



██████████
Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Swaleside
Eastchurch
Isle of Sheppey
Kent
ME14 4AX

MoJ ref: SUB 091521

15 October 2021

Dear ██████████,

**HMP SWALESIDE: 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 you were short of Board members at the beginning of the reporting year. I was saddened to hear there were three deaths in custody; my officials take recommendations from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman very seriously.

I extend my gratitude to HMP Swaleside for the continued use of their kitchen and to the staff who have worked tirelessly over an extensive period to prepare meals for HMP Standford Hill. I would like to reassure the Board that the new kitchen is anticipated to be completed by May 2022 and will provide an adequate catering provision for HMP Standford Hill.

Turning to the Board's comments about having access to non-confidential complaints, I understand the Governor has recently resolved this issue with you and I am pleased to hear you have been given access rights to the information held locally. In terms of policy, the Prisoner Complaints Framework mandates that confidential access complaints (Comp 2), and subsequent replies, must be recorded, but not opened by anyone other than the person they are addressed to. The Board, however, can obtain data on the number of confidential complaints recorded.

I acknowledge the Board's continued concern about the provision of resettlement services for those directly released from HMP Swaleside and that transfers to a local resettlement prison are not always timely. Men who are category B need to resettle from a prison appropriate to their security category. It is accepted that those who are recategorised to category C should be moved to an appropriate training or resettlement prison as soon as possible to access relevant resettlement services. If a category B prisoner is approaching their release date, they will be discharged directly from HMP Swaleside, as this is appropriate for their security category.

The Board may already be aware that on 26 June 2021 the National Probation Service (NPS) and Community Rehabilitation Companies unified to become the Probation Service. The unified Probation Service provides commissioned re-habilitative services for all sentenced people in prison wherever they are held. In the pre-release phase, Commissioned Rehabilitative Service (CRS) suppliers will offer support to those who will be released on licence to address accommodation needs and also to offer a

mentor to support a successful transition from custody to community. These services will be delivered by CRS suppliers based in the areas where the person will be released to and will continue post-release. Attendance at post-release appointments with CRS Suppliers will be part of mandatory licence appointments. I hope the Board is reassured that the CRS service will be available to all individuals released from resettlement or non-resettlement prisons. For people being released from non-resettlement prisons, accommodation support will be delivered via visits or by phone/video rather than by staff based in the prison. The mentor service will be an in-reach to enable the same person to deliver the service post-release. In terms of resettlement opportunities, the Governor and his team are looking at ways to engage the men and local services to assist with resettlement opportunities. I note you have raised some other local issues of concern in your report which the Governor will continue to keep you aware of as work continues.

I am sorry to hear the Board is concerned about the imposed reduction of visits; my team have forwarded your concerns to the IMB Secretariat and they will respond to you directly.

Turning to some positive comments captured in your report, it was encouraging to receive your praise to the management team and staff for their response to Covid-19 and their commitment to the health and safety of the people in prison. I was pleased to read the detailed summary of the progress made since your last report and noting the commendable work achieved by the prisoners and staff.

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 Swaleside.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Victoria Atkins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

VICTORIA ATKINS MP

HMP SWALESIDE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 MAY 2020 – 30 APRIL 2021

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Men Convicted of Sexual Offences

HMP Swaleside is hoping to offer a wider catalogue of education and training opportunities for this cohort of men through the Accelerator Prisons Project (a national project aimed at reducing reoffending).

Workshops and Vocational Training

The expansion of the engineering workshop has taken the number of meaningful employment placements from 25 to 50, enabling employed prisoners to complete accredited courses. Public Sector Prison Industries currently has no plans to increase capacity of this workshop further or introduce additional workshops.

The Head of Reducing Reoffending at HMP Swaleside has developed a number of new work and training opportunities and continues to review the capacity and utilisation of workshop facilities. It is recognised there needs to be a strong mix of skilled and less skilled work so that men of varying skill and education levels can access appropriate work and vocational training opportunities.

In-Cell Telephony

As the Board are aware, most cells were fitted with in-cell telephony. Unfortunately, some handsets and cable trunking have been damaged by prisoners. Replacement of the in-cell telephony will be installed differently, with greater protection of cable trunking to ensure repairs can take place faster and at less expensive. This is a priority action for the Governor.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

There is a national and regional focus by NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE/I) Health and Justice on adapting health and wellbeing services to individual's mental health (MH) needs following lockdowns in secure estates. For the south east including HMP Swaleside, this includes commissioning regular, independent reviews from the service user providers throughout the pandemic and following lockdown on the long-term MH impact. Recommendations are jointly actioned by NHSE/I and HMPPS to address these needs, for example increasing the number of group peer support sessions, adapting the MH model of provision and where necessary, increasing resources.

This issue remains a high priority for the Governor and he is working closely with the Head of Psychology and the mental health teams. The Governor is committed to meeting with the IMB Chair regularly to discuss progress.

Body Worn Video Cameras (BWVCs)

The next generation of BWVCs will be rolled out in early 2022 which will see a substantial uplift of camera numbers available to the entire public prison estate. The aim is to equip each establishment with a sufficient supply of BWVCs for every Band 3 to 5 prison officer and staff in certain other prisoner facing roles, to have a BWVC whilst on duty. The cameras will have a pre-record facility to constantly record and overwrite footage, which is saved once the recording function on the camera is activated. This helps to capture the build-up of spontaneous incidents and to record evidence. A review of the current BWVC Prison Service Instruction 04/2017 is being undertaken to formulate a new policy framework that reflects the new best practice. The maintenance contract remains in place with the current BWVC supplier,

including a battery refresh of current stock to minimise faulty units. The Physical Safety Team is also available to offer support to prisons and help them with BWVC equipment should it be needed.

Life Limited Room in Healthcare

HMPPS acknowledges the Board's concerns about the continued occupancy of the life limited room in healthcare by one prisoner. A long-term solution has been sought and an agreement is in place to move the individual to another prison. We are unable to indicate when the move might take place as this is subject to the availability of a suitable cell and transport arrangements. The Governor will be able to discuss this with the IMB Chair in more detail.

Staff Monitoring of Calls

Prisoner secure video calls were introduced across the estate in the summer and autumn of 2020 in response to the suspending of face-to-face visits as part of our Covid-19 response. It is the additional monitoring that comes with video calls that has created extra demand on staff. HMPPS are currently reviewing what resources are needed to undertake this work.

In the short-term, the ceasing of the weekly credit to all prisoner PIN phone accounts and introducing a restriction on the number of video calls a prisoner can make monthly, should lessen the burden placed on staff. This is an element of the broader Covid-19 recovery strategy to reintroduce purposeful and active regimes across the estate.

Recovery

It is encouraging that the Board acknowledges the continued success of the management team at HMP Swaleside in managing a large and complex prisoner population. The Board has been invited to the meetings regarding building back after the lockdowns, and the Governor will continue to keep the Board informed of developments. The safety of all those living and working at HMP Swaleside is a top priority for the Governor, and it is therefore important that the prison progresses slowly and safely based on stability concerns that were highlighted in previous annual reports.