



Ministry
of Justice

Rob Butler MP
Parliamentary Under
Secretary of State for
Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Swansea
200 Oystermouth Road
Swansea
SA1 3SR

MoJ ref: SUB100515

24 October 2022

Dear Chair,

**HMP SWANSEA: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 JUNE 2020 – 31 MAY 2021**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 May 2021. I was saddened to hear there was one death 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.

My own first experience of the prison system was serving on an IMB between 2006 and 2010, so I understand, and greatly appreciate, the dedication and commitment shown by volunteers both in monitoring the treatment of prisoners and assisting them when they particularly need help. I am very much aware of the amount of effort that goes into producing annual reports and thank you for providing a comprehensive picture of HMP Swansea over the reporting year.

I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work, especially as you had a number of vacancies and Covid-19 has impacted on your ability to gather information.

I understand the Board's request for prisoners to continue to receive support in accessing accommodation on release. The 'all in' approach taken by the Welsh Government since the start of the pandemic continues to be in place with consultation recently undertaken on the transitional legal arrangements to continue the approach prior to wider scale legislative reform. More broadly, for those released from custody, the Accommodation Pathway for Wales outlines the route for prison leavers to access accommodation and the introduction of the Community Accommodation Services Tier 3 project (CAS3) funding from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) addresses the availability and suitability of accommodation. The project in Wales is being funded for three years effective from July 2022 providing accommodation for up to 84 nights to those at risk of being homeless upon release from prison. It will also support those moving on from an Approved Premises or following a period at a Bail Accommodation and Support Services (BASS) residence as part of their resettlement and will also support transition into settled accommodation.

The Welsh Government, MoJ and HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) remain committed to supporting Local Authorities to ensure that prison leavers are considered in their response to ending homelessness. Homeless Prevention Teams (HPTs) set up to oversee the Covid accommodation emergency have been retained as a permanent feature of HMPPS to develop relationships with local authorities and other strategic partners to embed and expand housing options for prison leavers. The Accommodation Pathway Co-ordinator roles will also provide additional support to Local Authorities and

Practitioners to improve resettlement arrangements. The introduction of Commissioned Rehabilitative Accommodation Services by HMPPS is also placing a greater focus on resettlement plans and better preparation for release and locally HMP Swansea is amongst the highest in its comparator prison group for achieving the accommodation outcome upon release.

Turning to your concerns about the mental health services on offer to prisoners, in June 2022 the Welsh Government confirmed additional funding to Swansea Bay University Health Board (UHB) as part of its Service Improvement Funding for Mental Health. This will provide further support to the services at HMP Swansea, with £132,918 being made available in 2022/23 to fund a dedicated HMP Swansea Prison In-Reach (PIR) Secondary Care Team and a further £265,836 allocated for 2023/24 onwards. The Governor is pleased with this proposed change to the provision having raised the matter previously with the Prison Partnership Board, and it also being raised by the Welsh Parliamentary Review into Prison Health Care and by Health Inspectorate Wales. In addition, £330K has been allocated to Swansea Bay UHB on an annual basis since October 2019 to directly support the delivery of the Partnership Agreement for Prison Health in Wales and its priority on mental health. The Welsh Government will continue to work with Swansea Bay UHB to ensure there is an ongoing focus on the mental health needs of prisoners and it is pleasing to read the recognition given by the Board in your report to the local Healthcare and Homeless Team's for their coordination of treatment and medication for these prisoners on release.

It was reassuring to receive your comments that the prison provides a safe environment where violence remains low and staff have gone to considerable effort to protect prisoners from Covid-19. It was encouraging to note the success in raising standards and addressing previous recommendations made by HM Inspectorate of Prisons. I was also pleased to read that the morale of prisoners is good and that they are treated fairly and humanely by staff who continue to build on the positive relationships between staff and prisoners to support wellbeing.

I note you have raised four 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 Swansea.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Butler', with a stylized flourish at the end.

ROB BUTLER MP

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Transfers

HMP Swansea, as with other prisons in Wales, is a national HMPPS resource that provides spaces for any prisoners, including foreign nationals. However, the prison has a focus on taking prisoners from the courts it serves which includes those who have committed offences in Swansea and South Wales, but who may reside elsewhere. It is recognised that transfers into Welsh reception prisons from prisons in England are sometimes necessary, especially from HMPs Bristol and Hewell during times of population pressure. HMPPS tends to redirect to HMP Cardiff in the first instance, instead of HMP Swansea due to the distance involved which can subsequently affect occasional court redirections from HMP Cardiff to HMP Swansea. All redirections are cleared with the HMPPS Office in Wales before actioning them and during the Board's reporting period, transfer statistics for two months where significant redirections took place (November 2020 and February 2021) show 73 and 26 transfers took place respectively. During both months, HMPPS were managing considerable Covid-19 outbreaks in the South West of England and had limited access to prison places which necessitated prisoner redirections, mainly from Bristol to Cardiff, which may have then affected Swansea. Overall, there is no evidence that large numbers of out-of-area prisoners are redirected to HMP Swansea.

Prison Regimes

In May 2022, HMPPS exited the *National Framework for Prison Regimes and Services* and ceased central Covid Gold command which moved regime delivery and local decision making wholly back to governors. It is recognised that the level of restrictions that prison regimes have experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic means there is a need to increase access to purposeful activity and the time prisoners are unlocked to support well-being, rehabilitation and sentence progression. Throughout the pandemic HMP Swansea abided by the *National Framework for Prison Regimes and Services* and as restrictions allowed the prison has responded by improving the regimes and outcomes for prisoners with weekly prisoner representative meetings taking place to explain what was happening. Whilst Covid-19 continues to impact on regime delivery, HMPPS has effective outbreak management in place to reduce this and is committed to improving prison regimes in accordance with the Prisons Strategy White Paper. The HMPPS Future Regime Design will be introducing a National Regime Model to provide a suite of regime enabling products to improve delivery, which support the balance between quality and quantity of the regime whilst safeguarding consistency against statutory expectations. A new Tiered Regime Model will also provide structure, recognising extra-curricular activities alongside traditional activities such as work and education enabling prisons to deliver their best consistent regime offer for every person in custody.