



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Exeter  
30 New North Road  
Exeter, Devon  
EX4 4EX

16 July 2022

Dear Chair

**HMP EXETER: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 JANUARY 2021 - 31 DECEMBER 2021**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 December 2021. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work, especially as you had a number of vacancies. I was saddened to hear there were four deaths during the reporting year. As you are aware the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) carry out independent investigations into deaths in custody and I would like to assure the Board my officials take recommendations from the PPO very seriously.

As Minister of State for Justice, I value the crucial role of a prison officer which, as the Board have identified, is very demanding and challenging in a prison such as HMP Exeter. I hope to reassure you that HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) will be accelerating their work to ensure they are recruiting the right people and doing what they can to retain and develop existing staff. Insights from staff exit interviews tells us that nationally the main driver of staff attrition of less than two years' experience is linked to ways of working with themes around inability to access flexible working and the role of the prison officer not being what they expected. To improve this area, work is being undertaken to embed an outreach strategy to ensure engagement with candidates through the recruitment journey such as offering a tour of a prison. Buddy Schemes and the New Colleague Mentor supporting initiatives are being introduced across all prison regions during 2022 - 2023, specifically designed to create a helpful environment for staff and to feel capable and confident in their new role.

The Standards Coaching team, a good initiative drawn from experienced prison officers across the country will be supporting HMP Exeter and a new lead has been appointed in the Care team. The Trauma Risk Management tool, Reward and Recognition and Wellbeing meetings have re-launched and staff working life balance applications from staff have been reviewed and supported.

Turning to the Board's comments about the rehabilitative and resettlement role of local prisons, the Prisons Strategy White Paper published in December 2021 detailed the Government's commitment to investing £200 million per year by 2024-25 on reducing reoffending, including prison leaver employment schemes. New Futures Network (a specialist part of HMPPS that brokers partnerships between prisons and employers) are supporting initiatives to increase employment rates for prison leavers and will be working with HMP Exeter to drive through some of this work. Such initiatives include a business-led Employment Advisory Board to provide expertise advice to prison staff about the local labour market and inform them about the aspects of training, qualifications and experience that will benefit prison leavers when competing for vacancies. An Employment Hub will be set up providing a physical space where prisoners can seek employment opportunities and a new prison employment lead will create an

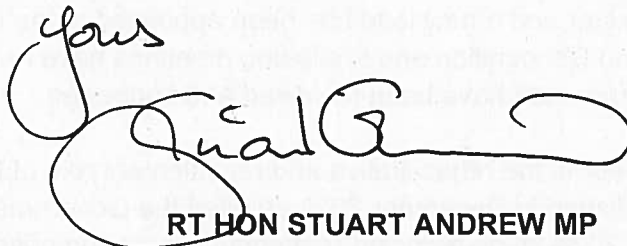
employment strategy and formal process for identifying candidates for vacancies made available through the hub. The Governor has provided assurance that he will work with partner agencies to increase activity spaces and work with Gov Facility Services Limited (GFSL) to maximise the number of working prisoners. A good outcome seen recently, prisoners have been employed by VINCI Construction to work on their on-site contracts, creating qualification opportunities.

I note the Board's concerns about the number of prisoners being released without a home to go to, as part of the changes made for the unification of Probation in June 2021, contracts have been let in each Probation Region (including the South West, HMP Exeter location) to providers of Accommodation Services for sentenced prisoners. These providers are mandated to have a presence in the resettlement prisons in their region. HMPPS is currently in the process of extending these contracts to provide services to all people in prison who have accommodation needs and hope to have the extended service in place by this Summer. Under the new resettlement approach all resettlement prisons including locals, will have an embedded resettlement provision managed by or otherwise linked to a Probation Delivery Unit. The Pre-Release teams will liaise with the Community Offender Manager / Short Sentence Function to progress referrals that have been made to Commissioned Rehabilitative Services (CRS) suppliers and provide services not available via the CRS. These include finance, benefit and debt services and immediate resettlement needs support for the unconvicted and those out of area. The Governor has obtained additional resource to support prison leavers primarily targeted at those serving short sentences and on remand (who may not receive a custodial sentence) by linking to accommodation sources for the first 84 days post-custody. Although yet to measure outcomes, this is an exciting development and should address some of the issues raised by your Board.

Despite the overarching concerns raised in your report, it was encouraging to read that HMP Exeter's response to the pandemic was managed well and prevented further outbreaks of the virus. Likewise, the supportive work from the Chaplaincy team and resilience of staff in the Care and Separation Unit. I am conscious there is still more work to be done at HMP Exeter to achieve better outcomes that create a more safe, decent and secure establishment. To end on a positive note, £26 million of capital investment is being invested which includes window replacement and improvements to the cell calling system.

HMPPS comments in response to other issues raised in your report are set out in the attached annex. 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.

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 Exeter.

*Yours*  
  
RT HON STUART ANDREW MP

## HMP EXETER: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JANUARY 2021 - 31 DECEMBER 2021

### HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

#### **Staff Training**

All new prison officers are trained in use of force and health, safety and fire procedures. Refresher training is managed and conducted locally. During the pandemic HMPPS continued to provide a national developmental training offer to all staff, both face-to-face and remotely wherever possible.

There is a national Use of Force Restart and Recovery programme agreed at senior level, and we are utilising all available resources. Training has been delivered to over 1,700 staff since the national training centres reconvened.

Locally, two Control and Restraint (C&R) tutors have been assigned to tackle the C&R training backlog at HMP Exeter and they facilitate other defence training such as Spontaneous Protection Enabling Accelerated Response (SPEAR). Additional Instructors have been recruited to join HMP Exeter and a formalised plan to monitor the completion of all mandatory staff training is being drafted.

#### **Prisoners' Property**

Further to last year's response, the new Prisoners' Property Policy Framework is anticipated to be published this Summer 2022. Any digital changes are likely to be longer-term and as such will not be part of the forthcoming framework.

At HMP Exeter the newly appointed Head of Operations is based permanently in Reception to make improvements and work is ongoing to strengthen property related processes both locally and via Prisoner Escort and Custody Services (PECS). PECS will continue to monitor all aspects of the contractors' performance and where it fails to meet standards, this will be addressed with the contractor.

Prison Service Instruction 12/2011 *Prisoners' Property* sets out that Governors must consider on a case-by-case basis items that arrive with a prisoner on transfer which are not permitted under the receiving prison's facility list but were permitted at the previous prison. Unless the items are considered a risk to good order, discipline, security, safety or exceed volumetric control limits, the prisoner should normally be allowed to retain these items in possession. However, the fact that an item was allowed on this basis does not give the prisoner the right to replace it as any replacement must comply with the local facility list.

#### **Procurement of Maintenance Work**

Liaison Officers have been appointed and regular meetings are held to address concerns and ensure proactive planning. This has reduced disruptions to the regime and improved the effective sequencing of work schedules.

#### **Prison Maintenance**

D wing fire and safety improvements have been completed and the wing reoccupied. There were some snagging items identified at handover but were not considered significant. Most of the issues have since been closed or are in the remaining stages of being signed off as complete.

The issues around the CCTV contract have been escalated to the Ministry of Justice Property Services.

### Accommodation

The provision of a secure gate for A4 landing was procured and installed locally. The significant delays occurred due to material shortages; however, the gate has been fitted and the safeguarding issues resolved. New beds have been installed including safety ladders and railings (roll out on C wing is currently being done sporadically until the wing is decanted for the fire safety improvement works taking place this year). Some issues were identified with ongoing maintenance / the cleaning regime that needed to be addressed locally. GFSL are now actioning this to resolve the current issues.

### **Information Technology (IT)**

The Prisons Technology Transformation Programme team is in the process of updating the core IT equipment that staff use in prisons to carry out their duties. Rollout has commenced and to date, 21 prisons have been completed, and is estimated that the whole prison estate will be completed by end of December 2022. HMP Exeter is due to receive the new IT this Summer 2022.

### **Temporary Cover Arrangements**

There has been a greater focus on recruiting at senior management team (SMT) level to address lack of stability within the SMT. The Deputy Governor Band 9 position has been filled substantively and to improve staff retention two Functional Head posts have been uplifted to Band 8. The other SMT vacancies have recently been advertised which should lead to stability moving forward.

### **Violence and Self- Harm**

Maintaining safety, the mental health and wellbeing of prisoners remains a top priority. HMPPS is taking urgent action to deploy the right interventions to improve prison safety. Throughout the course of 2022 (until the end of September 2022), Governors will be undertaking a self-assessment to demonstrate how well Challenge, Support and Intervention Plan (CSIP) is functioning in their establishments. This will provide confidence that CSIP is embedded and being used effectively across the adult prison estate, as well as provide an opportunity to identify areas for continuous improvement.

Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) version 6 (v6) has been implemented across the whole prison estate. HMPPS will be conducting a review into ACCT v6 which will look at how well the changes have been implemented, and where further support may be needed to ensure it's being embedded effectively. To support this aim and to reduce self-harm and violence, we are delivering a new safety training package for staff titled Safety Support Skills training. It brings together related safety topics, including suicide and self-harm prevention, understanding risks, triggers and protective factors, and communication skills, and encourages a joined-up approach to prison safety.

Outlined below are several ongoing initiatives to reduce violence and self-harm levels at HMP Exeter;

- Following a recent external scrutiny of Early Days in Custody and Induction programme, all new arrivals to HMP Exeter to receive a comprehensive induction and the appropriate support. This is driven by selected first night staff and trained Insider Peer Representatives.
- Focusing further efforts on other peer support programmes including a cohort of 12 trained Listeners and six peer mentors trained by the THREAD mentorship programme.
- All mail is photocopied, with the exception of legal correspondence, to ensure that routes for conveyancing of illicit drugs is disrupted with the hope that this will reduce the associated debt and bullying.
- Update on enhanced gate security, the body scanner is now in operation in the Reception and has been successful in preventing ingress of illicit items.
- ACCT Supervision and Quality Assurance is now in place. Feedback from the learning is shared with Case Co-ordinators and staff who complete ACCT entries to increase awareness and improve the quality of the support provided to the most vulnerable individuals.

- Continuing to embed CSIP to manage the most violent individuals and to support victims of violence.
- Since 14 March 2022, all prisoners have been issued with electric shavers on arrival. Razor blades have been removed following consultation and communication. Data in relation to the individuals who self-harm by cutting will be monitored closely.
- The new Incentive Policy Framework (IPF) 2022 has been implemented, prior to this staff and prisoner forums were held. Regular IPF forums will be conducted and an IPF manager has been appointed to oversee the fair use of IPF, staff have also been encouraged to focus on "Positive Behaviour Earns Privileges" to encourage improved behaviour.
- Following Covid-19 recovery; increasing cohort sizes in education lessons and activities to allow more individuals to access purposeful activity and time out of cell.