



██████████
Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Holme House
Holme House Road
Stockton on Tees
TS18 2QU

Moj ref: SUB 90738

15 September 2021

Dear ██████████

**HMP HOLME HOUSE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 JANUARY – 31 DECEMBER 2020**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 December 2020. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work in capturing these helpful observations, particularly as the Board continued to be short of members and the Covid-19 pandemic impacted on your ability to gather information. I was saddened to hear that there were seven deaths in custody; every death is a tragedy and my officials take recommendations from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman very seriously.

I understand the Board's request for funding to make improvements to the prison and the continued concerns about maintenance. HMP Holme House is making progress to improve decency of the prison, with managers, staff and prisoners working collaboratively to make improvements to deliver a collective vision. It is encouraging that the Board has acknowledged some of the progress already made with improvements to the reception area and healthcare waiting room, as well as painting of communal areas across the prison to improve the environment. Flooring has been replaced to the entirety of the wing areas in two of the original house block units during the financial year to March 2021. For this financial year 2021-22 funding has been approved for immediate improvements to sections of the flooring within house block four. Further building wide replacement flooring works at HMP Holme House has also been approved and awaits the release of the required funding. In addition, cell flooring replacement continues as and when reported through the maintenance system and operational staff are undertaking decency checks across the prison which incorporates reporting any damage to cells.

Separate funding has been secured for this financial year to refurbish the showers within house block three and this work is currently out to tender. Additional reactive works have also been approved to address some of the deteriorating shower recess areas in the original house block units. A total of 26 shower blocks have been identified for refurbishments for decency purposes and a funding bid is being prepared to be able to complete works to all the identified areas. Regarding cells, the facilities management provider has continued to follow the requirements of the cell access policies during the Covid-19 pandemic. Whilst recent changes have made the provision of the required protective measures challenging for cell entry during periods when the prison is designated a Covid-19 outbreak site, there is no reluctance to enter cells and those cells out of use continue to be prioritised for repair. The number of cells out of use is monitored daily at the prison's operational meeting and continues to be routinely low. Reported performance targets have also shown satisfactory response times to reported reactive calls to

attend works within cells. In addition, in-cell improvements continue to be made through the prisoner Clean, Rehabilitative, Enabling and Decent (CRED) cell refurbishment programme, which has received positive feedback locally particularly regarding the replacement furniture, fixtures and fittings within cells. The scheduled programme of work to cells will continue to be rolled out throughout the 2021-22 financial year.

Despite your concerns, it was encouraging to receive your comments recognising the cultural changes in the short time under the direction of a new Governor and Deputy Governor. I was pleased to read that staff were praised for the way they managed the first lockdown with minimal infections as well as continuing to treat prisoners fairly throughout the pandemic. I too am grateful for all their continued hard work and professionalism during these difficult times. I was reassured to note that violence and drug finds have reduced and that measures have been put in place to tackle the brewing of hooch. It was also encouraging to read that focus groups for each protected characteristic and events such as black history month and pride have raised awareness of equality and diversity during the reporting year.

I note you have raised a local issue of concern about induction 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 the other issue raised in your report about education is 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 Holme House.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lucy Frazer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

RT HON LUCY FRAZER QC MP

HMP HOLME HOUSE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JANUARY – 31 DECEMBER 2020

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Education

A National Framework for Prison Regimes and Services was published in June 2020 which set out how HMPPS will take decisions about easing restrictions through a staged recovery - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-national-framework-for-prison-regimes-and-services>. HMPPS will continue to ease restrictions at a pace which considers the unique setting of prisons. Not all prisons will move at the same pace as they must demonstrate readiness, but the Board can be assured that the focus is on enabling prisons to recover, expand regimes and begin to address the backlog of activity created by Covid-19 restrictions as soon as it is safe to do so.

Locally at HMP Holme House the appointment of a new Head of Reducing Reoffending, as well as a new Education Manager have resulted in a cultural shift within the department. The use of in-cell telephony, and in-cell distance style learning have been encouraged to increase education provision and attainment. Between January and July 2021 the number of prisoners allocated to education increased from approximately 100 to 190 per month and when provision such as the places provided through the Dynamic Purchasing System is included, approximately 223 prisoners have been engaging in education and skills learning. As the prison continues to move through the stages of Covid-19 recovery the number of places and variety of courses on offer will increase, however the amount will be determined by the prisons existing budget. In addition, various managerial initiatives have been introduced to ensure the education provision improves. These have included scrutiny at the daily operational meeting of the education providers engagement with prisoners, the introduction of a weekly performance monitoring meeting, as well as a greater focus being placed on the monthly Education meeting.