



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Stocken
Stocken Hall Road
Rutland
LE15 7RD

14 December 2022

Dear Chair,

**HMP STOCKEN: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 MAY 2021 TO 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 Stocken over the reporting period, particularly as you have a number of vacancies.

I was pleased to note that there were no deaths in custody during the reporting period and I address below the specific points you have raised for my attention:

I understand the Board's concerns about prisoners with severe mental ill health who require transfer to a secure hospital. The Government published the draft Mental Health Bill in June 2022 which 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. The Bill also commits to ending the use of prison as a place of safety for defendants and convicted people requiring assessment and treatment under the MHA. These, together with operational improvements, will help reduce unnecessary delays and ensure individuals in the criminal justice system receive swift access to treatment.

It is worth noting that throughout the Covid-19 pandemic there have been closures within the secure hospital estate due to Covid-19 cases resulting in many patients experiencing admission delays. The pathway into these secure beds is also complex but the focus is on improving efficiency and to proactively manage cases to reduce waiting times. NHS England Health and Justice (Midlands) Governance team and Commissioners have developed fortnightly Clinical Case review meetings, which uses dynamic risk assessments to prioritise access to the most vulnerable and high-risk patients and these have made positive improvements. The Mental Health team at HMP Stocken have continued to offer good support to prisoners and to prison staff to help them deal with vulnerable prisoners despite there being vacancies during the Board's reporting period. However, these vacancies have now been filled with permanent members of staff joining the mental health team. In addition, regional mental health support is provided by the current health provider. The prison will continue to work alongside the mental health team to offer the best support it can within the resources available.

I recognise the Board's concerns about retention of staff and vetting during the recruitment process. It is acknowledged that there are a number of prison officer vacancies at HMP Stocken with the resignation rate higher than the national average across the estate. Despite this the staffing group at the prison work

hard to ensure the daily regime runs with few curtailments. To provide the prison support, national detached duty has been requested along with the ability to offer excess fares for level transfers, as well as Public Interest Transfers. To try to increase recruitment locally the prison has attended several job fairs, recently held its own recruitment drive at the prison and has contacted several local newspapers and radio stations to promote the prison officer role which has involved stories from current members of staff. The main drivers of attrition at HMP Stocken from exit interviews are career progression; pay and reward; health and wellbeing; and ways of working. To work to address these nationally a Career Pathways Framework has been developed to allow staff to see the career options available to them across prisons, the Probation Service and HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) Headquarters. The Framework assists staff to understanding how they can progress, as well as providing information about the learning and development programmes and self-development tools to help them reach their career goals. The latest pay 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. A wellbeing app was launched earlier this year giving staff access to a wealth of information and support resources. Finally, a new rostering tool is being piloted in four prisons to provide improved opportunity to promote flexible working and different shift patterns to improve work life balance.

The unique nature of HMPPS and the settings in which individuals may work, means that security is a fundamental function. Consequently, vetting is undertaken during the pre-appointment stage of an application. HMPPS is not currently aware of any national issues causing vetting delays and at present directly employed personnel vetting is taking 25 working days to clear and non-directly employed workers' vetting is taking 8-10 working days to complete. The prison keeps candidates informed, but understandably on occasions, the wait is too long and they gain other employment. The main reason where vetting delays usually occur is due to the applicant not completing the vetting questionnaire correctly or not providing the correct documentation.

I recognise the Board's continued concern about the capacity within the open estate to allow Category D prisoners to progress. The Offender Management Unit at HMP Stocken continues to work with HMPPS Population Management Unit to facilitate transfers for prisoners to the open estate which has enabled over 231 prisoners moving to open conditions in the previous twelve months. This is despite the availability of Category D spaces being impacted by the requirement to close a number of accommodation blocks in the open estate over the course of 2021 which no longer met statutory fire safety standards. This is being managed across the open estate by replacing some of these places with existing temporary accommodation which was already present at some sites as part of HMPPS Covid-19 contingencies, as well as with new temporary accommodation at other sites. The Board will be aware that the Government is also investing £3.8 billion to deliver 20,000 prison places across England and Wales by the mid-2020s. As part of this project HMPPS will deliver 1320 places in the Category D estate. This comprises of 685 additional places through expansion, and 635 places to replace the decommissioned modular units which no longer met statutory fire safety standards. It is currently anticipated that the places will start to be occupied in 2023 with programme completion in 2025.

I thank the Board for drawing to my attention that access to Offender Behaviour Programmes (OBP) is delaying prisoners being able to be recategorised as Category D. The Board will be aware that OBP delivery was impacted across the prison estate due to the Covid-19 pandemic resulting in a backlog. HMP Stocken has attempted to deliver as many programmes as possible within the resources available, as well as prioritising those with the highest need. However, the prison has lost programme staff resulting in reduced delivery. A plan is in place to return to full delivery by April 2023 which anticipates the time needed for recruitment and training. In the meantime, the Programme Team is also liaising with other prisons which deliver programmes to arrange transfers where appropriate. In addition, a further needs analysis is in progress to ensure that the OBP offer remains in line with the needs of the prison.

Whilst recognising your concerns it was reassuring to receive your comments that the prison provides a safe environment where prisoners are treated fairly and humanely. Despite the challenges of recovering from Covid-19 and the staffing difficulties I was pleased to read about the teamwork and effort of staff to deliver over 900 purposeful activity opportunities for prisoners each day. I was also encouraged by the support being provided to prisoners who repeatedly self-harm via the Sense Take Awareness Reflect See course and the consistent professionalism of staff when dealing with difficult prisoners.

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 Stocken.

Sincerely
D. Hinds

Damian Hinds
Minister for Prisons and Probation

**HMP STOCKEN: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 MAY 2021 – 30 APRIL 2022
HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report**

Offender Assessment System (OASys) Assessments

The Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) model moved the responsibility of the completion of Start of Custody Offender Assessment System (OASys) reports for long term custodial cases into the prison estate. Prisons received refreshed staffing profiles for Prison Offender Managers (POM) to reflect the change in responsibility and completion of the task. Prisons with training and resettlement functions such as HMP Stocken are resourced to undertake OASys activity, therefore the establishment receives prisoners without an OASys report when they are allocated directly from reception prisons post-sentencing and ideally this should happen within ten working days. There are also instances where prisoners transfer from one Training/Resettlement prison to another without an OASys report, and this is largely due to resourcing pressures. This has created a national backlog of Start of Custody OASys assessments. The OASys Task Force is working with HMP Stocken to reduce the current backlog and establish processes to ensure new cases do not enter backlog. The prison is undertaking a review of capability which includes how case administration resources can be used more effectively to support completion and gain a more proportionate balance between quality and quantity of assessments to optimise delivery.

Prisoners' Property

Since the Board's reporting period, the new Prisoners' Property Policy Framework was implemented on 5 September. The Framework is the result of extensive consultation, including with the IMB. It has been designed with procedural justice at its core and aims to ensure consistency and fairness and enhance prisoners' satisfaction with processes and outcomes. Given the nature of property, and the movement of prisoners between establishments, the Framework looks to provide greater direction and standardisation on a national basis. It strengthens processes in relation to the main problem areas identified by IMBs and staff including the handling of valuable property, managing cell clearances, compliance with volumetric control and forwarding on excess property following a prisoner's transfer.

Property is a concern for HMP Stocken with a number of prisoners arriving with excessive property. The prison has a system in place to only accept three bags of property, one small bag and one oversized item for each new reception in line with the new Prisoners' Property Policy Framework. Any excess property has to be forwarded by the sending prison at a later date and HMP Stocken is receiving a large amount of property that follows on where volumetric controls have not been followed. It is recognised that this has caused issues with prisoners submitting complaints locally at HMP Stocken as there can be delays in their excessive property being reunited with them due to the amount being a challenge for the prison to process. HMP Stocken continues to monitor volumetric controls and will continue to liaise with other prisons to ensure volumetric guidelines are followed.