

██████████
Vice-Chair of the Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Forest Bank
Agecroft Road
Salford
M27 8FB

MoJ Ref: SUB 86067

24 March 2021

Dear ██████████,

**HMP FOREST BANK: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 NOVEMBER 2019 – 31 OCTOBER 2020**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 October 2020. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work in capturing these helpful observations, especially as you were short of Board members.

Firstly, I would like to offer my condolences to the Board for the loss of two dedicated and valued members, the f ██████████ and ██████████, ██████████. I was also saddened to hear there were two deaths in custody; every death is a tragedy and my officials take recommendations from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman very seriously.

I am grateful to the Board for highlighting the exceptional partnership work conducted by HMP Forest Bank, HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) and Public Health England (PHE), which undoubtedly helped control the outbreak of the virus, ensuring the safety of staff and prisoners. As the Board is aware, this pandemic has presented a unique set of challenges which HMPPS continues to address to maintain services in custody and the community. Close collaboration and partnership working across HMPPS, local authorities, PHE, NHS England and NHS Improvement and prison healthcare providers is essential to ensuring that prisoners are safely located. HMPPS continues to work very closely with public health authorities and experts to ensure the approach taken is based on the best scientific advice available. Post Covid-19, the Director of HMP Forest Bank is confident that he will continue with this impressive partnership work to manage other health and wellbeing related initiatives.

Turning to some other positives captured in your report, it was encouraging to receive your comments that staff went the extra mile to deliver a fair and humane experience despite staffing shortages resulting from staff having to self-isolate. I was pleased to note that HMP Forest Bank has excellent facilities and resources to meet the healthcare needs of prisoners and ensure their wellbeing, and that the prison is in good condition, providing a pleasant environment.

I echo your praise of the staff in the Care and Separation Unit who deal with often challenging prisoners with professionalism, and the Chaplaincy staff who have continued to deliver during this difficult time. I also welcome the Diversity and Inclusion and in-cell activity work that has been introduced.

I note you have raised a local matter in your report which the Director will report back on. HMPPS comments in response to the other issue 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 Forest Bank.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alex Chalk". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a period at the end.

ALEX CHALK MP

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Offender Flows

HMP Forest Bank is a Reception and Resettlement prison. The Reception cohort comprises of men who are on remand, convicted un-sentenced, fixed term recalls, non-criminal, have 28 days or less time left to serve at the point of transfer, are newly sentenced awaiting onward allocation or are an immigration detainee. The Resettlement cohort comprises of men who are category C with more than 28 days but equal to or less than 16 months' time left to serve.

In January 2020, 76% of HMP Forest Bank's population were in the Reception/Resettlement cohort. The Reconfiguration project team in February 2020 moved courts from HMP Manchester to HMP Forest Bank and as a result the reception population slowly increased month on month. There has been a reduction of category B men held at HMP Forest Bank, from 117 in January 2020 to 38 in December 2020. Overall, HMP Forest Bank has been demonstrating a slow positive change since January 2020 with 89% of the population correct for Reception and Resettlement cohorts as of December 2020. There will always be a small percentage of men who appear to be in the wrong place. This could be due to a prisoner awaiting a transfer to a more appropriate prison, being subject to medical or other hold, or being located at the prison for security purposes.