



Ministry
of Justice

Damian Hinds
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Whitemoor
Longhill Road
March, Cambridgeshire
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7 November 2023

Dear Chair,

**HMP WHITEMOOR: 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. Thank you for providing a comprehensive picture of HMP Whitemoor over the reporting period, especially as you had several vacancies.

I acknowledge your concerns about the progression of prisoners and thank you for drawing this to my attention. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is committed to reducing re-offending and protecting the public by delivering evidence-based excellence in rehabilitation. Rehabilitation is critical to addressing drivers of reoffending and cutting crime, increasing safety and preventing future victims. Rehabilitation services come in many forms, ranging from accredited programmes and interventions, to enabling a person to access education, healthcare, substance misuse support, suitable accommodation, and the means to earn a living. To do this HMPPS is adopting a coherent and coordinated approach to what it does and how it does it, providing enabling environments that best support change, alongside quality services when they are most likely to make a difference and empower frontline staff to help support prisoners to change their lives. The Long Term and High Security estate (LTHSE) predominantly holds prisoners serving long sentences and as such the focus is on encouraging engagement, supporting careers in custody through effective sequencing and understanding of progression. It is recognised that engaging those prisoners who have long sentences is challenging, and recent changes in the population at HMP Whitemoor has seen an increase in younger men at the early stages of their sentences. The prison is developing new approaches to create hopes for progression, including a Principles for Progression strategy and improvement plans for Keywork delivery to track progress for individual prisoners. A new needs analysis of the population is scheduled to be completed in due course to provide a greater understanding of the needs of the local prisoner population.

The Government welcomed the Justice Select Committee report into indeterminate sentences for public protection (IPP) as an opportunity to take stock of the issue and identify areas for improvement. It is recognised that there is still more that remains to be done and as a matter of priority, the Government is reviewing the work to date to help more IPP prisoners progress towards release and consider if there are any further steps we need to take. The Committee's main recommendation was to undertake a full resentencing exercise of all remaining IPP offenders who had not yet had their licence terminated. However, it remains the Government's long-held view that retrospectively changing the sentence which was lawfully passed would give rise to an unacceptable risk to public protection and that the refreshed IPP Action Plan published on 26 April 2023 at

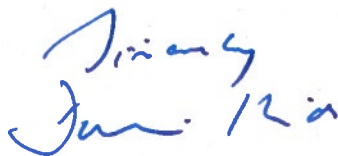
<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/39321/documents/192968/default/> is the best option by which these offenders can progress towards safe release. As such, the Government has rejected this recommendation and has no plans to conduct a resentencing exercise. The refreshed Action Plan will be a strong driver to build on past achievements and continue to provide the best possible opportunities for those serving an IPP sentence to progress towards a safe and sustainable release.

To clarify for the Board, the Secretary of State is responsible for accepting or rejecting recommendations made by the Parole Board for a transfer to open conditions, for Indeterminate Sentenced Prisoners (ISPs) and IPP prisoners. The decision to release these prisoners is a matter for the Parole Board. In July 2023, the Secretary of State directed a change to simplify the criteria how ISPs are assessed for suitability for open conditions as it was judged that some ISPs could be managed safely in open conditions but were unable to satisfy the previous criteria. Recommendations for transfer to open conditions will now be accepted where three criteria are met. The prisoner has made sufficient progress during the sentence in addressing and reducing risk to a level consistent with protecting the public from harm (in circumstances where the prisoner in open conditions may be in the community, unsupervised under licenced temporary release); and the prisoner is assessed as low risk of abscond; and there is a wholly persuasive case for transferring the ISP from closed to open conditions. Where a recommendation from the Parole Board has already been accepted or rejected this will not be reopened or reviewed. The prisoner will need to wait until their next assessment, when their suitability will be considered against the new test.

Despite your concerns it was reassuring to receive your comments that the prison provides a settled environment. I was encouraged to read that there had been progress to ensure prisoners with mental ill health receive the treatment and transfer they need earlier and that access to wider healthcare services are in line with the community. It is pleasing to read there have been improvements with recruitment and training of prison officers to aid retention and enhance knowledge and skills to support prisoners. I was also encouraged to note the efforts of the Business Hub to analyse complaints which is enabling the Senior Management Team to make prompt remedial action to the issues being identified.

I note you have raised two 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 Whitemoor.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Damian Hinds', with a date 'Jan. 12 in' written below it.

Damian Hinds
Minister for Prisons and Probation

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Dispersal System

HMPPS has operated the Dispersal system since it was recommended following the Mountbatten report in 1966 and then endorsed by the Radzinowicz report in 1968. The Mountbatten report introduced the Categorisation approach with prisons being equipped to hold specific categorisations, with the appropriate corresponding security systems. Although Mountbatten suggested Category A prisoners should be held on specific and dedicated units, Radzinowicz suggested the Dispersal approach, which was introduced and ensures those presenting the highest security risk are dispersed amongst a larger and wider population of Category B prisoners. HMPPS has reviewed this approach on several occasions and the Dispersal method is still the most effective way of managing this cohort.

A dispersal prison such as HMP Whitemoor is a closed Category B prison with the additional layers of physical and procedural security required to enable it to securely manage Category A prisoners within its population. Most mandated procedural restrictions that apply to Category A prisoners, such as the searching cycle, internal movement restrictions, the Approved Visits Scheme, additional measures on external escorts and communication monitoring does not automatically apply to the Category B population. Whilst the physical security systems do apply these do not restrict the access of a Category B prisoner within the prison.

Facilities Management

HMPPS is already investing in various projects at HMP Whitemoor with works due to complete by June 2024. This includes upgrades and replacements to the general and fire alarm systems site wide, replacement of the cell call system and upgrades to the security systems. A project to refurbish all the shower areas at HMP Whitemoor and install individual shower pods to the cells on A wing is in development and will be considered for inclusion in future capital maintenance programmes.

It should be noted that demands for maintenance across the prison estate are much greater than the available funding. HMPPS is therefore carefully prioritising funding bids to make best use of that funding, focusing on risk to life and risk to capacity and decency. In the interim quotes are being obtained to make some shower improvements such as replacing tiles and general decorations until the full refurbishments can commence. Robust cleaning and painting of all areas is also in place to make best use of the spaces whilst awaiting funding.

It is recognised that there had been an increase in mice caused by the lack of cleaning undertaken in an empty wing. When the wing was reopened additional measures were put in place which is tackling the issue, however as the prison is in a rural area, work will continue to keep vermin away.

