



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP/YOI Portland
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14 December 2022

De Chair,

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

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 30 April 2022. I was saddened to hear there was a self-inflicted death during the reporting year. I would like to assure the Board my officials take recommendations from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman 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 Portland over the reporting period, especially as you had a few vacancies. I address below the specific points you have raised for my attention:

The Board may be aware that when the National Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Companies unified in June 2021 to become the Probation Service, the responsibility for the delivery of resettlement services moved to the Regional Probation Directors (RPD) with key interventions delivered by Commissioned Rehabilitative Service (CRS) providers, commissioned by RPDs. Under the new resettlement approach, all resettlement prisons including HMP/YOI Portland have an embedded resettlement provision.

While the Pre-Release teams and CRS providers work closely with the staff in the offender management unit to ensure services are aligned and there is no duplication, they sit outside of the Offender Management in Custody model and are managed by, or otherwise linked to, a Probation Delivery Unit. These embedded Pre-Release teams identify and address immediate resettlement needs and provide pre-release support for all people in prison including the unconvicted and those out of area. The minimum screening for resettlement needs is through completion of the Basic Custody Screening Tool 2, signposting to specialist services within the prison, such as Prison Banking Administrators, and provide pre-release services not currently available via CRS suppliers. The Pre-Release teams liaise with the Community Offender Manager (COM) or Short Sentence Function and support pre-release planning activity throughout the sentence, including progressing referrals made to CRS suppliers and a point of contact.

As the Board will appreciate, the transition period following the unification of Probation has affected the delivery of resettlement services in some prisons. RPDs are working to stabilise the Pre-Release teams and CRS provision in their regions to improve service delivery to all people in prison. The South West Regional CRS Contract Management Team (CMT) are closely monitoring the CRS suppliers performance

and any identified service delivery concerns, or issues raised with the CMT locally, is managed through formal Governance procedures.

Turning to the Board's comments about remuneration and staff retention, the Government is committed to improving the skills and professionalism of HM Prison and Probation (HMPPS) staff at all levels and has taken steps to improve the prison officer role and training by expanding their offender management responsibilities and release preparation. In terms of the recruitment activity for Operational Support Grade (OSG) staff, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) Resourcing are involved in ongoing recruitment campaigns applying localised recruitment marketing activity, to supplement the candidate pipeline. Adaptions to the recruitment process have been made that will lead to a higher number of applicants reaching interview stage and improvements to the overall campaign success rate. Candidates who had previously applied to the OSG role have been encouraged to re-engage in the recruitment process.

The recent 2022/23 staff pay award reflects a significant investment to uplift and reform the prison pay structure; an increase in base pay of at least 4% for all staff between bands 2 to 11, alongside further targeted pay rises for HMPPS lowest paid staff of up to £3,000. The increase will support local marketing and attraction. HMPPS HR and MoJ Resourcing are exploring further flexible working offers to recruit a more diverse workforce and make the role more attractive.

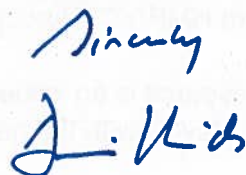
HMP/YOI Portland, along with other prisons has seen staff numbers decline considerably. The location of the prison presents challenges as the surrounding area has a competitive labour market with many other job opportunities. Over the past year the Governor has continued to focus on recruitment and staff retention and is close to achieving the staff in post figure. The Apprentice Coach provides valuable support to new prison officers who join HMP/YOI Portland. Regarding the healthcare vacancies, the new healthcare provider Oxleas has temporarily redeployed five members of their staff to HMP/YOI Portland to support the transition period and ensure safe staffing levels (up to five months cover will be provided until the vacant posts have been filled). NHS England will monitor the vacancy rates through monthly contractual performance monitoring.

I recognise that people in prison generally have poorer health and more complex needs than the general population, and this includes a higher prevalence of mental health needs. The Government takes this and prisoners well-being very seriously and safety remained a priority throughout the pandemic. It is recognised that anxieties regarding Covid-19 and the restrictions required for infection control may have exacerbated mental health needs and increased the risk of self-harm amongst some prisoners. HMPPS produced a range of products to support Governors in devising and implementing local safety and welfare plans designed to mitigate the safety risks and tailored guidance for supporting specific groups whose wellbeing may have been more affected by Covid-19 measures.

The Board may be aware, due to some ward closures in secure hospitals as result of patients testing positive for Covid-19, many patients incurred further delays to admission and as you will appreciate the pathway to a secure hospital is complex. A draft Mental Health Bill was published on 27 June 2022 containing several critical reforms to improve support for individuals with acute mental health needs in the criminal justice system. This includes the introduction of a new statutory time limit of 28 days for transfer from prisons and other places of detention to hospital. This time limit, together with operational improvements, should help reduce unnecessary delays and ensure people in the criminal justice system receive swift access to treatment. The National Partnership Agreement for Health and Social Care (2022-2025) is due to be published shortly. This sets out how HMPPS will work together to deliver their overall objectives, in support of key health and justice strategies, policies and plans to improve the quality of services for people in prison and those subject to statutory supervision by the probation service in the community. NHS England South West Quality Lead will continue to hold weekly meetings to monitor waiting times, providing support and escalation where necessary to facilitate timely transfers.

Turning to some positive comments helpfully captured in your report, it was encouraging to note HMP/YOI Portland responded very well to the Covid-19 pandemic. I was pleased to read that the prisoners felt safe and well cared for by the staff and particularly note the good work in managing a very complex individual in care and separation unit.

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 Portland.

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

Damian Hinds
Minister for Prisons and Probation

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

External Suppliers

Prisoner Escorting and Custody Services have not been made aware of any significant issues concerning late prisoner arrivals into reception and have not received any formal or informal complaints concerning hand over of information and/or property from HMP/YOI Portland.

Regarding late arrivals nationally, supplier resource is an issue across the contract affecting timely delivery and is being dealt with at the highest levels with the necessary contractual levers.

The supplier is responsible for transferring prisoners with the records and property provided by the sending establishment and cannot be held responsible if this information/property is lacking. Therefore, the receiving establishment would need to liaise with the sending establishment for information/property that has not been sent with the prisoner.

Beaufort Wing

An Estates Investment Proposal (EIP) for improved ventilation across HMP/YOI Portland living accommodation has recently been submitted. Approved proposals such as this form a national pipeline for capital investment spend which are considered in January and August every year. The consideration is made by a Board with representation from HMPPS Intelligent Client Function and MoJ Property Directorate and work is allocated into a financial year forecast based on priorities including fire safety improvements and life safety critical equipment.

MoJ Property Services is reviewing the EIP submission and will look to elevate the ventilation proposal up the order of priority.