



Ministry
of Justice

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

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP/YOI Brinsford
1 New Road, Featherstone
Wolverhampton
WV10 7PY

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27 January 2022

Dear Chair,

**HMP/YOI BRINSFORD: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 JULY 2020 – 30 JUNE 2021**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 30 June 2021. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work in capturing these helpful observations, especially as you continued to operate with a reduced complement of Board members during a very challenging period. I was saddened to hear there was one death in custody during the reporting year. My officials take recommendations from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman very seriously.

I appreciate the Board's concerns around Information Technology (IT) at HMP/YOI Brinsford. The Board may be aware that the estate-wide IT system known as Quantum is very outdated and coming to end of life. Every prison is currently experiencing slowness, freezing, lagging and crashing, and although attempts have been made to try and improve the service, there are limitations on how much the provider can do due to the age of the system. At HMP/YOI Brinsford this is compounded by failing infrastructure, namely damaged cables, which I understand has now been resolved with the installation of new cabling.

The new Prison Technology Transition Programme known as PTPP has started to roll out across the estate and I am pleased to advise that HMP/YOI Brinsford is currently scheduled for upgrade in July 2022. This project will be updating the networks, systems, and hardware which will provide a better IT service.

Regarding Foreign National Offender's (FNO), The Home Office is responsible for making decisions whether a FNO should be detained or deported at the end of their custodial sentence. This is in line with the Service Level Agreement (SLA) agreed in January 2020 between HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) and the Home Office where a FNO should be notified of a decision a minimum of 30 days prior to their Custodial Release Date (CRD). The Home Office is working in partnership with HMPPS and other government agencies to improve the service of detention paperwork. For cases that fall outside of the agreement, such as those that receive short sentences, these are expedited so that a FNO can be informed of a decision as soon as possible.

The Home Office acknowledges that delays in moves to Immigration Removal Centres can occur at times, often due to prisoners being unwilling to engage with embassies regarding travel documents together with language barriers, however the Home Office will continue to keep these to a minimum. The SLA is closely monitored for compliance with justification being obtained for each case that misses the service date. Detention reviews are completed every 28 days, and all aspects of transparency is closely monitored by

managers to ensure detention reviews are authorised on time. Any concerns can be raised directly with the teams involved and The Home Office Duty Desk helpline is available to both the IMB and HMPPS should any party wish to check on any aspect of case progression.

Although it was a very difficult reporting year, it was encouraging to receive your comments that overall the prison managed the different stages of the pandemic very well, and that the prison continues to be a safely run establishment where prisoners are treated fairly. The kitchen staff should be commended for obtaining a five-star rating from the Food Standards Agency, and I also noted the prisons efforts in accommodating prisoners with disabilities, the excellent assistance provided to a Vietnamese prisoner, that prisoners of all ethnic backgrounds and faiths are well cared for, and the Chaplaincy's significant contribution in fostering a positive atmosphere in the prison.

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/YOI Brinsford.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Victoria Atkins', with a stylized flourish at the end.

VICTORIA ATKINS MP

HMP/YOI BRINSFORD: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JULY 2020 – 30 JUNE 2021

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Fabric of the Prison

The prison continues with the Clean, Rehabilitative, Enabling and Decent (CRED) programme which through regular redecoration helps to maintain a clean and decent environment. Areas are prioritised based on need in collaboration with the Facilities Management (FM) provider, and other planned works are in place to support ongoing improvements.

Works are currently underway to carry out a full refurbishment of in-cell showers on Residential Unit 5 and the Gymnasium showers which will be completed before the end of March 2022. The cell-bell facilities and LED lighting replacement project is due to commence in the 2022/23 financial year. Funding of approximately £1million has recently been received to replace 48 boiler sets, improving the heating and hot water provision site-wide which will support decency at a core level. Capital bids have also been submitted to make further improvements to showers on Residential Units 1 to 4 and communal area flooring.

Activity Places

Access to activities has been impacted by regime restrictions caused by the pandemic. As a part of recovery, the prison regime has been reviewed as part of a re-profiling exercise. This review included a transition to a 'part-time' model for the majority of activity areas enabling greater access to activities. The new model will consist of a mix between full-time and part-time places and when fully operational (following the end of Covid restrictions), will enable all prisoners to access some form of activity in either a full-time or part-time capacity. The prison is also working in partnership with the Regional Employment Broker in order to identify more opportunities both internally and externally. The prison has been successful in receiving a bid to enhance the Recycling compound by installing a 'lean to' roof in the area. This project is underway and will enable more prisoners to access the area during inclement weather.

For prisoners over the age of 21, managers are developing a 'Peer Mentoring' scheme which will give more experienced individuals the opportunity to train and act as mentors. Managers have also capitalised on the opportunity to utilise the Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) which enables prisons to commission additional services. This service has been used to commission a range of additional curricula in order to increase prisoner's access to activities (including RMF Construction in 2019-2020, Drama workshops 2020-21, Conflict Resolution courses in 2020-21 and Kinetic Youth in 2020-21).

Prisoner Transfers

There are complex and wide-ranging issues involved in transferring prisoners between establishments and allocation decisions must reflect the specific needs and circumstances of the prisoner, together with the operating environment and range of services at the receiving prison. Within the context of these often competing operational and logistical demands, the Population Management Unit seeks to ensure that prisoners who have been accepted for transfer are moved as soon as is practical.

Over the past 12 months HMP/YOI Brinsford has transitioned to the offender flow model and is now primarily a Resettlement Prison with a secondary role as Reception function. In light of the national changes, staff at the prison have worked hard to ensure that the right cohort of prisoners are detained within the establishment and consequently provision is aligned with need. There are clear guidelines in place regarding prisoners transferring in and out of the establishment and those accepted for progression

and resettlement purposes. As at December 2021, 90% of prisoners at HMP/YOI Brinsford are correctly detained as per the offender flow model and the prison will continue to work within the guidelines.

Prisoner Re-categorisations

There is currently a backlog of prisoners in security Category C prisons and young offender institutions across the estate awaiting a transfer to a Category D establishment as only a limited number of transfers were taking place during the earlier phases of the Covid-19 pandemic. Transport demands have added to the difficulties as it is currently being prioritised for reception prisons following the Courts' efforts to clear their backlog of cases caused by the pandemic. This has reduced the availability of transport to open prisons, further slowing the process.

Transfers to open conditions have also been impacted by the requirement to close a number accommodation blocks in the open estate which no longer meet the statutory fire safety standards. The impact on the overall open estate has been managed through replacing some of these places with existing temporary accommodation which was already at some sites as part of HMPPS' Covid-19 contingencies, and in other sites, with new temporary accommodation. Separately, 660 additional permanent places is being delivered at the following sites: HMP/YOI Standford Hill (160 places); HMP Springhill (120 places); HMP/YOI Hatfield (60 places); HMP Leyhill (120 places); HMP Ford (120 places); HMP & YOI Sudbury (120 places). The programme to deliver 10,000 additional prison places also includes expansion of the Category D estate and HMPPS is currently assessing which sites may be suitable for expansion.

Education Provision

The Prison Education Framework Contracts, as designed, are performance based, with providers only paid on the amount of education actually delivered. Necessary changes to these contracts were made during initial Covid restrictions to allow continuity of delivery. A Teacher Quality Management Plan (TQMP) remains in place at each prison and is produced quarterly. If the Governor/establishment is unhappy with the progress of education on this measure, a 5% Performance Payment can be withheld, which is a significant contractual lever to drive improvement. This allows prisons to hold providers to account. At HMP/YOI Brinsford, there are processes in place to closely monitor and scrutinise performance concerns consisting of weekly TQMP meetings and monthly Education Performance Meetings. Quality Assurance checks are also conducted by the prison's Learning, Skills and Employment Manager.

Prisoners' Property

Following a pause in the development of the new Prisoners' Property Policy Framework due to COVID-19 the draft Framework was circulated to internal and external stakeholders, including the IMB Secretariat and IMB representatives previously consulted. Further operational engagement was necessary following that consultation and a large number of comments was received and is being considered. The Framework is now expected to be published early in 2022.

The Framework aims 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 to ensure volumetric control limits are respected so that prisoners do not build up excessive amounts of property.