



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP/YOI Deerbolt
Bowes Road
Bernard Castle
County, Durham
DL12 9BG

17 April 2023

Dear Chair,

**HMP/YOI DEERBOLT: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 OCTOBER 2021 – 30 SEPTEMBER 2022**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 30 September 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 Deerbolt, especially given the constraints experienced by the Board early in the reporting period. I am pleased to hear that following a successful recruitment drive you were able to effectively monitor the key areas of the establishment. I am advised that the recruitment campaign is ongoing to fill the remaining vacancies.

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

I can advise that HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) has no plans to close HMP/YOI Deerbolt. For some time, HMPPS has seen the demand for places at HMP/YOI Deerbolt decrease, even with the extended age range up to 29 years. Considering the significant growth in prison population, and capacity pressures, HMPPS is now having to maximise the use of every place across the estate. Consequently, it was agreed that the age cap could be lifted following negotiations with the operational line, which came in to effect on 6 March 2023, allowing men of all ages to be accommodated at HMP/YOI Deerbolt. This does, however, preclude individuals with certain complex needs until such time when HMP/YOI Deerbolt has the appropriate services in place to accommodate them. I am grateful to the Governor and staff for accommodating the profile change during a challenging time.

Regarding the education, training and activities on offer at HMP/YOI Deerbolt, these are suitable for all prisoners regardless of age. As you are aware, prisoners can achieve vocational qualifications in areas such as painting and decorating, joinery, multi skills and barbering, all of which are suitable for all ages. The classroom-based provision such as Maths, English and IT are tailored to anyone with an identified need, with many of the prisoners being at the higher end of the age range. The Governor is constantly exploring ways to expand the education and training offer at the prison and has carried out a needs analysis. Discussions are taking place with a business company about creating a Tyre Academy, with links to employment on release, and also with a training company to source qualifications in digital skills and hospitality. These will suit the needs of all ages.

Turning to your positive comments helpfully captured in your report, it is encouraging the Board has recognised the hard work of the prison's management team and praised the staff, particularly the segregation unit team who manage complex prisoners with compassion. I was also pleased to note there are good working relationships between the healthcare staff, the wider prison and members of your

Board. Likewise, the many good examples of Diversity and Inclusion events held during the year, and fewer complaints relating to discrimination or inclusion, are pleasing to note.

I note you have raised a local issue of concern in your report which the Governor will keep you informed. 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 IMBs throughout the estate and we are very grateful for your continued hard work on behalf of HMP/YOI Deerbolt.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Damian Hinds', written in a cursive style.

Damian Hinds
Minister for Prisons and Probation

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Staffing Levels

The retention issues at HMP/YOI Deerbolt are recognised and the prison is in scope of the retention oversight process, which provides targeted support to the most challenged prisons. HMP/YOI Deerbolt has recently had a deep dive carried out by an occupational psychologist to help determine the underlying issues/factors. This will then be underpinned by specific local and national actions to address the issues. In addition, this will be supported by the findings from an enhanced exit interview process to help understand why employees are leaving. Nationally, HMPPS has invested in several new initiatives to improve the experience of new joiners and increase employee retention.

To understand the factors that may be influencing voluntary resignations at HMP/YOI Deerbolt, just over forty operational and non-operational staff were interviewed individually / in small focus groups. A local strategy will be developed to implement appropriate interventions to address the drivers of attrition identified during the study. Whilst the purpose of this research was to find out why officers are choosing to leave HMP/YOI Deerbolt, it was also important to understand what has been working well. Positive aspects identified by staff included, friendships and professional relationships with colleagues, sense of teamwork, rehabilitating prisoners and benefits such as pension.

Over recent months there has been a steady influx of new joiners starting their career at HMP/YOI Deerbolt. A recruitment drive should put HMP/YOI Deerbolt in a better staffing position this year.

Education Provision

In response to the Board's belief that the education contract is focused on the quantity of allocation rather than the quality of provision, the allocation of learners to education courses is a key element in ensuring the right learners attend the right courses to meet their individual needs. Allocation is done by HMPPS based on a process of identifying learner need, through the Prison Activity Hub.

There is, rightly so, a focus on improving both attendance and allocation but this is to enhance quality not to detract from it. The current education contract is measured through several mechanisms. First the overall effectiveness of contract management is measured through a 'Gold Scorecard' process which identifies that the contract is running effectively. The contract also measures the success in terms of delivery via service levels; these measure the quality of delivery in terms of the effectiveness of English, Maths and vocational qualification delivery through success rates, which is the same measures used in the community. In addition, the contract measures the quality of teaching and learning against OFSTED criteria with the requirement that teaching staff are operating at least Good or Outstanding level. The provider is currently meeting all service levels (no improvement notices required).

At a local level, effectiveness is measured in various ways and involves the Governing Governor, Head of Reducing Reoffending and Learning and Skills Manager (LSM). The LSM holds weekly Teacher Quality Management Plan meetings which are the first level of measuring delivery and performance. The Head of Reducing Reoffending attends whenever possible. Education Performance Meetings (chaired by Head of Reducing Reoffending) are held monthly with the provider and include the Governor who prior to the meeting assesses and signs off the monthly performance data. These governance arrangements are standard arrangements throughout all prisons. In terms of the ever-changing cohort, the Governor will

continue to carry out needs analysis prior to commissioning of education contracts to ensure that provision meets need.

Reducing Reoffending

The Head of Reducing Reoffending is focused on provision that HMP/YOI Deerbolt can offer to prisoners in an effort to reduce reoffending and works closely with the Offender Management Unit to identify risk and with partner agencies to mitigate those risks. This is done by focusing on drug and alcohol dependency, securing accommodation and improving employment on release. Furthermore, ensuring there is a collaborative approach at the Reducing Reoffending meeting to focus on each pathway.

It is recognised that employment six weeks from release is an area that needs strengthening to help reduce reoffending and the prison team is working with partner agencies, employers and training providers to improve the offer to prisoners approaching release. The Governor and his team have found it challenging to improve this measure without a commissioned resettlement function. Staff are seeking support from other prisons in the region and some specific additional work from Prison Offender Managers, to help improve outcomes in this area. Current HMPPS Offender Flows should work to move prisoners to a resettlement prison nearer home within a three to nine month window before release.

Access to Performance Data

The performance of individual prisons against current key performance indicators is assessed by the Prison Performance Tool and Dashboard, available via the HMPPS Performance Hub. IMB members who require access to the Performance Hub should contact the Governor for further details.