



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Bristol
19 Cambridge Road
Bristol
BS7 8PS

8 February 2023

Dear Chair,

**HMP BRISTOL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 AUGUST 2021 – 31 JULY 2022**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 July 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 Bristol over the reporting period, particularly as you continued to operate with several vacancies.

I was saddened to hear there were two deaths in custody during the reporting year. 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 address below the specific points you have raised for my attention.

The effects of the pandemic and the consequent increase in the backlog in the Courts has resulted in increases in the prison remand population. HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) are taking actions to address this and includes improving efficiency, increasing capacity, and managing demand. HMCTS has removed the limit on sitting days in the Crown Court for the second year in a row to secure enough capacity to sit at the required levels in this financial year and beyond. Crown Court capacity has been increased with around 500 courtrooms now available for hearings and trials, which is higher than pre-pandemic levels. Judicial recruitment is being expanded, and in April 2022 we passed the Judicial Review and Courts Act to give the Crown Court more flexibility to return cases to the magistrates thereby reducing demand in the Crown Court.

Following the unification of Probation services in June 2021, Commissioned Rehabilitative Service (CRS) providers are mandated to have a presence in the resettlement prisons in their region. We are currently in the process of extending these contracts to provide services to all people in prison, including the those on remand, who have accommodation needs and expect to have the extended service in place in HMP Bristol by April 2023. Under the new resettlement approach all resettlement prisons including locals, will have an embedded resettlement provision. The embedded pre-release teams will provide immediate resettlement needs and pre-release support for unconvicted people in prison

The Victorian infrastructure of the prison presents numerous challenges and is exacerbated when the water in the showers has been left to run. This drains the system and reduces temperatures for both heating and hot water. Enhanced management of shower times and monitoring of the facilities will improve the situation. To future proof the boiler and hot water supply and introduce both carbon and cost savings, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) Property Team are trying to secure funding for C wing for potential

delivery during the 2023/24 financial year. A and G wings may also be considered within this funding stream or through a larger Estates Investment Proposal.

To assist prisoners with disabilities, the new healthcare provider at HMP Bristol has agreed to install appropriate aides to support prisoners with disabilities access services. Interim arrangements are in place for prisoners to attend HMP Leyhill for urgent dental treatment. To improve accessibility to the workshops, consideration is being given to convert the toilet facilities in workshop four and for any further improvements to the facilities to consider the needs of prisoners with physical disabilities and scoped into future funding streams. Across HM Prison and Probation Service, the Older Offenders Strategy referred to in my predecessor's response last year is yet to be published and is subject to consideration under the reprioritisation of projects currently being undertaken within the agency.

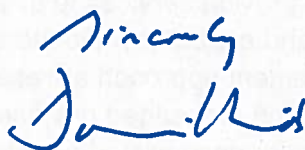
Pressures caused by inflation within prisons are being covered by the wider budget in 2022-23 by securing opportunities as they arise. The Ministry of Justice is currently undergoing the process of allocating budgets for 2023-24 and we are working on a more permanent solution to address the funding pressures caused by inflation. As the Board may be aware, energy budgets are managed at Prison Group Director level.

Healthcare provision and mental health services is now provided by a new contractor, Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust, which commenced on 1 October 2022. Oxleas is an experienced prison healthcare provider and is committed to ensuring equitable access to health services for all service users. NHS England South West Health and Justice Team meet Oxleas on a weekly basis to discuss mental health transfers from HMP Bristol and to gain assurance around the transfer times and whether any support from the NHS Health and Justice Team is required. The initial date of a referral for a mental health transfer starts the 'clock'. If the referral is rejected and a patient is referred to another unit, the clock should not reset at this stage. The template NHS England now uses for recording mental health transfers calculates the days waiting from the initial referral and this template is updated every week before the meeting between Oxleas and NHS England.

It was encouraging to receive your comments about the refurbished visits hall, the promotion of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme to reduce violence within the younger prisoners age group, and the introduction of the innovative Harmony project.

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. HM Prison and Probation Service (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 Bristol.



Damian Hinds
Minister for Prisons and Probation

HMP BRISTOL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 AUGUST 2021 – 31 JULY 2022

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Operational Capacity

The Governor and Prison Group Director are working closely to enable the prison to continue with the in-house refurbishment programme and the work will continue on a smaller scale. The Governor remains committed to improving and maintaining decent accommodation via monthly Senior Management decency checks, and the gains made will not be lost as the operational capacity increases.

Staffing Budget

Workforce planning has been devolved to Governors who now have greater responsibility for determining the number of officers required to deliver services within their allocated budget. Overall resourcing levels are monitored through a number of processes which provide the appropriate level of information for staffing decisions to be made.

At a local level, the workforce planning processes which are in place for prison groups have the level of detail needed to manage current staffing levels and make accurate predictions around future needs. HMP Bristol remains a challenging prison from the perspective of the recruitment and retention of staff in a buoyant labour market. In respect of prison officers, recruitment is delivering a regular flow of new staff into the prison. There are also ongoing efforts to support the retention of new officers including a significant pay increase following the recommendations of the Prison Service Pay Review Body.

Key Worker Provision

In Public Sector Prisons, Prison Group Directors have been directed to increase the quality and quantity of key work delivery. The central Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) team are monitoring prison level delivery and providing direct support to prison groups, identifying where key work delivery is being under resourced and providing advice and guidance on best practice. It is recognised that local resourcing pressures can lead to the de-prioritisation of key work activity and that there are some systemic issues that will need to be resolved to fully address this issue.

A project to review the allocation of prison level resources has been commissioned. This project will support effective profiling, resourcing, and management oversight of key work. Alongside this project, work is underway to improve resource management through the piloting of a new staff rostering tool and through a new workforce transformation programme to improve staff skills and capability.

Prisoners' Property

The new Prisoners' Property Policy Framework was published on 1 August 2022 and implemented soon afterwards. 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 seeks 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. The introduction of digitally recorded Person Escort Records, including property tags, will also assist with any investigations for property that is lost in transit.