



Ministry
of Justice

The Right Honourable
Stuart Andrew MP
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Swaleside
Eastchurch
Isle of Sheppey
Kent
ME14 4AX

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Dear Chair

**HMP SWALESIDE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 MAY 2021 – 30 APRIL 2022**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 30 April 2022. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work, especially as you continue to have a number of vacancies. I am sorry to hear that the mileage rate a member can claim is preventing new members joining, my team have forwarded your concerns to the IMB Secretariat who will respond to you directly.

I understand the Board's concerns about recruitment and retention. It is recognised that there are challenges in recruiting sufficient prison officers at HMP Swaleside, as well as at two other prisons on the Isle of Sheppey. To support recruitment a £5,000 market supplement was put in place to provide a more competitive salary and the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) Resourcing team are making strenuous efforts to advertise and market the roles at these prisons over a variety of channels to attract candidates. Since April 2022 a prison officer committing to a shift pattern of 39 hours has received starting pay of £29,427 once initial training has been completed. The Prison Service Pay Review Body report was also published in July 2022 with the Government accepting 12 out of 13 of the recommendations and all of those relating to staff in Bands 2 to 11. This award means that starting pay for Band 3 prison officers at HMP Swaleside from September 2022 (for the same shift pattern) will rise to £32,702. Importantly the award consolidates £3,000 of the time-limited market supplement as permanent salary. Existing prison officers on both modernised and legacy terms and conditions will receive a minimum increase of 4%. Further details can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/psprb-twenty-first-report-on-england-and-wales-2022>. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) also recognises the importance of retaining staff and action is being taken particularly to support new staff in post which is set out further in the attached annex. Locally, HMP Swaleside's Ambassador has been supportive and a voice for operational staff since the introduction of the role in 2021. A successful initiative, '*coffee breaks*' where the Ambassador takes on the role of another member of staff, who has worked exceptionally hard, has had a difficult time or may need a break to complete other work activities is recognition welcomed by staff.

I acknowledge the Board's concerns about the recent deaths and was saddened to hear there were seven deaths in custody 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. Where there are repeated deaths it is important that HMPPS also does everything it can to understand the circumstances and to identify any learning. In October 2021 a more formal approach was introduced, where clusters of self-inflicted deaths occur, to offer additional support to Governors without imposing unnecessary burdens or

intervening. The Long Term and High Security Estate (LTHSE) Group has also deployed a number of strategies to support the staff, prisoners and families, including a deep dive to identify any themes or commonalities which needed to be addressed to avoid further injury or death occurring.

In December 2022 the prison reached the threshold of a stage one cluster site with three apparent self-inflicted deaths within a 12 month period. An action plan was developed, based primarily on the findings of the earlier deep dive, and the prison has since received additional support from the HMPPS national safety team. Following more recent deaths occurring, the prison was moved to a stage two cluster site. A Cluster Board chaired by the Executive Director took place in June 2022 to discuss the circumstances of the deaths, the action plan progress from stage one and the operational and resourcing position at the prison. This was observed by the Board and attended by the LTHSE Prison Group Director, the Governor and other senior managers at the prison, the healthcare provider and commissioner, as well as the LTHSE Group Safety Lead and the HMPPS National Safety Team. A stage two action plan has been devised and is now being taken forward, which includes local action at the prison and engagement across HMPPS to identify additional measures that can be taken to support the prison. A further meeting of the Cluster Board will be arranged to consider progress and should it be necessary to move the prison to stage three a Task Force will be convened reporting to HMPPS Prison Performance Committee.

Turning to the Board's concern about the length of time some prisoners spend in segregated conditions, the LTHSE holds some of the most challenging and complex prisoners in custody which means that some periods of segregation may be longer due to the levels of risk that need to be addressed. The use of segregation is always for no longer than is required and a safe and sustainable progression for the individual concerned is paramount to ensure staff and other prisoners are not put at increased risk. Each prisoner who is segregated for more than 42 days is subject to elevated level of reviews at 42 day periods, with further escalation at six months which make recommendations about the management of the individual and the efforts to progress them from segregated conditions. Collaborative work with the LTHSE Group is developing strategies for those prisoners who have been segregated for longer periods of time and reintegration work at the prison has been reinvigorated to support the reduction of long-term segregation. As the LTHSE has four specialist units with the specific purpose of supporting prisoners' progression from segregated conditions, HMP Swaleside has been visited recently by the LTHSE Pathways to Progression team to support continued development of practise within the Care Separation and Reintegration Unit (CSRU). The line management structure of the CSRU has also moved to ensure the right amount of mental health support and clinical supervision is given to both staff and prisoners.

Although it has been a difficult reporting period, it was reassuring to receive your comments about the prisons progress since the last reporting period despite Covid-19 and staffing shortages. I was encouraged to read about the recognition given to staff for their co-operation with the Board and efforts to implement worthwhile regimes for prisoners with a focus on educational achievement. I too am grateful to everyone for their continued hard work and professionalism during the pandemic. I was also pleased to note the work of the Swaleside Outreach Service continues successful in helping most difficult prisoners.

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 HMP Swaleside.


STUART ANDREW MP

HMP SWALESIDE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 MAY 2021 – 30 APRIL 2022

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Offender Flows

Reconfiguration seeks to ensure that the adult male estate has the right type of prison places to meet the needs of the population. The offender flows, which went live in September 2020, underpin the Offender Management in Custody model to ensure that male prisoners move through the estate to access the necessary services to support their rehabilitation. Prisoners sentenced to 28 days or more, or who have 28 days time left to service (TLTS) and categorised security Category B will meet the offender flow criteria for allocation into the Category B Estate, including prisons in the LTHSE such as HMP Swaleside. The movement of these prisoners is important to create the necessary space to enable reception prisons to fulfil their role of serving the courts and the subsequent backlog in court activity following the Covid-19 pandemic, along with the rising prison population demonstrates an increased need for reception spaces.

The reconfiguration team continues to work closely with the LTHSE to manage any concerns about transfers and provides support to ensure that the moves of Category B prisoners are properly planned and safely implemented. The focus has always been on moving men with the longest TLTS. Since January 2022 the LTHSE has also produced weekly data on the Category B population within local prisons which is shared with LTHSE prisons to encourage them to focus on taking these prisoners with the longest TLTS. This collaborative working has resulted in a sustained and necessary reduction in the Category B population held in reception prisons.

Body Worn Video Cameras

Further to last year's response, the procurement process for the next generation of Body Worn Video Cameras (BWVCs) has concluded with HMP Swaleside expected to receive the new BWVC in March 2023. This procurement will provide each public sector prison with stock for every operational Band 3–5 prison officer on shift as well as a surplus and for HMP Swaleside this will be 190 cameras. In conjunction with the procurement of new cameras, the review of the current Prison Service Instruction (PSI) 04/2017 – National Security Framework – Security Management – Body Worn Video Cameras is being finalised. A new policy framework to replace the PSI is scheduled to be published in August 2022 alongside the rollout of the next generation BWVCs. This new framework will ensure that the new procedures of camera use are reflected including best practice and includes the mandatory wearing of BWVCs by operational Band 3–5 prison officers with prisons also able to target usage elsewhere as determined through their Local Security Strategy.

HMP Swaleside has previously received a maintenance visit from the outgoing BWVC supplier in October 2021 providing a battery refresh of the current cameras to minimise faulty units. A maintenance contract also remains in place with the current BWVC supplier which enables prisons awaiting the new equipment the avenue to continue to report faults to the Physical Safety team for troubleshooting or escalation to the supplier. In addition, as part of the national rollout of the new BWVC, older equipment from prisons early in the implementation plan will be transferred, increasing the available BWVCs at each prison. As part of this process HMP Swaleside are scheduled to imminently receive an additional 70 cameras until the new BWVC equipment arrives.

Kitchen

It is recognised that the pressures placed on the catering department at HMP Swalside and the length of time food preparation has had to be provided to HMP Stanford Hill is considerable and catering staff

should be commended for these efforts as the Board has recognised in its report. The liquidation of the construction company installing a new kitchen at HMP Stanford Hill was not foreseeable and the MoJ took all reasonable steps to ensure the resilience of the company, including following all industry protocols through a commercial tender process in October 2021 to validate the viability and delivery at HMP Stanford Hill. All efforts are being explored with consultancy partners to procure and complete the works at HMP Stanford Hill at speed and design and technical specifications are in place which will help expedite the project. In the meantime, the MoJ and HMPPS will continue to ensure that the delivery of meals is not hampered while the new facilities at HMP Stanford Hill are delivered.

Prison Officer Training

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, as well as to provide a clear understanding of the role and its expectations. All new prison officers are provided with an initial two-week training at their prison to embed them within their surroundings and allow them to start to learn the prison officer role. All prisons have a single point of contact who will ensure all the requirements of initial training are completed and that the learner understands what is expected of them as a prison officer. Learners then commence their foundation training where they are taught all the required skills to become a confident and competent prison officer. This is a seven week training package with an additional consolidation week back at their prison which tests the learner's knowledge and capability and provides opportunities to practise skills acquired. During the programme staff are fully supported by an Apprenticeship Coach who will assess their knowledge, skills, and behaviour in a live environment to ensure all training is completed to the standard required. All new officers are also expected to meet with their line manager every 12 weeks to discuss progress and developmental goals.

Equality

Whilst HMP Swaleside has already delivered some non-accredited courses for men convicted of sexual offences (MCOSO) the prison is looking at avenues to expand these further. The prison is also looking at ways to enhance the overall purposeful activity offer to MCOSO and vulnerable prisoners which the Governor will be able to inform the Board about as staffing improves.

Mental Health Services

The most recent Health Needs Assessment (HNA) was conducted in 2019 prior to the award of the new healthcare contract at HMP Swaleside in April 2022 and both primary and secondary mental health services were carefully considered in the award of the contract. It is recognised that needs do change and NHS England are currently procuring a full HNA for HMP Swaleside which will reflect any changing need as a result of the pandemic and services altered to reflect the HNA evidence.

Life Limited Room in Healthcare

The Board's continued concerns about the individual occupying the life limited room in healthcare is recognised. HMPPS remains committed to moving the individual to a suitable location for his needs but as previously advised HMPPS are unable to indicate when the move will take place.