



Ministry  
of Justice

**Damian Hinds**  
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
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30 May 2023

*Dear Chair,*  
**HMP & YOI AYLESBURY: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 APRIL  
2021 – 31 MARCH 2022**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 March 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 Aylesbury over the reporting period, especially as you had several vacancies. I am pleased to hear your newly recruited member has been a positive addition.

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

In terms of having a robust recruitment strategy, during the past two years HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) has recruited record numbers of new prison officers, despite the many difficulties presented post Covid-19. The principal concern, however, is not so much recruitment, but retention. While this has improved in all areas of HMPPS, it remains at too high a level. Pay is one contributing factor of staff retention, but many of the drivers of attrition in staff numbers relate to the perception of staff locally and the support they are given in their role. Strategically, HR resources have been deployed to support local management in all prisons to support retention and this is showing some positive outcomes. I hope to assure the Board that HMPPS has recently introduced some national recruitment measures such as the First Deployment Scheme initiative of which HMP & YOI Aylesbury is a direct beneficiary. Further detail is outlined in the attached annex.

In the Prisons Strategy White Paper, we committed to delivering a prisoner education service which raises the level of the numeracy, literacy and skills, with the aim of securing jobs/apprenticeships after prisoners leave prison. A pilot to introduce new Heads of Education Skills and Work has been completed, providing expert guidance to Governors in designing education and training provision for their populations. Recruitment is on track to have this resource at HMP & YOI Aylesbury and rolled out to the whole prison estate by the end of 2023. More broadly, the Prisoner Education Service team and Justice Digital are working together to develop digital services to support the managed rehabilitation of people in prison and set them up for success when the time comes for them to resettlement, as part of the Reducing Reoffending Programme. HMPPS is investing in tackling homelessness and unemployment on release, including investment in prison education as mentioned. Some key examples of this include the current recruitment of Neurodiversity Support Managers across all prisons in England and Wales to support and drive improved education delivery in establishments. Curriculum guidance has also been issued to Governors, ensuring clear understanding of expectations for different prison functions and population cohorts and reading strategies. A new reading assessment tool is in place in all prisons, recognised by HM Inspectorate of Prisons as good progress.

I share your Board's concerns about the number of seriously mentally ill people being held in prison. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) is committed to improving mental health outcomes for people in contact with the criminal justice system. The Board may be aware that in June 2022, the Government published the draft Mental Health Bill to reform the Mental Health Act 1983, it includes vital reforms to support people in the criminal justice system. It will speed up access to specialist inpatient care and treatment by introducing a 28-day statutory time limit for the transfer of patients from prison to hospital. These reforms will also prevent courts from detaining people with severe mental ill health temporarily in prison as a place of safety, whilst a hospital bed becomes available, and a proposed amendment to the Bail Act aims to prevent defendants being remanded to prison solely on mental health grounds. Furthermore, together with operational improvements, these reforms will ensure that people with severe mental health needs are able to access appropriate and timely support in the most appropriate setting. The Joint Committee appointed to consider the Government's draft Bill, published their pre-legislative scrutiny report on 19 January 2023; the Committee's recommendations are being reviewed and we will respond in due course.

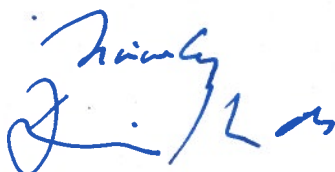
Meanwhile, new performance metrics have been developed by NHS England to monitor patients being referred, assessed, and transferred under the Mental Health Act. This will provide oversight to ensure that for every individual referred, the best decisions are made to enable access to the most appropriate service, in the correct geographical location, at the right time. Work is also underway to develop a whole-pathway approach to the care of offenders. This includes diverting offenders from the criminal justice system where appropriate, and reconnecting those leaving custody with health services in the community. National and regional teams in NHS England are working closely with the Adult Secure NHS-led Provider Collaboratives as the vehicle for the delivery of improvement in the effectiveness and quality of adult medium and low secure inpatient services. In line with the Long-Term Plan ambition, the Provider Collaborative Programme gives local ownership to providers for the whole pathway, including the interface with the criminal justice system, and the resource for their own populations, enabling providers to make commissioning decisions to improve and integrate services.

A strategic commissioning plan is being developed for high secure beds that will describe the clinical model, pathways and capacity required for implementation. The overall strategic direction continues to be the maintenance of existing adult secure bed capacity, not an increase, albeit with improved geographical distribution and improving efficiency across the pathway. Thank you for writing to me on such important matters. I hope this information is useful.

Despite the issues outlined in your report, it was encouraging to note there was more consultation with prisoners during the reporting year and great efforts made by staff to treat prisoners fairly and humanely, which led to one staff member winning a MoJ Humanity award, a remarkable achievement. It was also pleasing to note prisoners learning achievements are now celebrated in the monthly newsletter.

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 Aylesbury.



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

## **HMP & YOI AYLESBURY: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 APRIL 2021 – 31 MARCH 2022**

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

#### **Housing New Prisoner Categories**

The decision to increase the age limit at HMP & YOI Aylesbury was taken following appropriate governance within HMPPS in the context of significant population increases requiring all establishments to operate at high occupancy levels. Although not directly responsible for implementing the change, HMPPS Population Management Unit and the Offender Flows Team were amongst the teams working closely with HMP & YOI Aylesbury to manage the progressive change in the upper age limit. As we manage ongoing population pressures, it is sometimes necessary to make changes to the prison estate at relatively short notice. However, HMPPS remains open to feedback from all our stakeholders on how these processes can be improved.

The staff at HMP & YOI Aylesbury have worked hard and quickly to recategorise to a Category C training prison and, due to the timescales of the change, we acknowledge the difficulties noted in accommodating both young offenders and managing an increasing Category C population.

The team at HMP & YOI Aylesbury is now able to fully focus their attention on providing a regime and activity offer that is better suited to the needs of a Category C training prison. This includes a planned upcoming Activities Summit involving Senior Leaders, managers, and prisoners. Likewise, the deployment of the national Standards Coaching Team to help upskill staff confidence and competence in managing an older population and meeting their needs and enhancing the types of courses and gymnasium offer (through a revised needs analysis).

#### **Management of Contracts**

New challenging targets have been set for all education providers for the contract extension, which will take us to the new Prison Education Service contract in 2025. Financial penalties have been increased to reflect the new service levels which focus on achievement in functional skills and vocational skills delivery. Contract management resource has been increased to maintain and build on the already robust contract management processes in place. Governance processes are in line with best practice and a stringent governance structure in place.

Tenders for an Employability Innovation Fund have been launched, enabling Governors to work with more employers and training providers to repurpose workshops, and deliver sector specific skills training. Contracts have been awarded to two suppliers to deliver literacy projects in 15 prisons as part of the Literacy Innovation Fund. Changes have been made to enable prisoners to begin apprenticeships whilst in custody.

#### **Recruitment Activity**

Staffing levels are a matter for determination by the Governor and Prison Group Director, taking account of the needs of the establishment and the available budget. Workforce planning processes are in place to ensure prison groups have the level of detail needed to manage current staffing levels appropriately and make accurate predictions around future resourcing needs. The Prisons Strategy White Paper sets out the vision for a modern prison service and a key component is the commitment to invest in the development and support of our workforce and provide a modern employment offer that encourages

candidate attraction and assists retention. A pay settlement was reached last year, which has significantly helped recruitment and retention.

It is recognised that HMP & YOI Aylesbury is situated in a relatively affluent part of the country with a competitive labour market, where people have a large range of choices about the jobs they can do. The area also has several prisons drawing new staff from the same area. The staffing position at HMP & YOI Aylesbury is under close review and an 'always on' approach to recruitment activity is currently being taken with advertising tailored through a variety of channels, local public relations support, internet job boards and search engine advertisements. These methods are to help raise awareness of HMPPS as an employer in the local community and highlight the breadth of roles available.

Further actions are being taken to increase the numbers of new recruits by use of First Deployment, whereby officers are deployed for their first two years to HMP & YOI Aylesbury before returning to their permanent prison. The Governor will be revising the People Plan and People Strategy to focus on recruitment, retention and capability with the aim to lower the current attrition rate within the next 12 months, therefore retaining a greater number of staff to deliver key work. Outcomes from actions taken will be monitored at the monthly Workforce Planning Meeting, chaired by the Head of Business Assurance.

### **Offender Management in Custody**

As staffing and regime delivery at HMP & YOI Aylesbury improves, the delivery of the key worker scheme throughout the establishment will increase. The increased staff-prisoner interaction that keywork and a greater regime offer brings will provide more opportunities to model consistent good behaviour. This, and ensuring staff are supervising and actively engaging with prisoners on wing landings will be driven by the responsible Custodial Managers. Outcomes will be monitored through the Prisoner Council forum, which is chaired by the Governor/ Deputy Governor.