



# Ministry of Justice

**Victoria Atkins MP**  
Minister of State for Justice and  
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Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
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Dear Chair,

## **HMP BULLINGDON: 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 during a challenging reporting period. I was saddened to hear there were seven deaths during the reporting year, including one from Covid-19 and one post release. My officials take recommendations from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman very seriously.

I appreciate the Board's concerns around prisoners with mental health issues. Work is underway to develop a whole-pathway approach to the care of offenders. This includes diverting offenders from the criminal justice system where appropriate, and reconnecting those leaving custody with health services in the community. Whilst in prison, NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to focus on the pathway for transfers and remissions of adult prisoners to and from mental health hospitals. New performance metrics have been developed by NHS England and NHS Improvement to monitor offenders being referred, assessed and transferred under the Mental Health Act. These commenced April 2021 and work is ongoing to improve consistency and quality.

Since 2016 the Government has taken steps to increase staffing levels and recruitment for all prisons, it is therefore recognised that there is a much higher proportion of new and less experienced officers in our prisons. To ensure experienced staff levels are maintained, a local assessment tool, supporting toolkit, and Retention Strategy is being launched to enable prisons to assess locally what their drivers of attrition are. Work to develop clear career paths and professionalise the service continues, and this should provide development and promotion opportunities for our experienced staff. This will aid motivation and offer greater reliance across the system, with new staff being supported and mentored, and through extra staff there will be greater confidence in working in a safe, decent and secure environment. Additionally, a new Custody & Detention Apprenticeship for all new prison officers joining HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is now being rolled out in the North/Midlands and is due to be introduced in the South of England imminently. This training programme has been designed to provide Prison Officers with the confidence and competence to complete their role. The Apprentices will be supported by an Apprenticeship Coach and will ensure all training components are completed to the standard required.

Turning to the continuing reconfiguration of HMP Bullingdon, to further support the prison's provision of progression and resettlement services the Accelerator project has been introduced. A Short Sentence Function (SFF) will be implemented in all regions by June 2022. The SSF will work with all people on probation with ten months or less to serve in prison. This will enable them to be fast tracked and offered

direct engagement. It will ensure better connection with a hard to reach/engage group with high levels of recidivism. Following the launch of the unified Probation Service in June 2021, under the new resettlement approach, HMP Bullingdon is due to have an embedded resettlement provision. The embedded pre-release teams will provide services not available via the by Commissioned Rehabilitative Service (CRS) including Finance, Benefit and Debt services and support services to the people in prison. In the pre-release phase, CRS providers will deliver resettlement and pre-release interventions to all convicted people being released from HMP Bullingdon, which will support sentence management activities completed by the Probation Practitioner and pre-release staff in the prison. We are currently looking into what additional accommodation and rehabilitative support could be provided to unconvicted people in prison.

Overcrowding across the estate was eased by the pandemic due to a reduction in inflows from the courts during the lockdowns leading to less cell sharing, however, I acknowledge the Board's continued concerns. HMP Bullingdon has been required to operate in excess of its Certified Normal Accommodation (CNA) level (i.e. its uncrowded capacity) during this period because of regional capacity pressure. Prison cell occupancy is certified by the Prison Group Director (PGD) in accordance with the guidelines for determining cell capacities and cells will only be shared where a PGD has assessed them to be of an adequate size and condition. Whilst it is not desirable to hold two prisoners in a cell designed for one in order to accommodate national population pressures, for the foreseeable future, and in common with some other prisons, it will be necessary for HMP Bullingdon to continue to operate with an operational capacity that involves a level of crowding above its CNA. To make conditions better, the prison has proactively improved screening in shared cells by ordering 260 privacy curtains for all cells that require them. They will be installed in due course.

I can also confirm that there will be a new building at HMP Bullingdon to accommodate a further 247 prisoners to meet projected demand that is forecasted to rise significantly. The delivery of additional prison places is to mitigate against a capacity deficit through delivering more prison places. As mentioned above, crowding in prisons is a longstanding issue that will not be easily addressed. We are investing £3.8 billion over the next three years to deliver 20,000 additional modern prison places by the mid-2020s, which includes these 247 places at HMP Bullingdon. These additional prison places 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 ultimately reduce will always be dependent on levels of demand in the system.

Although it has been a challenging reporting period, I was encouraged to receive your comments about the reduction in the number of outstanding Offender Assessment System plans and the installation of the scanners in reception and the gate. I was also pleased to note that in-cell telephones have been installed helping to facilitate contact between the prisoners and their families and between staff and prisoners.

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 Bullingdon.

Yours ever,



**VICTORIA ATKINS MP**

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**HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report**

**Drugs**

The Board has noted the numerous measures already in place to counter the availability and use of drugs, including the recently installed scanners in the reception and at the gate. HMP Bullingdon has now refreshed its Drug Strategy, re-established its drug recovery unit, and is working closely with the substance misuse service to reduce demand and reduce harm.