



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Ranby
Retford
Nottingham
DN22 8EU

18 September 2023

Dear Chair,

HMP RANBY: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 APRIL 2022 – 31 MARCH 2023

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 March 2023. I was saddened to hear a prisoner died very shortly after being released from the prison and two other deaths occurred 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 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 Ranby, especially knowing the difficulties you faced over the reporting period and without a full complement of Board members. I am pleased since the new Governor took up post, there has been a prison representative at IMB meetings and a clerk to minute-take.

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

I note the Board's concerns about crowded conditions. Accommodating two prisoners in a cell designed for one is never desirable but continues to be necessary across the prison 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 responsible for managing the prison, considering risks to safety and stability, and not by a central process or by wider supply and demand issues.

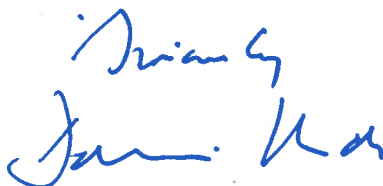
HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) has already delivered c.5,400 of the 20,000 modern uncrowded places, this includes through the brand-new prison, HMP Fosse Way, which started accepting prisoners at the end of May 2023. This is in addition to HMP Five Wells, a new prison which opened last year.

In the future, there may be options to reduce crowding levels if the population growth is slower than projected and there is sufficient headroom in the prison estate. This would enable targeted reductions of the least suitable prison places, including those which are crowded, but it is not possible to commit to this based on the current 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 Ranby will always ultimately depend on regional population levels and demand. As such, there are no current plans to reduce cell sharing at HMP Ranby. In terms of local updates, attendance at purposeful activities has improved leading to more time out of cell. The pilot of structured wing activities during the non-working part of the day (for prisoners employed part-time), has shown that prisoners are better engaged, and early signs indicate a reduction in violence and self-harm incidences.

Turning to some positive comments helpfully captured in your report, it was encouraging to note every effort is made to treat the prisoners fairly and the Board considers HMP Ranby as safe, and the general condition of the prison is of a good standard. Likewise, I was pleased to note the Board observed excellent staff/prisoner relationships and I welcome the positive comments about the reading group and the chess club, which have brought prisoners together.

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 Ranby.



Damian Hinds
Minister for Prisons and Probation

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Food, Budget and Canteen/Cooking

Food budgets are determined locally by the Governor in Public Sector Prisons (or the Director in privately managed prisons) and kept under review as part of normal budget allocation planning. Prison Rules require that prisoners are provided with three meals a day that are varied, nutritious and meet the religious, cultural, and medical needs of all. The daily food allowance has been increased to £2.70, in line with the national review of catering budgets.

HMPPS Catering Team is supporting prison establishments to help address the rising cost of food and working closely with local catering managers to understand issues, share good practice with food suppliers and look at supply and sourcing options. They are also working closely with the Office of Health Improvement and Disparities, following government guidelines, to provide enhanced advice to prisoners and staff across the prison estate on eating healthy meals. A local food forum was held at the end of July 2023 conducted by the catering manager and revealed no issues relating to portion size (with the exception of tuna in salads, which is understood to be due to a distributive issue). Prisoners were presented with new food to test, which they endorsed as additions to the menu. Most comments received were positive and feedback received was taken on board.

The prison canteen provides a valuable service and offers a wide variety of products (including ambient, fresh and chilled products) to prisoners. Items are delivered by an approved national supplier responsible for sourcing products to meet the needs of the population and to ensure that products are delivered to the correct quality. The Prison Retail policy on item pricing is to sell 'canteen' items at the manufacturer's recommended retail price. The pricing increases are as a result of increases by the wholesaler and are mirrored in the community.

Regarding delays to canteen refunds, HMP Ranby's Head of Residence has worked in partnership with the canteen provider to resolve this issue and refunds are mostly given on the same night. In the event of a prisoner identifying incorrect or damaged stock, the DHL order distribution staff or staff at HMP Ranby will complete an amendment form and issue it to the prisoner. Once the DHL retail workshop is in possession of the amendment form, they will commence the process of refunding the prisoner as appropriate. All amendments submitted following the agreed process will be processed by the supplier within 48 hours of receipt. DHL then send the list of amendments to the prison's local Business Hub. Prison staff are then responsible for reimbursing monies owed to the prisoner back into their spending account. The length of time taken for refunds to be completed is outside the supplier's control.

In response to some prisoners trying to cook food in their cell kettles, prison staff are conducting regular cell checks. Kettles will be removed if found being used inappropriately.

Recruitment and Retention

The prison officer staffing position at HMP Ranby has improved and the prison is projected to have a small surplus in the number of prison officers in post over the next few months (compared to the staffing requirement). The higher losses in terms of prison officer resignation in the first two years of service, compared to more established prison officers is expected and largely built into recruitment projections and activity.

The reasons why new prison officers leave is varied and often individual related. Good support in the first year, including the offer of pre-employment visits are a vital component in retention and HMPPS has recently invested heavily in new colleague mentors to provide new officers with an identified experienced officer to help manage their early months in the service. Selection processes are extensive and seek to build on the best resourcing practices available.

Locally, monthly half day staff events, introduced in April 2023 have focused on wellbeing, communication, and training.

Access to Rehabilitative Courses

The wider population pressures have increased churn significantly at HMP Ranby and presents a challenge, not only to the stretched Offender Management Unit resources, but also for progression in education and qualifications due to the short time prisoners have left to serve. As a training/resettlement prison, the expectation is that HMP Ranby accepts men in accordance with the offender flow model, which includes men with a short period of time left to serve ahead of release. Prisoners in the resettlement cohort can be received from 29 days up to 16 months' left to serve. As HMPPS manages the impact of the ongoing population pressures, we will be looking to make the most efficient use of bedspaces right across the adult male estate to help the reception estate to meet its commitment of serving the courts. Consequently, we are asking all training and resettlement prison Governors/Directors to build flexibility into their populations and regimes whilst balancing the rehabilitative needs.

Prisoner Transferred without Paperwork

The Governor of HMP Ranby is not aware of any specific issues relating to a prisoner being returned from a category D prison without paperwork or the chance to answer associated charges against him. If the Board wishes to provide more details this can be investigated separately. In general terms, when there is a police investigation, HMP Ranby does not always provide full disclosure to the prisoner, as this falls to the category D prison to notify the prisoner as they complete the re-categorisation assessment. Also, if security information is found sufficient, it is enough to return a prisoner to closed conditions without an adjudication. The prisoner can dispute the allegations via the complaint process, which is sent to the category D prison to respond to.

Prisoners' Property

The *Prisoners' Property* Policy Framework implemented on 5 September 2022, introduced a new requirement that prisons must transfer excess property within four weeks unless there are exceptional circumstances which make this impossible. To avoid the problem of delays altogether, the Framework places an emphasis on ensuring compliance with volumetric control limits, since anything within these limits will be transferred with the prisoner.

The Framework is clear that Governors must ensure that property complaints and disputes are investigated thoroughly and efficiently, with prisoners being offered appropriate compensation. All efforts should be made to resolve issues through the various stages of the complaints process. HMPPS is planning to undertake work in due course to establish the impact of the new Framework.

The introduction of the digitally recorded PER (dPER) includes a property section that accurately records the number and type of sealed property 'owned' by and transferred with the prisoner and is an accurate record of property handover between different people. This is now embedded as business as usual. The digital process has assisted with investigations for property that is lost in transit with the Prisoner Escort and Custody Services (PECS) supplier. However, PECS receive few complaints for lost property overall and often the issue is not attributed to the PECS supplier. PECS review complaints during monthly formal

meetings with the PECS supplier and during 2020 to 2023, no complaints have been received relating to property.

HMP Ranby's newly appointed Head of Business Assurance and Head of Residence are doing their utmost to ensure prisoners receive timely compensation where property items have been lost or damaged.