



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Wandsworth
Heathfield Road
Wandsworth
London
SW18 3HS

25 October 2023

Dear Chair,

HMP WANDSWORTH: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JUNE 2022 - 31 MAY 2023

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 May 2023. I appreciate the amount of effort that goes into producing annual reports and thank you for providing a comprehensive picture of HMP Wandsworth.

I was saddened to hear four prisoners died in custody during the reporting year. I would like to assure the Board my officials and I take recommendations from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman very seriously.

The prison population is rising rapidly, and we have already delivered c.5,500 of the planned 20,000 modern uncrowded places, the largest prison build programme since the Victorian era, to ensure the right conditions are in place to rehabilitate prisoners. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) is striving to reduce the court backlog and has extended the use of the Nightingale courtrooms over the course of this financial year, to provide additional court capacity.

As stated in previous responses, holding two prisoners in a cell designed for one is never desirable. Unfortunately, this long-standing practice continues to be necessary across the prison estate to accommodate all those committed to custody by the courts. The total number of prisoners that an establishment can hold under HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) policy, including the maximum level of crowding, is set by the Prison Group Director. In making this assessment, the Prison Group Director is required to consider risks to safety and stability using his or her operational judgement and experience. Given that several of the factors that affect maximum occupancy crowding levels are dynamic such decisions are regularly reviewed. Funding to repair the vandalised cells will continue and with minimised disruption.

I acknowledge it has been a difficult reporting period for HMP Wandsworth and the impact staffing shortages has had on every aspect of prison life. Detached duty staff, (that is, staff temporarily seconded from other prisons) are supporting the prison and additional contracted work hours have been offered to staff through Payment Plus. The regime management plan is being reviewed daily to consider how best to maximise the regime, and any curtailments are communicated to the prisoners through the prison radio. A re-profiling exercise is planned to take place to ensure the regime delivery is better aligned with the current staffing resource.

Specific to recruitment and retention, the Governor is supportive of local recruitment and is exploring a potential pilot with the MoJ People Group to see how this could work for HMP Wandsworth. It is hoped the

new national recruitment campaign will attract applications from a wider pool of people, prepared for the complexities of working in a prison. HMPPS has a retention strategy to help address attrition levels, which is linked to wider activities around employee experience, employee lifecycle and staff engagement at work. Alongside the strategy a retention toolkit has been introduced which identifies local, regional, and national interventions against the drivers of attrition, which are utilised by Governors/Directors to embed individual retention plans.

The Board may be aware of the new exit interview process introduced in 2021, to gauge employee opinion and satisfaction in relation to their experience and establish reasons for leaving. The interview questions are structured and based around the 10 drivers of attrition. Alongside the data gathered from exit interviews, the Retention Research Team led by an Occupational Psychologist is conducting research to identify potential causes of resignations and this helps to shape and determine interventions.

In February 2023 a new retention oversight process was introduced to target priority establishments with the highest attrition rates and those considered as a cause for concern due to increasing attrition. HMP Wandsworth has been identified as one of the next sites to receive this intervention. We want people to stay in the prison service and have already appointed over 150 New Colleague Mentors (NCMs), to support the wellbeing of new colleagues. NCMs provide a welcoming and supportive onboarding, induction, and early career journey experience. They also provide informal peer-to-peer support.

The Board will be aware of the CCTV and Perimeter Intrusion Detection System (PIDS) upgrades are currently underway and will continue until April 2025. These significant improvements represent an investment of £7.5 million and are now 65% complete. Further funding for additional CCTV and PIDS upgrades has been secured, the first part of which will be to replace the CCTV system in visits.

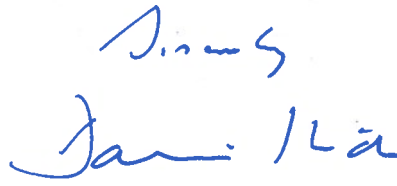
I note the Board's concerns about the housing support for unsentenced prisoners and thank you for bringing this to my attention. The Prisons Strategy White Paper sets out our plans to improve prison leavers' access to accommodation as we recognise prison leavers who have access to stable accommodation on release are almost 50% less likely to reoffend. Although the Commissioned Rehabilitative Service services were initially only available for sentenced people in prison, HMPPS is working on extending the contracts for accommodation to include the unconvicted and unsentenced. It is worth noting, Strategic Housing Specialists are subject matter experts on housing and homelessness for prison senior leaders. This team of specialists are currently working on different initiatives to strengthen collaborative working with prisons, probation and Local Authorities to remove access barriers to accommodation.

Locally at HMP Wandsworth, a strategic housing specialist supports remand prisoners with housing on release, where appropriate, and there is a service supporting remand prisoners with existing tenancies. As the Board is aware, HMP Wandsworth is part of the 12-month pilot Remand Project launched in January 2023, the findings from which will be reviewed to consider future support for the remand cohort. Further information is set out in the attached annex to this response.

Despite your Board's concerns raised in your report, which I fully acknowledge, it was encouraging to note you thought the prison worked very hard in trying to operate a full regime and you were impressed by the compassion and patience shown by staff in the care and separation unit. It was pleasing to note improvements to Assessment Care in Custody and Teamwork reviews and the re-establishment of the incentivised substance free living unit.

I note you have raised some additional 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 Wandsworth.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Damian Hinds', written in a cursive style.

Damian Hinds
Minister for Prisons and Probation

HMP WANDSWORTH: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JUNE 2022 to 31 MAY 2023

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

New Healthcare Centre

We acknowledge the Board's concerns about the delays to the completion due to omissions from the original commission request. The new healthcare centre is now complete, apart from some snagging issues, and is due to open soon. Refurbishment has also recently been completed on six cells within Addison healthcare unit.

Facilities Management (FM)

There are several ongoing projects to improve the living conditions at HMP Wandsworth including the refurbishment of showers on Trinity unit. Any further work requests will be considered, noting that demands for maintenance are much greater than available funding. Therefore, once a bid for a project is received, HMPPS must prioritise works very carefully to make best use of that funding, focusing on risk to life and risk to capacity and decency.

Here is a summary of the current position of the projects:

Showers

Local remedial works have taken place to improve the poor-quality showers, with more in progress, and an estimated two-year, £12.5 million project of site-wide shower upgrades, including increasing the number of showers on Trinity unit, has been commissioned. This project is in design stage and will be considered for funding in the 2024/25 capital maintenance programme.

Boilers

The FM provider is currently obtaining another quote to replace the temporary boilers on C - E wings. This work is currently being scoped with a target completion date end of this financial year 2023/24. There is a project pending to replace all boilers site wide, but this is further down the priority list.

Flooding Incidents

The company Rentokil is providing a quotation for the replacement of lavatory pans and sinks, following a full site survey for additional proofing, which will be shared with the Area Property Operations Manager to consider.

Vermin

Food waste is being separated and the flower beds on Trinity yard will be emptied, as this is attracting rats. Following a full site survey, Rentokil is providing a work quote to reduce ingress points for vermin, the location of nests, and access to food.

Windows

A site-wide window replacement project, with an expected programme length of approximately four and half years at a cost of around £10 million, is projected to start on site in middle of next year. An interim project to add Perspex screens to the 74 highest risk windows concluded, as planned in May 2023.

Fire Safety Improvement (FSI)

A five year, £60 million site wide FSI project is projected to start in February 2024.

Recycling Centre

A project to refurbish / replace the recycling centre has been commissioned to be developed and then considered for funding in the future.

Purposeful Activity including for Remand Prisoners

HMPPS has developed a new National Regime Model for prisons to drive purposeful activity which will be formally launched to all prisons in January 2024. Governors/Directors will be required to complete a new annual regime planning cycle including producing a detailed plan of the regime they aspire to deliver following a nationally prescribed design process. Governors/Directors will outline their purposeful activities within the plans including new extra-curricular activities. A new quality measure of regime activities and for performance measures will be introduced.

All prison activities at HMP Wandsworth, including education and work positions are open to all prisoners, regardless of status and 51% of positions are currently held by unsentenced prisoners. It is acknowledged that HMP Wandsworth does not have enough activity spaces given the size of the population but there are plans to introduce three new activity areas before the end of 2024 to increase the activity spaces available for all prisoners, including those on remand. The plans will consider the possibility of converting some full-time employment positions into part-time spaces to increase the number of opportunities available.

HMPPS is testing new initiatives designed to meet the specific needs of remand prisoners in HMP Wandsworth, this includes:

- A short life-skills course to help deal with the uncertainty of being on remand, develop communication and decision-making skills.
- Extending identification documents and employability support to remand prisoners.
- A staff remand caseworker and team of prisoner remand representatives to support wellbeing and help prisoners tackle key issues to enable them to engage with the prison regime.