



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP/YOI Eastwood Park  
Eastwood Park  
Falfield  
Wotton-Under-Edge  
GL12 8DB

29 March 2023

Dear Chair,

**HMP/YOI EASTWOOD PARK: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 01 NOVEMBER 2021 – 31 OCTOBER 2022**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 October 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/YOI Eastwood Park over the reporting period, especially as you continued to operate with several vacancies. I met with the Governor and staff when I visited on 23 March, and I was pleased to discuss some of the themes in more detail.

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 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 mental health needs receive timely support and in the most appropriate setting. In June 2022, the Government published the draft Mental Health Bill which was recently subject to pre-legislative scrutiny. The Bill contains measures to speed up access to specialist inpatient care and treatment. This includes the introduction of a statutory 28-day time limit for transfers from prison to hospital. This time limit, together with operational improvements, aims to reduce unnecessary delays and deliver swifter access to treatment.

NHS England has commissioned and provided an on-line training tool for both healthcare staff and prison officers to support those that have an Acquired Brain Injury (ABI). As part of a national screening programme, ABI disclosure is recorded on to the medical system together with any declaration of having been a victim of domestic abuse. This allows NHS England to work with ABI patients on providing individual care packages. As part of NHS England's Women's Review, they have engaged with a large number of stakeholders on what they would like from the health service. NHS England has also provided gender specific clinical templates to support clinical decision making and, once the final report is published, NHS England will seek to implement all recommendations.

With regard to the establishment of a Residential Women's Centre in South Wales, a site in Swansea was identified and secured, and a planning application for development submitted to the local planning authority in July 2022. Unfortunately, despite the Planning Officer's recommendation to approve the

application, the local planning committee rejected the submission. HM Prison and Probation (HMPPS) is currently pursuing an appeal.

It was encouraging to receive your comments that despite a major restructuring of the senior management team the transition was seamless and staff continued to undertake their duties in a professional and humane manner. I was also pleased to note the achievements of the gardening team, the nominees and winners of the Koestler awards, the eventual success of the Fitness for Life initiative, and the excellent attainment of a degree with first class honours by one prisoner.

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 Eastwood Park.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Damian Hinds', is centered on the page.

**Damian Hinds**  
**Minister for Prisons and Probation**

## **HMP/YOI EASTWOOD PARK: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 NOVEMBER 2021 – 31 OCTOBER 2022**

### **HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report**

#### **Staffing**

Staff shortages are largely the result of high levels of staff departures and recruitment has been unable to keep up with this amount of attrition. Recruitment is ongoing in a challenging and competitive labour market in the Bristol and South Gloucestershire area. Job advertisements have been tailored to promote vacancies in the women's estate and a separate webpage has been created highlighting the challenges and opportunities of working with women in custody together with an additional assessment that assesses an applicant's motivations to work in this area. In addition to increased marketing, Ministry of Justice Resourcing is recruiting nationally for women's prisons through a First Time Officer deployment scheme, however, it is unlikely that these efforts will bridge the shortfall in staff numbers for some time.

All HMPPS prisons, including HMP/YOI Eastwood Park, have employed a New Colleague Mentor (NCM) to coach, nurture, and be the Single Point of Contact for all new recruits within their first two years of employment. This is a new position and to date HMP/YOI Eastwood Park's NCM is proving to be an asset and success. The prison has also appointed a Learning and Capability Manager to ensure new recruits are supported in the vulnerable first year of their career. Retention work is also high on the agenda for HMP/YOI Eastwood Park with specific work being undertaken at present with the Operational Support Grade group. The regional Prison Group Director's Culture and Wellbeing lead is working with the prison to ensure the Healthy Culture Strategy addresses directly the need for staff to experience a culture of care in order to provide the same for the women in our care.

#### **Team-Based Rostering**

It is acknowledged there was considerable initial effects following the cessation of team-based rostering, also known as TBSR. The system could be seen to favour more vocal staff whilst penalising quieter members. This was not deemed the fairest of systems. Rostering a working pattern that was better suited to operational requirements together with a Trades Union approved profile is a much fairer way to allocate shift patterns. Operational staff receive 20% Unsocial Hours Allowance and are expected to cover shifts outside of the core working day. The impact of an unsociable working patterns was quickly recognised and addressed by the senior management team by developing and implementing an alternative which has been well received by the staff at the establishment.

Following the initial loss of prison officers there was a settling effect amongst the group with staff attrition remaining steady at four per month. The establishment is working to reduce this level further. The reprofiling exercise is underway and the prison will learn from this experience and ensure staff associations are involved at all stages of development and a number of attendance patterns are available for staff to consider and select from.

#### **ONE Women's Centre Funding**

The ONE Women's Centre is a pilot by The Nelson Trust which had received funding by the Local Leadership and Integration Fund (LLIF), a strand of the Prison Leavers Project. The LLIF is a £7.1 million grant fund for local leaders across the public and third sector to partner together and improve the join-up of services through the development and delivery of pilots in their local area. There are eleven partnerships across two funding rounds which are delivering pilots across England and Wales. Funding for the centre is being discussed with providers with the hope that it can be secured to ensure the service continues. The short funding window for this project may, however, result in a hiatus between the end of

the short-term funding before long-term solutions are implemented. There is commitment at Executive Director level to support the work of the Governor in trying to find a solution to this.

### **Activities Centre**

The new activities centre/offender management unit will be handed over to the establishment for occupation in April 2023. There were a number of delays in the programme and remedial options available within the contract were exercised by HMPPS.

### **Prisoner Transport**

Approximately two to three women are escorted every day to court from HMP/YOI Eastwood Park. The size of the female estate together with the geographical dispersion means that prisoners from HMP/YOI Eastwood Park travel across the country and as far as Truro, which is over a three hours drive. It is recognised that this results in some women spending many hours on escort vehicles getting to and from the establishment. The transport contractor, Prisoner Escorting and Custody Services (PECS), ensures the prisoners are offered comfort breaks every two hours. If a rest room break is required before the scheduled time then they are offered 'TravelJohns' where needed.

It is also acknowledged that there have been all-male crews transporting women. This is due to staffing issues in the Devon and Cornwall areas which has now reduced and is being closely monitored by PECS. A large recruitment drive has been undertaken by the contractor and is ongoing.

### **Transgender Prisoners**

HMPPS recognises the forthcoming changes to transgender prisoner allocation policy could be a source of anxiety among transgender prisoners, particularly in the women's estate, and governors continue to ensure that those experiencing concerns are monitored and supported.

Under the changes, there will be a presumption against transgender women who have been either convicted of a sexual offence and/or retain birth genitalia from being held in the general women's estate. However, case-by-case exemptions from these new rules will be considered, with the aim of ensuring that transgender women can continue to be allocated to the women's estate, where there are compelling safety reasons to do so and where this is signed off by a Minister. All decisions will continue to be taken based on comprehensive risk assessments by a Complex Case Board (CCB).

CCBs will continue to take place at the earliest opportunity to allow appropriate information to be made available and for appropriate attendance. This avoids the need for boards to be adjourned and enables informed discussion and robust decision-making to take place, which balances the needs and safety of all of those in our care. Any decisions to locate a transgender prisoner in a Care and Separation Unit prior to a CCB are made locally and should be supported by an individual risk assessment.