



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Hull
Hedon Road
Hull
HU9 5LS

Moj ref: SUB 91780

27 October 2021

Dear Chair,

**HMP HULL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 MARCH 2020 – 28 FEBRUARY 2021**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 28 February 2021. 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 during the reporting year and the Covid-19 pandemic affected your monitoring of the prison. I was saddened to hear there were seven deaths in custody; officials take recommendations from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman very seriously.

I understand the Board concerns about insufficient capacity within the prison estate and wish to assure the Board that the Government's announcement to commit over £4 billion capital funding will make significant progress in delivering 18,000 additional prison places across England and Wales by the mid-2020s. This includes creating four new prisons over the next six years and expanding another four prisons over the next three years. Construction is well underway on HMP Five Wells, the new prison at Wellingborough in Northamptonshire, and works have started at Glen Parva, Leicestershire. These additional prison places will be safe, decent and uncrowded and will have a positive impact on lowering the proportion of crowding within the prison estate. However, the extent to which the proportion of prisoners held in crowded accommodation will reduce will be dependent on levels of demand in the system.

It is acknowledged that HMP Hull has continued to need to operate in excess of its certified normal accommodation level (uncrowded capacity) due to regional capacity pressures. This is despite a temporary reduction in capacity at the prison to accommodate a Reverse Cohorting Unit to prevent the spread of Covid-19, as well as fall in the national prison population since March 2020 due to a decline in new receptions from courts. This resulted in a reduction in the number of people in prison sharing cells across the estate and enabling HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) to implement its compartmentalisation strategy to reduce the risk of transmitting Covid-19. It is recognised that it is not desirable to hold two individuals in a cell designed for one but reducing crowding at one prison would result in crowding having to increase further elsewhere. The places used for double occupancy at HMP Hull meet HMPPS standards for crowded accommodation and have been certified as suitable by the Yorkshire Prison Group Director. In addition, to improve the condition of places at the prison there is a rolling program to repair or replace toilet screens which are manufactured in the prison's workshops.

Despite your concerns, it was reassuring to receive your comments that the prison is a safe place where violence, aggression and self-harm have reduced. It was encouraging to note the progress in inclusivity and diversity with improving awareness and standards. I was pleased to read that staff and prisoners have collaborated to cope with the pandemic and that staff continue to be compassionate and make every effort to help and keep prisoners safe despite the risk involved. I'm aware how proud the Governor is of the prison's response to the pandemic and I too am grateful to everyone for their continued hard work and professionalism throughout.

I was pleased to read that every effort has been made to keep wings clean and tidy. It was encouraging to note that education course completion has improved significantly, and the prison's workshops have been refurbished. I was also encouraged to hear that new approaches to communication, such as Hull TV is changing attitudes to employment.

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 Hull.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Victoria Atkins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'V'.

VICTORIA ATKINS MP

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Prisoners' Property

Further to last year's response, HMPPS has now circulated the draft framework for wider consultation to internal and external stakeholders which included the IMB Secretariat and the IMB representatives previously consulted. A large number of comments have been received which are being considered and as a result, HMPPS expects to publish the new Prisoners' Property Policy Framework early next year. The framework will provide greater direction and standardisation on a national basis and has been designed with procedural justice at its core. It strengthens guidance on known problem areas such as volumetric control and seeks to ensure prisoners' property is managed efficiently, effectively, consistently and with care and respect.

Whilst it remains the responsibility of the sending prisons to forward on any excess property a prisoner has accumulated to the receiving prison as soon as possible, HMPPS is continuing to take steps to ensure there is a consistent approach. Digital improvements to the property processes are being explored as part of these steps, but the nature of this work means that any digital changes are likely to be longer-term and as such will not be part of the forthcoming framework. However, the planned introduction of digitally recorded Person Escort Records, including property identification numbers, will enable better tracking of property in transit with Prisoner Escort and Custody Services (PECS) suppliers and will assist with investigating the few complaints PECS receives about lost property. PECS will also continue to monitor all aspects of the contractors' performance and should this fail to meet the agreed levels this will be raised with the contractor for improvement.

It is encouraging that the Board has recognised the local efforts of the prison to address complaints about property. HMP Hull acknowledges and has identified property is one of the biggest sources of complaints. The Head of Residence has adopted a new process allocating staff at key times to assist with property to allow prisoners to receive this in a more timely manner which has resulted in a reduction in complaints. Whilst this remains a work in progress and continues to embed, other options continue to be explored locally to improve the outcomes for prisoners.