



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Berwyn
Bridge Road
Wrexham Industrial Estates
Wrexham
North Wales
LL13 9QE

31 August 2023

Jan Chai
HMP BERWYN: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 MARCH 2022 – 28 FEBRUARY 2023

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 28 February 2023. I visited HMP Berwyn on 22 August 2023 and was pleased to discuss some of the themes in more detail. 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 Berwyn over the reporting period, especially as you continued to be under-resourced.

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.

All prisoners that arrive at HMP Berwyn have a full health assessment in reception which includes a full medication review by the General Practitioner (GP) who assesses the clinical appropriateness and safety of prescribing any medications in line with national prescribing guidelines. Prisoners who are not prescribed medication in reception for any reason will have a face-to-face appointment with the GP the next day to consider their medication plan. Regarding specific mental health medications, these are discussed the next day with the mental health team who complete the second day screening for every prisoner that enters HMP Berwyn. This is then discussed with the on-site psychiatrist and also within the prescriber's forum. These arrangements are in line with the prisons responsibility to deliver safe clinical practice.

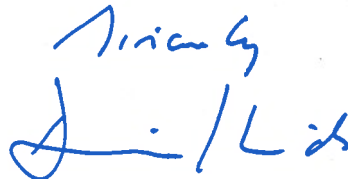
Where prisoners wish to contest the medication being provided, they can do so directly to local practitioners and through the Health Board complaints process. When prescriptions are changed for clinical reasons, efforts have been made to ensure that this is done safely and communicated in a timely manner to ensure distress and uncertainty for prisoners is kept to a minimum. Following such changes, additional support, if required, can be provided through either the clinical or safer prisons teams. Although the practice at HMP Berwyn has been deemed to be safe, I would like to assure the Board that the Governor is nevertheless committed to improving decision making communications.

There have been twenty-one prisoners transferred to secure mental health hospitals during the reporting period and it is recognised that a small number of these cases have been delayed. This is a nationwide issue and delays are often due to the lack of medium-level secure beds available in England where the prisoner is registered. Where there is a delay, I would like to assure the Board that these cases are escalated to the responsible hospital bed managers and commissioners for action.

It was encouraging to receive your numerous positive comments throughout the report including the relationships between staff and prisoners, and how substance misuse is being addressed. I was impressed to learn that HMP Berwyn has been assessed as one of the best education and work providers in England and Wales, that the number of prisoners in employment six weeks after release was above the national benchmark, the significant reduction in the backlog of OASys (risk assessment) reports, and the implementation of a new wellbeing strategy for both staff and prisoners.

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 Berwyn.

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

Damian Hinds
Minister for Prisons and Probation

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Out of Area Prisoners

Due to national prison population pressures, there has been a significant increase in transfers and prisoner churn at the prison and HMPPS recognises this. As a designated training and resettlement prison, the expectation is that HMP Berwyn accepts men in line with the offender flows model, which includes men with a short period of time left to serve ahead of release. As HMPPS continues to manage the impact of the ongoing population pressures, HMPPS is making the most efficient use of bedspaces right across the adult male estate in order to help the reception estate meet its commitment of serving the courts. Consequently, we are asking all training and resettlement prisons to build flexibility into their populations and regimes whilst balancing the rehabilitative needs of their prisoners. Although agreed offender flows do take account of family contact, there is a need to balance this out with prisoner places available in each region. Individual cases are reviewed for exceptional reasons and do allow some men to remain in North West prisons.

To help address challenges for prisoners and their families, the prison facilitates video visits to support family contact for those not available to attend the prison in-person. Financial assistance is provided through the National Assisted Prisoner Visits scheme to support visitors that make the journey to HMP Berwyn. HMPPS is grateful to the Board for recognising the family support services provided by the prison and through a positive and improved Barnardo's family support service.