



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Channings Wood
Denbury, Newton Abbott
Devon
TQ12 6DW

MoJ ref: SUB 95699

30 March 2022

Dear Chair,

**HMP CHANNINGS WOOD: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 SEPTEMBER 2020 – 31 AUGUST 2021**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 August 2021. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work in capturing these helpful observations, especially as you ended the reporting period with a reduced complement of Board members. I was saddened to hear there were three deaths in custody during the reporting year. My officials take recommendations from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman very seriously.

It is acknowledged the delivery Offending Behaviour Programmes (OBPs) suffered during the reporting period and this was primarily due to a focus on delivering Exceptional Delivery Models (EDMs) during the pandemic in accordance with national guidance. The staffing situation at the prison has significantly improved, however, it is important to note that this did not impact on the delivery of programmes as the prison's OBPs team has always been fully resourced.

HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) continues to prioritise access to OBPs on a date-based priority system. This ensures that men approaching parole reviews are prioritised alongside those approaching release in order to balance sentence progression needs with public safety requirements. OBPs is one element in a range of rehabilitative activity provided by HMPPS and is voluntary within custodial settings. This means that it is not uncommon for men to be released without programme completion outside of the current restrictions. The OBP recovery team continually reviews the waiting lists and priority cases, and supports sites in targeting OBP access and facilitates transfers for urgent cases.

Although it has been another difficult reporting period, it was encouraging to receive your comments that the prison has largely remained settled despite the significant restrictions and challenges of operating the prison throughout the pandemic. I was pleased to read that most men remained tolerant and positive about these severe limitations and I acknowledge the good work carried out by prison chaplains during the pandemic.

I was also pleased to note the improvement in the living blocks including the redecoration of the segregation unit by an enhanced prisoner and the high level of engagement and pride in the food being produced in the cookery course designed for the Traveller community. The Board's comments about the peer-led deep dive exercise focussing on industries were most welcome and I was encouraged to read

that prisoners felt that these places were more than just work, but places of learning where they were able to gain hard and soft skills.

I note you have raised a local issue 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 Channings Wood.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Victoria Atkins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Victoria" and the surname "Atkins" clearly distinguishable.

VICTORIA ATKINS MP

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Prisoners' Property

Further to last years' response, there was a pause in the development of the new Prisoners' Property Policy Framework due to Covid-19. Following further extensive consultation and feedback, adjustments to the new Prisoners' Property Policy Framework have been made. The Framework is currently going through the necessary clearance processes and will be published as soon as those processes are concluded and is expected by the Summer. The Framework aims to ensure that property is handled with efficiency, care and respect and that staff and prisoners are clear on the arrangements in place. It provides clear requirements and strengthens guidance on known problem areas, including providing stronger guidance to ensure volumetric control limits are respected so that prisoners do not build up excessive amounts of property.

Regarding the specific issue of secure movement and storage of prisoners' property, as mentioned last year, Prisoner Escort and Custody Services (PECS) provide transportation for custodies and their property. The vehicle fleet is designed to carry the number of custodies it is intended for, together with their property in line with the volumetric limit which is governed by Prison Service Instruction 12/2011. The planned introduction of digitally recorded Person Escort Records, including property tags, will assist with investigations for property that is lost in transit with PECS suppliers. Additionally, HMPPS is considering what more can be done to encourage prisoners to send out or dispose of excess items to reduce the amount of their property that cannot transfer with them. Steps are also being taken to ensure a consistent approach when prisons forward on any excess items to prisoners at their new establishments after transfers have taken place. PECS continues to monitor all aspects of the contractors' performance and on occasions where it fails to meet the agreed levels will be raised with the contractor for improvement.