



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP/YOI Brinsford  
1 New Road, Featherstone  
Wolverhampton  
WV10 7PY

27<sup>th</sup> November 2023

*Dear Chair,*

**HMP/YOI BRINSFORD: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 JULY 2022 – 30 JUNE 2023**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP/YOI Brinsford. I commend the Board for carrying out its statutory role effectively, especially as you had many vacancies.

Thank you for bringing to my attention that some residential units were without central heating during the reporting year and the contract for installing the new boilers did not cover all the required aspects. I hope to assure the Board that funding has been secured to replace the failing old boilers and as the Board may be aware, in the first half of 2023 specialist contractors carried out a lengthy flush of the pipework. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) accepts that further work is required to fit thermostats to the heating system, however, the Governor reports there are provisions in place to enable prisoners to cool their cell, if necessary. Additional bids to replace more elements of the heating and hot water systems such as pumps, plate heat exchangers and controls will be submitted. All work requests 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 must prioritise works very carefully to make best use of funding, focusing on risk to life and risk to capacity.

Regarding the education curriculum, Governors are responsible for commissioning courses and if the provider is unable to deliver the commissioned product, the provider is not paid. In general terms, a Service Level Agreement (SLA) for the contract is in place, which measures the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and financially penalises where standards fall below 'Good' or 'Outstanding' as described by Ofsted. The prison itself measures this service level and HMPPS will check how the prison has rated the teaching quality. The contract financially penalises the education provider for not meeting stretching service targets, some of which are impacted by the prison's own performance. Those financial penalties can equate to 10% of earnings.

In terms of progress, the contract management has improved locally, with an additional contract manager to support HMP/YOI Brinsford and the Regional Head of Learning Skills and Employment. New SLAs have been introduced for this contract year, which carry a larger financial reward if met, but also means if they are not met than the provider is not rewarded for non-delivery. The new education contract(s) will be introduced from April 2025, issues and learning from the current contracts will be taken into consideration. Additionally, contract local assurance measures have been introduced and these will feed into regional and national assurance work.

Turning to your Board's comments about the length of time prisoners are on remand, since the barrister industrial strike last year, the outstanding caseload in the Crown Court has increased to 65,000 at end of August 2023. Despite these additional pressures, judges were able to dispose of hundreds more cases in

July and August 2023 compared to previous months. The Government has introduced a raft of measures to improve the justice system which includes funding another year of unlimited sitting days, recruiting up to 1,000 judges across all jurisdictions and investing £220 million in essential modernisation and repair work of court buildings across the next two years. Alongside this, we are investing in various key services to support remand prisoners and prepare them for release. Remand prisoners can access the same NHS provision as sentenced prisoners and we are investing to support more into treatment, including recruiting dedicated Drug Strategy Leads in male Category C and women's prisons.

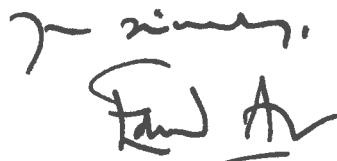
Remand prisoners are eligible to access education and training if they wish but are not considered for offending behaviour work, given their offending behaviour is not confirmed. Whilst Accredited Programmes do not currently sit within the Pre-Release function, West Midlands probation region has set up a task group to review the use of offender behaviour programmes within HMP/YOI Brinsford. Remand prisoners can access advice and support on employment and claiming benefits from the Department for Work and Pension's network of Prison Work Coaches. With regard to resettlement support, probation Pre-Release Teams assess and identify immediate needs on entry into custody through the Basic Custody Screening Tool (BCST2), this includes help with maintaining/ terminating tenancies, addressing outstanding debts and pursuing accommodation options prior to release. HMPPS is currently working on extending the contracts for Commissioned Rehabilitative Services Accommodation to unconvicted and unsentenced people in prison.

It is recognised that the pre-release provision to remand prisoners at HMP/YOI Brinsford has been limited given the lack of CRS provision and absence of a Community Probation Practitioner. Despite this, the Pre-Release Team continues to support the remand population and West Midlands probation region is working to improve the quality of the BCST2 screenings and in doing so, is developing an audit process that will ensure a proportion of screenings are measured monthly. Following a recent successful pilot with Warwickshire Local Authority (LA), all remand prisoners presenting as No Fixed Abode from the Warwickshire area upon entry into HMP/YOI Brinsford will have a Duty to Refer (DTR) completed by the Pre-Release Team. This is regardless of the length of time between court dates with potential release dates tracked to enable Warwickshire LA to commence preparatory work for accommodation in the event of an immediate release from court.

Turning to some positive comments helpfully captured in your report, it was encouraging to note HMP/YOI Brinsford is a safe prison and compared to similar establishments has lower levels of self-harm, violence and substance misuse. I applaud the resettlement work delivered by Ernst and Young LLP Outreach and work done by The Invested Man charity to change prisoners' mental attitude. Likewise, the Maverick Sounds project enabling prisoners to express themselves through the art of music. It was also reassuring to note that prisoners housed in the new Incentivised Substance Free Unit have spoken positively to the Board about it and I am pleased the Care and Separation Unit has strengthened since a new regime was introduced.

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.

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



**RT HON EDWARD ARGAR MP**

## HMP/YOI BRINSFORD: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JULY 2022 – 30 JUNE 2023

### HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

#### **Reception Roof**

A Maintenance Bid was submitted for a complete roof repair in April 2023, and we await the outcome. In the meantime, works to the leaking areas were completed by a specialist roofing contractor in September 2023 and this appears to have addressed the issue. However, we will continue to monitor this.

#### **Purposeful Activity**

Purposeful activity is one of HMP/YOI Brinsford's three key priorities, the appropriate allocation, based on a sequenced journey, is vital to supporting the long-term release and rehabilitation of prisoners. This requires prisoners to engage with all aspects of their individual journey.

Activity places are limited, due in part to the limited infrastructure available for use as purposeful workshop and activity places. Tea packing described in your report is a contract workshop; however, this will eventually become a holding activity for prisoners who have completed induction but are not able to start on their chosen pathway. Forklift Truck training is popular but is limited by the required number of learners to instructors ratio. The Annual Delivery Plan has training planned for 36 weeks of the year, which is 54 learners, the same teacher will also deliver Traffic Management for the other weeks he works. The Governor will explore more placement opportunities for prisoners going forward.

#### **Prisoners' Property**

The introduction of the digitally recorded Person Escort Record including a property section that accurately records the number and type of sealed property 'owned' by and transferred with the prisoner and an accurate record of property handover, is now embedded. The digital process has already assisted with investigations for property that is lost in transit with the Prisoner Escort Custody Services supplier.

HMPPS notes the Board's concerns about prisoners' property, despite implementation of the *Prisoners' Property Policy Framework*, which came in to effect on 5 September 2022. The Framework places an emphasis on ensuring compliance with volumetric control limits, since anything within these limits will be transferred with the prisoner. Volumetric control limits apply to all prisons and the Framework contains a leaflet to explain these limits to prisoners. The Framework introduced a new requirement that prisons must transfer excess property within four weeks unless there are exceptional circumstances which make this impossible. In addition, emphasis has been placed on the accurate recording of items. The Framework is clear that Governors should ensure management checks are undertaken to have confidence that prisoners' property is being handled correctly and with care. Any other digital improvements will be longer-term. HMPPS will monitor the impact of the new Framework going forward and will continue to look at what further improvements can be made.