



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP/YOI Sudbury
Sudbury
Ashbourne
DE6 5HW

11 January 2023

Dear Chair,

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

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 May 2022. I was saddened to hear there were two deaths during the reporting year, one of which I note tragically took place whilst being released on temporary licence. 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/YOI Sudbury over the reporting period, especially as you had several vacancies.

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

I am sympathetic to the needs at HMP/YOI Sudbury, and elsewhere across the estate. All prisons have been assessed for their requirements in respect of safety, security and for the delivery of offender management in line with the commitments outlined in the White Paper. As the Board is aware, maintaining staffing levels during Covid-19 presented challenges for the prison, however, I am pleased to note these have largely been resolved. HMP/YOI Sudbury currently has a full complement of prison officers and is projected to have a slight surplus over the next nine months. My officials in the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) Resourcing will continue to support HMP/YOI Sudbury in maintaining staffing levels in line with these assessments. In addition, across the Probation Service the focus is on addressing recruitment and retention challenges particular within Probation Delivery Units and prisons with the highest average Probation Officer vacancy rates. There has been and remains a commitment to increase recruitment to fill Probation Officer roles with 1007 joining the Professional Qualification in Probation (PQiP) in the financial year 2020/21 and 1518 within the financial year 2021/2022, meeting the recruitment targets for both years. During this financial year further recruitment is taking place towards a target of 1500 PQiPs and targeted recruitment campaigns are also helping bolster the number of applications for Probation Service Officers and case administrators roles.

I note your concerns about the quality of accommodation within the prison estate, unfortunately despite the significant increases secured in the last two Spending Reviews (SR20 and SR21), demands for prison maintenance remains greater than the funding available. Work projects are therefore being prioritised carefully to make best use of the funding, focusing on risk to life and risk to capacity, decency and sustainability. For longer-term investment, beyond the current Spending Review time period, HMPPS is developing a Long-term Prison Estate Strategy. Data to underpin the Strategy's proposals will be provided

through a programme of surveys, to assess conditions of the prison fabric, cells, and critical assets at each prison site. That data will inform long-term forward maintenance registers to be held and prioritised against future capital budgets. The Strategy will be complete by the end of 2023.

In terms of investment at HMP/YOI Sudbury, £4.5 million is being invested to improve fire safety, ensuring all accommodation is compliant and with automated fire detection, suppression and ventilation (improving the safety aspect of the living areas). This includes the two new sixty bed accommodation units mentioned in last year's response. The fire safety improvement work project will commence in early 2023 and anticipated to complete before the end of the year. Upgrades to the shower and washroom areas will also be completed during this timeframe. The Governor will be able to provide you with the full scope of the works that will be covered in the expansion programme and keep you updated on progress.

Regarding East and West dormitories, a project to upgrade the electrical distribution boards was completed in September 2022, enabling the use of additional electrical items and small appliances. Microwaves have been fitted in each kitchen along with two additional fridges. A new extraction fan has been installed in dormitory West 7 showers to help remove moisture in the air that can cause a build-up of mould and a full refurbishment can now be undertaken. Throughout 2022 an extensive pest control programme took place to eradicate the issues which included pest proofing and to date such measures seem to have helped. Additional pest control measures will continue, and the Governor will review food waste management.

Turning to some positive comments helpfully captured in your report, it was encouraging to note self-harm rates and assaults remained low throughout the reporting year. I am pleased the new induction process is now fully embedded and prisoners reporting a positive experience. Likewise, the reintroduction of the park run programme and the provision of garden furniture.

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 Sudbury.



Damian Hinds
Minister for Prisons and Probation

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Prisoners' Property

The newly published *Prisoners' Property* Policy Framework came into effect on 5 September 2022. 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.

Locally, the Business Hub in conjunction with Security managers are exploring the sub-types of property related complaints to establish any specific processing related errors or trends. The current process involves staff supervising the room on a planned prisoner transfer, working in pairs to pack all items that are not perishable. Each item is checked against the property card in the Secure Accommodation Unit (SAU), a controlled area. Any extra items not recorded on their property card are bagged and sealed separately and transferred with the prisoner (to be held in their stored property at the receiving establishment for one year or until release, whichever is sooner). Working with Residential managers and wherever it is operationally safe to do so, prisoners will be invited to check and sign for their property in the SAU, prior to transfer.

Functional Skills

Level 1 English and Maths is considered a minimum for prisoners in order to live independently with the confidence to complete tasks in everyday life and work. The prisons within the closed estate that send HMP /YOI Sudbury the highest number of inductions have been identified to share the importance of prisoners taking the opportunity to improve English and Maths skills to level 1. The required criteria for accessing the outwork scheme is also shared with prisoners so they can see for themselves the benefits of investing in their skills development. The prison Employment Lead and the Offender Management Unit have undertaken visits to prisons, accompanied by prisoners to give their account of what life is like in an open prison, to help in preparing people for their next steps.