



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Exeter
30 New North Road
Exeter, Devon
EX4 4EX

3 August 2023

Dear Chair,

**HMP EXETER: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 JANUARY - 31 DECEMBER 2022**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 December 2022. I was saddened to hear there were six deaths during the reporting year, three of which happened shortly after the men were released from HMP Exeter. I would like to assure the Board my officials take recommendations from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman very seriously.

I appreciate the amount of effort that goes into producing annual reports and thank you for providing a comprehensive picture of HMP Exeter, especially as you lost two experienced members during the reporting period, and they were not replaced. I hope you are successful in recruiting new Board members.

I address below the specific points you have raised.

The Board is probably aware that, due to very poor safety outcomes and instability, HMP Exeter has been subject to two HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) urgent notifications (UNs), since May 2018, with the most recent in November 2022. It has been difficult for HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) to attract suitable candidates to fill senior leader positions at HMP Exeter, primarily due to the unique challenges of this prison. HMPPS has tried to address these difficulties by temporarily uplifting the senior management team to reflect the need for experienced senior leaders, and key senior staff are now in post. A new Governor has been in post since June 2023, and I hope to reassure the Board that he will be supported by both the Prison Group Director for Devon and North Dorset and the Executive Director for Public Sector Prisons South through regular meetings. This will allow issues that may impede improvement to be resolved through HMPPS Senior Manager intervention. HMPPS detailed response to HMIP's priority concerns and key concerns can be found in the Action Plan published here:

<https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprison/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2023/02/HMP-Exeter-Action-Plan-March-2023.pdf>

Although staff attrition rate has reduced, and retention has improved following the UN, staff sickness absences, whilst now below target levels, have affected delivery of all regime activities due to the unavailability of Band 3 prison officers. The regime therefore fluctuates dependent on staff availability, as such, the regime management plan is followed to prioritise prisoner access to time in the open air, access to showers, domestics, and time out of cell. A Regime Driver has been recruited for a temporary period to provide oversight of purposeful activity allocation and attendance.

I note the Board's comments about supporting the rehabilitative and resettlement role of local prisons. HMP Exeter's operating model is reception and resettlement (55% / 45% ratio respectively). However, with the present operational capacity challenges, the prison is operating with a remand population of 84% and this figure is rising. Due to the profile of a local prison, serving the courts remains a priority and staffing of reception, first night and induction functions. Rehabilitation and Release Planning has been HMP Exeter's strength, which is evidenced by HMIP's two consecutive 'Reasonably Good' assessments and the prison now has the advantage of two new roles associated to employment on release introduced as part of a national roll-out, these being the Band 6 Prison Employment Lead (PEL) and Band 3 ID and Banking Administrator (IDBA). The PEL role is responsible for overseeing the Employment Hub and working with potential employers to recruit prison leavers. Reporting to the PEL is a second new role, the IDBA, responsible for ensuring prisoners have a bank account and suitable ID documentation for use after their release from prison. This service supports wider resettlement outcomes, including employment. HMP Exeter has also been part of a trial to test a new senior leadership role, Head of Education, Skills, and Work, responsible for the strategic oversight and delivery of all education, skills and work-based activities, functions, and staff. Introduction of this role has enabled Heads of Reducing Reoffending to increase their focus on key resettlement pathways and support prison leavers reintegration into the community. I am pleased to announce the Employment Advisory Board (set up locally) is now embedded and will provide expert advice to HMP Exeter's staff.

Turning to some positive comments captured in your report, it was encouraging to note HMP Exeter scored well in employment on release statistics (and was first among twenty-five prisons). It was also pleasing to hear that two prison officers were recognised for their outstanding efforts and the invaluable skills of the chaplaincy team and segregation unit staff in supporting prisoners. I was pleased to note the new patient engagement lead is raising awareness and addressing prisoners' healthcare concerns. Likewise, your comments about the new Insiders scheme, it is encouraging to note this initiative has enabled prisoners to be trained to support the prison team.

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 Exeter.

Yours ever,



Damian Hinds
Minister for Prisons and Probation

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Staff Training

We acknowledge the backlog of staff training during the reporting period. Essential training for operational staff was paused during the Covid-19 pandemic and has not yet been re-established. However, it is hoped that mental health awareness for operational staff (delivered at a local level by prisons) will be included in one of the two training days per month.

Business critical safety training such as Use of Force, Suicide and Self Harm, First Aid and Spontaneous Protection Enabling Accelerated Response (SPEAR) was prioritised during the reporting period over any other training. Training delivery targets are monitored closely by the Governor, Prison Group Director, and national level. HMP Exeter has currently a team of four instructors, two more instructors are awaiting to join and a further two will be appointed once the recruitment campaign has come to an end. HMP Exeter is making good progress against staff training (see summary below of training completed as of June 2023).

- Basic Control and Restraint 78%
- SPEAR 96%
- PAVA 95%
- RBH 100%

Prisoner's Property

The *Prisoners' Property* Policy Framework implemented in September 2022 involved extensive consultation, including with the IMB. It 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 has been handled correctly and with care. This includes, for example, checks on property cards to ensure they have been completed accurately and the volume of property held by prisoners does not become excessive. HMPPS also plans to undertake work in due course to establish the impact of the new Framework.

The transportation provider Prisoner Escort Custody Services (PECS) vehicle fleet has the capacity to hold prisoner's property to the limit of 7.5kg. The introduction of the digitally recorded Person Escort Record (dPER) including a property section that accurately records the number and type of sealed property 'owned' by and transferred with the prisoner and an accurate record of property handover between different holders. This is now embedded as business as usual. The digital process has assisted with property investigations lost in transit with the PECS supplier. PECS review complaints during monthly formal meetings with the supplier. However, it is noted that PECS receive few complaints for lost property overall and it is often the

case, PECS supplier has not attributed to the lost. During 2021 to 2022, PECS have not received any complaints from HMP Exeter in relation to property.

It is noted that not all cell clearances were completed in a timely manner, which in some instances led to property being misplaced. Revised cell clearance procedures have been implemented to address such concerns.