



Ministry  
of Justice

The Right Honourable  
**Stuart Andrew MP**  
Minister of State for  
Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Highpoint  
Stradishall  
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Suffolk  
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16 July 2022

Dear Chair

**HMP HIGHPOINT: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 JANUARY – 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, particularly as you continue to have a number of vacancies and due to the constraints that Covid-19 placed on your monitoring.

I acknowledge the Board's continued concerns about the transfer of prisoners' property and the repeated request for an urgent review. Further to last year's response that the development of the new Prisoners' Property Policy Framework had resumed, HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) circulated the draft Framework with internal and external contributors, including the IMB Secretariat and the IMB representatives previously consulted. Following that consultation further operational engagement was necessary. The feedback received has been considered and, where appropriate, adjustments to the new Prisoners' Property Policy Framework have been made. The Framework is currently going through clearance processes and it is now anticipated that publication will take place this Summer.

The Framework aims to ensure that property is handled with efficiency, care and respect and that staff and prisoners are clear on the arrangements in place. It provides clear requirements and strengthens guidance on known problem areas. This includes providing stronger guidance to ensure volumetric control limits are respected, so that prisoners do not build up excessive amounts of property.

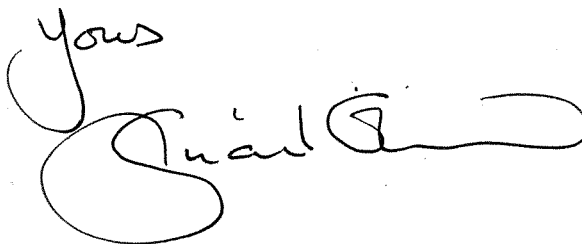
In addition, following a local review, HMP Highpoint have taken steps to reduce issues regarding the transfer of prisoners' property. Actions taken include inviting prisoners with excessive amounts of stored property to review their property and transport being sent to establishments to collect property which is being held for prisoners who have recently transferred in.

Turning to your concern about funding for the provision of therapeutic initiatives across the prison estate, the funding for education provision is set through a formula based on the type of establishment and the operational capacity. The budget allocation is therefore stable and has not materially changed over the four years of the current contract. The Governor is able to move funding between the Prison Education Framework and the Dynamic Purchasing System which are both able to be used to support music or drama provision.

Although it has been another challenging reporting period, it was encouraging to hear that violent incidents have continued to decrease. I would like to commend the Governor and all the staff at HMP Highpoint for all their hard work throughout the pandemic and I acknowledge the applaudable work of the Mental Healthcare Team who were able to continue with face-to-face work maintaining a high level of care during a difficult year. I was also pleased to read that there were no deaths in custody during the reporting period.

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 Highpoint.

Yours  


**RT HON STUART ANDREW MP**

## HMP HIGHPOINT: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JANUARY – 31 DECEMBER 2021

### HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

#### **Gov Facility Services Ltd (GFSL)**

Facilities management delivery continues to be a challenge at HMP Highpoint and, despite their own efforts, GFSL have not been able to recruit the right tradesperson. As of May 2022, GFSL had less skilled staff on site due to a number of resignations which was compounded by the lack of skilled sub-contractor labour at GFSL's third party supplier. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) Property Team has been working with GFSL to overcome these challenges by targeting and risk assessing priorities of work and using the escalation routes through the contract.

The MoJ Property Team have completed an audit and performance report on the daily management and produced a full action plan working with GFSL. Performance has recently improved, such as the fire safety audit score rising from 44% to 85% and is expected to continue to improve over the coming months.

Joint working between GFSL and the MoJ has also ensured a better service provision from the contractor, which has alleviated many of the problems previously reported on the kitchen catering equipment.

#### *Anti-Contraband Netting*

While HMPPS continues to monitor and evaluate the impact of the netting, HMP Highpoint is taking action to deter throw-overs by conducting additional fence checks, frequent scanning and external ground patrols of areas. Prisoners also conduct supervised litter picking across the grounds during which some throw-overs have been intercepted.

#### **Resourcing**

HMPPS is aware of the challenges in recruiting teaching staff at HMP Highpoint, the HMPPS Custodial Contracts Directorate Education Group (the Education Group) in partnership with the Governor and the Prison Group Director have worked with People Plus the education and training provider, through contract negotiation to improve the level of recruitment and reduce vacancies. Tutor vacancies have now decreased and the Education Group continue to monitor the situation. In addition, the Governor has secured 10% of the education contract to be moved onto the Dynamic Purchasing System which will allow for more provision and local control over deliverable vocational qualifications.

The allocation of the education budget is a set formula based on the number of prisoners and category of prison. During the Covid-19 period, the allocation has stayed stable as education activity has been curtailed. Now that we are reopening regimes, we will ensure allocations still reflect the set formula. It should be noted that Governors and senior leaders are able to move allocated funds between establishments if required.

All healthcare providers, both within prisons and in community, are experiencing significant challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified staff and NHS England monitors vacancy rates through its contract review arrangements with each contracted provider. The resourcing of each service is in the context of an up-to-date health needs assessment which is commissioned by NHS England, allowing an independently-

authored insight into met and unmet health need. Health needs assessments are always requested by The Care Quality Commission when inspecting prison healthcare services.

### **Impact of Covid-19 Restrictions**

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has left HMPPS with areas of backlog and a series of competing demands to address in restoring our service. We intend to move beyond restoring the service to transforming delivery in a range of areas, including regimes, considering Covid-19 pandemic learning, and our experience of different ways of working in the past two years.

The pace of recovery will vary between prisons. Prisons where sentence progression has been particularly affected by Covid-19 regimes will be supported in making the local decision to prioritise this area of backlog and providing purposeful activity that supports this.

The level of restriction in regimes means that there is a critical need to increase access to time unlocked and to afford access to purposeful activity that supports well-being, rehabilitation and sentence progression. Moreover, this purposeful activity should be individualised and utilised to support personal targets and goals, such as recategorization, in line the Future Regime Design (FRD), Time Well Spent vision.

There has already been considerable active engagement between Governors and the FRD project to achieve the maximum quality from the quantity of regime that can be delivered in prisons. There are opportunities to drive increased purpose in the regime and ensure time is well spent, with a boost to time in cell and on wing; not just seeing solely time in education and work as purposeful but maximising the opportunity to support rehabilitation and resettlement. The FRD team continue to work with the operational line to share good practice and be ambitious in transforming the regimes we deliver and developing new practice to make prisons more purposeful and more able to meet individual needs.

### ***Accredited Programmes***

Whilst delivery of accredited programmes was curtailed significantly through 2020-2021 and 2021-2022, prisons are now able to increase delivery as restrictions are lifting. A national prioritisation framework has been put into place which ensures that we prioritise places for those prisoners approaching a parole event or release to assist with progression decisions and maintain our commitment to reduce reoffending on release and protect the public. Delivery plans are being finalised for 2022-2023 which indicates a significant increase in delivery, although such plans may be subject to change and will be kept under review. At HMP Highpoint, proposals indicate an increased level of delivery compared to pre-covid subject to successful recruitment, retention and access to training. Such issues, in addition to local waiting lists and assessment processes, are closely monitored to ensure delivery is maximised as much as possible.