



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Humber
4 Sands Lane
Everthorpe, Brough
HU15 2JZ

Dear Chair,

18 July 2023

HMP HUMBER: 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 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 Humber over the reporting period, especially as you continued to operate with a depleted complement of members.

My officials raised your recruitment concerns with the IMB Secretariat and I can confirm that a national recruitment campaign ran from 27 March to 7 May and tours and interviews are being arranged. The Secretariat has reviewed feedback from previous recruitment campaigns and integrated this as part of the current campaign. There has been an increased focus on outreach together with new approaches to attract applications. I hope this information is useful.

I was saddened to hear there were three deaths in custody during the reporting year. As you are aware the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) carry out independent investigations into deaths in custody and I would like to assure the Board my officials take recommendations from the PPO very seriously. I address below the specific points you have raised for my attention.

I appreciate the Board's concerns about the rate of prison officer recruitment and the consequences this has. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) Resourcing team, that has overall responsibility for recruiting, has initiated a number of measures to boost recruitment to HMP Humber which appears to be having a beneficial effect. These have included separating recruitment campaigns for HMPs Humber and Hull and using a policy of 'early start'. The early start initiative enables candidates that have successfully passed their assessment and pre-employment checks to commence work almost immediately. While it is recognised that this can lead to a prolonged induction period for new officers, it avoids the loss of candidates who might otherwise take up positions in other organisations that provide employment more immediately. Given the large number of new officers starting at HMP Humber, it is expected that the prison will be fully staffed within the next few months.

Thank you for drawing my attention to the pre-release provision for prisoners, including for those with less than twelve weeks to serve. The MoJ is taking steps to recruit the people needed to provide the services we want consistently, and to reflect the Target Operating Model. Like other large organisations, the MoJ is not immune to challenges in recruitment, exacerbated by the volatility of the post pandemic labour market and cost of living crisis. However, the MoJ has recruited trainee Probation Officers in unprecedented volumes between 2020/21 and 2022/23 (4,039 against a target of 4,000) and we will continue to recruit trainee Probation Officers at the level required to meet demand. Probation Officer numbers have started

to stabilise and while some of those who joined on the 2021/22 cohort have already qualified, more are due to qualify over the coming months.

In the Yorkshire and the Humber (YandTH) probation region pre-release and resettlement services are provided by Community Integration Teams (CIT). Over the last six months the region has undertaken a recruitment campaign to increase the prison-based CIT capacity. This team covers both HMPs Humber and Hull and is now fully resourced. The increase in resources has allowed them to provide additional provision of service within HMP Humber. Additionally, YandTH has recruited a full-time Senior Probation Officer to manage this team. The manager is undertaking a review of the resourcing levels within both HMPs Humber and Hull and where necessary will make any relevant changes. YandTH region is continuing to monitor their resource model and is building in contingencies to compensate for any pressures brought about by the increase in remand cases within the prisons. The CIT currently has two dedicated staff attending HMP Humber twice per week, which is commensurate with the number of short-term cases being released from the establishment (approximately twenty per month).

Separately, the Governor is exploring the feasibility of creating a wing specifically for short-sentenced prisoners with the objective to provide resources to meet the needs of those who have less than twelve weeks to serve. If commissioned, the wing will solely focus on preparation for release and run more soft skill activities.

It was encouraging to receive your comments about the prison's continued excellent work on their recovery plan as a result of the pandemic whilst giving all possible consideration to the wellbeing of prisoners and increasing their levels of purposeful activity. I was pleased to note the provision of the new employment hub, that the prison's ICE TV channel has continued as an excellent communication vehicle, and that there has been an overall reduction in self-harm and violence.

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. HM Prison and Probation Service (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 Humber.



Damian Hinds
Minister for Prisons and Probation

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Prison Capacity

HMPPS recognises that accommodating two prisoners in a cell designed for one is never desirable but continues to be necessary across the estate in order to accommodate all those committed to custody by the courts. Operational capacities, including manageable levels of crowding, are set by senior operational management responsible for managing the prison and considering risks to safety and stability. This is not governed by a central process or by wider supply and demand issues.

HMPPS is delivering 20,000 additional modern uncrowded prison places, the largest prison build programme since the Victorian era, ensuring the right conditions are in place to rehabilitate prisoners, helping to cut crime and protect the public. We have already delivered approximately 5,200 places through the openings of HMP Five Wells and HMP Fosse Way, the latter of which is a brand new prison which started accepting prisoners at the end of May. We have also delivered approximately a further 700 temporary places through modular units.

There may be options in future to further reduce crowding levels, for example if population growth is slower than projected and there is sufficient headroom in the estate. This would enable targeted reductions of the least suitable prison places (including crowded places), but it is not possible to commit to this based on the latest projected population. Furthermore, it is also difficult to predict how these national trends will play out at a local level and the proportion of prisoners held in crowded cells at HMP Humber will always ultimately depend on regional population levels and demand.

Prisoners' Property

The Prisoners' Property Policy Framework, implemented during September 2022, is the result of extensive consultation and 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 ensuring property cards are completed accurately and that the volume of property held by prisoners is checked regularly and does not become excessive. HMPPS notes the Board's concern about the need for digital improvements to handling property. This continues to be explored but the nature of that work means that any such changes are longer-term and as a result it was not possible to include in the new Framework.

Category D Spaces

HMPPS acknowledges the Board's concerns about the availability of category D spaces. As noted by the Board, capacity of category D spaces was affected by the requirement to close a number of accommodation blocks in the open estate over the course of 2021 as they no longer met statutory fire safety standards. The impact on the overall open estate has been managed through replacing some of

these places with existing temporary accommodation delivered as part of our Covid-19 contingencies, and other sites were managed with bespoke container-style temporary accommodation.

Significant expansion is currently underway to extend sites with permanent accommodation. The category D expansion programme will deliver approximately 1300 new permanent places and ancillaries in the category D estate. This represents a net gain of 685 places when the decommissioned modular units which no longer met fire safety standards are taken into account. It is currently anticipated that the places will start to be occupied from later this year.

Prison Service Outsourcing and Contract Management

The outsourcing and management of contracts is a broad and complex area involving both HMPPS and the MoJ. The operations are divided up into three distinct functions and are as follows:

- Commercial – this function explores the viability, procurement, negotiations and awarding of the contract;
- Commissioning – this is business led and involves assessing needs, scoping requirements and contract implementation;
- Contract management – ensuring goods or services are delivered as agreed, monitoring performance, and escalating where appropriate.

Food and Retail

HMPPS works very closely with the national food supplier to ensure all products are available to establishments and enforce monetary service credits against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) if stock is not available. Over 1,000 items are available in the catalogue. Non-catalogue item requests may be available on the supplier portal. If the supplier does not stock the requested item, the establishment is able to use an alternative route to purchase. In the last twelve to eighteen months, HMPPS has experienced challenges in the supply chain for certain foodstuffs, including eggs and potatoes. As part of the contract terms and conditions, the supplier must provide a substitute product at the same price or less if they cannot deliver an ordered product. Where the substitute is not suitable or the establishment is not able to be flexible with their menus, items can be purchased locally to make up the shortfall. The contract relies on large volumes to drive economies of scale, and so establishments would be paying more for locally sourced items which they cannot get in bulk through the supplier. HMPPS always encourages establishments to utilise the contract for this advantage and other benefits.

Digital Services and Video Calling

HMPPS acknowledges there were some initial performance related issues with the transition to the new service provider, however, these have now been fully addressed and we are not aware of any recent issues that have been reported from HMP Humber. HMPPS encourages prisons to report any issues with the service through the established incident helpdesk process, so that issues can be acted upon immediately with the relevant resolver groups.

Education

HMPPS is able to confirm that contractually the education provider at HMP Humber is required to provide cover for absent staff and will be financially penalised for failure to deliver against education provision commissioned by the Governor and captured on the Annual Delivery Plan. Further financial penalties are also triggered for any education sessions cancelled due to absentee teaching staff.

Maintenance

The facilities management contract at HMP Humber allows for KPIs to be reviewed on a monthly basis. These reviews currently indicate the contractor is performing well within the defined measures. There have also not been any formal complaints made against the provider through the escalation route.

There is a very large turnover of vandalism repairs at HMP Humber together with wear and tear repairs in the kitchens due to the busy nature of the environment. Historically there has been a requirement for specialist parts to repair the equipment resulting in issues, but this is now managed better and the kitchen equipment is in a improved position than it was over a year ago. We have also replaced some obsolete assets within the main kitchen and trying to secure funding to replace additional items.

Prisoner Property Transfers

Prisoner Escort Custody Services (PECS) provide transportation for prisoners and their property. The current PECS contract includes the new vehicle fleet with an increased capacity to facilitate an additional half bag of property for consumables to the limit of 7.5kg. The vehicle fleet is designed to transfer the number of prisoners intended, together with their property in line with the volumetric limit which is governed by Prisoners' Property Policy Framework. In addition, the PECS Supplier shall transfer a reasonable volume of legal documentation.

PECS introduced digital records including a property section that accurately records the number and type of sealed property owned by and transferred with the prisoner. The digital process has assisted with investigations for property that is lost in transit with PECS suppliers. PECS reviews complaints during monthly formal meetings with the suppliers.