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Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Whitemoor
Longhill Road
March, Cambridgeshire
PE15 0PR

MoJ Ref: SUB 082909

2 November 2020

Dear ██████████

**HMP WHITEMOOR: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 JUNE 2019 – 31 MAY 2020**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 May 2020. I met the Governor and staff when I visited HMP Whitemoor on 20 August 2019 and 17 January 2020, and I was pleased to discuss some of these themes in more detail with them. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work in capturing these helpful observations, especially as Covid-19 impacted significantly on the Board's ability to gather information during the final weeks of the reporting year.

I have noted the Board's repeated concerns around the dispersal system. Further to my response in January, the Long Term and High Security Estate (LTHSE) is now in the process of recruiting both a clinical and an operational manager to deliver broader Young Adult services for long sentenced men across the estate. This follows an extensive research conducted over the last two years looking at strategies for the improvement of strategic management of young adults within the LTHSE and focuses on improving regime provision and commissioned services for this cohort of prisoners. We anticipate substantive improvements and developments in the way young adults are managed across the LTHSE in the coming year.

The review was completed with a series of recommendations which have been taken forward into the LTHSE young adults model. This has a distinct focus on these very long sentenced and young men with all their specific needs and issues. The LTHSE intend to develop a delivery model for young men to understand and deliver a better service by supporting prisons across the entire LTHSE directorate. This work will be spread across wider public sector prison directorates to ensure the LTHSE is tied into other young adult provision and Youth Custody Service programmes to provide the most effective regime and population management.

I note you have raised some local issues of concern in your report which the Governor will continue to keep you updated on as work progresses. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) comments in response to other issues raised in your report are set out in the attached annex.

I was disappointed to learn that prior to the Covid-19 restrictions which were implemented in March, improvements around the issues the Board raised last year had been inconsistent.

I was however encouraged to hear about the success of the incoming mail itemiser, the performance of some existing industrial contracts resulting in businesses concerned making HMP Whitemoor sole contractor, and the emphasis on activities to support the mental wellbeing of prisoners such as the gardens for A Wing and D Wing. I was further encouraged to hear about the Governor's aspiration to build a healthier and more harmonious community within the establishment including prisoners taking more responsibility for their living conditions.

The Learning Together programme organised by Cambridge University requires special mention. The programme facilitates prisoners and those in higher education to study together in equal partnership. The tragic killing of two young Cambridge University workers at a Learning Together prisoner rehabilitation conference in London by a previously held prisoner at HMP Whitemoor jeopardised the development of this scheme. I was heartened to hear that the organisers are committed to restarting the programme as soon as possible, subject to review of the safety arrangements of all participants and the ongoing Covid-19 situation, and future applications and enrolments are looking promising and healthy.

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 Whitemoor.

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 WHITEMOOR: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JUNE 2019 – 31 MAY 2020

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Segregation and Specialised Units

HMPPS recognises segregation units within the LTHSE have experienced a high level of occupancy. This is something the Pathways to Progression project works to address. This work includes developing relationships with specialist services in prisons together with those in healthcare settings and is showing improved outcomes for some of the most complex prisoners within segregation units.

Whilst onward transfer can be seen as a remedy for the length of stay in segregation for a given site, it is often not the best pathway to a sustained exit from segregated conditions and continuing to work with men in segregation can lead to better longer-term outcomes. Specialist services within prisons require prisoner consent which can be a barrier to progression, but the perseverance of the Governor of HMP Whitemoor and her team has resulted in success in the cases of a number of long-term segregated men at HMP Whitemoor who have now consented to return to normal location or engage in assessment for these specialist services.

A national joint NHS/HMPPS meeting, held on a quarterly basis, with representatives from the three high secure hospitals, prison Personality Disorder units, Pathways to Progression lead, NHS Commissioners and the IMB, raises cases of concern for consideration by senior clinicians from health settings where they can advise on appropriate options for them which has delivered positive outcomes for a number of complex long-term segregated men.

Communications Arrangements Post-Pandemic

HMPPS appreciates the importance of having in-cell telephony across the estate as it allows prisoners easier access to family/friends and support frameworks. Although the In-Cell Telephony project has now completed this installation in just over 60% of the estate, installing infrastructure into the prison environment is complex and can be time consuming due to local restrictions and security implications, and therefore, it can take up to 12 months to install in-cell telephony into each prison. HMPPS determines the priority order of deployment of this provision, and HMP Whitemoor is not currently in scope to receive in-cell telephony for the current round of commissioning. Unfortunately the funding available for the current phase of project is not sufficient to upgrade the entire prison estate.

Staff across HMPPS know that keeping in contact with family and friends is really important and are making sure that prisoners have enough money to make phone calls and therefore an additional £5 credit per week is now being added to PINphone accounts. This is being funded by the Help with Prison Visits scheme. Additionally, the provider (BT) has reduced the cost of pin-phone calls during the period until visits can be resumed. A secure video call system has been introduced across the estate with over 26,000 video calls completed so far. The current video call service is a temporary measure intended for use while contact with family and friends is limited as a result of social distancing measures. However, we are considering a longer-term solution for video calls in line with the recommendations of Lord Farmer's 2017 review, focussing on those who do not receive face-to-face visits under normal circumstances. Regarding Foreign National Offenders, there have not been any specific actions to help these prisoners contact family and friends as they will have benefited from the additional measures provided to all prisoners.

Prisoners' Property

The Board may be aware that development of the new Prisoners' Property Policy Framework was being informed by a project undertaken in summer 2019, involving stakeholders across HMPPS and the escort services. The project involved visiting 14 prisons, consultation with staff and prisoners, and engagement with external stakeholders such as the Independent Monitoring Board Secretariat and Prisons and Probation Ombudsman. Its purpose was to support the policy review and identify areas where immediate and more long-term changes may be required to improve operational practice.

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. This work is now moving forward again and a meeting with IMB members took place in August. Consultation with operational colleagues is also expected to resume soon, subject to any further Covid-19 impacts on recovery. The feedback received at the meeting with 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 2020. While digital improvements are being explored, the nature of that work means that any digital changes are likely to take longer to develop.