



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP/YOI Hull  
Hedon  
Hull  
HU9 5LS

Dear Chair,

4<sup>th</sup> December 2023

**HMP/YOI HULL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 MARCH 2022 to 28 FEBRUARY 2023**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP/YOI Hull. 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 two 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 understand the Board's continued concerns about estate capacity and use of double cells. The prison estate is facing population pressures and on 16 October 2023 the Lord Chancellor gave a statement to the House of Commons on criminal justice in which he outlined the steps being taken to manage population pressures. To manage overcrowding, HM Prison and Probation Services (HMPPS) published a revised framework in Spring 2022 for the certification of prisoner accommodation from which the useable operational capacity of the estate is derived. The operational capacity at each prison predominantly relates to manageability of the risks involved. Under HMPPS policy the total number of prisoners that an establishment can hold, including the maximum level of crowding, is set by the Prison Group Director (PGD). In making this assessment, the PGD is required to take into account control, security and the proper operation of the planned regime using their operational judgement and experience. Given that several of the factors that affect maximum crowding levels are dynamic, this decision is regularly reviewed. No prison will ever be expected to exceed its operational capacity and the Governor has assurance processes in place to ensure living condition standards are met.

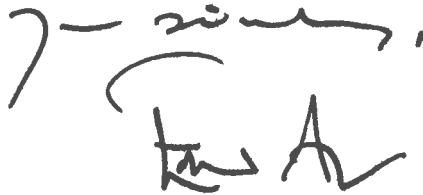
In the longer term, we are delivering 20,000 additional modern uncrowded prison places which is the largest prison build programme since the Victorian era, ensuring the right conditions are in place to rehabilitate prisoners, helping to cut crime and protect the public. We have already delivered around 5,600 places, including through brand new prisons HMPs Fosse Way and HMP Five Wells. There may be options in future to further reduce crowding levels, for example if population growth is slower than projected and there is sufficient headroom in the estate. This would enable targeted reductions of the least suitable prison places (including crowded places), but it is not possible to commit to this based on the latest projected population. It is also difficult to predict how these national trends will play out at a local level and the proportion of prisoners held in crowded cells at HMP Hull will always ultimately depend on regional population levels and demand.

It was encouraging to receive your comments about the positive prisoner and officer relationships throughout the establishment. I was also pleased to read about the success of the body scanner in

reducing illicit substances entering the prison, and that HMP/YOI Hull has the lowest prisoner on prisoner violence within its benchmarking group and the second lowest number of staff assaults.

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 'Ed Argar', with a large, stylized initial 'E' and 'A'.

RT HON EDWARD ARGAR MP

## HMP/YOI HULL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 MARCH 2022 - 28 FEBRUARY 2023

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

#### **Prisoners' Property**

HMPPS notes the Board's concerns about the transfer of prisoners' property, despite the implementation of the Prisoners' Property Policy Framework 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. It also sets out that, where prisoners have transferred, establishments must liaise with each other to ensure any property complaints are investigated and answered efficiently and promptly without placing unnecessary burdens on the prisoner. HMPPS will monitor the impact of the new Framework going forward and will continue to look at where further improvements can be made.

#### **Food Budgets**

Food budgets are determined locally by the Governor in Public Sector Prisons (or the Director in privately managed prisons) and kept under review as part of normal budget allocation planning. Prison Rules require that prisoners are provided with three meals a day that are varied, nutritious and meet the religious, cultural and medical needs of all. The HMPPS Catering Team based at headquarters has also been providing support to all prison establishments to help address the rising cost of food. The team is working closely with local catering managers to understand issues and share good practice ideas with food suppliers to look at supply and sourcing options. They are also working closely with the Department for Health and Social Care to provide enhanced advice to prisoners and staff across the estate on eating healthy meals following government guidelines.

To improve the daily food offering, the lunchtime menu at HMP/YOI Hull was recently changed to provide a hot snack option such as soup, jacket potato, hot pastry, fishcake. For most mealtimes the prison is now providing a five-choice menu service (vegan, vegetarian, halal, meat and fish). Additionally, the prison was awarded a 5-star environmental health rating in June 2023 by the Environmental Health Office.

#### **Probation Resourcing**

Although there are some staffing issues across the Yorkshire and the Humber region, the Probation Delivery Units (PDUs) local to HMP/YOI Hull are relatively well resourced. HMPPS will continue to monitor local resourcing levels and has undertaken recruitment of Probation Service Officers where necessary. HMPPS conducts recruitment campaigns at certain points over the year, with an extended training/qualification period. Once qualified, any gaps are filled as part of this process.

Nationally, HMPPS has increased funding for the Probation Service by an additional £155 million per year. There is a continued focus on recruitment and retention and HMPPS has accelerated recruitment of trainee Probation Officers to increase staffing levels, particularly in PDUs with the most significant staffing challenges. Consequently, over 4,000 trainees have joined the service between April 2020 and March 2023. A number of targeted recruitment campaigns have been conducted across the Probation Service to help bolster the number of applications, including recruiting for key grades, and ensuring sufficient staffing levels in the hardest to recruit regions.

Although progress is being made in increasing staffing levels which will directly impact on reducing workloads, HMPPS recognises that recruitment and training takes time, which is why we are also focused

on retaining our experienced and valuable staff. This is key to ensuring staff have manageable workloads in the long term. Initiatives already implemented and aimed at improving retention include:

- A national and standardised approach to exit interviews to better understand the key drivers of attrition and the launch of a Retention Toolkit to support this work.
- A multi-year pay deal for all Probation Service staff to aid recruitment and retention and guarantee annual salary increases until the end of financial year 2024/25.
- We continue to encourage agency staff and leavers to return on permanent terms and provide financial support to incentivise staff to move permanently to areas with the most significant staffing challenges.