



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Wymott
Ulmes Walton Lane
Leyland
Preston
Lancashire
PR26 8LW

1 November 2023.

Dear Chair,

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

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 May 2023. 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 Wymott over the reporting period, especially as you had several vacancies and I am sorry to hear of the continued problems experienced in recruiting new members.

I was saddened to hear there were seven deaths in custody during the reporting year. As you are aware the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) carry out independent investigations into deaths in custody and I would like to assure the Board my officials take recommendations from the PPO very seriously.

I appreciate the Board's concerns about the prioritisation of estate budgets. By the end of this Spending Review period, we will have invested nearly £4 billion towards the delivery of 20,000 additional, modern prison places, the biggest prison build programme since the Victorian era, ensuring the right conditions are in place to rehabilitate prisoners, helping to cut crime, and protect the public. These places are being delivered through the construction of six new prisons, as well as the expansion and refurbishment of the existing estate and temporary accommodation.

The department has a separate allocation for prison capital maintenance. This allocation is based on the Spending Review 2021 Settlement, as adjusted at HM Treasury's recent Efficiency and Savings Review which factored in the department's priorities at that time, in particular continuing delivery of the Fire Safety Improvement programme to ensure the whole prison estate will be fully compliant with current fire standards by 2027. Projects involving both capital renewal and prison expansion are combined wherever possible to maximise value for money and time efficiencies. As meeting demand for particular cohorts of prisoners requires both maintaining existing prisons and building new places, HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) continually reviews delivery programmes in both areas to align to revised demand projections.

HMPPS also ensures places are taken out of use for essential maintenance where required and thereby preventing them being lost indefinitely. Maintenance funding continues to be spent on critical safety work, particularly fire safety as mentioned, and addressing critical risks to capacity. Considerable work has gone into planning refurbishment works at HMP Wymott and HMPPS is currently working through options for the provision of temporary accommodation at the site to facilitate the refurbishment of A and B wings when this is ready to proceed.

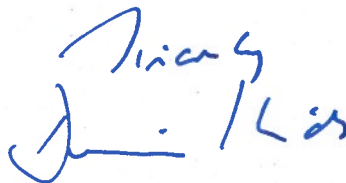
The Justice Select Committee (JSC) published their report into the Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentence on 28 September 2022 following a year-long inquiry. The Government has now issued a formal response to the Committee's report, which can be accessed on the [parliament.uk](https://www.parliament.uk) website. The Government continues to focus on the rehabilitation of IPP prisoners through a refreshed and updated Action Plan, published on 26 April 2023, as a response to the JSC's report. The Plan provides a renewed focus on supporting those serving IPP sentences in both custody and the community, by ensuring that each prisoner has a robust and effective sentence plan, tailored to their individual need, and supporting those in the community on licence to comply with their conditions. 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. These efforts in recent years delivered a substantial reduction in the number of IPP prisoners who have never been released. That number stood at 1,269 at the end of September 2023, a reduction from 1,437 at the end of September 2022.

Following the Committee's assertion that offenders serving an IPP sentence on licence in the community are being recalled unnecessarily, HM Chief Inspector of Probation will now conduct an independent thematic inspection on the Probation Service's use of recall in IPP cases. The Chief Inspector will assess whether decisions to recall an IPP offender were necessary and proportionate in response to evidence of increased risk upon breaching of licence conditions. We expect to receive the Chief Inspector's findings by the end of the calendar year. In the meantime, HMPPS officials will complete a short, timebound review of internal processes, to ensure that the decision making processes for both the Probation Service, who are responsible for requesting the recall of IPP offenders, and for staff working in HMPPS Headquarters who formally revoke the offender's licence, are robust and ensure that sufficient evidence is provided in support of recall.

It remains a priority for His Majesty's Government that all those serving the IPP sentence receive the support they need to progress towards safe release from custody or, where they are being supervised on licence in the community, towards having their licence terminated altogether. In that respect, the Lord Chancellor advised in his statement to the House of Commons, on 16 October, that he would be looking at options to curtail the licence period to restore greater proportionality to IPP sentences in line with recommendation eight of the JSC's report. He will come back to the House on that in due course.

It was encouraging to receive your comments about the Recoop buddy system that supports older and disabled prisoners that has become a model for other prisons, and of the Asset Based Community Development scheme that encourages prisoners to develop and share their skills. I was reassured to learn of the circulation of the HMPPS Safety Learning Bulletin on the risks of self-harm and suicide among IPP prisoners along with the introduction of an IPP Forum.

I note you have raised some 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 Wymott.



Damian Hinds
Minister for Prisons and Probation

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

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

New Prison Locations

HMPPS understands the Board's concerns about the impact of any new prison built near HMPs Wymott and Garth and its potential effects on staff recruitment. HMPPS also recognises that the recruitment of IMB members has been challenging for some time.

The labour market has been challenging, but we have recently seen the national staffing picture for prisons improving. As of 30 June 2023, there were 22,426 Band 3-5 prison officers in post within public sector prisons, an increase of 701 (3.2%) Full Time Equivalent staff since 30 June 2022. Should plans for the new prison go ahead, HMPPS would work very closely with the operator during the preparation and mobilisation phases and, in the competition to select the operator, significant weighting will be given in the evaluation process to their staffing levels and proposals for the recruitment and retention of staff.

Maintenance and Refurbishment

A business case for the refurbishment of A and B wings at HMP Wymott has been submitted and is under review. Any request from the establishment for further capital maintenance investment will be considered, noting that demands for maintenance are much greater than the available funding. Therefore, once a bid for a project is received, HMPPS has to prioritise works very carefully to make best use of funding, focusing on risk to life and risk to capacity and decency. Maintenance will continue to be undertaken on A and B wings until the refurbishment project commences. There is no change in the funding for the kitchen upgrade.

Since publication of the report, a failing roof in the main industries building has resulted in damage to alarms and electrics and now needs urgent repair and investment. These repairs have not yet begun and could possibly take up to a year to complete. The prison is developing plans to mitigate the loss of activity spaces during this time.

Staffing

Retaining skilled, experienced staff, is vital to ensuring prisons remain safe, secure and decent, not least because of the jail-craft built up. Nationally, HMPPS and private sector prison operators are accordingly focusing efforts on prisons with higher attrition rates. HMPPS retention strategy 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 establishments to ensure that they are embedding individual Retention Plans. For new joiners, HMPPS invested in a number of new initiatives to support new staff with over 150 New Colleague Mentors, buddy schemes, and bolstered leadership training. HMPPS also launched an Alumni scheme which encourages former officers to return to the service, bringing with them their previous levels of experience.

Workforce planning processes are in place to ensure prison groups have the level of detail needed to manage current staffing levels appropriately and make accurate predictions around future resourcing needs. HMPPS is currently reviewing resource requirements for all prison types to ensure that staffing budgets across the estate are aligned to our agreed delivery priorities and support improvement in the management of key operational risks across the system, thereby ensuring that each prison has a staffing model that fulfil its function. A National Training Committee is in place to oversee the delivery of training

across the prison service and ensure that the risk associated with appropriate delivery is managed with suitable mitigations put in place nationally.

The 2023/24 Prison Service pay award delivered a pay rise of 7% for Band 3-5 prison officers on modernised terms and conditions, bringing the starting salary for an entry level officer (on the national rate, 39 hours with unsocial hours) to £32,851. Our lowest paid Operational Support Grades (Band 2) received an increase of £2,000. HMPPS hopes this will have a positive impact on both recruitment and retention and we will continue to closely monitor the impact of this significant investment into pay.