



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP/YOI Swinfen Hall
The Drive,
Lichfield,
Staffordshire
WS14 9QS

MoJ ref: SUB 92549

6 January 2022

Dear Chair,

**HMP/YOI SWINFEN HALL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 MAY 2020 – 30 APRIL 2021**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 30 April 2021. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work in capturing these helpful observations, especially as you were short of Board members.

I acknowledge the Board's concern about the wing refurbishment work not going to plan and how this has impacted on the operational capacity level. I am aware of the setbacks and complications (multiple pipe leaks and having to replace the main external water supply). Refurbishment of the showers had to be repeatedly revisited due to the resin wall coatings failing, this is still an ongoing issue which the contractor is currently trying to resolve. The Ministry of Justice Property Directorate will continue to monitor the programme of work and hold regular meetings with the contractor to resolve issues as quickly as possible. Despite these matters, HMP/YOI Swinfen Hall is back to operating at the national agreed level of 624 prisoner places and is expected to remain at this level well into 2022/23. A high resistant heating system was installed over spring and summer; the effectiveness of this new system will be tested over the coming winter period.

Turning to the Board's comments on recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic, prisons are continuing to progress to Stage 1 where it is safe to do so, based on public health advice and local conditions. To help support prisoners maintain healthy relationships with their families, HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) continues to operate restricted social visits and allow physical contact with children aged under 11 years old. Physical contact is also permitted for older children and adults as long as there is proof, they have tested negative for Covid-19 prior to their visit. HMPPS is continuing to regularly review restrictions in line with the latest public health advice to ensure its approach to protecting the safety of people in prison, staff, and visitors is proportionate. Staffing levels and capability will continue to be areas of focus for the Governor to ensure there is sufficient staff cover to manage the regime. A local summary of HMP/YOI Swinfen Hall's position on recovery is set out in the attached annex.

Despite this difficult and challenging period, it was encouraging to hear that 53 men were granted Category D status and successfully transferred to an open prison. It was also pleasing to receive your comments about the psychologically informed Enhanced Support Service referrals having a positive impact on behaviour and your praise to the teams involved in this work. Likewise, it was reassuring to hear that the out of hours and weekend cover for mental health has been addressed.

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 Swinfen Hall.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Victoria Atkins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Victoria" and the surname "Atkins" clearly legible.

VICTORIA ATKINS MP

**HMP/YOI SWINFEN HALL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 MAY 2020 – 30 APRIL 2021
HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report**

Prisoners' Property

Following the pause in the development of the new Prisoners' Property policy framework due to Covid-19, a meeting with IMB representatives took place in August 2020. The feedback received from those members was 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 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.

As part of the planning for the new Prisoner Escort and Custody Service (PECS) contract, which commenced end of August 2020, PECS engaged with the Ministry of Justice Policy Team to review property limits on the new transport vehicles and it was jointly agreed to facilitate an additional half bag of property for consumables to the limit of 7.5 kg. Overall, PECS receive few complaints for lost property and often the issue does not sit with PECS transportation. However, PECS continues to monitor all aspects of the contractors' performance and where it fails to meet the agreed levels will be raised with the contractor for improvement. The planned introduction of digitally recorded Person Escort Record (moving away from handwritten records) including property tags will assist with investigations for property lost in transit with PECS suppliers.

Whilst it remains the responsibility of sending prisons to forward on excess property a prisoner has accumulated to the receiving prison as soon as possible, HMPPS is continuing to take steps to ensure there is a consistent approach. Digital improvements to the property processes are being explored as part of these steps, but the nature of this work means that any digital changes are likely to be implemented longer-term and as such will not be part of the forementioned framework.

Locally at HMP/YOI Swinfen Hall, a negotiable agreement has been reached with PECS in terms of the property limit allowance, which is being governed by the escort staff. Where any property has not been received within two weeks of the prisoner transferring in; the sending establishment is contacted. It has been noted that there has been a reduction in complaints submitted.

Offender Assessment System (OASys) Reports

All prisoners transferring to another prison for any reason must first be assessed as clinically safe for transfer by a healthcare professional. The resourcing modelling for the Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) included initial OASys assessments and was based on the expected volumes of prisoners transferring from Reception prisons under the new offender flows. OMiC resources are currently being reviewed and HMPPS hopes to publish the outcome of the review at the end of this calendar year, with any changes implemented to take place from April 2022 (these dates however, maybe subject to changes).

HMP/YOI Swinfen Hall is already financially resourced to complete these early assessments on prisoners transferred directly from reception prisons following their sentencing. It is recognised, however, that the number of unfilled Prison/Probation Offender Manager (POM) posts, combined with the existing backlog of OASys assessments has impacted on the completion of these assessments. Having successfully now recruited into these vacancies (apart from one 0.5 vacant to be filled), this will reduce the overall POM caseload, enabling the backlog to be tackled. The national OASys Taskforce Team is also providing support to HMP/YOI Swinfen Hall and the Governor is optimising staff overtime to clear the backlog. Furthermore, six additional OASys trained staff are sourced to help with this. POMs have an OASys completion rate target to reach, and performance is monitored.

Covid-19 Recovery

Visits

Since 27 July 2021 HMP/YOI Swinfen Hall resumed face to face social visits (providing 54% of its pre-Covid capacity). Maximising the visiting sessions will be kept under review and the secure social video call service will continue to be provided until further notice (sixty sessions per week).

Regime

The prison moved to Stage 2 of the National Framework for Prison Regimes and Services on 11 October 2021 and within five weeks successfully transferred to Stage 1, delivering a near normal regime through the relaxing of social distancing measures. A part time working model is being explored so that prisoners have equality of access to the off-wing regime alongside association times.

Healthcare

Clinic utilisation since the start of Stage 2 delivery has increased and will continue to. As identified by the Board, the waiting time backlog for dental and secondary care hospital appointments remains a concern. NHS England and NHS Improvement is currently working with the healthcare provider(s) on restoration and recovery planning concerning management of the waiting list.

Education

The education provision has increased in line with the National Framework for Prison Regimes and Services. The increase is primarily due to being able to optimise the number of number of people in classrooms.

Staffing Support

HMP /YOI Swinfen Hall has employed a Prison Officer Entry Level Training (POELT) Mentor and an Apprenticeship Coach to support newly qualified officers, whilst new officers on the Unlocked Graduates scheme receive support from an Independent Mentor.

HMP/YOI Swinfen Hall is a pilot for the confidence and competence (C & C) toolkit, which up-skills and develops Band 3 prison officers in the work-tasks expected from this grade, utilising targeted briefings and learning materials. An additional Band 5 Custodial Manager has been recruited to lead on building C&C in newly qualified officers. This role will support officers through dedicated time on coaching and supervision. To complement this post, there is a dedicated Band 3 POELT Mentor who provides peer-led support and guidance. New officers will continue to be supported through the POELT passport and bi-lateral reviews conducted by line managers.

The Governor is recruiting experienced prison officers through a level transfer national campaign providing an additional layer of experienced staff and is undertaking a rotation exercise to spread the officer experience equally across the establishment. Staff training days will continue to be run to ensure established staff receive refresher training.

In-cell Telephony

The in-cell telephony project has been completed.