



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP/YOI Portland
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January 2024

Dear Chair,

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

Thank you for providing your annual report on HMP/YOI Portland. I commend the Board for carrying out its statutory role effectively, particularly as you operated with several vacancies. I was deeply saddened to hear that one offender died during the reporting year the day after release and I would like to confirm that recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman are taken very seriously.

I have read your correspondence with care. I understand the Board's concerns about the resettlement provision to support prisoners in their release. Further to my predecessor's response to your last report, HMP Portland does have a probation pre-release team based at the prison who identify and address immediate resettlement needs with the Prison and Probation Offender Managers communicating directly where necessary to discuss any specific issues. HMP/YOI Portland has taken action by appointing a new Prison Employment Lead in October 2023, who is assisting prisoners to find employment ready for their release and will be working alongside a new Banking and ID support worker who starts in January 2024. However, it is recognised that improvements need to be made and HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is focused on embedding and improving the performance of its resettlement approach across the prison estate, since its launch alongside the unified Probation Service in July 2021. Additional funding has been provided to enable the recruitment of a record number of trainee Probation Officers in recent years. In addition, during the spending review period 2022/23 – 2024/25 a landmark investment is being made to reduce reoffending through a range of initiatives to support prison leavers into employment, stable accommodation and drug treatment. The creation of HMPPS Area Executive Director roles in October 2023 will also enable increased collaboration between prisons and probation to maximise this investment and drive continuous improvement to support prison leavers to resettlement into communities post release.

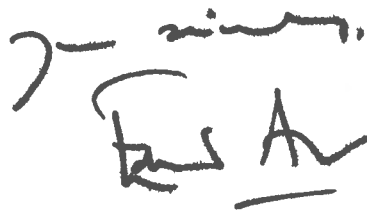
Turning to the Board's concerns about the Community Accommodation Service (CAS3) national implementation. The Prisons Strategy White Paper set out plans to reduce reoffending, including improving prison leavers' access to accommodation, such as delivering the transitional accommodation service, known as CAS3. CAS3 was launched in July 2021 providing up to 12 weeks accommodation on release with support to move to settled accommodation initially in five probation regions. The service was expanded to Wales in June 2022 and between 1 July 2021 and 31 March 2023 it allowed 5,796 prison leavers to have a stable accommodation base on release to improve their chances to gain employment. Implementation in the remaining probation regions in England has been taking place throughout 2023 and in May 2023 agreement was given for the CAS3 service in the South West to commence. The Housing

Network (THN) has since been mobilising the service and whilst it is recognised there have been some challenges in finding appropriate local accommodation, it is expected that THN will be delivering close to the targeted 184 emergency accommodation beds by March 2024.

Despite your concerns, it was reassuring to receive your comments that the prison provides a safe and relaxed environment. It is pleasing to note that prisoners feel respected and that they have positive relationships with staff enabling them to approach staff for support when needed. I was encouraged to read about the high priority placed on cleanliness and that prisoners recognise the visible improvements being made to the accommodation. It was interesting to read about the efforts put into pieces for the Art Exhibition and the recognition given to the library facilities and progression prisoners have made in education and vocational opportunities during the year.

I note you have raised some local issues of concern in your report including Key Work. The Governor will continue to keep you aware as work continues and as the operational staffing position improves Key Work will be re-launched at the prison during 2024.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Argar', with a horizontal line underneath.

RT HON EDWARD ARGAR MP