



Ministry
of Justice

The Right Honourable
Stuart Andrew MP
Minister of State for
Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Lancaster Farms
Stone Row Head,
Off Quernmore Road
Lancaster
LA1 3QZ

5 August 2022

Dear Chair

**HMP LANCASTER FARMS: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 FEBRUARY 2021 – 31 JANUARY 2022**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 January 2022. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work, especially as you had several vacancies. I am saddened to hear a prisoner died in custody. 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.

Although the Board has seen a drastic reduction in self-harm incidents at the prison, I note prolific self-harm is a long-standing concern. Safety of those in care is a top priority for HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) and over the next three years the Government has committed to £37 million of ring-fenced investment to improve key safety outcomes for people in prison. Our Prisons Strategy White Paper published on 7 December 2021 sets out a preventative approach to safety by introducing specialist support, developing bespoke interventions, testing new technology for use in prisons and making key changes to the physical environment such as delivering 290 ligature-resistant cells. HMPPS continues to develop guidance for staff on understanding and supporting someone who is self-harming and as part of a Safety Support Skills Training package is continuing to develop a suite of modules.

Regarding the provision of mental health services, NHS England is focused on the pathway for men with a mental illness, including transfers and remissions of adult prisoners to and from mental health hospitals. Work on the development of a whole-pathway approach to the care of people in the criminal justice system continues, including diversion from the system where appropriate, and reconnecting those leaving custody with health services in the community. HMPPS is in the process of creating a Core Capabilities Framework (CCF) for Adult Health, Care and Wellbeing. This Framework will outline the key skills, knowledge and behaviours that HMPPS staff will need to demonstrate in order to care for adults who need support and will be accompanied by a core curriculum. The commitment to develop the CCF has been published and is in response to the Justice Committee Report into Mental Health in prison (29 September 2021); the joint thematic Inspection of the criminal justice journey for individuals with mental health needs and disorders (17 November 2021) and, as such, contributes to the Deputy Prime Minister's priorities in this crucial area. Locally at HMP Lancaster Farms, the healthcare provider has secured additional resource to move forward with the enhancements outlined by my predecessor last year. However, the delivery commencement date of June 2021 has unfortunately been hindered by the Covid-19 pandemic. NHS England will continue to monitor the development of mental health services at HMP

Lancaster Farms as the provider further implements their delivery plans during the restoration and recovery phase.

I note your Board's comments about the number of prisoners serving indeterminate sentences. Whilst it is our priority to protect the public, HMPPS is committed to supporting the progression of those serving indeterminate sentences for public protection (IPP) and to reduce their risk to the point where the Parole Board determines that they may be safely released. This commitment is being delivered by a bespoke and regularly refreshed IPP action plan and it also includes overseeing the delivery of specialist progression regimes, giving those in prison a chance to develop and test their ability to manage their risks and lives in an environment of increasing freedoms and responsibilities.

Efforts have in recent years delivered a substantial reduction in the number of IPP prisoners who have never been released. That number stood at 1,554 at the end of March 2022. This is reduced from 1,784 at the end of March 2021. This is good progress considering that the population of unreleased prisoners serving IPP sentences was, at its highest in 2012, over 6,000. It is important to note that a proportion of those who remain in prison are still assessed as posing a high risk of committing further violent or sexual offences and have a complex set of risks and needs. Understandably, for these reasons, there are prisoners serving the IPP sentence who have spent a significant number of years in custody after completing their tariff. Locally at HMP Lancaster Farm, men are supported through access to comprehensive vocational and educational courses to aid their sentence plan and progression.

In terms of the IPP licence period, this differs from licences for other indeterminate sentences in that, after 10 years have elapsed from first release by the Parole Board, the Board will give consideration to terminating the IPP licence, the result will be to bring the licence and thereby the sentence as a whole to a definitive end. The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 introduces an amendment which requires the Secretary of State to automatically refer every eligible IPP person to the Parole Board for consideration of licence termination annually once they reach the 10-year eligibility point. Under this amendment, those who are in prison following recall under the IPP licence or are serving another determinate sentence (*without having been recalled under the IPP licence*) will also be automatically referred to the Parole Board to determine for the protection of the public whether when released they remain under the IPP licence. We look forward to hearing the recommendations from the Justice Committee's inquiry in to IPP sentences and will consider them closely.

I acknowledge your Board's concerns about staff recruitment and retention and I hope to reassure you that this is my number one concern coming out of the pandemic. The annex to this letter provides a detailed update and includes the position on the learning/skills and programme provision. 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 to issues raised in your report is also contained in the annex.

Turning to some positive comments captured in your report, it was pleasing to note that the level of violence within the prison continued to decline. Your feedback on in-cell telephony, the key worker scheme and the drug rehabilitation units is appreciated and likewise I welcome the established links with charities and local football clubs.

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 Lancaster Farms.


STUART ANDREW MP

HMP LANCASTER FARMS: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 FEBRUARY 2021 – 31 JANUARY 2022

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Staffing Levels, Recruitment and Retention

The Government has taken steps since 2016 to increase staffing levels and recruitment for all prisons. As part of operational stability, HMP Lancaster Farms is being supported to maintain its agreed staffing levels; coupled with an external recruitment campaign that aims to attract new prison officers. Recognising increasing staffing pressures at certain establishments HMPPS has expanded the existing Market Supplement scheme which will deliver a pay increase to sites where recruitment and retention challenges are most acute. For prison sites where it is hard to recruit staff, we are tackling the issue through this scheme alongside a tailored approach to recruitment advertising.

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 candidates are engaged with prior to joining the service, have the opportunity to visit a prison and ask any questions that they may have around the role and discuss any human resource related issues. Supporting each other initiatives have been implemented, such as Buddy Schemes and the New Colleague Mentor which are being introduced across all prison regions during 2022 - 2023, specifically designed to create a supportive and helpful environment for staff and to ensure that they feel capable and confident in their new role.

Pay is an important element to attract and retain staff, HMPPS' published submission to the Prison Service Pay Review Body for 2022 proposes that starting pay for prison officers outside of London is increased to £25,382. It is also proposed that the number of pay points/increments to progress to the maximum salary is reduced from four to two.

Prisoners' Property

It is anticipated that the new Prisoners' Property Policy Framework will be published this Summer 2022. Any digital changes are likely to be longer-term and will not be part of the forthcoming Framework.

Contract Management

As part of the changes made for the unification of Probation in June 2021, contracts have been let in each Probation Region (including the North where HMP Lancaster Farms is located) to providers of Accommodation services for sentenced prisoners. These Commissioned Rehabilitative Service (CRS) 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 Summer 2022.

Employment, Training and Education (ETE) interventions via CRS providers is only accessible post release for people on probation. ETE pre-release is the responsibility of the prison.

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 embedded Pre-Release Teams will provide pre-release services not currently available via CRS including Finance, Benefit and Debt (FBD) services and support services to the people in prison. Additional CRS contracts

will commence across a number of Regions in Autumn 2022, to provide FBD services to sentenced and unsentenced people in prison.

The transition period following unification has affected the delivery of resettlement services in some prisons. Probation Regional Directors are working to stabilise the Pre-Release Teams and CRS provision to secure improved service delivery to all people in prison.

The embedded Pre-Release Teams will provide immediate resettlement needs and pre-release support for all people in prison including the unconvicted and people out of area. The minimum will be to assess under the Basic Custody Screening Tool Part 2, undertake specialist immediate needs and support services to the people in prison. The Pre-Release Teams will liaise with the Community Offender Manager (COM) or Short Sentence Function as allocated and support pre-release planning activity throughout the sentence, including progressing referrals that have been made to CRS suppliers and providing a point of contact for CRS suppliers seeking to engage with the individual.

Canteen

We regret the reported rise in the number of applications received by your Board about the canteen service. During this period the HMPPS Retail Team ensured that a canteen service was delivered to prisoners every week without fail and our relationship with our partners and the prison was instrumental in this success.

We recognise that some products were unavailable due to Covid and supply chain issues following Brexit. To ensure supplies, key products (vapes etc) were bulk purchased and stored at a Distribution Centre to cover future market uncertainty. This successfully guaranteed that prisons and prisoners were able to continue to receive essential products to support regimes and ensure stability. Some products were unavailable at different times during the year due to national supply issues which resulted in the HMPPS Retail Team reducing the availability of some fresh and frozen items, but this was balanced by market forces and our expertise to ensure prisoners always received a canteen service rather than reception packs.

DHL Couriers

During the period two DHL staff and two prison staff were required to be available to distribute canteen onto the wings every Friday afternoon. We recognise that on some occasions there was a shortage of DHL staff due to some testing positive for Covid-19 and having to isolate. However, such absences caused no interruption to canteen services being fully delivered and completed. Going forward, the Governor has requested that canteen distribution to take place on Friday mornings between 7am and 11.00am (smarter new way of working utilising the existing staff). This has been successfully implemented without additional prison officers having to be diverted from other duties.

Refunds

Regarding refunds, during Friday's distribution between 7am to 11am, DHL staff are available to respond to any queries and document any changes made. Prison staff are then responsible for reimbursing monies owed to a prisoner back into their account. The time taken for these refunds to be completed is therefore outside the Canteen Team's control. Additional resources have been assigned to the Business Hub to ensure prompt responses to refunds when required. Many of the refunds were due to national shortages of goods e.g. coffee. Efforts were made by the prison staff to purchase coffee from local supermarkets so that prisoners did not go without this.

Learning / Skills and Programme Provision

HMPPS has reviewed the landscape for Offender Behaviour Programmes (OBPs) delivery and the exact volume is being finalised. Throughout the past year, HMP Lancaster Farms has retained its full budget for all aspects of learning and skills. As the Board will appreciate, levels of activity on site were depressed due to the need to deliver within 'Covid safe' national operating guidelines. HMPPS safely exited from the National Framework arrangements on 9 May 2022. An Operations Team remains in place to support prisons in their transition period. HMPPS has published a principles document for regimes as prisons return to normality, providing a new definition for Purposeful Activity and a tiered Regime Model. The National Regime Model will eventually deliver the HMPPS "Time Well Spent" vision and a key element of this model is the principle of 'right services, right person' which is that individuals will be offered greater personalisation in regimes rather than success being measured solely by quantity in available activities.

HMP Lancaster Farms has returned to its pre-Covid delivery model and intends to deliver the Thinking Skills Programme, Resolve and Challenge to Change. Programmes are currently prioritised for those due a parole hearing or release in order to maintain progression and maximise our public protection. However, staff have worked hard to ensure prisoners' progression to Category D conditions has not been impeded by exploring other options for sentence planning on an individual basis.

All learning and skills budgets have been secured for the next year and, as such, no further funding is needed. Employment opportunities boards are embedded at HMP Lancaster Farms that allow prisoners to choose from a variety of vocational or educational courses alongside local employers to enhance opportunities for job readiness. OBPs will be offered to those that require it.