the Gate (TTG) service to aid the provision of resettlement in all resettlement prisons. This new specification includes the requirement that all Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) complete specific, tailored tasks to help prisoners gain employment, as well as secure and maintain settled accommodation and manage debt and their financial affairs. To support this, an additional £22 million pounds per annum has been invested over the remaining life of the CRC contracts and this provides approximately 500 additional CRC staff to deliver this service in resettlement prisons.

Alongside this, New Futures Network (NFN) is the specialist part of the prison service that brokers partnerships between prisons and employers, helping businesses fill gaps in skills and prisoners to find employment on release. NFN Regional Brokers, who cover all prison groups across England and Wales, and the NFN National Sector Leads support businesses with three types of partnership: prison industries, ROTL and employment on release.

It is accepted that employment outcomes are likely to be negatively impacted if the prison receives more short-term prisoners with less than three months to serve. This is because there will only be time to assess the prisoner and release them into the community with support from TTG services, rather than progressing them to level 2, at which point they would be considered employment ready, particularly if they have received relevant work experience in the prison.

As identified by the Board, the funding cut has led to a reduction in the number of educational and vocational training activity spaces, and it is recognised that this impacts negatively on progression routes to increase employment outcomes. At present the information advice and guidance (IAG) service is re-commissioned each year.

HMP/YOI Stoke Heath has successfully commissioned a new 12-month IAG service to progress prisoners with suitable employability skills to employment during the last 12 weeks of their sentence. However, this remains on hold until such time when the prison is able to move to the regime recovery stage post Covid-19 that enables a steady progress from the current level to a level that allows face-to-face contact between prisoners and prospective employers to take place. As well as this, it has been decided to reduce functional skills delivery but going forward increasing vocational and employment related qualifications. Early discussions have taken place with the West Midlands NFN lead to begin exploring the potential delivery of Recycling, Woodwork and Upholstery and Telecom Cabling to support learners in gaining employment upon release.

Likewise, a strong interest has been shown from the multi award winning waste management organisation, Recycling Lives, and Public Sector Prison Industries (PSPI) about investing in additional television recycling activity spaces also linked to employment on release. PSPI has shown an interest in creating additional industries activity spaces. However, due to Covid-19 this is on hold with the Regional Employment Advisor (REA). Responsive to the changing job skills required in the labour market, a meeting is due to take place with the REA to look at the developing the Training Hub for prisoners undertaking construction, rail, telecoms sector work to facilitate short weekly courses on new constructions which will potentially lead employment on release.

The Governor is also dependent on the successful outcome of an external funding bid and will keep you notified of any progress made. He will also continue to look for opportunities to attract private enterprises once the recovery regime is in place.

### **Prisoners' Property**

It is unfortunate and regrettable that prisoners' property continues to be an issue and the policy framework is awaiting publication. HMPPS is still working closely with stakeholders to consult on the proposed changes to the policy. Discussions ahead of consultation with IMB members began with the IMB Secretariat in late February 2020, however, in light of the pressures placed on Boards by Covid-19, HMPPS agreed with the IMB Secretariat to push consultation back. This work is now moving forward again and a meeting with IMB members took place in August 2020. Consultation with operational colleagues is also expected to resume soon. The feedback received from the IMB members will be considered alongside the comments received from other stakeholders, with the intention that the revised draft policy framework will be circulated for wider consultation at the end of this year. While digital improvements are being explored, the nature of that work means that any digital changes are likely to take longer to develop.

It should be noted that all prisoners, irrespective of the local incentive level, can have access to the permitted items listed under Part 1 of the National Facilities List set out in Annex C of the Incentives Policy Framework which went live in prisons on 13 January 2020. Governors can then choose to make additional items available from Part 2 of the list to those on the Standard and Enhanced levels or any additional levels introduced locally above Enhanced. Allowing prisons to determine locally what incentive level prisoners must be on to have access to these additional items provides them with the flexibility to tailor incentives to their local needs and challenges. Should a prisoner be subsequently transferred to another prison where items which they have earned are not permitted, the Incentives Policy Framework and Prison Service Instruction 12/2011 - Prisoners' Property makes it clear that the prisoner would normally be allowed to retain these items unless it is considered a risk to good order, discipline, security, safety or would exceed volumetric control limits.

Locally, prison staff will continue to work hard to resolve property related issues, but it is unfortunate that a vast majority of property complaints relate to items lost during the transfer process.

### **Telephone Access**

There is a huge focus on in-cell technology within the prison estate resulting in a number of projects being commissioned to undertake surveys to futureproof prisons with this technology. HMP/YOI Stoke Heath has been selected and recently surveyed to drive initiatives forward and the results from the survey are imminent and this will determine the best course of action to take. The Governor will keep you updated on future progress.