



Ministry
of Justice

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

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Dartmoor
Princetown
Yelverton,
Devon
PL20 6RR

MoJ ref: SUB 94225

1 February 2022

Dear Chair,

**HMP DARTMOOR: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 OCTOBER 2020 – 30 SEPTEMBER 2021**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 30 September 2021. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work in capturing these helpful observations, particularly as you remain short of Board members and Covid-19 impacted on your ability to gather information. I was saddened to hear there were three deaths in custody during the reporting year with one related to Covid-19. My officials take recommendations from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman very seriously.

I understand the Board's continued concerns related to the closure of HMP Dartmoor. I am pleased to inform the Board that on 22 December 2021 staff at the prison were informed that HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) had agreed the principal terms of a new lease for HMP Dartmoor with the Duchy of Cornwall. Whilst this remains subject to final agreement, HMPPS can confirm that HMP Dartmoor will remain operational as a prison beyond the end of 2023. I am sure that the Board will agree that this is reassuring news for everyone working at the prison. It is acknowledged that these negotiations have been protracted but HMPPS has a duty to the taxpayer to ensure value for money. Throughout the period of uncertainty HMP Dartmoor has not dwelled on the closure notice and has continued to treat all prisoners with respect and decency which has been evident in staff remaining supportive of prisoners and their relationships continuing to be good. Prisoner Consultation has provided a platform for prisoners to have a voice that is listened to and acted upon and the prison is working to address any incidents of discrimination.

It is recognised that the regime delivered has been impacted, mainly due to multiple long-term bed watches, as well as constant supervisions. These have impacted on the daily staffing levels, alongside the prison experiencing high sick absences, such as Covid-19. The prison is working hard to reduce these absences through supportive and robust attendance management practices. In addition, the Care and Trauma Risk Management (TRiM) Teams are available to support staff through their absence or trauma, and there is a recently recruited HR Permanence Manager. However, HMP Dartmoor does not currently have difficulties recruiting and there is a healthy pipeline of Prison Officer candidates. Operational Bands 3 – 10 are fully resourced with substantive, or temporary promoted employees, and plans are in place to fill all roles permanently. The prison has previously experienced the need to re-advertise for positions in the kitchen, but candidates are undergoing pre-employment checks to fill these vacancies now. While several experienced industrial staff will be leaving there are applicants interested in filling these positions.

The healthcare provider, Practice Plus Group (PPG), has also experienced employees moving on, but staffing is at full complement following recent recruitment campaigns. The prison is aware that the buoyant labour market can impact on retention, as has the closure notice which is evidenced in exit interviews from those leaving roles. Workforce Planning Meetings are monitoring resourcing levels and succession planning is considered to ensure timely recruitment campaigns take place when necessary. Ministry of Justice Resourcing is also continuing to drive applications via paid media channels including promoting the opportunity to complete an apprenticeship as well as pro-actively managing candidates through the recruitment process.

Investment continues to be made to the prisons infrastructure with tenders out to refurbish the showers on four wings and the care and separation unit. Work is planned to commence in May 2022 for the installation of in-cell telephony and surveys are taking place to consider a refurbishment of C wing which has been closed for many years. A new fit for purpose servery is currently being installed on G wing that will replace the temporary servery and a contract has been awarded to refurbish two existing constant supervision cells. Major work is also ongoing to refurbish the Gate Lodge and replace the roof which has experienced delays and is now planned to be complete in May 2022.

Turning to the Board's concerns about prisoners who are serving indeterminate sentences for public protection (IPP). Covid-19 continues to present a unique set of challenges in maintaining services in custody and in the community. Despite this, the latest published national figures at the end of December 2021 show the unreleased IPP population standing at 1,602. This is a reduction from 1,849 at the end of December 2020 which demonstrates that opportunities remain available to IPP prisoners wishing to progress despite the pandemic. To continue the progress already made, HMPPS is regularly refreshing the IPP action which includes initiatives such as case file reviews for those prisoners who are struggling to progress to help identify the most appropriate pathway for them. It includes a work stream that oversees the specialist progression regimes, giving prisoners a chance to develop and test their ability to manage their risks and lives in an environment of increasing freedoms and responsibilities. There are also a broad range of work streams in the plan, aimed at both the progression towards a safe release, and towards the sustainability of that release, following a positive parole outcome. It is also important to note, that as the number of IPP prisoners continues to decrease the proportion of those that remain in prison who have committed more serious offences and whose cases are complex grows. Prisoners must be willing to address these risks which is why some have spent a number of years in custody after completing their tariff. This is not a simple task, but HMPPS remains committed to do all that it can to support their progression and efforts to reduce their risk, to the point where the independent Parole Board determines that they may be safely released and managed in the community.

The Government is also committed to introducing a new statutory time limit of 28 days for transfers to mental health hospitals from custody. Legislation changes will take place once the NHS England and NHS Improvement good practice guidance is fully embedded which was published in June 2021 and promotes the timely access to appropriate treatment and reduces unnecessary delays. It is acknowledged that the admission of prisoners with serious mental ill health to secure beds within the southwest region is highly dependent on spaces and staff availability to conduct assessments. However, the network of Provider Collaboratives for secure mental health admissions has become well established and they are working well to support most patients who require admissions to secure beds in a timely way. Network meetings are taking place which allow any delays to be escalated or potential difficulties to be discussed and the Nursing and Quality team in the NHS England and NHS Improvement South West review mental health transfer data on a weekly basis. The national Mental Health Lead, with support from Nursing and Quality leads are also establishing where opportunities to improve admissions, transfers and remission can be implemented with an expectation on the providers to stringently adhere to the good practice guidance.

Despite your concerns, it was reassuring to receive your comments that HMP Dartmoor is a safe place where prisoners are treated fairly and humanely. I was pleased to read about all the recognition given to staff for their commitment and hard work supporting prisoners during the pandemic and limiting Covid-19 infections. I too am grateful to everyone working at the prison for their efforts during these difficult times. I was also pleased to note that the prison won the Windlesham Trophy by the Royal Horticultural Society during 2021 and all the staff and prisoners involved should be congratulated for their achievement.

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 Dartmoor.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Victoria Atkins', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Victoria' and the surname 'Atkins' clearly legible.

VICTORIA ATKINS MP

HMP DARTMOOR: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 OCTOBER 2020 – 30 SEPTEMBER 2021

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Health and Social Care

When a prisoner at HMP Dartmoor requires overnight health and social care, care opportunities at the prison will always be explored first between health and social care partners which are commissioned by NHS England across Devon. Where the prison environment and regime can support this, overnight care will be provided by the commissioned health and social care team and there have been occasions in the past where overnight complex care has been provided at HMP Dartmoor. It is recognised that providing such care can be a challenge as hoists, tailored beds, wheelchairs and various pieces of equipment cannot fit into some prison environments. Where the required care cannot be provided at HMP Dartmoor, health and social care partners will provide support to find a suitable alternative prison setting, and nursing homes and community settings will also be explored as part of this process.

The Board can be assured that the Governor has raised concern about those prisoners that will require social care beyond what can be provided in a prison without 24-hour healthcare facilities, during the current re-commissioning of healthcare services, given the prisons older population. NHS England is discussing regionally with partners in the South West how to provide better care for the health and social care needs of the older population to support the HMPPS Older Persons Strategy.

Employment

The Board will be aware that Covid-19 has impacted prisoners time out of cell and purposeful activity. While there is currently no funding available for employment, HMP Dartmoor has been reviewing its employment strategy and as it builds on its recovery and moves into Stage 1 of the [National Framework for Prison Regimes and Services](#) there will be an increase in capacity in the workshops. The prison already has capacity to provide 426 full-time workplaces for the population of 640. To provide further suitable activity places there are plans to re-open a workshop and increase the capacity in others which will be supported by recruiting into several industry instructor vacancies, as well as re-opening the Two Bridges dementia facility. The introduction of a split regime will ensure that everyone who is able to work will have the opportunity to do so either full-time or part-time, with those part-time workers either working or engaging in structured wing activities.

In addition, over the next two years HMPPS will be rolling out dedicated Employment Advisers to all resettlement prisons who will develop a local employment strategy that is unique to their prison. They will also match prisoners to suitable roles for in-prison work, work placements on Release on Temporary Licence and jobs on release brought to the prison by the New Futures Network, a specialist part of HMPPS that brokers partnerships between prisons and employers. Employment Hubs will be also be rolled out, which will be the equivalent of a job centre in a prison where prisoners can find out about opportunities sourced by the New Futures Network and other partners. HMP Dartmoor will benefit from these interventions and will continue to be supported by the New Futures Network, to create and develop partnerships with employers to increase opportunities for prisoners.

Release Planning

It is acknowledged that while HMP Dartmoor is a Category C Training prison it does hold a large number of prisoners within their resettlement window. The prison continues to work hard with HMPPS Capacity Management to realign the population by transferring prisoners to a resettlement prison or to the Open

estate. The current pressures on capacity across the estate and previous restrictions on transfer during the pandemic to reduce the transmission of the virus have had an impact on this proactive collaboration. However, the prison is meeting its timescales for the handover from Prison Offender Manager to Community Offender Manager.