



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Holme House
Holme House Road
Stockton on Tees
TS18 2QU

Dear Chair

**HMP HOLME HOUSE: 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, especially as you continued to operate with a number of vacancies. I was saddened to hear there were five 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.

I am pleased to note the Board has recognised the improvements made at HMP Holme House during the reporting year. Work to improve decency within cells is ongoing. Throughout the 2021 calendar year, and as of June 2022, approximately 151 privacy screens have been fitted by the maintenance contractor. Some delays were experienced during this period due to a lack of required privacy screens on-site to enable the completion of the works. All previous requests have now been completed and any further works will be completed as part of an ongoing programme.

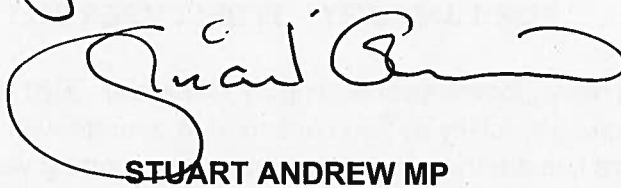
I appreciate the Board's concerns around the dental services at the prison. Throughout the pandemic dental care continued to be delivered in line with the national guidelines from the NHS England Chief Dental Officer by prioritising and delivering urgent care. Any prisoner with an urgent care requirement or perceived urgent care need is seen within 24-48 hours. This has been the case in all North East establishments and the wider community throughout the pandemic. Infection prevention guidelines also affected the NHS' ability to deliver dental care. Having moved out of the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, we will see improvements. Recently the Governor has made resources available to enable the delivery of additional weekend dental sessions to provide more access for prisoners to alleviate any pressures.

Prior to the pandemic an Improvement Board was overseeing work to improve a range of healthcare services. This included reducing waiting times for the Dentist and increasing attendance at appointments as approximately a third of all scheduled dental appointments went unused when prisoners failed to attend. NHS England and its commissioned providers do not have direct control over attendance at appointments and have worked with the prison staff to resolve these issues. A range of measures were taken to reduce the level of missed appointments and attendance and waiting times have since improved.

Although it has been another difficult reporting period, I was pleased to receive your comments about the prison's management of the regime changes whilst enabling the prisoners to have a reasonable quality of life. I was encouraged to hear that the trend in violence reduction is continuing, about the good work of the Diversity and Inclusion Team particularly around the LGBT+ focus group, and the improvement in the culture and atmosphere of the site. I would also like to recognise and commend the mental health team for their nomination as an example of best practice as part of the Royal College of Psychiatrists' peer review of prison mental health services.

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. HM Prison and Probation Service (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 Holme House.

Yours

STUART ANDREW MP

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Healthcare Contracts

Spectrum Community Healthcare is the lead provider for all healthcare services excluding dental which is commissioned directly by NHS England. NHS England nationally has set the standards for complaint management within healthcare services and the time frames in which they should be responded to. The healthcare complaint response targets are the same as community healthcare services. The healthcare provider is responsible to NHS England if they fail to meet these targets. During 2020 and 2021, healthcare services across the country were allowed to extend their complaint response timeframes due to the pressure and demands of managing the Covid-19 pandemic, with the 28-day target reintroduced at the start of 2022.

Prisoners' Property

The Board will be aware that a new Prisoners' Property Policy Framework is due to be published soon. The Framework is currently going through the necessary clearance processes and will be published as soon as that process is concluded. It provides clear requirements and strengthens guidance on known problem areas, including stronger guidance to ensure volumetric control limits are respected so that prisoners do not build up excessive amounts of property. 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.

Prisoner Escort and Custody Services (PECS) provide transportation for individuals and their property. The vehicle fleet is designed to carry the number of people it is intended for, together with their property in line with the volumetric limit which is governed by Prison Service Instruction (PSI) 12/2011 *Prisoners Property*. In addition to this, the escort contractor will take a reasonable volume of legal documentation.

As part of the planning for the new PECS contract, which commenced in August 2020, PECS engaged with Ministry of Justice Policy to review property limits on transportation and it was agreed that the new vehicle fleet would have increased capacity to facilitate an additional half bag of property for consumables to the limit of 7.5kg. The introduction of digitally recorded Person Escort Records including property tags will assist with investigations for property that is lost in transit with PECS suppliers, however, PECS receive few complaints for lost property overall and often the issue does not sit with the PECS transportation. HMPPS is also considering what more can be done to encourage prisoners to send out or dispose of excess items to reduce the amount of their property that cannot transfer with them. Steps are being taken to ensure a consistent approach when prisons forward on any excess items to prisoners at their new establishments after transfers have taken place. PECS continue to monitor all aspects of the contractors' performance and on occasions where it fails to meet the agreed levels will be raised with the contractor for improvement. No complaints have been submitted to PECS in relation to HMP Holme House in the past year.

Maintenance

Although the existing ventilation system to the Bistro area was functional, it had been noted as being of insufficient handling capacity for adequate air changes per hour to meet Covid requirements. A survey of the existing system has been undertaken by a specialist sub-contractor and improvement requirement works identified. These works will be progressed at the earliest opportunity. Notification of required

remedial works to the Engagement Centre ceiling was reported to the contractor in February 2022. It is acknowledged there has been a delay in resolving this request due to local issues.

Contractual service level agreements for required service provider performance are routinely monitored and reported on a monthly basis via key performance target measurement by the Ministry of Justice Property Services group. Where necessary, suitable and appropriate payment application deductions, in line with contractual agreements, are applied for noted Key Performance Indicators and service performance failures by the service provider.