



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMYOI Aylesbury
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MoJ ref: SUB 93753

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Dear Chair,

**HMYOI AYLESBURY: 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, particularly as your membership reduced during the reporting year and Covid-19 impacted on your monitoring. I was saddened to hear there were two self-inflicted deaths in custody during the reporting year. My officials take recommendations from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman very seriously.

I understand the Board's request for stronger commitment and resource for young adult (YA) rehabilitation. It is recognised that YAs, those aged 18-25 years old, have distinct needs relating to their maturity and development, and the Ministry of Justice and HM Prisons and Probation Service (HMPPS) are committed to developing approaches which respond to these needs. An action plan in response to HM Inspectorate of Prisons short thematic report on Outcomes for Young Adults in Custody was published in January 2021 which included the commitment to develop a national operational strategy for YAs.

An evidence informed maturity screening tool is available across prisons and probation to assess YA males who are still maturing neurologically in order to identify those most in need of support. In February 2020 a year long project began with a focus on achieving better outcomes and experiences for YAs, including those within the Long Term and High Security Estate. The project's work was evidence based, drawing on data, research papers and professional expertise, including clinical and operational experience. Consideration was given to the demographics of the YA population, the regime, activities and services delivered, how YAs transitioned and progressed, as well as equalities issues and what best practice looked like. Staff training was a key component to the project and a dedicated YA section has been created on HMPPS My Learning to help staff understand some of the complexities of the YA cohort. The first YA training was delivered to the Unlocked Graduates cohort in 2021 and staff training priorities have been agreed with the YA pathfinder prisons to pilot this new training. A series of mini seminars are now underway that focus on themes relevant to working with a YA cohort.

In recognition of the importance of the role employment plays in helping to reduce reoffending, the Board will be aware that the New Futures Network (NFN) was established as a specialist part of HMPPS that brokers partnerships between prisons and employers. NFN has a team of specialist Regional

Employment Brokers and National Sector Leads across England and Wales who work with employers across all industries and sizes to create and develop partnerships with prisons to increase opportunities for prisoners. These partnerships are helping businesses to fill skills gaps and prison leavers to find employment on release with the focus on three types of partnership, prison industries, Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL), and employment on release. These allow businesses to either set up commercial workspaces in prisons staffed by serving prisoners or allow risk-assessed prisoners to leave prison each day to work for employers in the community to increase the chance that employers offer opportunities to prison leavers, such as those they have seen work in a prison industry or in the workplace on ROTL. More information about the work of the NFN is available at <https://newfuturesnetwork.gov.uk/>.

Turning to the Board's concerns about prisoners with serious mental ill health, NHS England and NHS Improvement continues to work to reduce the numbers with serious mental ill health that are remanded and sentenced to custody. This includes commissioning Criminal Justice Liaison and Diversion Services that offer screening and assessment of people with vulnerabilities in Police Custody Suites and Courts which provide individual health needs information for Courts and Probation Services to inform sentencing decisions. Where individuals are remanded or sentenced to custody relevant health information is shared with the prison to allow the local mental health team to support the individual.

The overall strategic direction continues to be the maintenance of the existing adult secure bed capacity but with improved geographical distribution and efficiency across the pathway. It is recognised that prisoners have had long waits for transfer to secure hospital throughout the pandemic due to positive Covid-19 cases within the mental health hospital estate resulting in delayed admissions. Providing access to secure hospital is part of the Restoration and Recovery of Services across the healthcare sector and new performance metrics commenced in April 2021 to monitor referrals, assessments and transfers under the Mental Health Act. The Government remains determined to improve the transfer process and is committed to introducing a new statutory time limit of 28 days for transfers to mental health hospitals from custody. Legislation changes will take place once the NHS England and NHS Improvement good practice guidance is fully embedded which was published in June 2021 and promotes the timely access to appropriate treatment and reduces unnecessary delays.

Despite your concerns, I was pleased to read about the reduction in the number of incidents of violence and self-harm and the many positive examples of supportive interactions between staff and prisoners. It was encouraging to note the focus placed on improving working conditions and recognition of dedicated staff and successes and I too am grateful for the continued hard work and professionalism of everyone working at the prison throughout the pandemic.

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 HMYOI Aylesbury.

Yours ever,



VICTORIA ATKINS MP

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Regime

It is acknowledged that HMYOI Aylesbury has had a series of Covid-19 outbreaks during the pandemic. During this time the risk to life has been balanced against the need to offer a safe, decent and worthwhile regime for the YAs which has always been at the forefront of decision making. The prison's population being primarily YAs, resulted in the vaccine roll-out being later than in many other prisons with the prioritisation primarily based on age in line with the community, as this approach remains the most effective way of reducing deaths and hospitalisation from Covid-19. HMYOI Aylesbury moved steadily through the [National Framework for Prison Regimes and Services](#) as part of its recovery, from a restricted regime during the national lockdown periods to Stage 1 of recovery. This provided a more progressive regime with all activity areas open offering real opportunities to YAs again. HMYOI Aylesbury continues to be guided by Gold Command in HMPPS Headquarters regarding the restrictions necessary to ensure a safe regime is provided and risk management will continue to play an integral part whilst Covid-19 remains prevalent in our society.

Education and Training Targets

National targets for education and training outcomes are set in the contract with providers and there are financial penalties in place where targets are not met. These targets are backed by professionally informed practice and supported by data analysis through the education management information system. In addition, local level Key Performance Indicator targets are set and monitored through Monthly Establishment Performance Meetings and qualified contract managers are in place to ensure delivery is in line with the service commissioned by the Governor.