



Ministry
of Justice

Rt Hon Edward Argar MP
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP/YOI Sudbury
Sudbury
Ashbourne
DE6 5HW

27th November 2023

Dear Chair,

**HMP/YOI SUDBURY: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 JUNE 2022 - 31 MAY 2023**

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

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 informed on progress during your regular meetings. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) comments in response to the other issues raised in your report are set out within the attached annex.

It was encouraging to receive your positive comments about HMP/YOI Sudbury, and I thank you for highlighting the marked improvements during the reporting year. Compared to last year, it was pleasing to note there was a reduction in prisoner/staff assaults, self-harm incidents were low, and staff and prisoner relationships have improved. Likewise, it was pleasing to note the general environment at HMP/YOI Sudbury has been enhanced and some good initiatives adopted to support family contact. It was also pleasing to note a series of events were held with former prisoners to showcase their career development since being released and that an astonishing 69% of released prisoners assigned to the external working paid scheme secured employment in the community. It was interesting to learn about HMP/YOI Sudbury's library provision and reassuring to hear the library is used by 90% of the population.

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

RT HON EDWARD ARGAR MP

HMP/YOI SUDBURY: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JUNE 2022 - 31 MAY 2023

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) Applications

It is acknowledged that some Probation Delivery Units (PDU) have struggled to process ROTL applications, and these are generally those designated as a 'Red site'. This means that staffing levels are particularly low in the PDU and there are few staff to whom this work can be allocated to. As a consequence, applications have been completed later than expected. There is an escalation route in place, initially to community team managers, which includes the Regional Offender Management in Custody Lead and Head of Public Protection. Midlands Probation Service has now instigated a weekly review to monitor overdue ROTL checks and ensure completion is prioritised.

At HMP/YOI Sudbury, supervision with prison offender managers takes place to review progress of all caseloads and ROTL boards. A data base tracker has been created to track dates, including Offender Assessment System report sign offs, and other staff are being trained to help reduce the backlog. The Offender Management Unit (OMU) Hub manager completes managerial checks and reports any concerns to the Head of OMU. Any individual concerns are investigated and checked by a manager to ensure consistency. A quarterly breakdown of statistics has been introduced to measure/monitor performance.

Illicit Items

HMPPS is committed to ensuring prisons are sufficiently resourced, and HMP/YOI Sudbury is an example of recent improvements in the national prison staffing picture. From June 2022 to June 2023, the number of Band 3-5 prison officers increased from 71 to 79 (by 11%). Currently, there is ongoing work to examine the overall staffing model, to help improve our analysis of resource allocation across the system, as it relates to specific tasks, such as residential or security duties. This project aims to ensure we have prioritised staff resources to address key business risk areas.

Significant investment has been made across the prison system under the Security Investment Programme for prisons to reduce conveyance, but this was targeted at the closed estate given the vulnerabilities and greater risk. However, the Risk and Capabilities Unit (RaCU) at HMPPS has offered support to HMP/YOI Sudbury through the regular Category D Open Forum and supported an upskilling programme on Local Tactical Assessments best practice and assisted the prison in identifying key risks and mitigating actions. RaCU meets with HMP/YOI Sudbury's Head of Security during monthly regional security meetings and has recently offered support around mobile phone detection. HMP/YOI Sudbury has appointed a Head of Wellbeing and Drug Strategy. They will lead on the work, alongside partners, to develop a range of strategies to reduce both supply and demand. This will include a full review of the current Drug Strategy to ensure it focuses on using intelligence to reduce supply routes and inform targeted searching procedures.

Educational Courses

We acknowledge the Board's concerns. The responsibility for commissioning courses in closed prisons lies with the respective Governor and they are responsible for allocating prisoners to appropriate courses. The Governor of HMP/YOI Sudbury will continue to promote learning and external work opportunities whilst providing English and Maths Levels one and two.

Wi-Fi Availability

As part of the delivery of the future Prison Education Service, HMPPS has been working in partnership with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) to design, develop and deploy an Education IT system that better represents what prisoners would utilise in the community. The new infrastructure will include having Wi-Fi installed into all education departments, libraries and workshops (prisons that are within the current education contracts) and a new cloud-based platform to aid consistency of prisoner's experience regardless of which prison they are assigned to. The installing period for the new networks will begin from November 2023 followed by a phased roll out across the prison estate.

Late Arrivals

Prisoner Escort Custody Services (PECS) Escort Contractors are required to return prisoners by the prison's 'latest reception time'. Specific contract performance measures are in place to monitor the return journey (i.e., to transport a prisoner back within three hours of their court appearance). The dispersed nature of the prison estate requires the contractor to effectively manage their vehicle fleet. However, as highlighted by the Board prisoners are often late arriving to HMP/YOI Sudbury. This can be due to late court sittings, together with long distances coupled with traffic/adverse weather conditions that the contractor may encounter on route, which then has a detrimental impact on arrival times. Escort Contractors are required to ensure receiving prisons are informed of any delays and agreement is sought in advance for the safe receipt of any late arrivals. PECS continue to monitor all aspects of the contractors' performance and where it fails to meet the agreed levels it is raised with the contractor for improvement.

All prisoners are screened as fit to be transferred before arrival and if there is an issue identified Healthcare will arrange to see the prisoner. HMP/YOI Sudbury will always aim to provide adequate cover so that prisoners who do arrive late in reception are settled and their initial needs met. Most are seen by a Healthcare member of staff shortly after their arrival, but if not, they are seen the following morning. Welfare checks are carried out during the night for prisoners that need to be watched/assessed.

Accommodation Refurbishment and Improvements

Unfortunately, the £4.5 million fire safety improvement works did not go ahead this year but are rescheduled to start in early 2024 and anticipated to be completed before the end of 2026. As mentioned in last year's response, this will ensure all accommodation is compliant, with automated fire detection, suppression and ventilation.

MoJ Property Services will submit an Estates Investment Proposal bid containing options for full refurbishment of the East and West dormitories (including P dormitory) or replacement of the old accommodation blocks with new modern equivalents. In the meantime, planned and reactive maintenance and small-scale improvement projects to the existing showers, washroom and urinal areas will continue.

Prisoners' Property

As the Board is aware, PECS provide transportation for prisoners and their property. As part of the planning for the current PECS contract, which commenced in August 2020, PECS engaged with MoJ Policy Leads to review property limits on transportation, and 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 limit. In addition, the PECS supplier shall transfer a reasonable volume of legal documentation.

The introduction of the digitally recorded Persons Escort Record (dPER) includes a property section to accurately record the number and type of sealed property 'owned' by and transferred with the prisoner

and to capture an accurate record of property handover. This is now embedded as business as usual. The digital process has assisted with investigations for property lost in transit with the PECS supplier, however, PECS receive few complaints for lost property overall and often the issue is not attributed to the PECS supplier.

PECS review complaints during monthly formal meetings with the PECS supplier. During the last 12 months there have been no complaints received from HMP/YOI Sudbury in relation to the loss of property attributed to PECS. For property delay, in-line with the HMPPS Prisoner Property Framework if the limit of items allowed in possession has been reached, and if there is no space on the escort vehicle to transport items safely and securely, then responsibility for transfer of any remaining items remains with the sending prison.

HMPPS notes the Board's concerns about the transfer of prisoners' property, despite implementation of the Prisoners' Property Policy Framework which came into 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. 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.

Reception staff at HMP/YOI Sudbury will ensure that when property arrives in reception the prisoner is identified and called to reception to enable their property item(s) to be issued without delay.