



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Oakwood
Oaks Drive
Featherstone
Wolverhampton
WV10 7QD

27 September 2023

Den Chair

HMP OAKWOOD: 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 there was a death in custody during the reporting year. I would like to assure the Board my officials take recommendations from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman very seriously and thank you for monitoring the work undertaken by everyone who supported the deceased throughout the period of his terminal care.

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 Oakwood over the reporting period, especially as you had several vacancies.

I address below the specific point you have raised for my attention about the Psychologist vacancy and the career pathway for psychologists.

As the Board is aware, psychological services focused on health and well-being within HMP Oakwood are commissioned by NHS England, Midlands Health & Justice and are provided by Midlands Partnership University Foundation Trust (MPUFT). MPUFT recognises the difficulties in recruiting a Psychologist to work at HMP Oakwood, as I understand the recruitment campaign revealed little or no interest for the role; a position that is reflected nationally. MPUFT has reviewed the career pathway and recruitment process to encourage interest to this role. I hope to assure the Board that filling this vacancy remains MPUFT priority and in the meantime they will continue to use bank or agency staff to provide cover. In the interim, two members from the Mental Health team will be offering lower-level psychological interventions. Although this is not a permanent solution, and not a replacement for a psychologist, these sessions will provide some support to the prisoners and improve the experience.

More broadly, NHS England (Midlands) has commissioned a bespoke workforce plan in recognition of the local and national workforce challenges across Health and Justice services. The report and recommendations will be shared with healthcare providers, partnerships of integrated care and workforce planning and training advisors within NHS England to determine longer term actions to improve recruitment and retention.

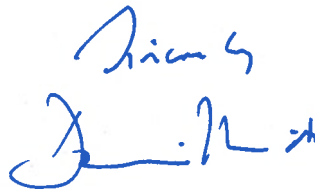
It might be useful to note and specific to public sector prisons, as the largest single employer of psychologists in the country, HMPPS Psychology Services Group has a well-established recruitment and training programme for trainee psychologists with a clear internal progression route for qualified psychologist posts and an external recruitment approach. Such services have a different focus than the

mental health services mentioned above. Thank you for writing to me on this important matter. I hope this information is useful.

Despite your concerns, it was encouraging to read the Board's commendation to the prison staff and management team for keeping the prisoners protected and safe throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Likewise, to the dedicated staff in the Care and Segregation Unit who work in a difficult and challenging environment, and for supporting prisoners with acute mental health. It was also pleasing to note good staff and prisoner relationships observed by the Board, the re-established Veterans Support Group, and the clinical discharge lounge.

I note you have raised several local issues of concern in your report which the Director will continue to keep you aware of as work continues. HMPPS comment in response to other issue raised in your report is 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 Oakwood.



Damian Hinds
Minister for Prisons and Probation

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Prisoners' Property

HMPPS notes the Board remains concerned about the transfer of prisoners' property particular to prisoners being transferred in to HMP Oakwood, despite implementation of the new *Prisoners' Property* Policy Framework. The Framework 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. HMPPS will monitor the impact of the Framework going forward and will look at what further improvements can be made.