



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Northumberland
Acklington
Morpeth
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Dear Chair

**HMP NORTHUMBERLAND: 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 continued to operate with a number of vacancies. I was saddened to hear there were six 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 appreciate the Board's recognition of HMP Northumberland's effective management of the pandemic. As we continue our recovery, HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) has published a principles document for regimes as prisons return to normality, providing a new definition for Purposeful Activity and a tiered Regime Model. The National Regime Model will eventually deliver the HMPPS "Time Well Spent" vision and a key element of this model is the principle of 'right services, right person' which is that individuals will be offered greater personalisation in regimes rather than success being measured solely by quantity in available activities. A number of prisons have worked closely with external bodies during the pandemic to support aspects of mental health, such as prisons that have older cohorts have had support from Recoop and Age UK who have trained peers as Buddies to support prisoners with care needs (Recoop) and through the provision of distraction packs (Recoop and Age UK).

The HMPPS Health and Care Partnerships Team is creating a Core Capabilities Framework for Adult Health, Care and Well-being (CCF). This framework will outline the key skills, knowledge and behaviours that HMPPS staff will need to demonstrate in order to care for adults who need support and will be accompanied by a core curriculum to provide staff with the training they need aligned to the CCF. The commitment to develop the CCF has been published in response to the Justice Committee Report into Mental Health in prison (September 2021); the joint thematic Inspection of the criminal justice journey for individuals with mental health needs and disorders (November 2021) and therefore contributes to the Deputy Prime Minister's priorities in this area. The healthcare provider at HMP Northumberland will continue to ensure a range of interventions is on offer for prisoners to access.

Whilst provision of housing is the responsibility of local authorities, we recognise how important it is that everyone leaving prison has somewhere to live, as accommodation supports them to hold down a job and reduces the likelihood of them re-offending. To help prisoners at risk of homelessness on release, the

new Commissioned Rehabilitative Services (CRS) went live in June last year, with HMPPS overseeing the effective embedding of these new contracts.

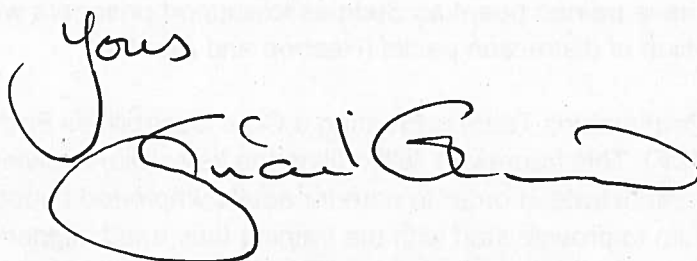
In the pre-release phase, CRS providers deliver resettlement interventions to support sentence management activities completed by the Probation Practitioner and pre-release staff in the prison. The contracts are designed to support sentenced prisoners and those subject to probation supervision in the community, address the needs linked to their offending, and to achieve the stability they need to do so. Those services which are delivered pre-release, such as accommodation, will continue post-release. Under this approach all resettlement prisons, including locals, will have an embedded resettlement provision, managed by, or otherwise linked to, a Probation Delivery Unit (PDU). These teams will provide immediate resettlement needs and pre-release support for all people in prison including the un-convicted and people out of area.

More broadly, Homelessness Prevention Teams (HPTs), operating across England and Wales, continue to strengthen relationships with local authorities and other strategic partners in order to embed and expand housing options for prison leavers. We will also invest an extra £200m each year by 2024/25 to transform our approach to rehabilitation. This includes expanding our transitional accommodation service, initially launched in five probation regions in July 2021, across England and Wales. The service will support those under supervision from probation who are released from prison at risk of homelessness with up to 12-weeks accommodation. The 'Prior Information Notice' for the contract tender for six of the remaining regions is now available online.

Although it was another difficult reporting period, it was encouraging to receive your comments that prisoners are treated fairly and humanely and that staff-prisoner relationships are generally good as evidenced by thank-you cards from prisoners for the second consecutive year. I was also pleased to hear that despite regime restrictions, staff across the site made strenuous efforts to provide the prisoners with in-cell activities and to engage with them individually. The Board's recognition of senior management's priority around staff welfare and wellbeing is also appreciated.

I note your comments about some local issues in your report for the attention of the Director who will continue to keep you aware of progress as work continues.

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 Northumberland.

Yours


STUART ANDREW MP