



Ministry
of Justice

Victoria Atkins MP
Minister of State for Justice and
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Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Wandsworth
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London
SW18 3HS

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Dear Chair,

**HMP WANDSWORTH: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 JUNE 2020 – 31 MAY 2021**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 May 2021 I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work in capturing these helpful observations, especially as you remained 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 four deaths in custody during the reporting year, one of which was natural causes. My officials take recommendations from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman very seriously.

I understand the Board's concern about the number of adapted cells at the prison. The prison typically has two prisoners on Jones Unit at any one time who are wheelchair users, but do not need to reside in a healthcare facility. The situation has recently improved with the creation of two additional cells adapted for wheelchair users, increasing the total number of cells to seven. It is, however, recognised that five of the cells are on the Vulnerable Prisoner Unit which presents some difficulty with access for those who should not be allocated there. Whilst this can present a challenge regular reviews are completed to ensure prioritisation is given to those with the most need. No funding has been provided to create additional adapted cells at HMP Wandsworth during the current financial year and any future funding will need to be considered alongside other competing priorities.

I acknowledge the Board's request for a full pre-pandemic immigration service to be restored. At HMP Wandsworth, alternative methods to serve immigration papers were agreed with the Head of the Offender Management Unit, via the assistance of local prison staff. All essential letters were sent with a full explanation of what the letter meant and, as the national lockdown continued, Foreign National Offender Returns Command (FNORC) started to use video links to interview prisoners. A specific Duty Officer was also assigned to the prison to answer any enquiries raised with prison staff. Towards the end of 2020 FNORC met the Deputy Governor and the Independent Monitoring Board to discuss attendance on site and communication with foreign nationals. A phased return to HMP Wandsworth commenced on 9 March 2021 with the local immigration team split in two to minimise contact with others and since 1 August 2021 on site support has been provided seven days per week. Immigration Officers now communicate with foreign nationals via the in-cell phones, kiosks and attend the wings to serve various paperwork, but are encouraged not to enter wings where Covid-19 is present to control the spread of the virus. Immigration Officers also attend reception every morning to conduct inductions with new arrivals. Discussions between FNORC and the prison are ongoing to reintroduce access to legal visits to conduct interviews and to commence wing surgeries as was the case prior to the pandemic.

Turning to the Board's continued concern about overcrowding, I can assure the Board that the Government's commitment to spend over £4 billion capital funding will make significant progress in delivering additional prison places across England and Wales by the mid-2020s. These additional prison places will be safe, decent and uncrowded and will have a positive impact on lowering the proportion of crowding within the prison estate. However, the extent to which the proportion of prisoners held in crowded accommodation will reduce will always be dependent on levels of demand in the system. Since March 2020 the national prison population has also fallen due to a decline in new receptions from courts due to 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. Despite this, HMP Wandsworth has continued to need to operate in excess of its certified normal accommodation level because of regional capacity pressures. There are no plans to reduce the capacity at HMP Wandsworth any further following the reduction in capacity authorised during the summer of 2021 and the impact this is having on crowding throughout the financial year 2021/22 will not be fully understood until the release of the HMPPS Annual Digest in 2022. While the crowded places at HMP Wandsworth 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.

Regarding the Mental Health provision, in June 2021, the service specification for the mental health contract was reviewed and the In-reach function was redesigned to include an assessment and liaison function. A Standard Operating Procedure for the Mental Health Referrals Triaging process was developed and implemented in October 2021. Referrals are now made through a Single Point of Access and triaged daily according to need against a priority traffic light system by the local multi-disciplinary team. Additional clinical leadership is being provided via a Band 8A Clinical Service Leads and a Clinical Programme Manager, as well as four new Assessment and Liaison posts being recruited, which will provide two Band 6 nurses and two Band 4 Critical Time Intervention Workers. Foreign nationals continued to access the same service from the Mental Health team as other prisoners throughout the pandemic and received support through the Assessment Care in Custody and Teamwork process where appropriate. The prison also remains focussed on regime progression in order to improve and increase delivery in line with HMPPS Covid-19 recovery planning which will provide greater purposeful activity opportunities for prisoners.

Despite your concerns, it was pleasing to receive your comments recognising the dedication of staff throughout the pandemic and the focus on welfare and safety within the prison. I too am grateful to everyone working at the prison for their efforts and professionalism during this challenging time. I was reassured to read that prisoners were treated fairly and every effort was made to alleviate the impact that the of Covid-19 restrictions had as well as keeping them informed through enhanced communications.

I note you have raised two 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 Wandsworth.

Yours ever,



VICTORIA ATKINS MP

HMP WANDSWORTH: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JUNE 2020 – 31 MAY 2021

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Re-Role

HMP Wandsworth is a Reception prison with a secondary resettlement function and therefore holds, a remand population, those newly sentenced awaiting allocation into the wider estate, and Category C resettlement prisoners with less than 16 months left to serve. HMP Wandsworth has not assumed responsibility for courts from HMP High Down as this was paused to allow the prison to focus on dealing with Covid-19 and the recovery. However, work is now progressing with the intention of transitioning the courts in spring 2022.

Living Conditions

Further to last year's response, shower refurbishment work has continued in six shower rooms which has completed the shower refurbishment throughout Heathfield. In August 2021 redecoration work was undertaken to address mould issues in the Trinity showers until the refurbishment work can begin which will include additional showering facilities. Refurbishments have also been completed to all serveries on Heathfield, as well as large areas of landing and cell flooring. Heating issues have been addressed with a new plant installed, all segregation cells have been refurbished, the car park has been resurfaced and improvements have been made to the TV system. Further improvement projects are planned for the financial year 2021/22 including various works on Trinity, low voltage switchgear and boiler replacements. Other projects are also in the pipeline such as fire safety improvement works and the chapel refurbishment, with the Chapel roof due to be replaced in 2022/23.

Where any accommodation is identified as having mould or leaking plumbing this is taken out of use to facilitate remedial work. The facilities management provider continues to complete repairs through reactive maintenance, with additional resource provided to manage vandalism repairs. Whilst broken windows have been replaced these remain an ongoing challenge and a bid is being submitted for funding to enable all windows to be upgraded to the latest specification. Pest control visits have been increased to tackle rodent problems and the funding being sought to replace cell windows will prevent rubbish and food thrown from cell which attract rodents. Work was also undertaken during summer 2021 to remove pigeons from the wings, clean up the pigeon faeces and install measures to reduce the risk of pigeons re-entering.

Education Contract

As the Board is already aware whilst HMP Wandsworth does not have management control of Novus (the education provider), the prison, in co-operation with Regional Teams, have a contractual right to withhold a 5% performance payment from the provider. This is an important mechanism to help drive change and improvement and an agreed action plan is now in place, with regular meetings taking place to assess progress.

CCTV

Essential repairs and control room upgrade works were completed in early 2020. In addition, contractors commence the complete replacement of the CCTV system cameras and equipment during November 2021 which will take two years to complete and will provide increased coverage.

Healthcare Accommodation

The new healthcare building which is due to be completed in March 2022 was not intended to include cellular accommodation. However, a funding bid has been submitted for the refurbishment of the existing healthcare accommodation during this financial year to create more robust accommodation. Scoping for the use of additional accommodation for Healthcare is also underway but is likely to be a longer-term project.