



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Featherstone
Featherstone
Wolverhampton
WV10 7PU

18 August 2023

Dear Chair,

**HMP FEATHERSTONE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 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 Featherstone, especially as you had several vacancies over the reporting period.

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

As the Board is aware, previous Estate Investment Proposal (EIP) bids to refurbish houseblocks 1 to 5 have been unsuccessful. Demands for maintenance are much greater than the available funding, therefore, HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) must prioritise works very carefully to make best use of that funding, focusing on risk to life and risk to capacity and decency. Projects to replace the prison windows and to refurbish the houseblocks are in development, and funding for delivery will be considered for inclusion in future capital maintenance programmes. More recently, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) Property Directorate commissioned a feasibility study on the long-term redevelopment of HMP Featherstone. The review board's outcome and final decision is awaited.

The MoJ Property Directorate in 2022, however, carried out Priority Prison investment funded works to the houseblocks including flooring and shower upgrades to houseblock 5 and planned and reactive maintenance has continued where possible, to further support the buildings' fabric and systems. In terms of further improvements made, new extractor fans have been fitted covering houseblocks 1 to 4 and the power supply issues have been resolved. The air handling units associated to the centre core of the houseblocks have been replaced and are now operating well. Regarding the Segregation Unit, the roof has been repaired and the boiler plant and supporting infrastructure will be reviewed before the arrival of colder winter weather. The site wide aging heating system is controlled via the Building Management System and an EIP has therefore been submitted for its replacement. The kitchen will continue to be a priority for new capital investment. Further contractual improvements with the new service provider(s) have been agreed to improve response and repair timelines.

Turning to some positive comments captured in your report, it was encouraging to note there were no deaths during the reporting period and the prison is generally safe. It was pleasing to note there is comprehensive reception process in place and that Chaplaincy staff provide a high-quality service to new prisoners on arrival, in segregation and on discharge from the prison. I was encouraged to read about the good library

provision and the Get Set for Success initiative and was pleased to hear your positive comments following the lesson observations undertaken by IMB members throughout the year.

I note you have raised some local issues of concern in your report which the new Governor will keep you aware of as work continues. HMPSS comments in response to the issues raised around healthcare and staff culture 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 Featherstone.

Yours ever

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Damian Hinds".

Damian Hinds
Minister for Prisons and Probation

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Healthcare

Mental Health

NHS England Health and Justice West Midlands continues to maintain oversight of long waits to access secure inpatient treatment in a mental health hospital. Delays have been escalated to the mental health (MH) Provider Collaboratives and MH Specialised Commissioners both regionally and nationally, given this is a widespread issue. Increased patient acuity, reduced bed capacity and staffing issues within secure settings were observed as a result of the pandemic, which affected bed availability and transfer times. Fortnightly multi-agency calls are held to support prioritisation of patients and expedite transfers. A national data exercise is underway to determine the scale of demand and waiting times for all patients and a data collection portal has been set up to facilitate this. Once completed, further delivery actions can then be agreed.

NHS England Health and Justice West Midlands has recently concluded a review of the process and pathway for referrals for patients requiring twenty-four-hour healthcare support. There are beds available within three West Midland prisons and following referral, a Multi-Disciplinary Team will review each case weekly and decide on where best to locate the patient to enable their needs to be met.

Regarding the individual referenced in section 3.2.9 of your report, as I am sure you can appreciate it would not be appropriate for me to discuss the specific details of this case in this letter. However, we are grateful to the Board for acknowledging the efforts of HMPPS, NHS England and the Healthcare provider in trying to source alternative placements for this individual. What I can say is that following a successful transfer in June 2023 to another prison, he is now receiving the care and support required, until a transfer to a secure hospital is facilitated. Experience shows that complex patients do benefit from a low intensity living environment. In the absence of a dedicated residential location that meets this requirement, the Segregation unit is the only location setup to meet this specific need. Mental health training has been provided to segregation staff and to further support and educate them in the specific aspects of mental health care, a local agreement with Practice Plus Group (physical healthcare provider) has been established to deliver supervision training to the Segregation Team on a regular basis, overseen by a nurse.

Staffing Position

It is worth noting that challenges with dispensing medication relates not just to healthcare but also due to prison staffing levels, which has affected the prison's ability to supervise. Issues with roll counts being completed in a timely manner have also affected the dispensing of medication. A weekly healthcare resourcing and delivery meeting chaired by the Deputy Governor and key stakeholders (including the Head of Healthcare) provides oversight and effective strategic planning.

Vacancies are back filled with agency and bank hours and recruitment is ongoing for healthcare staff with several posts going through the onboarding process. The number of actual vacant positions within the healthcare services at mid-July is 4.37 (whole time equivalent), an improvement from 12.04 vacancies reported in January 2023. All sanctions established by Care Quality Commission have now been lifted and

service developments have now been realised including the recruitment and deployment of a full-time Paramedic.

Staff Culture

HMP Featherstone's senior leadership team is fully aware of the challenges presented by the relative inexperience of the prison's staffing group and its impact on prisoner relationships. Concerns identified in this area and in interactions between staff were addressed in partnership with HMPPS Tackling Unacceptable Behaviour Unit, resulting in a cultural action plan produced following a formal climate assessment. Significant progress has been made on staff cultural development in year one of the action plan commitments and focus has now turned to developing improved prisoner/staff relationships.

HMP Featherstone now has the benefit of two Procedural Justice (PJ) trainers to enhance the training delivered. A PJ staff training programme is being developed alongside plans to deliver workshops to front line staff to educate them about the fundamental importance of good quality professional relationships with prisoners. The Governor acknowledges significant work is still needed to raise the capability of middle, and first-line managers to identify and challenge relationship shortfalls. The Governor also reached out to the HMPPS Evidence Practice Team to commission a research project to assess the impact of PJ in responding to prisoner complaints. The project was extremely successful and has ensured all primary complaint responders are trained in the PJ principles.

The Deputy Governor now has oversight and triage of all staff related complaint forms. These are then allocated to the most appropriate individual to investigate and to respond to the complaint. Governance of the quality and timeliness of complaint responses is now provided on a weekly basis to the Governor, in addition to statistics on the number of interim responses is challenged and priority directed towards the final response. This in turn has led to a significant reduction in the quantity of appeals to complaints.