



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP/YOI Downview
Sutton Lane
Sutton, Surrey
SM2 5PD

30 November 2022

Dear Chair,

HMP/YOI DOWNVIEW: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 MAY 2021 – 30 APRIL 2022

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 30 April 2022. 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/YOI Downview over the reporting year, especially as you had a number of vacancies.

I recognise the Board's concerns about the IT infrastructure within prisons for use by prisoners. I understand at the start of 2022 the Ministry of Justice ordered laptops for 88 prisons which would have provided each site with 15 devices to begin to offer a wide range of content to learners in-cell and within the classroom. However, the laptops failed the necessary HM Prison and Probation (HMPPS) security requirements to enable distribution to prisons. Work is therefore continuing to ensure that devices provided to prisons will give safe and secure online and offline access to appropriate curriculum content for prisoners. An offline in-cell laptop solution is being explored with laptops deployed at pilot sites to evaluate the impact they have on engagement and curriculum support. These provide access to education materials in-cell and can be controlled at an individual prison level. Within the pilot sites a category-based approach has also been introduced to give greater internet access to appropriately risk assessed prisoners. HMPPS is also exploring what the commercial sector can offer to enhance the learning experience of prisoners both offline and online whilst remaining safe and secure. In addition, digital work continues to progress the supply of a secure tablet for every prison for the use with Information Advice and Guidance providers to assist in the completion of Personal Learning Plans (PLP). These will allow remote offline working across any site and when logged in the tablet links directly to the Virtual Campus 2 and the learners personal wallet, where the PLP is stored, making it accessible for all staff. These tablets are on order and delivery is expected in 2022.

I understand the Board's concerns about the number of women with acute mental health difficulties who enter the prison system. The Government published the draft Mental Health Bill in June 2022 which seeks to improve the support women receive who have acute mental health needs, including those who come into contact with the criminal justice system. The Bill includes the provision to introduce a statutory time limit of 28 days for transfers to hospital as proposed in the Reforming the Mental Health Act (MHA) White Paper published in January 2021. This time limit, together with operational improvements, will help reduce unnecessary delays and ensure women in the criminal justice system receive swift access to treatment. I am pleased that the Bill includes reforms to end the use of prison as a place of safety. This will stop the practice of courts diverting defendants and convicted people to prison who require assessment and treatment under the MHA, ensuring they receive the right support in the right setting. It also includes an


amendment to the Bail Act (1976) to ensure vulnerable defendants can no longer be remanded to prison for their own protection where the court's sole concern is a defendant's mental health.

It remains the case that access to secure hospital beds can be challenging but NHS England and their providers are working proactively with the prison to expedite a transfer to a more appropriate secure hospital location as quickly as possible. HMP/YOI Downview continues to develop its approach to multi-disciplinary working, including reviewing the approach to Safety Intervention Meetings (SIM), Challenge Support and Intervention Plans (CSIP), Assessment Care in Custody Teamwork (ACCT) and partnership working between the prison and healthcare to ensure there is a proactive care and management of complex women. Women are only segregated in exceptional circumstances, especially when there are concerns around the risk to self and all periods of continuous segregation over 42 days are carefully considered by senior managers within the HMPPS Womens Directorate. Complex mental health presentations at HMP/YOI Downview are discussed regularly by a multidisciplinary team of professionals to ensure there is appropriate triage, clinical reviews and pathway planning, particularly for those women that self-harm or are segregated. Complex case clinics also take place face to face now to ensure that physical and mental health needs are being addressed. Therapeutic groups have also restarted following Covid-19 restrictions with the waiting list reducing and with a specialist learning disability nurse in place now there is a well-qualified team at the prison to recognise neurodiversity which often underpins complex cases and self-harming. In addition, HMPPS and NHS England have jointly commissioned a review of health and social care across the women's estate to obtain a better understanding of the current provision and to ensure equity which is expected to report in Autumn 2022.

I can assure the Board that the prison expansion programme will deliver better conditions for women with the new accommodation supporting trauma informed practice through the creation of small communities and greater health integration to make women feel safer. These will also enable women to carry out their sentence closer to home and with the introduction of open units these will provide greater resettlement opportunity. Should the projected increase in the women's population not materialise the Ministry of Justice has committed to using the new places to close older, less suitable accommodation in the women's estate. In addition, in September 2022, the Ministry of Justice announced that up to £24 million would be invested up until March 2025 to support women in or at risk of contact with the criminal justice system. This includes funding for women's community sector organisations and local services to work more closely together to support women.

It was reassuring to receive your comments that the prison provides a safe environment where women are treated in a fair and humane way and I am pleased that staff have been recognised for their hard work for providing this environment under extraordinary circumstances. I was encouraged to read about the early day's induction programme and the compliments from prisoners about the caring attitude of staff as well as the reception and induction processes.

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/YOI Downview.

Tom


Damian Hinds
Minister for Prisons and Probation

**HMP/YOI DOWNVIEW: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 MAY 2021 – 30 APRIL 2022**

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Employment Advisory Board

Regarding the Board's concern that Employment Advisory Boards will add an additional layer of reporting and accountability for the prison, assurance can be provided that these Employment Advisory Boards are advisory and do not have any formal governance responsibility. They are chaired by a local businessperson who recruits members from businesses, local charities and social enterprises. Each Employment Advisory Board is linked to a prison and their purpose is to offer advice, support and challenge to Governors on how to strengthen their employment offer and ensure prisoners are ready to work in the local labour market. In line with the HMPPS national guidance issued, the Governor of HMP/YOI Downview and the Chair of the Employment Advisory Board are defining the role of the Board to create a space where the best employment outcomes can be considered and pursued for the women located at HMP/YOI Downview. The Governor welcomes the level of expertise and contacts that the Chair of the Employment Advisory Board brings and has confidence that the Board will improve the outcomes for prisoners.