



Ministry  
of Justice

**Damian Hinds**  
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Wandsworth  
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London  
SW18 3HS

**MoJ ref:** SUB100991

11 November 2022

Dear Chair,

**HMP WANDSWORTH: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 JUNE 2021 – 31 MAY 2022**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 28 February 2022. 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 am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work during another difficult reporting period. 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 Wandsworth over the reporting period.

I understand that the former Prisons Minister, Alex Chalk MP, visited the prison on 1 and 2 September 2021 and I hope these visits proved useful.

I appreciate the Board's concerns around prison officers' absence management and restricted duties. Although this is primarily a local issue, I can confirm full staff briefings and training days have resumed to better manage this. A new Prison Officer Entry Level Training mentor is now in post who will support all new prison officers to improve their induction experience and readiness for the role, together with a new pilot of structured supervision to support officers in their personal development and resilience in post. The local Human Resources performance manager is supporting first line managers to confidently adhere to attendance management processes. I am also pleased to advise that recruitment campaigns for prison officers continue to attract applicants to the role.

Following the unification of probation services in June 2021, HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is currently in the process of extending the contracts to provide services to all people in prison who have accommodation needs and hope to have the extended service in place by the end of this year. In the meantime, the pre-release teams provide support for immediate resettlement needs for all people in prison including unsentenced prisoners. At HMP Wandsworth, an Accelerator Housing Specialist has been recruited to focus on remand prisoners. Since their appointment, numerous achievements have been made including housing on day of release or a housing appointment secured; appeals lodged with local authorities where housing payments were stopped; emergency housing information provided for

those leaving unexpectedly without housing support in place; and links established with additional housing providers to increase options for prison leavers.

Accommodating two prisoners in a cell designed for one is never desirable but continues to be necessary across the estate in order to accommodate all those committed to custody by the courts. I appreciate this is an ongoing concern, and whilst frustrating, HMPPS is doing all it can to reduce overcrowding. Annually published figures show that crowding across the prison estate reduced between 2018/19 and 2021/22, equivalent to approximately 4,300 fewer prisoners held in crowded conditions. Our commitment to deliver 20,000 new uncrowded prison places remains. There may also be options in future to further reduce crowding levels, for example if population growth is slower than projected and there is sufficient headroom in the estate it will enable targeted reductions of the least suitable prison places. The proportion of prisoners held in crowded cells at HMP Wandsworth will ultimately depend on regional population levels and demand.

Violence in prison occurs due to a number of factors and may in part be linked to conditions and overcrowding. As mentioned in last years' response, the commitment to deliver 20,000 new uncrowded prison places is supported by £3.8 billion investment over the next three years. HMPPS has recently published a revised framework for the certification of prisoner accommodation, from which the useable operational capacity of the estate is derived. While most single cells in the prison system could physically hold two people, the determination of the maximum crowded capacity of a particular establishment is a matter of operational judgement considering risks to safety and stability. In times of severe population pressure, establishments will be expected to hold as many prisoners as they can safely accommodate, but it is equally clear that number should be determined by the operational managers responsible for managing the prison.

Although it was another difficult reporting period, it was encouraging to receive your comments about the sensitive and imaginative manner in which the management team and staff managed the welfare of everyone in the establishment, together with the commendable work of the communications team and their use of Radio Wanno and Wanno TV. I was also pleased to learn about the prison's drive to encourage prisoners to attend work and training, and the progress made by Government Facilities Services Limited (GFSL).

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. 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 Wandsworth.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Damian Hinds', is positioned above the printed name.

**Damian Hinds**  
**Minister for Prisons and Probation**

## **HMP WANDSWORTH: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JUNE 2021 – 31 MAY 2022**

### **HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report**

#### **Living Conditions**

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) Property Directorate acknowledges the shower facilities are in a poor condition. Whilst there is no separate budget for this refurbishment, MoJ Property will use any available funding to make these facilities decent and safe. Remedial work is being undertaken to avoid further deterioration and repairs to H1 and G1 showers on Trinity has recently been completed. Separate funding has been allocated to improve shower ventilation, and work on two showers on C wing has recently been completed to address building fabric failures resulting from poor ventilation. Pest control at HMP Wandsworth is managed via weekly visits by a specialist contractor and is supplemented by additional targeted treatments where specific problems have been identified. Government Facilities Services Limited (GFSL) recognises that sufficient progress has not been made in reducing the presence of rats and pigeons and other options are being considered, including additional contractor options.

#### **Healthcare Accommodation**

The new healthcare building was recently signed off as completed by the project team and the handover process to HMPPS commenced in October. The refurbishment project of six cells in Addison is progressing and due for completion this Autumn. Funding is being sought for the refurbishment of the remaining six cells, and if secured, this work will start as soon as possible.

#### **Foreign National Offenders**

There has been a significant reduction in the number of Immigration Detainees since the end of the reporting period. Following the end of pandemic restrictions, HMP Wandsworth is fully accessible again to the Home Office's Immigration Prison Team who have resumed Immigration Surgeries so that a number of individuals can be seen and updated at once. The Home Office's team conduct regular meetings with prison officials to provide updates on those cases being held as Immigration detainees to consider their welfare. Monthly updates are also provided to individuals directly.

Cases are reviewed every 28 days and case progression panels provide a second line of assurance by reviewing the appropriateness of ongoing detention at three-monthly intervals to ensure a consistent approach. Face-to-Face interviews have now recommenced so further explanations can be given to individuals should they make an application to speak with an Immigration Officer. All of these measures have effectively meant that the process is now back to the same consistent approach as pre-pandemic.

#### **Probation Service Staffing**

The Probation Service has accelerated the recruitment of trainee probation officers over the last two years to unprecedented levels, recruiting over 1000 trainees in 2020/21 and 1518 trainees in 2021/22. During the course of the current financial year, the Probation Service has committed to recruiting another 1500 trainees to further increase staffing. Centralised recruitment support is also underway to increase staffing levels at pace, this includes targeted recruitment work in London.

New technologies are being applied to support candidate engagement, including the use of webinars and blogs, together with paid and organic marketing (this includes social media, job boards, outreach events and careers fairs). The recruitment process itself has also been simplified, resulting in a more streamlined and user-friendly approach.