



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Ashfield
Shortwood Road
Pucklechurch
BS16 9QJ

MoJ ref: SUB 93226

16 December 2021

Dear Chair,

**HMP ASHFIELD: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 JULY 2020 – 30 JUNE 2021**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 30 June 2021. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work in capturing these helpful observations, especially as you continued to be short of Board members. I was saddened to hear there was one death in custody during the reporting year. My officials take recommendations from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman very seriously.

I note the Board's continued concerns around accommodation for released prisoners, particularly those convicted of sexual offences. As the Board will be aware, the Approved Premises estate is being expanded with an increase of 200 spaces by 2024. The intention is to maintain flexibility across the Approved Premises estate to accommodate all categories of offences where there is a need for a public protection placement. It is therefore not possible at this stage to give precise figures about specific categories of offenders.

I would like to reassure the Board that all eligible cases will receive support to find accommodation prior to release and this will be delivered by Commissioned Rehabilitative Service (CRS) 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. 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. Those services which are delivered pre-release, i.e. accommodation and mentoring, will continue post-release and attendance at appointments with CRS Suppliers will be part of mandatory Licence appointments. This continuity of support is a key element of the CRS provision and is available to all convicted individuals released from Resettlement or Non-resettlement prisons.

The pandemic no doubt made it a very challenging reporting period. It was therefore encouraging to receive your comments that the prison continues to be a well-managed establishment with high standards where prisoners are treated fairly and humanely in a safe environment and that the relationship between staff and prisoners has been good despite the difficulties of the pandemic. HMP Ashfield is also due special praise for regularly maintaining prison areas during the lockdowns with small working parties consisting of suitably trained prisoners and maintenance staff, for maximising the opportunities within Covid-19 restrictions for time out of cell and exercise, and for the excellent utilisation of the in-cell TV system to engage prisoners during the lockdowns. I was further encouraged to note that the horticulture

department continues to provide magnificent displays around the grounds of the prison, and the prison's initiatives with prisoner finances and fostering a savings culture that resulted in a large take up.

I note you have raised some local issues of concern in your report which the Director will continue to keep you aware of as work continues. 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 Ashfield.

Yours ever,

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

VICTORIA ATKINS MP

HMP ASHFIELD: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JULY 2020 – 30 JUNE 2021

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Offender Behaviour Programmes

HMPPS is focused on restoring Offender Behaviour Programme (OBP) delivery to pre-pandemic levels and is committed to maximising resources to meet priority demand for OBPs. The capacity to deliver OBPs is kept under regular review with new data gathering systems established and regular site updates to inform recovery and future strategic delivery planning.

Although there are no immediate plans to increase the number of OBPs delivered at HMP Ashfield, a system has been established to aid the transfer of prisoners to relevant sites where capacity is available. Delivery remains under constant review and opportunities to increase capacity are being explored. During the pandemic, additional programme management resource has been provided to support delivery sites to explore opportunities to maximise delivery and to better meet the priority needs of the population.

Category D Places for Sex Offenders

HMPPS plans on delivering 660 additional places through the expansion of the Category D estate, 600 of which are at prisons in the South and Midlands. The expansions will be delivered through adding one or two 60-bed units at each site, based on those establishments with the highest demand. The size of each expansion was determined using site surveys and what was feasible operationally and based on land available. The expansions will not change the profile of offenders accommodated by these prisons and there will be no change to which sites currently accommodate men convicted of sexual offences. The six Category D prison sites selected for expansion/new units are as follows:

- HMP/YOI Stanford Hill – 120 places (South)
- HMP Springhill – 120 places (South)
- HMP Leyhill – 120 places (South)
- HMP Ford – 120 places (South)
- HMP & YOI Sudbury – 120 places (Midlands)
- HMP/YOI Hatfield - 60 places (Yorkshire)