



Ministry
of Justice

The Right Honourable
Stuart Andrew MP
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Leicester
Welford Road
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17 August 2022

Dear Chair

**HMP LEICESTER: 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, particularly as you continue to have a number of vacancies.

I understand the Board's ongoing concerns about prisoners with severe mental ill health who require transfer to a secure hospital. The Government published the draft Mental Health Bill in June 2022 which includes the provision to introduce a statutory time limit of 28 days for transfers to hospital as proposed in the Reforming the Mental Health Act (MHA) White Paper published in January 2021. The Bill also commits to ending the use of prison as a place of safety for defendants and convicted people requiring assessment and treatment under the MHA. The overall strategic direction of NHS England and Improvement continues to be the maintenance of existing secure hospital bed capacity with improved geographical distribution, not an increase. However, it is worth noting that throughout the Covid-19 pandemic there have been closures within the secure hospital estate due to Covid-19 cases resulting in many patients experiencing admission delays. The focus is on improving efficiency across the pathway and to proactively manage and support reductions in the waiting times, NHS England Health and Justice in the Midlands region have developed a fortnightly Clinical Case Review meeting which uses dynamic risk assessments to prioritise access to the most vulnerable and high-risk patients.

Despite the challenges that Covid-19 presented, the latest published national figures at the end of June 2022 show the unreleased indeterminate sentences for public protection (IPP) population standing at 1,492. This is a reduction from 1,722 at the end of June 2021 demonstrating that opportunities remained available to IPP prisoners wishing to progress. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) efforts to support their progression towards a safe release are continuing through the IPP action plan and following the publication of the Justice Select Committee report into the IPP sentence, HMPPS will review the IPP action plan so that resources and efforts are focused on the right aspects of progression. Every effort also continues to be made to locate an IPP prisoner to a prison best placed to meet their sentence planning needs as promptly as possible. The IPP prisoners currently at HMP Leicester are licence recalls or have been moved there from another prison for accumulated visits. They will be transferred in line with offender flows. The power to recall an offender remains a vital public protection measure and HMPPS must submit a re-release plan to the Parole Board within 28 days following recall.

It is recognised that there has been a transition period in the delivery of resettlement services in some prisons following unification of the Probation Service. Regional Probation Directors are working to

stabilise the pre-release teams and Commissioned Rehabilitative Service (CRS) provision to secure improved service delivery to all prisoners. Contracts have been let to provide accommodation services for sentenced prisoners which are being delivered by CRS providers and under the new resettlement approach all resettlement prisons will have an embedded resettlement provision managed by or linked to a Probation Delivery Unit. The embedded pre-release teams will provide pre-release services not currently available via the CRS which includes finance, benefits and debt services, as well as support services to unconvicted people in prison and prisoners out of area. HMPPS is also working on extending the CRS contracts to provide accommodation support to all people in prison including those unsentenced with commencement expected this Summer 2022, as well as additional CRS contracts to commence in Autumn 2022 to provide finance, benefits and debt services.

To tackle the backlog of court hearings, over the next three financial years, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) is investing an extra £477 million for the Criminal Justice System to help improve waiting times for victims of crime and reduce the Crown Court backlog from around 58,200 at the end of April to an estimated 53,000 cases by March 2025. The judiciary is also continuing to prioritise cases involving custody time limits, as well as those cases involving vulnerable complainants and witnesses (including youth cases), domestic abuse and serious sex cases. In addition, in April 2022 the Judicial Review and Courts Act was passed giving the Crown Court more flexibility to return cases to the magistrates, whose sentencing powers have been increased. It is acknowledged that trial waiting times remain high with 736 outstanding trials at Leicester Court as at end of May 2022, with 209 of these cases in custody. This has changed the percentage of HMP Leicester's reception and resettlement ratios. However, when compared with 280 outstanding custody cases at the highest point in September 2021 these are reducing despite Judicial capacity being the main barrier to recovery across the Midlands.

Finally, I note the Board commend the prison for coping with the many projects with minimal disruption but acknowledge the concern about the facilities management provider. Project delivery at HMP Leicester has been extensive to improve the decency of the environment for prisoners and staff with investment of over £3 million for 53 projects in the last two financial years. Much of this work such as installation of new boilers and heating infrastructure, as well as roof replacements have been delivered on time and without any major issues. However, it is recognised that the reception refurbishment was problematic from the outset with project management and delivery having to be regularly reviewed by MoJ Area Property Operations to enable sub-standard work to be rectified resulting in delays. Allocations of projects are now reviewed by senior managers within the facilities management provider which will ensure that the most appropriate contractors are appointed for each individual project.

Whilst recognising your concerns, it was pleasing to receive your comments that the prison continues to be well run, remains safe and there are good working relationships between staff and prisoners who are treated fairly and with respect. I was encouraged to read the recognition given to the Governor, senior management team and staff for their leadership, teamwork and going the extra mile to support prisoners to cope with the restricted regime during the pandemic. I too am grateful to everyone for their continued hard work and professionalism during these challenging times. HMPPS comments in response to the other two 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 Leicester.



STUART ANDREW MP

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

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Recruitment and Retention

HMPPS recognises the importance of retaining staff and is committed to improving retention as having experienced staff is vital to ensure prisons remain safe, secure and decent and so they can support prisoners to lead crime free lives when they are released. It is acknowledged that the leaving rate has increased amongst Band 3-5 Prison Officers which was 14.5% for the 12 months ending 31 March 2022. Recruitment marketing campaigns are being used on a variety of channels for all prisons to attract candidates. These campaigns demystify that you need to be a certain type of person to be a Prison Officer and explain the impact prospective candidates could make on prisoners and society. Since April 2022 HMPPS has also invested in a number of new initiatives to improve the experience of new joiners and increase the levels of experience amongst existing staff. These include a new peer-to-peer learning scheme, the introduction of mentors for new colleagues, and increased leadership training. In addition, HMPPS has now moved away from the Prison Officer Entry Level Training having fully implemented the Custody and Detention Apprenticeship during the 2021/22 financial year. The apprenticeship has been designed to support early development and upskill new starters to provide them with the confidence and competence to undertake their role by enhancing practical skills. During the programme staff are fully supported by an Apprenticeship Coach to ensure all training is completed to the standard required and a new standardised induction across all prisons was introduced in April 2022 to help improve capabilities.

Recruitment and retention of staff is one of HMP Leicester's key priorities and a great amount of effort is put in to understanding the drivers for staff leaving. To support the prison to improve retention, a new Colleague Mentor and an HR Performance Manager have been appointed. The East Midlands Prison Group is also committed to piloting new initiatives designed to broaden the appeal of HMPPS to a wider section of the labour market, which includes a part time recruitment and training offer for Prison Officers, a new rostering solution for Prison Officers, and the Advance into Justice programme to fast-track armed forces veterans into Prison Officer roles. The staffing levels and the availability of unified grades at HMP Leicester are being kept under constant review, and should intervention be required, the circumstances of the prison will be considered by the Operational Resilience and Stability Panel who can provide national resourcing at times of necessity.

In-Cell Technology

HMPPS is committed to the continued rollout of in-cell technology across the prison estate including at HMP Leicester in line with the funding that is made available. The prioritisation of prisons is being carefully considered balancing available funds and greatest need. It is recognised that HMP Leicester has a lack of space for purposeful activities with the prison only able to provide a part time purposeful activity regime. The Governor has therefore requested that HMP Leicester be considered as a priority for the installation of in cell technology to enhance the experience of prisoners.