



Ministry  
of Justice

Rt Hon Edward Argar MP  
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Stocken  
Stocken Hall Road  
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27<sup>th</sup> November 2023

*Dear Chair,*

**HMP STOCKEN: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 MAY 2022 - 30 APRIL 2023**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Stocken. I commend the Board for carrying out its statutory role effectively, especially as you had a few vacancies. I was saddened to hear two prisoners died during the reporting year, and I would like to reassure you that recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman are taken very seriously.

Although no specific issues have been raised for my attention, I note the Board has raised some local issues of concern, which the Governor will keep you updated on progress. The Governor has assured me that he will do everything possible to make HMP Stocken a better establishment. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) comments in response to the other issues raised for their attention are set out within the attached annex.

Despite it being a difficult reporting year, it was encouraging to receive your positive comments that HMP Stocken is generally a safe place for prisoners and staff and that the time prisoners spend out of their cells is to be commended. It was interesting to hear about the Employment Hub and the Incentivised Substance Free Living wing, which I note are both working well. Your comments about the STARS programme providing excellent outcomes for vulnerable prisoners and the good work done with specific prisoner groups, in particular, veterans and the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller were pleasing to note.

I appreciate the valuable contribution from members of Independent Monitoring Boards and am grateful for your work.

**RT HON EDWARD ARGAR MP**

## HMP STOCKEN: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 MAY 2022 - 30 APRIL 2023

### HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

#### **Inappropriate Prisoner Transfers**

In the face of ongoing population pressures across the entire adult male prison estate, HMPPS continues to strive to maintain offender flows by balancing the prison estate to hold prisoners in the right place at the right time, where possible. 87% of the prison population is aligned to our Configuration Ambition 2025. The Offender Categorisation and Assessment Team at HMP Stocken does everything within their remit to ensure they receive appropriate prisoner allocations, but due to the prison capacity issues, this is not always possible.

With regard to the Board's comment about prisoners entering HMP Stocken on an open Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) and without an appropriate handover, when prisoners are due to be transferred, an urgent case review must be completed before the transfer and as soon as possible after arriving at the receiving prison. In addition to this, those being supported by the ACCT process will meet with a member of staff on arrival at HMP Stocken. It is not a justifiable reason for receiving prisons to not accept prisoners with an open ACCT.

#### **Transfer of Prisoners to Category B prisons**

The remand population has grown to unprecedented levels as result of the Crown Court backlog and industrial action taken by the Criminal Bar Association, and this impact is being felt considerably in the training estate. The convicted and unsentenced population has also had a direct impact on spaces in reception prisons. HMPPS is trying to maximise capacity in reception prisons in order to serve the courts, which means moving Category B prisoners from reception prisons into the Long Term and High Security Estate (LTHSE) remains one of our key priorities. We acknowledge the importance of transferring prisoners who are recategorised from Category C to Category B to the most appropriate prisons as quickly as possible and the LTHSE and HMPPS Population Management continue to work collaboratively to support the Category C estate.

It might be useful for the Board to note, over recent months more prisoners have been recategorised to Category B due to their poor behaviour. As soon as a prisoner is made Category B, the work within the Offender Management Unit begins to get the individual moved into an appropriate establishment. However, Category B are often reception prisons which are running to full capacity, so organising a move is not always as straight forward as we would like.

#### **Population Management Unit**

There are complex and wide-ranging issues involved in transferring and locating prisoners, and allocation decisions must reflect both the specific needs and circumstances of the prisoner as well as the operating environment and range of services at the receiving prison. Although operating within these constraints, HMPPS is committed to ensuring that, where practicable, prisoners are moved in a timely fashion and in line with published offender flows. Prison staff are doing what they can to support colleagues in local establishments who are receiving increased demand from the courts. Likewise, prisons are encouraged to support offender flows as much as possible and to ensure that the prisoners rehabilitation needs are met and protected.

## **Accredited Programmes**

Accredited programmes are prioritised based on risk and relevant date and staff are currently assessing prisoners 18 months or more before their relevant release or parole date. HMP Stocken currently has 92 prisoners eligible and awaiting a place on the Thinking Skills Programme (TSP). We are due to deliver 10 TSP groups, comprising of 100 spaces over the coming months. In addition, 12 prisoners have been assessed as eligible and waiting for Kaizen. Kaizen Interpersonal Violence are on track to deliver 16 spaces and Kaizen General Violence 4 spaces. HMP Stocken does have a high number of referrals awaiting assessment who are being prioritised based on their relevant release or parole date in line with national guidance. In rare cases, some prisoners are transferred elsewhere to enrol on a programme. The waiting list is monitored nationally and locally.

Attendance at an offending behaviour programme (OBP) is one way to demonstrate a reduction in risk, and prisoners being reviewed for re-categorisation should be considered based on their wider risk and rehabilitative opportunities, not only on their OBP attendance. Programme teams are funded by a centrally held OBP budget. This investment has been maintained by HMPPS and is fully allocated across all accredited programme delivery sites. We do, however, keep accredited programmes delivery under regular review based on local demand and HMPPS is currently testing a 'Next Generation' of accredited programmes. This aims to simplify and streamline assessment processes for accredited programmes.

The Governor is looking to introduce non-accredited interventions. Victim awareness continues to run and personal social development modules. Other projects are being explored for HMP Stocken, one is a partnership with the violence reduction network, to design bespoke materials to enable prisoners to be trained in peer led violence reduction interventions. In addition to this, work is taking place with domestic violence charities to explore initiatives that address the increasing number of prisoners with previous history of domestic violence. A comprehensive needs analysis of HMP Stocken's population has been completed, including an OBP specific needs analysis.

## **Wing-Based Technology**

Kiosks are no longer being rolled out in establishments. In-cell technology is now the focus. The Governor is in contact with the Ministry of Justice Digital Team to explore enhancing HMP Stocken's IT offer. Although HMP Stocken is not on the list for in-cell technology in the near future, the Governor will keep the Board informed of any future developments.

## **Food Budget**

Food budgets are determined locally by Governors in Public Sector Prisons (or Directors 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 HMPPS Catering Team has been providing support to all prison establishments to help address the rising cost of food. They are working closely with local catering managers to understand issues and share good practice ideas with our food suppliers to look at supply and sourcing options. They are also working closely with the Department of Health and Social Care and, the Office of Health Improvement and Disparities, following Government guidelines, to provide supplementary advice to prisoners and staff across the estate on eating healthy meals.

The Kitchen manager at HMP Stocken offers a wide range of daily choices so that prisoners can have a varied diet. Whilst acknowledging the challenges of increasing inflation, the daily food allowance has been increased from £2.21 to £2.70. This is a reasonable increase.

**Education Contract**

The education contract has been reviewed and a new extension to the contract was launched in April 2023. The contract includes increased financial penalties for non-delivery and poor-quality teaching, learning and assessment. It should be noted that Ofsted feedback is generally positive on contracted delivery and most areas of concern are associated to non-contracted related issues.