



Ministry
of Justice

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

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Wymott
Ulmes Walton Lane
Preston, Lancashire
PR26 8LW

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Dear Chair,

**HMP WYMOTT: 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, particularly as the Board has remained short of members and Covid-19 impacted on your ability to gather information during the reporting year. I was saddened to hear that four members of staff passed away during the reporting year. I appreciate the hard work and professionalism of everyone at the prison during this difficult time whilst having to come to terms with the loss of colleagues and friends.

I was also saddened that there were seven deaths in custody, six of which occurred at outside hospital due to natural causes. My officials take recommendations from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) very seriously and I note the Board has asked how the prison ensures actions are implemented following PPO recommendations. The Governor has provided assurance that a comprehensive record of all PPO recommendations are reported to the prisons Local Health Delivery Board and Safety Meetings and the actions taken to address these continue to be monitored.

I understand the Board's continued concerns about prisoners at HMP Wymott who are serving indeterminate sentences for public protection (IPP). Further to my predecessors response last year, the Board will be aware that 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 September 2021 show the unreleased IPP population standing at 1,661. This is a reduction from 1,895 at the end of September 2020 which demonstrates that opportunities remain available to IPP prisoners wishing to progress despite the pandemic. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) remains committed to do all that it can to support their progression and every effort is made to locate an IPP prisoner to a prison best placed to meet their sentence planning needs as promptly as is reasonably possible. However, transfers during the parole review process would usually only take place to access a progression opportunity and where it does not disrupt an impending parole hearing date. Prisons will otherwise seek to progress IPP prisoners at the earliest opportunity following the conclusion of a parole review.

To continue the progress already made, HMPPS is regularly refreshing the IPP action plan, which includes initiatives such as case file reviews being expanded to include all short tariff prisoners irrespective of previous parole hearing outcome. This is in addition to those that have failed to make any progress after two or more post-tariff parole hearings. 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.

Despite your concerns, it was reassuring to receive your comments that the prison is safe and the appointment of the Equalities Manager is continuing the commitment to provide fair and equal treatment. It was encouraging to note that levels of self-harm, drug use, violence and the need to use force have all reduced during the reporting year. I was pleased to read about the recognition given to staff for their hard work through very challenging times during the pandemic whilst continuing to maintain positive relationships with prisoners. I too am grateful for everyone's extraordinary efforts during the pandemic.

It was reassuring to read about the buddy system in place in association with Recoop to help less able older prisoners with daily tasks. I was encouraged to note that the chaplaincy was commended for its weekly packs to aid in-cell worship, as well as the support throughout the pandemic to bereaved families and prisoners. It was also pleasing that recognition was given to the family development officer for the various initiatives, such as photographs and Christmas decorations to help prisoners maintain contact with family, as well as to the library service to continue an outreach service and Storybook Dads to allow fathers to read to their children during online visits.

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 four 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 Wymott.

Yours ever,



VICTORIA ATKINS MP

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

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Accommodation

Further to last year's response, the refurbishment of A and B wing remains programmed for progression, but a commencement date has not been finalised yet due to decisions around decanting prisoners from the wings to other locations to allow this to proceed. However, a visit to the prison by the main building contractor is planned in due course to review the scope of works and finalise the costing.

In the meantime, the prison has continued to work with the Ministry of Justice and Facilities Management provider colleagues to focus attention on specific concerns. The wings are being kept clean and tidy and the refurbishment of the heating system is improving conditions. New heating calorifiers have been installed which have improved the heating and availability of hot water and it is reassuring that the Board acknowledge these improvements and have meant fewer applications as a result. In addition, a shower improvement project is in progress, with the specifications, designs, and costs confirmed for planned work to the ground floor shower rooms on C, D and E wings and a limited number of other areas.

Kitchen Improvements

Further to last year's response the kitchen refurbishment project has been programmed in by MoJ Property for the 2022/23 financial year, however this remains subject to funding being mandated and its prioritisation being approved by HMPPS. In the meantime, issues associated with equipment failures are being monitored on a weekly basis and the Governor and HMPPS Service Delivery Manager visit the kitchen regularly and escalate concerns to MoJ Property. The Catering Manager also has a designated operational manager to raise concerns and is developing a risk report for the monthly Estates Meeting. Improvements to upgrade the circuits in the main kitchen have been approved which will address the power issues. Temperature control issues have also been addressed by the recent heating replacement, which has ensured that a constant temperature is being maintained in the kitchen.

HMPPS do also acknowledge that some of the kitchen equipment is beyond its economic life and needs replacing under the Asset Replacement Programme and will look to bring forward investment to address this where funding allows following the 2021 Spending Review. In the meantime, it is encouraging that the Board commend the kitchen staff for continuing to maintain food supplies despite these challenges. The facilities management provider is ensuring that repairs are undertaken, although it is recognised on occasions these can be delayed.

Prisoners' Property

Further to last year's response, HMPPS has now circulated the draft Prisoners' Property policy 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 next year. The 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.

Whilst it remains 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 introduction of digitally recorded Person

Escort Records will enable better tracking of property in transit with Prisoner Escort and Custody Services (PECS) suppliers and will assist with investigating the few complaints PECS receives about lost property. The revised Prisoner Complaints Policy framework also specifically addresses complaints that relate to another prison or property lost in transit. Where a complaint submitted in one prison might involve an incident which occurred in a previous prison or during transit, the prison where the prisoner is located at the time the complaint is submitted is responsible for ensuring that a response is provided in the required timescales. However, to avoid delays, it is essential that prisons agree at an early stage which of them is responsible for providing the actual response (and paying any proposed compensation where it may be necessary). Where agreement cannot be reached, such matters can be referred to the relevant Prison Group Director.

Locally HMP Wymott is continuing work to improve the management of property which has included reducing the storage of bulk property, continuing to ensure incoming items are appropriately searched where necessary, and communicating with other prisons to address issues. Whilst transfers were restricted at times during the pandemic, it is encouraging that the number of IMB applications about the loss of property during transfer to the prison or at another prison has reduced since the Board's last reporting period from 31 to 13, as has the number of applications about property moving within HMP Wymott from 29 to 11.

Prisoners' Pay

The Board will be aware that prisons have the freedom to set local pay rates that reflect their prisoner population needs, the prisons regime and the various employment, education and vocational training opportunities that are available. All prisoners employed in work, induction, education, training or offending behaviour programmes will receive at least the minimum rate of £4 set out in Prison Service Order 4460 - *Prisoners' Pay*. It is also essential that the local pay scheme is reasoned and structured, so that it is clear to both prisoners and staff, and it is not applied in an arbitrary or discriminatory way.

HMP Wymott's budget for prisoner pay has not increased and remains constant. The prison did introduce a Covid-19 pay model to support the increased number of unemployed prisoners with purchasing canteen, catalogue items and to maintain contact with family. This initially provided £10.60 a week unemployment pay with greater pay available to essential workers based on the number of sessions worked. Separately all prisoners received additional support through national HMPPS measures, such as additional £5 pin phone credit per week. The prison had always been clear with the prisoner committee locally at HMP Wymott that the Covid pay scales were temporary and would be reviewed at each stage of recovery in the HMPPS national framework. Essentially reducing to pre-Covid pay levels in a similar manner to the national Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. As the local regime has continued to expand, although primarily in the first instance with activities on a part-time basis, the pay budget remains a challenge, but HMP Wymott is committed to encouraging and supporting prisoners in their rehabilitation through high levels of engagement in activities and programmes. The pay proposals for Stage 1 are being considered to ensure they provide a fair outcome for prisoners within the prisons available budget.