



Minister for Prisons and Probation
102 Petty France
London
SW1H 9AJ

4th September 2023

Dear Minister

Reply to the Minister's letter to the IMB Board at HMP Gartree ('the Board') dated 19th June 2023 in response to IMB Board's Annual Report.

The Board thank the Minister for his reply to the specific points that the Board raised for his attention. After reflecting on the reply provided by the Minister, the Board are seeking further information and clarification from points raised in your letter and Annex A.

Improving the environment at HMP Gartree

In the Prisons Strategy White Paper (published December 2021) in the section 'Improving our Existing Prison Estate' it states that a 'fresh look' is required in relation to the needs of existing prisons, and how can improvements be made to the current infrastructure by starting '*with getting the basics right: properly maintaining prisons is vital to preventing cells being taken out of use, providing clean and decent environments for prisoners and staff, and ensuring health and safety*'.

The Minister stated that HM Prison and Probation Service 'is continuing to improve the environment at HMP Gartree with investment totalling £13.5 million between 2020-2025'. The Board is seeking to understand this figure more, specifically where investment has taken place since 2020 and the related costs, and the planned investment to 2025 again with the related costs that will improve the environment at HMP Gartree for both prisoners and staff. We are writing to yourself to ask you to provide this detailed information to the Board as we have been unable to obtain this level of information at a local level and we are keen to understand how the £13.5 million is contributing to providing safe, clean, and decent environments for prisoners and staff.

The Minister also shared that 'demands are much greater than the available funding', so the Board requests an update on when the 'new strategy' which, as outlined in the White Paper, '*will bring together in one place a detailed overview of the needs of the estate and the associated effect of underinvestment*' will be completed. In addition, could the Minister advise that when reviewing the content of the new strategy the Board will be able to understand how HMP Gartree will benefit from a change of investment rather than underinvestment in the next few years.

The Board noticed with interest that in June 2023 the Lord Chancellor and Justice Secretary, Alex Chalk visited and opened HMP Fosse Way, which is only 14 miles from HMP Gartree, which was described in the press release as the latest of the Government's new 'smart' prisons. We would like to invite the Minister and the Justice Secretary to visit HMP Gartree in the coming months, in order to offer visibility of the other end of the spectrum of the prison estate and to see first hand our concerns.

Healthcare Provision

The Board note with interest the statement 'healthcare services are based on community equivalence against a suite of National Service Specifications'. However, the Board are still seeking to understand how equivalent care is defined, measured or compared to that in the wider community, and what wider community for example the Harborough District or nationally, especially as it has been recognised that that prisoners '*are some of the most marginalised, vulnerable population groups in any community*', as outlined in the National Partnership Agreement for Health and Social Care for England: Improving the quality of services for people in prison and those subject to statutory supervision by the probation service in the community 2022-2025.

In the document, it is further acknowledged that prisoners '*are known to have multiple complex health and social care needs, suffering from higher rates of infectious diseases, chronic illnesses, poor mental health, increased risk of premature mortality, poorer access to health services (in custody and in the community, as well as backgrounds of poverty, indebtedness, unemployment, substance misuse, poor education and homelessness*'. Therefore, the Board are seeking to further understand that as '*health inequalities experienced by people in our care are well above the average experienced by the general population*', why there is not a suite of measurements against which Healthcare Provisions in HMP Gartree are measured in order to address these health inequalities rather than comparing interventions and outcomes to the wider community.

We look forward to receiving your response in due course.

Yours sincerely

Tim Norman

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board – HMP Gartree