



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Guys Marsh
Shaftsbury
Dorset
SP7 0AH

MoJ ref: SUB96659

31 May 2022

Dear Chair,

**HMP GUYS MARSH: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 DECEMBER 2020 – 30 NOVEMBER 2021**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 30 November 2021. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work in capturing these helpful observations, particularly as Covid-19 impacted on your ability to monitor the prison. I was saddened to hear there was one death in custody during the reporting year, which occurred within 24 hours of release from the prison. My officials take recommendations from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman very seriously.

I acknowledge the Board's concern regarding the size of the category D prison estate. The availability of these spaces were affected by the closure of a number of accommodation blocks in the open prison estate during 2021 which no longer met statutory fire safety standards. The impact has been managed with temporary accommodation, particularly in the South, which was already present at some sites as part of HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) Covid-19 contingencies measures, as well as with new temporary accommodation introduced at other sites. It is recognised that there remains a high demand for category D places resulting in many adult males having to be held in closed conditions which restricts their access to services such as release on temporary license that will support their rehabilitation. Progressive transfers therefore remain subject to space in the appropriate parts of the prison estate becoming available. However, I hope to reassure you that the Government has committed to investing £3.8 billion over the next three years to deliver 20,000 additional, modern prison places including 2,000 temporary prison places across England and Wales by the mid-2020s. This project will deliver 660 additional places through expansion of the category D estate at a number of sites across the country.

As an update to my predecessor's response last year on making the prison officer role an attractive profession, HMPPS has now moved away from the Prison Officer Entry Level training having fully implemented the Custody & Detention Apprenticeship during the 2021/22 financial year. The training programme enhances practical skills and is in line with adult learning principles and reflective practice and has been designed to support early development and upskill new starters to provide them with the confidence and competence to undertake their role. During this time staff are fully supported by an Apprenticeship Coach to ensure all training is completed to the standard required, as well as there being a new standardised induction across all prisons introduced from April 2022 to improve capabilities. In addition, a Retention Strategy and interactive toolkit was launched in November 2021, with a focus on collaborative HR working to engage and retain new and experienced operational and non-operational staff. A new exit interview process has been introduced to identify why operational and non-operational staff are leaving to allow targeted local interventions to be introduced to reduce staff turnover.

Recruitment marketing campaigns are also being used on a variety of channels for all prisons with a focus on how becoming a prison officer is a career with great opportunities for progression and to specialise; this has helped attract 541 applications to the prison officer role between February 2021 and March 2022. These campaigns demystify that you need to be a certain type of person to be a prison officer and explain the impact prospective candidates could make on prisoners and society, as well as highlighting the Civil Service benefits and pension they could receive. Since February 2021 specific marketing has also been used to support recruitment to HMP Guy's Marsh through internet job boards and search engine advertisements.

Turning to the Board's continued concern about the number of prisoners with severe mental ill health, it is recognised that prison is not an appropriate setting for individuals with severe mental health needs. That is why the Government has already taken steps to end the use of prison as a place of safety under the Mental Health Act (1983). The Government has also committed in the Prisons Strategy White Paper published in December 2021 to do more to support early identification of mental health need, ensure staff are fully equipped with the right skills, and do more in the community to divert people away from the justice pathway altogether. In January 2022, health and justice partners established a cross-departmental working group to better understand the issues leading to prisons being used as a place of safety and to develop solutions to safely remove its use. The cross-departmental response and agreed priorities are due to be published in September 2022. NHS England and NHS Improvement has also developed a process to monitor transfer and remission activity which is being analysed to identify trends and areas where further improvement is needed to meet the Government's commitment to transfer prisoners to secure hospital within 28-days. Monitoring will take place monthly and where time frames are breached or other concerning trends are identified, regional NHS England and NHS Improvement teams will be supported to carry out targeted work.

Despite operating under difficult circumstances, it was reassuring to receive your comments that the prison is safe and incidents of self-harm have reduced compared with 2019. I was pleased to read that staff are supportive of those in their care and have good relationships with the prisoners. I note the Board commend the Governor, staff and healthcare for their prompt response and efforts to reduce the transmission of Covid-19 and I too am grateful to everyone working at the prison for their continued hard work and professionalism during these challenging times. I also note that the availability of illicit substances is a concern and the Governor has provided assurance that funding has been secured for improvements to physical security, such as new windows and a wing for substance-free living during 2022/23.

I note you have raised three 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 Guys Marsh.

Yours ever,



VICTORIA ATKINS MP

HMP GUYS MARSH: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 DECEMBER 2020 – 30 NOVEMBER 2021

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Staff IT System

HMP Guys Marsh is due to have MoJ Official deployed in July 2022 which replaces the current staff IT system, Quantum. The deployment of MoJ Official is part of the complete replacement of Quantum being delivered across all prison and non-prison sites which will provide a significant IT upgrade by introducing a modern desktop to prisons that will improve staff efficiency and ways of working. MoJ Official has already been rolled out to 15 prisons with a user base of more than 15,000 people and user feedback has been positive with an emphasis on the speed of the system, collaboration features and the overall stability of the IT system.

Prisoner IT System

A key strategic objective of the HMPPS 2021-2024 Digital, Data, and Technology Strategy is to give the people in prison the digital tools and technology to support their rehabilitation, including prisoner education and administration. Within that strategy HMPPS has committed to making laptops available in prisoners' cells in up to 15 prisons through the in-cell technology programme by the end of October 2022. HMPPS has now completed deployments to eight sites, with a further five being completed by October 2022, as well as a refresh of the devices and service in the two original sites, HMP Wayland and HMP Berwyn. In addition, the rollout of the education software, Virtual Campus 2, has been enabled on in-cell laptops offering prisoners access to education services while in their cell.

The potential benefits in-cell technology can bring to prisons is acknowledged, with initial feedback from prisons highlighting the time saved for staff. Consequently, HMPPS aims to continue the rollout to more of the prison estate in the coming years and has secured funding to install in-cell technology in a minimum of six additional prisons in the next three years. However, whilst sources for future funding continue to be investigated it is recognised that a considerable share of the prison estate are yet to be able to offer in-cell technology to prisoners such as HMP Guys Marsh.

Resettlement Pathways

It is recognised that there has been limited resettlement pathways support available to prisoners at HMP Guys Marsh in the resettlement phase of their sentence. This was as a result of the loss of all staff at Catch 22, the resettlement service provider following the reunification of the Probation Service and shift of the service into the new model. To replace the lost services HMP Guys Marsh has been using existing prison resources, such as the Employment Hub to maintain services for prisoners to open bank accounts and sourcing identification for pre-release. All referrals for resettlement support have continued to be directed to the Employment Hub in the absence of Catch 22 with a caseworker delivering support to prisoners alongside two peer support Pathways Ambassadors to coordinate all the resettlement work that is undertaken during the last 12 weeks of a prisoners sentence. HMP Guys Marsh is confident that the resettlement pathways for prisoners will improve as work is continuing with the Probation Service and Resettlement Providers to ensure Accommodation and personal wellbeing interventions are enabled via the Community Offender Manager. The prison's progress through the remainder of its recovery from Covid-19 will also improve the approach as this allows for the reintroduction of the Resettlement Academy and the enablement of the four-week pre-release Board's in partnership with the Offender Management Unit.