



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Preston  
2 Ribbleton Lane  
Preston  
Lancashire  
PR1 5AB

28<sup>th</sup> November 2023

*Dear Chair,*

**HMP PRESTON: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 APRIL 2022 – 31 MARCH 2023**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Preston. I commend the Board for carrying out its statutory role effectively particularly as you continued to operate with several vacancies. I was saddened to hear that four 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.

I appreciate the Board's continued concerns about the reception facilities at HMP Preston. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) and the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) Property Directorate have had discussions with the local council regarding the adjacent museum/former sessions court house building and have visited to inspect it. The council only wishes to sell the building rather than lease it. The building is old and very large and is Grade II listed. It would require considerable upkeep if purchased, and there is no entrance into the prison itself which would pose a privacy and security risk as prisoner documents would need to be transported outside the secure perimeter.

A further options analysis has been commissioned, to include conversion of the museum building into a combined gate and administration/offender management unit building. Given the listing of the building, conversations are taking place with the local planning officer adding to the complexity and timescales for the process. Given that the museum conversion option may turn out to be unviable, other options within the existing site perimeter are currently being explored with a view to having a solution designed and ready to be considered for funding in future financial years. This issue remains a priority objective for HMP Preston.


I note the Board's concerns about the transfer of prisoners' property. The Board will be aware that the new Prisoners' Property Policy Framework was implemented during 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. 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. HMPPS will monitor the impact of the new Framework going forward and will continue to look at what further improvements can be made.

As part of the planning for the current Prisoner Escort Custody Services (PECS) contract, it was agreed that the new vehicle fleet would have increased capacity to facilitate an additional half bag of property for consumables to the limit of 7.5kg. The vehicle fleet is designed to transfer the number of prisoners intended, together with their property in line with the volumetric limits governed by the new Framework. The introduction of the digitally recorded Prisoner Escort Record (dPER) includes 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 between different stakeholders. The digital process has assisted with investigations for property that is lost in transit with PECS suppliers. In the event capacity is reached on the transport vehicle, the responsibility for transfer of any remaining items remains with the sending prison. Although HMP Preston has high levels of churn receiving up to 80 new receptions each week, the prison will continue to make it's best efforts to ensure prisoners have their property and it is treated with care.

It was encouraging to receive your comments about the completion of the installation of in-cell telephones, the commencement of the laundry equipment replacement programme, and the launch of The Support Hub where the Board has already received positive feedback.

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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RT Hon Edward Argar MP', written in a cursive style.

**RT HON EDWARD ARGAR MP**

## **HMP PRESTON: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 APRIL 2022 – 31 MARCH 2023**

### **HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report**

#### **Maintenance Budgets**

HMPPS recognises there has been one item on long term hire in the kitchen that MoJ Property Directorate has been funding. This was pending funding approval for a permanent replacement and the decision was taken to mitigate the risk to prisoners. The decision to hire ensured HMP Preston could deliver a reliable catering service. Although the cost of hire added a financial pressure, catering could not have been delivered without this contingency arrangement. HMPPS acknowledges that hiring equipment on this scale is not ideal, however it was necessary on this occasion. Funding for a permanent solution has now been approved and additional equipment has been secured in the annual catering asset replacement programme.

Any future requests for capital replacement of hired items will be considered, noting that demands for maintenance are much greater than the available funding. Therefore, once a bid is received, HMPPS has to prioritise works very carefully to make best use of that funding, focusing on risk to life and risk to capacity and decency.