



Ministry
of Justice

Damian Hinds
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Preston
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MoJ ref: SUB101743

12 December 2022

Dear Chair,

**HMP PRESTON: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 APRIL 2021 – 31 MARCH 2022**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 March 2022. I was saddened to hear that there were two deaths in custody during the reporting year and a further death within 14 days of a prisoner being released. 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 very much aware of the amount of effort that goes into producing annual reports and thank you for providing a comprehensive picture of HMP Preston over the reporting period, particularly as you have a number of vacancies.

I address below the specific point you have raised for my attention:

I understand the Board's concerns about the prison's condition, having been built in the Victorian era. It is recognised that such accommodation across the prison estate can be challenging to maintain and despite the significant increases achieved in the last two Spending Reviews, demands for maintenance remains greater than the available funding. Projects are therefore being prioritised carefully to make the best use of the funding, focusing on risk to life and risk to capacity, decency and sustainability. HMP Preston, the Cumbria and Lancashire Prison Group Director, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) Property Directorate and HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) Prison Supply Directorate have been working together to develop several medium and long-term projects to improve conditions at the prison. These include the expansion and refurbishment of the reception area and gates, wing refurbishments, replacement of windows and the replacement of the Offender Management Unit. The Board can be assured that negotiations between MoJ Property, HMPPS and Lancashire County Council have continued regarding the possibility of leasing or purchasing the old museum, the use of which forms one of the options in the above projects.

A bid has been submitted for the full refurbishment of all showers across the prison, but in the meantime in-year funding has been provided to undertake refurbishment on those in the poorest condition. In addition, funding has been provided for new wing landing floor coverings, toilets and painting which is a welcomed investment to improve the decency levels across the prison. The prison has also been installing fixed privacy screens within cells on a rolling basis to replace the previously used shower curtains which had been used due to the size of cells but were easy for prisoners to remove. As the Board

is aware additional pest control visits are also continuing to take place to tackle the vermin, including pest proofing, resulting in a marked improvement with fewer sightings of vermin.

Although it has been a challenging period for the prison recovering following Covid-19 restrictions and outbreaks, I was reassured to receive your comments that HMP Preston provides a safe environment. Your independence is welcomed by prisons and the Governor would like to thank the Board for your insights to help the prison reflect on the care, decency, and support it gives to prisoners. It was encouraging to read about the work undertaken at the prison to address violence by way of developing a change programme course. I am pleased these efforts were recognised by being awarded a grant from the HMPPS Operational Innovations Award initiative. I was also encouraged by the prison's efforts to support prisoners who are either segregated for their own protection or good order or discipline.

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 Preston.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dam. Hinds'.

Damian Hinds
Minister for Prisons and Probation

HMP PRESTON: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 APRIL 2021 – 31 MARCH 2022

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Administrative Staffing

The Board may be aware that the latest pay award for 2022/23 following the recommendations of the Prison Service Pay Review Board reflects a significant investment to uplift and reform the prison pay structures. This award has delivered an increase in base pay of at least 4% for all HMPPS staff between Bands 2 to 11, alongside further targeted pay rises for the lowest paid staff of up to £3,000. Band 2 and 3 administration staff will benefit from this pay award and the increases in base pay will support local marketing and help attract prospective candidates. In addition to the pay award, HMPPS Human Resources and MoJ Resourcing are exploring further flexible working offers which aims to support recruitment of a more diverse workforce and to make these roles more attractive.

It is recognised that HMP Preston is currently experiencing difficulties in recruitment within the Band 3 Business Administrator roles and has historically struggled to recruit and retain Band 2 Administration staff. The prison is considering creative solutions to address this and is currently moving the visits booking line to a national provider who can offer an improved service to visitors. This is currently scheduled to take place during November and following this transition the prison will carefully consider further business development opportunities to mitigate any adverse impact on prisoners wherever possible.

Indeterminate Sentences for Public Protection (IPP)

Whilst the main priority is to protect the public, HMPPS remains committed to doing all it can to support prisoners serving IPP sentences to progress and reduce their risk to the point where the independent Parole Board determines that they may be safely released. Efforts in recent years have delivered a substantial reduction in the number of IPP prisoners who have never been released and the latest published national figures show the unreleased IPP population standing at 1,437 at the end of September 2022. This is reduced from 1,661 at the end of September 2021. However, as the number of IPP prisoners who have never been released continues to decrease, the proportion of those who remain in prison who committed more serious offences and whose cases are complex grows. The risks and needs of these prisoners must be addressed before the independent Parole Board consider that they can be safely managed in the community, which is why some prisoners spend a number of years in custody after completing their tariff.

HMPPS efforts to support progression are continuing through the IPP action plan initiatives, such as case reviews for those prisoners who are struggling to progress, as well as work streams to oversee the specialist progression regimes and progression towards a safe and sustainable release. Now that the Justice Select Committee's report into the IPP sentence has been published, HMPPS is carefully considering the evidence and recommendations from the report and will be reviewing the existing IPP Action Plan in light of the report. Every effort also continues to be made to locate an IPP prisoner to a prison best placed to meet their sentence planning needs in terms of interventions as promptly as is reasonably possible. As a Reception prison HMP Preston does receive a range of prisoners either through the courts, recalls into custody or transfers from other prisons, which can include IPP prisoners. Whilst the number of IPPs received is relatively low the prison does its best to manage their individual circumstances. Prompt access to Prison Offender Managers and Community Offender Managers often helps those IPP prisoners returning to closed conditions where they feel uninformed about why this has happened and allows the prison to work with the individual towards their progression into the wider resettlement or training prison estate.