



Ministry
of Justice

Damian Hinds
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Channings Wood
Denbury, Newton Abbott
Devon
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15 February 2022

Dear Chair,

**HMP CHANNINGS WOOD: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 SEPTEMBER 2021 – 31 AUGUST 2022**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 August 2022. I was saddened to hear that during the reporting period there were two deaths in custody and two further deaths shortly after their release from prison. 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 Channings Wood over the reporting period, especially as several experienced members have left and you still have several vacancies.

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

I understand the Board's concerns for people in prison suffering with mental ill health particularly those who require transfer to a secure hospital. The Ministry of Justice is committed to improving mental health outcomes for people in contact with the criminal justice system to ensure that those with acute needs receive timely support in the most appropriate setting. The Government published the draft Mental Health Bill in June 2022 which was recently subject to pre-legislative scrutiny. The Bill contains measures to speed up access to specialist inpatient care and treatment as well as introducing a statutory 28-day time limit for transfers from prison to hospital. This time limit mirrors that introduced in NHS England's good practice guidance, published in June 2021 and together with operational improvements will reduce unnecessary delays.

NHS England South West has also reviewed the service specification for the South West prisons as part of a recommissioning process, adding enhancements to the mental health provision for prisoners such as group work and a new staff profile to meet demands. Following a tender process, the contract for Devon, which includes HMP Channings Wood, was awarded to Oxleas NHS Trust who took over the contract on 1 December 2022 and have since been implementing the four-tier approach for mental health. In addition, further work has taken place across the South West to support timely transfers from prisons to secure placements. Transfers are discussed on a weekly basis between healthcare partners which have led to improvements with transfers now regularly taking place within the target 28-day time frame. Locally, those waiting to be transferred to specialist secure accommodation are supported by a multidisciplinary team of staff at HMP Channings Wood to reflect their individual needs to ensure they are held in safe and decent

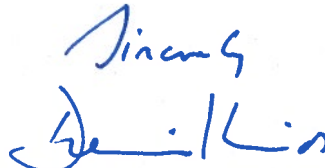
manner until they can be moved. Where it is determined that a prisoner with less severe condition can remain in custody they are also supported by dedicated team of mental health professionals, including the Outside the Box outreach programme which supports prisoners with a personality disorder or neurodiverse or learning needs and was identified as notable positive practice when HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) visited the prison in July 2022.

Turning to the positives in your report, it was pleasing to receive your comments that the prison provides a safe environment where violence and self-harm have reduced and are showing no signs of returning to the levels seen in the past. I was reassured to note that there is excellent scrutiny of use of force which is also lower than at comparator prisons and that prisoners consider it much harder to get hold of drugs now than a few years ago. It was encouraging to read that staff have good relationship with prisoners and equality and diversity staffing is more consistent with prisoner representatives and forums reinstated during the year.

I was also pleased to read that in-cell telephony has been installed improving the opportunity for prisoners to maintain family ties and that the next project to refurbish the showers started in September 2022 as planned and is on target. I also welcome that HMIP found the prison had made improvements in safety, respect and rehabilitation and release planning when visiting during this report period and I look forward to the Board being able to report on further progress in the coming year.

I note you have raised a local issue of concern in your report about Keywork 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 Channings Wood.



Damian Hinds
Minister for Prisons and Probation

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Transfers

Due to current capacity and population pressures following the pandemic and backlog of court activity, HMPPS is not able to avoid undertaking transfers on a Friday. The movement of prisoners is important to create the necessary space to enable reception prisons to fulfil their role of serving the courts and the offender flows ensure that male prisoners move through the prison estate to access the necessary services to support their rehabilitation.

HMPPS expectation is that the escort provider routes vans accordingly to collect prisoners from sending prisons in good time to arrive at HMP Channings Wood within the reception opening hours. It is acknowledged that where prisoners have arrived at HMP Channings Wood after the 16:00 reception time these have been due to later departures of vans from sending prisons due to the escort providers resource. To robustly manage this issue HMPPS Prisoner Escort and Custody Services has commercial levers in place. However, it is encouraging that the Board recognise that the number of late arrivals over the reporting year have fallen by nearly 50% that prisoners are treated compassionately by reception staff and a member of the healthcare team is always present and the induction programme over the first few days is well organised.

It is recognised that historically, prisoner's PIN telephone accounts have been mapped over by administration staff working in the receiving prison's business hub, which has not taken place until the prisoner has arrived at HMP Channings Wood. The prison is in the process of introducing a trial which will undertake this mapping as soon as the escorting vehicle leaves the sending prison which will ensure PIN telephone access is available should there be any late arrivals.