



Ministry
of Justice

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

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Manchester
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27 January 2022

Dear Chair,

**HMP MANCHESTER: 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 am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work in capturing these helpful observations, particularly as you continued to be short of Board members and Covid-19 impacted on your ability to gather information.

I was saddened to hear there were six deaths in custody, four of which were from natural causes with one of these being related to Covid-19. I was also saddened to hear that two members of staff died during the reporting year due to Covid-19. I appreciate the hard work and professionalism of everyone at the prison whilst having to come to terms with the loss of a colleague and a friend.

I understand the Board's concern that the installation of secure windows has not commenced yet. The project has been progressing with a feasibility study completed to support planning and the project has been identified as part of the 2021/22 capital delivery programme approved by HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). The project is currently at the outline business case stage with the current projected timeline anticipating work commencing on site at HMP Manchester in August/September 2022 which will allow the completion of the business case approval, tender evaluation and the commercial agreement process.

Turning to the Board's continued concerns for those prisoners with mental ill health awaiting transfer to a secure hospital I can assure the Board that the Government is determined to improve the transfer process. The Government is committed to introducing a new statutory time limit of 28 days for transfers to mental health hospitals from custody which was proposed in the White Paper on Reforming the Mental Health Act published in January 2021. This will be commenced once the new NHS England and NHS Improvement good practice guidance is fully embedded which was published on 10 June 2021 and promotes the timely access to appropriate treatment and reduces unnecessary delays -

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/guidance-for-the-transfer-and-remission-of-adult-prisonersandimmigration-removal-centre-detainees-under-the-mental-health-act-1983>.

It is acknowledged that there have been delays in access to secure mental health hospitals due to a lack of suitable beds on appropriate admission wards relating to unprecedented demand across all communities caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The relevant units are currently restoring and recovering routine levels of service where possible and NHS commissioners will continue to support mental health

services and HMP Manchester when there are difficulties in achieving transfers in a timely way. Prisoners waiting for transfer are fully supported by the mental health team at the prison until the transfer is achieved and resolution of delays is given the highest priority. In addition, new performance metrics have been developed by NHS England and NHS Improvement to monitor referrals, assessments and transfers under the Mental Health Act. These commenced in April 2021 and work is ongoing to improve consistency and quality. Work is also developing the whole-pathway approach to the care of offenders including diverting them from the criminal justice system where appropriate, and reconnecting those leaving custody with health services in the community.

Due to the complex needs and behaviour of some prisoners, segregation for their own safety or the safety of others may be necessary whilst awaiting a transfer to secure hospital under the Mental Health Act. However, segregation is always used as a last resort and following robust decision logs and safety algorithms led by the health provider, as well as regular multidisciplinary reviews taking place, to meet the individual's needs, whilst ensuring safety, vulnerability and risks are managed. Every effort is made to expedite transfers and Greater Manchester Mental Health Foundation Trust, HMP Manchester and the Directorate of Security continues to work collaboratively to access secure hospital beds where appropriate.

Despite your concerns, it was pleasing to receive your comments recognising the improved standard of accommodation and overall cleanliness, including the outside areas of the prison. I was encouraged by the steps to make improvements for those prisoners with protected characteristics, provide a more inclusive environment and adapt ground floor cells for those with disabilities. It was reassuring to note that the efforts of staff have continued to ensure a safe environment where Covid-19 restrictions have been managed professionally and understood by prisoners enabling a reasonable standard of healthcare and wellbeing to be provided. I was also encouraged by the efforts of the education and PE departments to adapt and provide in-cell opportunities, as well as the support offered to prisoners and their families by the Faith team. I too am grateful to everyone working at the prison for their continued hard work and determination throughout the pandemic.

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 Manchester.

Yours ever,



VICTORIA ATKINS MP

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Property Records

Following the pause in the development of the new Prisoners' Property policy framework due to Covid-19 mentioned in the previous response to the Board, feedback received from IMB members has been considered alongside the comments received from other stakeholders, and comments from subsequent operational engagement. HMPPS has now circulated the draft framework with internal and external stakeholders, including the IMB Secretariat and the IMB representatives previously consulted, and the large number of comments received are being considered. As a result, the framework is expected to be published early in 2022. The new framework will seek 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. This includes providing stronger guidance on the correct procedures for completing prisoners' property cards. The introduction of digitally recorded Person Escort Records will also enable better tracking of property in transit with Prisoner Escort and Custody Service (PECS) suppliers and will assist with investigating the few complaints PECS receives about lost property.

Locally HMP Manchester is also conducting a property summit which is seeking feedback from staff, prisoners, families of prisoners and other partner organisations. This will be used to implement changes in the local property processes and a local property task force is being setup to deliver the summit outcomes.