



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Ranby
Retford
Nottinghamshire
DN22 8EU

MoJ ref: SUB 93498

10 January 2022

Dear Chair,

**HMP RANBY: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 24 MARCH 2020 – 31 MARCH 2021**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 March 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 during the reporting year. I was saddened to hear there were two deaths in custody, with one of these being related to Covid-19. My officials take recommendations from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman very seriously.

I understand the Board's continued concerns for those prisoners with mental ill health being located within the Segregation Unit whilst awaiting transfer to a secure hospital. The Government is determined to improve the transfer process and 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 recognised that prisoners have had long waits for transfer to secure hospital throughout the pandemic due to positive Covid-19 cases within the mental health hospital estate resulting in delayed admissions. Providing access to secure hospital is part of the Restoration and Recovery of services across the healthcare sector and to proactively manage reductions in the waiting times in the Midlands, NHS England Health and Justice (Midlands) Governance team and Commissioners have developed a fortnightly Clinical Case Review meeting. The meeting incorporates all patients who have exceeded the 28 day timeframe to ensure that a whole system approach is taken to support those patients most vulnerable and high-risk and has impacted positively on prioritising their access to a secure hospital bed. In addition, any prisoner with a mental health need is identified and a plan is formulated to support the individual whilst they are in custody at HMP Ranby. 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 a robust discussion between the prison and healthcare team to meet the individual's needs, whilst ensuring safety, vulnerability and risk are managed. The healthcare provider and prison staff

at HMP Ranby continue to work with key stakeholders to ensure patient access to secure hospital beds where appropriate.

Turning to the Board's continued concern about overcrowding, the Government has committed to increase investment of £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 includes creating four new prisons over the next six years and expanding another four prisons over the next three years. Construction is also now well underway at HMP Five Wells, the new prison at Wellingborough in Northamptonshire, and works have started at Glen Parva, Leicestershire. In addition, since March 2020 the national prison population has fallen due to a decline in new receptions from courts during the pandemic. This has resulted in a reduction in those sharing cells and enabled HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) to implement its compartmentalisation strategy to reduce the risk of transmitting Covid-19. The average number of prisoners held in crowded conditions at HMP Ranby did also fall during the 2020/21 financial year compared to 2019/20, but the prison has continued to need to operate in excess of its Certified Normal Accommodation level because of regional capacity pressures. While the crowded places at HMP Ranby meet HMPPS standards for accommodation it is recognised that holding two in a cell designed for one prisoner in order to accommodate national population pressures is not desirable. However, reducing crowding at one prison would result in crowding having to increase further elsewhere. For the foreseeable future, and in common with some other prisons, it will be necessary for HMP Ranby to continue to operate with an operational capacity that involves a level of crowding above its Certified Normal Accommodation.

Regarding the Board's continued concern for those prisoners being released to homelessness, it is recognised that offenders face significant barriers to securing suitable accommodation which HMPPS cannot tackle in isolation. These barriers are often linked to their lack of access to necessary funds, availability of local authority housing supply, as well as the affordability and access to the private rented sector. Since October 2018, HMPPS has had a duty to refer anyone at risk of homelessness to the Local Housing Authorities, who hold statutory responsibility for housing. To strengthen the responsibilities of prison and probation staff to make effective, timely referrals, HMPPS implemented 'The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017: Duty to Refer (England only)' policy framework on 1 July 2021. The policy framework also outlines the process supporting the Offender Pathway in Wales.

The Board will hopefully be reassured to note that the Homeless Prevention Teams set up to oversee the Covid Emergency Scheme have been retained as a permanent feature to continue to develop relationships with local authorities and other strategic partners in order to embed and expand housing options for prison leavers. Housing Specialists are also being introduced in twenty resettlement prisons to support Heads of Reducing Reoffending to be more strategic in their response to reducing homelessness, including working in partnership with Commissioned Rehabilitative Services, Homelessness Prevention Teams, and Local Authorities. In addition, over £20 million is being invested to launch a new service, providing up to 12 weeks of basic temporary accommodation for prison leavers who would otherwise be homeless. The service was initially launched in July 2021 within five probation regions and will support around 3,000 offenders in its first year.

Although at an early stage, following the National Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Companies unifying to become the Probation Service in June 2021, Commissioned Rehabilitative Service (CRS) providers in the pre-release phase will be delivering key resettlement interventions. All eligible cases will receive support prior to release and for accommodation this will be delivered by suppliers based in the areas to which they will return. As well as preparing people for release, CRS providers will undertake activity to close down tenancies at the start of someone's sentence where this is required or maintain their housing arrangements where appropriate and possible.

Regarding releases on Home Detention Curfew (HDC), it remains the case that accommodation must be approved. Prisoners with no fixed abode cannot be released on HDC or if the address is deemed inappropriate. Bail Accommodation and Support Services provision within the Yorkshire and Humberside region continues to meet referral demand and HMP Ranby has continued to release all those eligible who can provide a suitable address or where suitable secure accommodation can be found for them. Although there was no suspension to the HDC scheme, it is recognised that there can be delays, however, HMP Ranby assesses some of the highest numbers of prisoners eligible for HDC across the prison estate.

Despite your concerns, it was pleasing to receive your comments recognising the efforts of the Governor, management and staff to keep Covid-19 under control whilst continuing to treat prisoners fairly and with humanity. I note the Board wish to place on record that a number of prisoners thanked the Governor for caring and protecting them during the pandemic and I too am grateful for everyone's continued hard work and professionalism during this challenging time. I was encouraged to read that despite the challenges of the pandemic the healthcare services have been provided in line with the service in the community. I was also reassured to read that the prison remains safe with violence, assaults and self-harm continuing to reduce.

I note you have not raised any local issues of concern in your report for the Governor to address in recognition of the exceptional challenges the prison has faced due to the pandemic, however the Governor will keep you aware of its regime recovery as this continues to progress. 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 Ranby.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "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

Prisoner Escort and Custody Services (PECS) vehicle fleet is designed to carry the number of prisoners it is intended for, together with their property in line with the volumetric limit which is currently governed by Prison Service Instruction 12/2011 – Prisoners' Property. As part of the planning for the new PECS contract, which commenced in August 2020, property limits on transportation were reviewed with Ministry of Justice Policy and it was agreed that the new vehicle fleet would provide increased capacity to facilitate an additional half bag of property for consumables to the limit of 7.5kg. Whilst it is the responsibility of the sending prisons to forward on any excess property a prisoner has accumulated to the receiving prison as soon as possible, the new Prisoners' Property policy framework will provide greater direction and standardisation on a national basis and has been designed with procedural justice at its core. It strengthens guidance on known problem areas such as volumetric control and seeks to ensure prisoners' property is managed efficiently, effectively, consistently and with care and respect. The introduction of digitally recorded Person Escort Records will also enable better tracking of property in transit with PECS suppliers and will assist with investigating the few complaints PECS receives about lost property.

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.

Recategorisation

Further to last year's response, it is acknowledged that further improvement is necessary and HMP Ranby continues to work with colleagues in the open estate to ensure that paperwork relating to any adjudication charge for an alleged disciplinary offence follows the individual prisoner during or after transfer as this is not currently always the case. Where a prisoner has concern that this will have impacted their recategorisation to a higher security category, the Prisoner Complaints Policy Framework remains available to make representations.