



Ministry  
of Justice

**Victoria Atkins MP**  
Minister of State for Justice and  
Minister for Afghan Resettlement

██████████  
Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP/YOI Styal  
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Dear ██████████

**HMP/YOI STYAL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 MAY 2020 – 30 APRIL 2021**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 30 April 2021. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work in capturing these helpful observations, especially as this was an unprecedented and challenging reporting year. I was saddened to hear there were two deaths in custody. My officials always take recommendations from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman very seriously.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the age and structure of the houses at HMP/YOI Styal make them an increased fire risk, I am advised that the establishment has not been asked to take the accommodation out of use as a precaution. This would have been the case if the risks were deemed to be unacceptable.

A Fire Safety Improvement business case for HMP/YOI Styal is currently being developed. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is awaiting the results of a compartmentalisation report before the business case can be finalised. It is envisaged the business case will be finalised and approved by the end of October this year, contractors appointed early next year and works to commence on site by April 2022. The results of the compartmentalisation report will also feed into a Ministry of Justice Estates Team assessment examining structural integrity and decency. In the meantime, temporary work has been completed to fill the voids (fire rated sealants) to prevent the spread of fire, and all fire doors continue to be tested regularly.

I note that maintenance of accommodation continues to be an issue despite the measures outlined in my predecessor's letters of January and October 2020. The facilities management contractor has had supply chain issues which consequently led to excessive costs being submitted for work. The Service Delivery Manager challenges all costs which are deemed to be excessive which has had the unfortunate effect of delaying a number of projects. The Performance Improvement Process meeting (PIP), referred to last year, has been reinstated by the new Governor following the lapse in performance. The contractor has also provided a mentor for their Site Manager which has seen some preliminary improvements in performance, though the rate of vacancies within their team is not sustainable and the Governor has raised this with the contractor's senior management. Additionally, the Governor continues to make good use of the prison's DIY team that undertakes repair/decency work, such as the installation of kitchens on three houses to facilitate self-catering arrangements. This has resulted in significant cost savings. With these additional measures, maintenance concerns are expected to improve significantly.

The ingress of drugs has no doubt been affected by the pandemic. The use of body scanners is currently only to be used on male adult prisoners. As part of health and safety considerations, pregnant women and prisoners with female reproductive organs are not considered suitable for x-ray scanning. Some women are not aware they are pregnant on arrival in custody and many decline a pregnancy test. Legally a prison cannot mandate a pregnancy test or inform the prison of the result, therefore, any exposure to ionising radiation by a pregnant female prisoner would also carry a risk of harm. Currently there is no alternative.

As the Board will be aware, the female estate does not have its own drug dogs and therefore the provision is managed by the North West Dogs Team which also covers two male prisons groups. A Dogs Review is underway which recommended all local female prisons be placed onto a Service Level Agreement with their regional dogs teams that would guarantee a certain number of hours per month. This work is still in progress. Additionally, all mail is now photocopied and consideration is being given to a capital bid for a Rapiscan machine located outside of the prison in the new stores. The Governor also appointed a Drugs Strategy Lead to focus on this work in August. Nationally, as part of the £100 million investment in security, HMPPS is currently working to develop a new national maintenance, training and consumables contract for all Rapiscan Trace Detection equipment in prisons and will include regular drug library updates to ensure the latest threats are captured. HMPPS is on schedule to having a national contract in place by October 2021.

Regarding mental health provision, the NHS-led National Review into Health and Social Care within the Women's Estate is due to report at the end of October 2021. This review will consider whether more specialised units are needed for the most complex women in the system. Women presenting with serious mental illness will always be considered for referral into an external mental health unit under the Mental Health Act.

Although the pandemic made it a very challenging reporting year, it was encouraging to hear that staff at HMP/YOI Styal were very effective in the management of the virus whilst maintaining a positive and supportive environment despite the testing conditions of lockdown. I was also pleased to hear that the Stepping Stones programme is showing early signs of success with some of the most vulnerable prisoners, and the security improvements undertaken have greatly improved the prison.

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 Styal.

Yours ever,



**VICTORIA ATKINS MP**

## HMP/YOI STYAL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 MAY 2020 – 30 APRIL 2021

### HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

#### **Prison Escorts**

HMPPS appreciates the pressures escort provisioning places on the operation of the prison. HMP/YOI Styal has been short staffed over the past twelve months and isolation/track and trace requirements have exacerbated this challenge. Healthcare at HMP/YOI Styal is currently profiled for three escorts per day, comprised of external appointments and the order of priority determined by clinical staff. Any emergency escorts for self-harm incidents or Mother and Baby Unit (MBU) emergencies would be in addition to the allocated three escorts. Additionally, any babies on the MBU requiring external appointments are not factored into the allocated healthcare escort provision as the babies are not the provider's patient. All of these factors place pressures on resources and impacts regime delivery, but as we come through the pandemic and isolation/track and trace requirements reduce the situation is expected to improve.

#### **Through the Gate (TTG) Services**

In June 2021, we launched our new Commissioned Rehab Services (CRS) model which changed the way services were commissioned by the Probation Service. The Probation Service is monitoring CRS referrals and outcomes, in particular for those women leaving custody with no fixed abode. Probation staff have received training in the CRS service provision, to enable a consistent and coordinated approach to meet the needs of women in custody. All eligible cases will receive support prior to release and this will be delivered by suppliers based in the areas to which they will return. CRS Suppliers will be based in the resettlement prisons within the geographical area they cover but for people being released to areas outside of this geography or released from non-resettlement prisons, this support will be delivered via visits or by phone/video rather than by staff based in the prison. At HMP/YOI Styal there are still a number of staff who previously provided the Through the Gate (TTG) services and who now work for the Probation Service to support women's resettlement.

Specifically, for female prisoners, HMPPS has commissioned a holistic service which is designed to ensure that, on release, women can access support to address a range of needs overseen by a single provider with experience of meeting the specific additional issues which women experience. This service is delivered by providers based in the community where women are due to be released. This ensures local knowledge and access to local providers. It enables ongoing support post-release if circumstances change or in the event of a very short prison sentence. Pre-release services include accommodation which can involve supporting women to maintain or relinquish a tenancy and ensure related debt or arrears do not build up. At HMP/YOI Styal, data from July's statistics has exceeded expectations with a 76% accommodation on first night being attained. The TTG manager is committed to making the new service a success and this will be further improved as the staffing situation continues to ease.