



Ministry
of Justice

The Right Honourable
Stuart Andrew MP
Minister of State for
Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP/YOI Isis
Western Way
London
SE28 0NZ

16 July 2022

Dear Chair

**HMP/YOI ISIS: 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. The Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister met the Governor and staff when visiting HMP/YOI Isis on 7 December 2021 and were able to discuss some of these themes in more detail and specifically the role prisons play in tackling the causes of reoffending. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work, particularly due to the constraints Covid-19 had on your monitoring.

I understand the Board's continued concerns regarding lost property and your request to deliver the property framework previously promised. Further to HM Prison and Probation Service's (HMPPS) response last year, the further consultation feedback has now been considered and adjustments to the new property framework have been made where appropriate. I can assure the Board that the new Framework will enable property to be handled with efficiency, care and respect. It will also ensure that staff and prisoners are clear on the arrangements in place as it provides clear requirements and includes stronger guidance on known problem areas, such as volumetric control to ensure limits are respected and prisoners do not build up excessive amounts of property which require transfer. The Framework is currently going through clearance processes and it is now anticipated that publication will take place this Summer. Locally HMP/YOI Isis recognises that missing property on transfer is important but remains a challenge and has in place a database to track missing property. The database is reviewed on a weekly basis with follow-up enquiries made with the sending prison's and matters escalated where necessary with the London Prison Group Director informed of any significant issues. Due to the focus placed on missing property by the prison this has resulted in a reduction in property complaints being submitted.

Turning to the Board's concerns about education and work to support prisoners on their release, HMP/YOI Isis has 450 activity spaces available with 192 spaces provided by the education contractor. This is sufficient for the prison's population as it is supplemented with additional short courses and other opportunities. The prison also ensures that those prisoners in the last three months of their sentence have completed education and gained relevant qualifications to enable them to concentrate on their resettlement needs. It acknowledged that there are always unfilled spaces in some work activity areas due to the churn of prisoners through HMP/YOI Isis which creates these vacancies on a daily basis. It also recognised that Induction, which is used to identify a prisoner's needs, was disrupted by the pandemic such as the need for reverse cohorting of prisoners on arrival to minimise the spread of the virus. The Board can be assured that there is a well-established arrangement which allows prisoners to

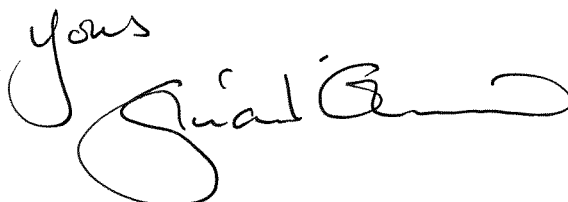
apply to fill all spaces in a timely fashion and now Covid-19 restrictions have ended the prison is focussing on returning to induction ensuring all needs are identified and has been successful in filling all spaces in education.

HMP/YOI Isis has adopted a new model where learners attend education once a week for a tutorial with a teacher in the Education Academy with the rest of their learning being independent study. However, there is a small amount of project based learning that is face to face, as well as the vocational workshops which are now open again following Covid-19 restrictions and the prison is also looking at other opportunities to increase the amount of face to face classroom provision. Whilst it is too early to assess whether there has been an improvement in academic outcomes, early signs show that these outcomes are in line with those achieved in the previous model which provides optimism that as the new model fully embeds over time further improvements can be achieved.

Despite your concerns, it was reassuring to receive your comments that new arrivals are treated with decency and respect and reception and first night arrangements, when prisoners can be at their most vulnerable, are well organised. It was pleasing to read that the previous improvements in the standards of hygiene and cleanliness have been maintained which continue to be good across the prison. I was encouraged to note that prisoners who are Black, Asian, minority ethnic and those with other protected characteristics are treated comparably. I was also interested to read about the proposals to improve vocational training and work, as well as the recent initiatives such as the theatre skills workshop, the employability course and production kitchen to increase the chances prisoners have on gaining employment on release.

I note you have raised six 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 four 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 /YOI Isis.

yours


RT HON STUART ANDREW MP

HMP/YOI ISIS: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JANUARY 2021 – 31 DECEMBER 2021

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Offender Assessment System

The Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) model changed the responsibility of the completion of start of custody Offender Assessment System (OASys) reports from reception to training prisons and as such all prisons have refreshed staffing profiles for Prison Offender Managers (POM) to reflect the change in responsibility and work load. The staffing figures in May 2022 for HMP/YOI Isis stood at five full time equivalent Probation POMs (with 3.5 in post) and 7.5 Prison POMs (with 11.5 in post) with a greater number of staff in post as a temporary measure to provide cover for the probation POM vacancies as recruitment is challenging in this area. Whilst the HMPPS OASys Taskforce have engaged with the prison to offer support, HMP/YOI Isis has been able to work through the backlog locally which is evident in successfully reducing the OASys backlog cases by 47% over three months from January 2022. It is recognised that prisoners arriving at HMP/YOI Isis with OASys work that is already overdue is adding to the overall backlog, but the prison continues working towards clearing the backlog through clear set targets for each POM for OASys completions each month.

Categorisation Category D

The availability of Category D spaces has been impacted by the closure of a number of accommodation blocks in the open prison estate during 2021 which no longer met statutory fire safety standards. The impact has been managed with temporary accommodation, particularly in the South, which was already present at some sites as part of HMPPS Covid-19 contingencies measures, as well as with new temporary accommodation introduced at other sites. It is recognised that there remains a high demand for Category D places resulting in many adult males having to be held in closed conditions which restricts their access to services such as release on temporary license that will support their rehabilitation.

Progressive transfers currently remain subject to space in the appropriate parts of the prison estate becoming available, however, the Government has committed to investing £3.8 billion over the next three years to deliver 20,000 additional modern prison places including 2,000 temporary prison places across England and Wales by the mid-2020s. This project will deliver 660 additional places through expansion of the Category D estate at a number of sites across the country. Locally, HMP/YOI Isis continues to be proactive in attempting to tackle issues with recategorisation to support transfers being achieved as soon as possible and this approach has been recognised by a review of Offender Management Units commissioned by the London Prison Group Director last year.

Cell Windows

It is recognised that there has been an ongoing issue with windows that will not close or open at HMP/YOI Isis and these require replacement, but there are no projects currently planned to undertake this work. As the Board indicates in its report the required work is costly and complex. In addition, demands for maintenance are greater than the available funding, even following the increases achieved in the last two Spending Reviews. The current funding therefore must be prioritised carefully focusing on risk to life and risk to capacity, decency and sustainability to make best use of what is available.

Resettlement

It is recognised that there has been a transition period following unification of the Probation Service which has impacted on the delivery of resettlement services in some prisons. 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. Whilst HMP/YOI Isis no longer has staff providing the Through The Gate or resettlement function within the prison, the housing provider, St Mungo's continues to provide excellent support with between 95-100% of prisoners released with access to accommodation. The prison also has Information Advice and Guidance provision in place and are recruiting an Employment Broker and a Department for Work and Pension Work Coach is due to join shortly. 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 immediate resettlement needs and pre-release services not available via the CRS which includes finance, benefit and debt services and will also support people in prison that are unconvicted and those being released to other areas. HMPPS is also currently working on extending the CRS contracts to provide accommodation support to unsentenced people in prison with commencement expected this Summer 2022, as well as additional CRS contracts to commence in August and September 2022 to provide Finance, Benefits and Debt, and Dependency and Recovery services which will be also be delivered to unsentenced people in prison.