



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Lowdham Grange  
Lowdham  
Nottingham  
NG14 7DA

*Dear Chair,*

27 June 2023

**HMP LOWDHAM GRANGE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1  
FEBRUARY 2022 – 31 JANUARY 2023**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 January 2023. 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 Lowdham Grange over the reporting period, especially as you continued to operate with several vacancies. It is also to your credit that despite the many distractions, including the unprecedented transfer of prison management from one private sector contractor to another, the Board continued to focus on the safety and wellbeing of the prison population and staff alike during the complex transition process.

I also note the Board's comments about the relationship with the previous contractor's Director and the senior management team at the prison. I would like to assure you that the work of the IMB is valued and steps have been taken locally to address the relationship difficulties. A new Director has been appointed by Sodexo who are now operating the prison who is confident relationships are now building well. I address below the specific points you have raised for my attention.

I appreciate the Board's continued concerns about the time taken to conclude coroners' inquests for deaths in custody. The five deaths in custody inquests referenced in the Board's 2022 report have now been completed. There are three ongoing cases relating to deaths which occurred in August 2021, October 2021 and January 2022, for which jury inquests have been listed.

The Board can be assured the coroner has taken a number of steps to address the backlog across the region. The measures include listing jury inquests to run almost consecutively following the lifting of pandemic restrictions and enabling all jury inquests to proceed as hybrid hearings; listing inquests relating to deaths in custody ahead of receiving the Prison and Probation Ombudsman report where the cause of death is clearly established as unnatural; appointing a full-time Area Coroner with expertise in conducting death in custody investigations to oversee the smooth running of cases; providing a dedicated courtroom for these hearings; providing training for local police and prison staff to assist with the investigation of deaths in custody; meeting with local Governors and Heads of Healthcare to share learning from inquests; and providing coronial input to the National Symposium on Deaths in Custody.

Whilst it is important to await the outcome of an inquest to identify risks of future deaths together with a Preventing Future Death (PFD) report to be issued where risk is identified, agencies and stakeholders providing care to the prison population are not prevented from learning from deaths in custody while awaiting the conclusion of the inquest nor are they prevented from taking action. Additionally, clear guidance is available through Prison Service Instruction 64/2011 *Managing prisoner safety in custody*

regarding local and national learning from deaths, which stresses that there is likely to be a delay before the inquest concludes and emphasises the need for prompt local review.

The Justice Select Committee (JSC) published their report into the Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentence on 28 September 2022 following a year-long inquiry. The inquiry conducted by the Committee constituted a thorough assessment of the issues surrounding the IPP sentence and the published report contains considered recommendations for change. The Government has now issued a formal response to the Committee's report, which can be accessed here:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/work/1509/imprisonment-for-public-protection-ipp-sentences/publications/>. The Board will be aware it is the Government's long-held view is that retrospectively changing the sentence which was lawfully passed would give rise to an unacceptable risk to public protection and that the IPP Action Plan, suitably updated, remains the best option by which these offenders can progress towards safe release. As such, the Government has rejected this recommendation and has no plans to conduct a resentencing exercise.

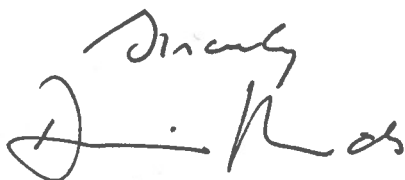
The Government has accepted the Committee's recommendation to review the Action Plan and shared the updated IPP Action Plan with the Justice Select Committee (JSC) on 26 April 2023. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) has already begun work on this, specifically focusing on improved, clear work streams, with deadlines, and a robust overarching governance structure. These efforts have, in recent years, delivered a substantial reduction in the number of IPP prisoners who have never been released. As the number of IPP prisoners who have never been released continues to decrease, the proportion of those who remain in prison who committed more serious offences and whose cases are complex grows. As explained last year, these prisoners are still assessed to pose a high risk of committing further violent or sexual offences and have a complex set of risks and needs. These must be addressed before the Parole Board can consider that their risk to the public is safely manageable in the community under probation supervision. This is not a simple task, and HMPPS will continue to work with these individuals to offer them opportunities to reduce their identified risks. I have no doubt that the refreshed Action Plan, when finalised, will be a strong driver to build on past achievements and continue to provide the best possible opportunities for those serving an IPP sentence to progress towards a safe and sustainable release.

Amendments to the Parole Board rules came into force on 3 April 2023 and new guidance has been issued to all Prison and Probation staff. The guidance confirms that HMPPS report writers are permitted (but not required) to provide the Parole Board, within their reports or at oral hearings, with their professional opinion on whether the prisoner is safe to be managed in the community or moved to open prison conditions, provided that they feel able to give a such an opinion. This means that there are no barriers to HMPPS staff providing the Parole Board with their opinions within their area of competence. It is not mandatory for staff to include a recommendation in their reports but they can provide their professional opinion if they feel able to do so. The Parole Board may also ask a report writer for their opinion in an addendum report or during the oral hearing, if one is convened.

I recognise that this has been a difficult and turbulent reporting period and it was therefore encouraging to receive your comments about the good management of the segregation unit, the excellent work of the Inside Media team particularly with the development of the iHub in-cell technology, and increasing the complement of family liaison officers.

I note you have raised some local issues of concern in your report which the Director 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 Lowdham Grange.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Damian Hinds', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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

## **HMP LOWDHAM GRANGE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 FEBRUARY 2022 – 31 JANUARY 2023**

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

#### **Video-Calling**

HMPPS acknowledges that there has been network related issues with the service. These issues have now been resolved, and no further incidents have been raised since November 2022. Feedback ratings from both prisoners and callers have remained positive since. As part of the move in contract management of the prison, HMP Lowdham Grange is in the process of moving their video calls service on to the Sodexo network including the hardware, and will no longer be running on the Ministry of Justice network.

#### **Probation Service Resourcing**

Regional Probation Directors (RPDs) are responsible for the delivery of resettlement services with key interventions delivered by Commissioned Rehabilitative Services (CRS) providers. Significant investment has been made in the East Midlands Region Pre-Release Team resources and in the management of commissioned services supporting pre-release planning and successful community re-integration. East Midlands Probation Service offer pre-release support to prisoners at HMP Lowdham Grange via an in-reach support provided by community probation practitioners (CPP) and are actively recruiting staff to strengthen their offer.

The CPP support prisoners with pre-release planning activity after the hand-over from Prison Offender Manager (POM) to Community Probation Practitioner, which takes place eight and a half months before their release date. This includes interactions between the prisoner and the CPP to identify any resettlement needs and progress referrals to CRS suppliers based on need. Further pre-release support could include mentoring with up to three meetings pre-release. Additional CRS support will be provided in the community on release, including for other needs such as education training and employment, support with family and significant other relationships, lifestyle and associates, emotional wellbeing, finance benefit and debt. During the pre-release period the CPP can provide a point of contact for CRS suppliers seeking to engage with the individual in the prison.

#### **Rehabilitation Provision**

##### *Offender Behaviour Programmes*

Sodexo now runs several accredited programmes based on local needs analysis. It is accepted that there has been an impact on delivery with the contract change but there are plans in place to increase delivery with staff recruited and trained in a range of programmes.

The current range of Accredited Programmes managed by HMPPS has been designed in line with the latest international evidence of what works to reduce reoffending. To ensure quality of delivery, HMPPS regularly monitors this using a robust quality assurance process. HMPPS is committed to learning from the evidence base. Our approach to Accredited Programme evaluation is one of continuous learning and development. It is important to have a body of evidence to inform the ongoing development of programmes. We have recently published a number of studies related to our Accredited Programmes, all of which can be found by visiting <https://www.gov.uk/search/research-and-statistics>.

##### *Mental Health*

NHS England (NHSE) are the Commissioners for mental healthcare at the prison and recognise there are concerns with the provision. To support and improve this, NHSE has used its contract levers to request a

Recovery Action Plan to address the issues across the service. This is now in place and being monitored via a monthly Risk Summit meeting with the healthcare provider. Staffing vacancies is also a part of the Recovery Action Plan.

### *Education*

HMPPS acknowledges that there were difficulties in education staffing recruitment. To ensure high-quality and innovative education and skills development programmes are in place, Sodexo commissioned Novus college as the specialist provider of learning and skills (previously this was delivered in-house by the former contractor). Novus, in partnership with Sodexo, are in the process of overhauling education delivery which includes changes in the curriculum offer, quality assurance processes, staffing and administrative functions. HMPPS is confident there will be a significant improvement in education delivery that will meet the defined standards and delivery at HMP Lowdham Grange.

### **Prisoners' Property**

The Prisoners' Property Policy Framework, which was implemented on 5 September 2022, 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 looks 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 Framework is clear that Governors should ensure management checks are undertaken to have confidence that prisoners' property is being handled correctly and with care, such as property cards being completed accurately and that the volume of property held by prisoners is checked regularly and does not become excessive. HMPPS plans to undertake work in due course to establish the impact of the new Framework.