



Ministry
of Justice

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

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Berwyn
Bridge Road
Wrexham Industrial Estate
Wrexham
North Wales
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MoJ ref: SUB 91790

10 November 2021

Dear Chair,

**HMP BERWYN: 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 understand that my predecessor Alex Chalk met the Governor and staff during a visit to the prison on 16 August 2021 and I trust this proved useful. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work in capturing these helpful observations during a very difficult and challenging reporting period with a reduced complement of Board members. I was saddened to hear there were three deaths in custody. My officials always take recommendations from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman very seriously.

It is regrettable that maintenance issues persist. There is evidence to suggest the paint was incorrectly applied to the concrete walls and so the Government Legal Department (GLD) are now looking to address the issue with the constructor. In the meantime, a pilot painting programme commenced on Monday 18 October to refurbish three cells. These cells are having different specifications of work undertaken to assess which of the finishes will provide the most appropriate and resilient end-product. The work is scheduled to be completed before the end of October and the cells will then be monitored on a monthly basis for the next six months to evaluate the works. The most appropriate painting finish will then be applied to the remainder of the cells.

Regarding the heating systems, the site is serviced by three gas boilers and heating supplied through a centralised system. Although there were some improvements with this long-standing issue during the reporting period, there are current problems with the heat valves and distribution pipes and so temporary backup boilers were installed as a contingency measure to cover all residential accommodation and other critical areas. Some action has already been undertaken to replace the underground valves, however other defects were identified with the original installation. As with the paint defects, evidence has been gathered and presented to the GLD. Steps are being taken to resolve all maintenance issues through contractual negotiations.

There is significant work to support men with mental health concerns at HMP Berwyn and this work has become more complicated with the prison taking responsibility for remand prisoners from North Wales Courts. In Wales and England, the demand for secure hospital beds exceeds supply. This often results in significant delays. The length of wait for a secure hospital bed is dependent upon availability but in all cases, the health provider ensures men are transferred to a secure hospital bed as soon as a place is available. Pending any required transfer, HMP Berwyn continues to make use of its excellent community

outreach provision, provided through the healthcare contract, to support men until a secure hospital bed is available.

At HMP Berwyn, the health provider has a good consultant psychiatry support service. When extended stays are unavoidable, prisoners receive regular joint reviews from clinical and prison operational teams. The prison continues to provide support to the more vulnerable men, but it is recognised that regime limitations and limited opportunities to transfer prisoners was further affected by the pandemic. The decision not to have an in-patient facility at HMP Berwyn was decided at the construction project stage and there remains no plans to build a unit at this time.

The pandemic made it a very difficult reporting year and it was therefore encouraging to receive your comments that staff at HMP Berwyn worked hard to minimise the effects of the curtailment of the usual rehabilitative regime and to manage the unsettling effects of Covid-19. I was further encouraged to note that staff-prisoner relationships are generally very good, and the work of the chaplaincy including the launch of a television channel alongside a helpline and activity packs. It was also very kind of the Board to record a welcome video message to provide key information for the reception and induction process.

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. 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 Berwyn.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Victoria Atkins', with a stylized flourish at the end.

VICTORIA ATKINS MP

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

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Management Stability

There are no anticipated changes that will impact on the stability of the senior team next year or the foreseeable future. This should help the prison to continue to progress.

Dental and Healthcare Provision

Although the waiting time for routine dental treatment remains in excess of 12 months, emergency dental treatment is provided on the same day. Significant delays resulted from a backlog in appointments at the start of the year; Covid-19 restrictions which impacted on access as appointments had to be limited/cancelled; there was a need to undertake physical upgrades to the dentistry area to improve the air and heating circulation system (this work now is completed); and the advice from the Chief Dental Officer for Wales to restrict routine dental care during the pandemic.

A business case for a waiting list initiative has been approved by the Health, Wellbeing and Social Care Partnership Board. This will deliver additional dental sessions on site at HMP Berwyn to address the routine dental treatment waiting times. The provider is also actively recruiting additional dentist and dental nurse posts. The additional sessions will commence as soon as these staff are appointed. An enhanced oral health promotion programme is planned to compliment the increased sessions.

Category D Transfers

HMPPS understands prisoners' frustrations with the speed of transfer to the open estate. Although Covid-19 management procedures severely impacted capacity throughout the estate, there is a high demand for Category D places for adult males. To prevent future victims, the ability to test men in open conditions as they approach the end of their sentence is a critical step in their reintegration into society.

Expansion of the Category D estate is already underway. This project will deliver over 600 additional places at six sites (HMPs/YOIs Stanford Hill, Springhill, Hatfield, Leyhill, Ford, and Sudbury). The places will be delivered through adding one or two 60-bed units at each site. Sites were selected in consultation with Prison Population Management, based on establishments with the highest demand. Site surveys established what size expansion was feasible operationally and considered the land available. The expansion 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.