



Ministry
of Justice

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

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP/YOI Peterborough
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Dear Chair,

**HMP/YOI PETERBOROUGH: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 APRIL 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, especially as you continued to operate with a reduced complement of Board members during the reporting year.

As your Board covered both establishments, I will address the issues raised in both reports in this letter. I was saddened to hear there was one death in custody across both sites. My officials always take recommendations from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman very seriously.

It is regrettable that the Board remains concerned about the lack of suitable accommodation for prisoners on release from the male site. We will continue to work together with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Welsh Government and Other Government departments to address this issue. In response to the pandemic the Ministry of Justice secured £11.5 million to provide up to 56 nights of accommodation per individual at risk of homelessness on release from custody. Additionally, HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) set up regional Homeless Prevention Teams to provide oversight and help secure accommodation. These teams have been highly successful and around a third (32%) of those accommodated in phase two of the scheme progressed to permanent accommodation. Using lessons learned from the response to Covid-19, HMPPS has developed a new service, initially in five probation regions, which provides prison leavers at risk of homelessness with temporary accommodation for up to 12 weeks and support into settled accommodation. It will support around 3,000 offenders this year. HMPPS is also introducing and testing a new Housing Specialist role in twenty prisons to support the Head of Reducing Reoffending to be more strategic, working with local partners, in their response to reducing homelessness. HMP/YOI Peterborough is one of the prisons testing this role and has a Housing Specialist in post in both the male and female sites.

As the Board will be aware, in April this year responsibility for accommodation on release services moved from the community rehabilitation companies to the National Probation Service, delivered under centrally commissioned rehabilitation services. It is still very early and any initial issues should be resolved over the course of the reporting year. HMP/YOI Peterborough also saw a significant increase in the number of immediate releases during the past year, meaning accommodation often had to be arranged very quickly. To address these problems, HMP/YOI Peterborough has taken a number of proactive steps such as the provision of release packs containing key telephone numbers for support and including mobile phones

(with £10 credit) where prisoners do not have one; working with the Outside Links facility in Peterborough City Centre providing ongoing support to released prisoners around accommodation and a range of other needs; setting up agreements with two local housing providers for the provision of first night release accommodation where the prisoner has none; and a project providing 15 units of accommodation for released prisoners who are of no fixed abode and would be very hard to place in settled accommodation.

I appreciate the Board's concerns around the use of short sentences for female offenders. We remain absolutely committed to the vision set out in the Female Offender Strategy (2018) of seeing fewer women offending and reoffending; fewer women in custody, especially on short sentences, with more managed effectively in the community; and better conditions for women in custody that support effective rehabilitation. We are continuing to engage with sentencers and the judiciary in order to highlight the different and often complex needs of women and encourage the use of robust community penalties as an alternative to custody and are committed to improving community provision for women.

In September 2018, the Magistrates Association published its position statement on the Female Offender Strategy, welcoming the evidence of the impact that sanctions have on families, particularly children, and acknowledging that women can often be the most vulnerable and complex cases of all. We are continuing to liaise with the Magistrates Association and produced articles for both their online and written magazines offering a probation perspective on robust community sentencing, the impact of maternal imprisonment and the benefits of a holistic response. Sentencing guidelines already give clear direction to sentencers dealing with cases involving primary carers to ensure that, where possible, disruption to family life is minimised. There will, though, be cases where the seriousness of the offending means that a custodial sentence is necessary, despite the existence of dependants. Sentencing must match the severity of a crime, and public protection is our priority: it is therefore imperative that judges and magistrates have the power to impose short custodial sentences where they are appropriate and necessary.

Although it was a very difficult and challenging reporting period, it was encouraging to receive your comments that, across both sites, the Board has observed a high level of positive working relationships between staff and residents with good rapport and professionalism. The management's hard work to provide culturally appropriate personal care and dietary products, the marking of celebration and awareness days throughout the year, and the innovative approach to access clinicians from the outset of the pandemic are all pleasing achievements. I also noted the improved security measures that have reduced the flow of illicit substances in the male site, and the significant improvements in safety at the female site including the trauma strategy and provision of a trauma lead officer.

I note you have raised some local issues of concern in your report which the Director 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 Peterborough.

Yours ever,



VICTORIA ATKINS MP

HMP/YOI PETERBOROUGH: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 APRIL 2020 – 31 MARCH 2021

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Separation and Care Units – SCU (Male site)

As the Board will be aware, prisoners are held in the SCU for a range of different reasons. Some are held there during a period when their mental health requires daily assessment and support. All prisoners in SCUs are assessed by clinical staff on first location in the unit. They are then seen daily by the Mental Health Team, who also attend Assessment Care and Custody Teamwork and Good Order or Discipline reviews. More detailed mental health assessments are conducted as required and self-help and low-level interventions provided as necessary. Any prisoner already subject to mental health support would continue to receive that in the SCU, including secondary mental health care such as psychiatry input and structured psychological interventions using the care programme approach. This would also involve, as necessary, supporting unit staff in the care and management of prisoners.

Post-Pandemic Regime (Male site)

HMP/YOI Peterborough is now operating at Stage Two of the national recovery framework with part-time work available for all prisoners. As the prison progresses to Stage One, the Director and Senior Management Team have indicated they would like to keep all prisoners in at least part-time activity, but also explore the feasibility of continuing some aspects of the pandemic measures such as no longer facilitating full evening association and moving large numbers of prisoners to activities simultaneously. Any changes to the future regime would be with the intention of reallocating resources to more purposeful, rehabilitative and resettlement activity with the aim of enhancing prisoner well-being and improving prospects of successful resettlement.

Complex Needs Prisoners (Female site)

The national complex needs group referred to in the report is the Women's Estate Case Advice and Support Panel (WECASP) and it is not a mechanism for managing transfers to other prisons. Establishments continue to transfer prisoners through the current operational processes should any prisoner require access to specific programmes or therapeutic environments. WECASP is a trauma responsive central mechanism that provides multidisciplinary case support and advice to prisons in the management of a small number of complex individuals within the women's estate. It works with the aim of stabilising their behaviour, improving their wellbeing and supporting the surrounding staff groups, to help reduce their risk accordingly, as well as enabling them to progress through their sentence. WECASP does not hold responsibility for the placement of individuals throughout the women's estate and does not replace the prisons care and management role.

The pathway into the WECASP for those with complex needs is a referral process, outlined within the WECASP Policy Framework May 2021, and undertaken by the responsible prison via their identification processes. The prison holds a local weekly complex cases meeting which reviews the care being provided to all prisoners who have been assessed as needing extra support and care. Wherever possible, the prison tries to manage these cases on normal location through enhanced care plans, using trauma-informed approaches, and working with the local primary and secondary mental health service provider. The prison is currently exploring the provision of a HMPPS psychologist on a secondment arrangement and this work is ongoing.