



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP/YOI Chelmsford
200 Springfield Road
Chelmsford
Essex
CM2 6LQ

27th February 2024

Dear Chair,

**HMP/YOI CHELMSFORD: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 SEPTEMBER 2022 – 31 AUGUST 2023**

Thank you for providing your annual report on HMP/YOI Chelmsford. I commend the Board for carrying out its statutory role effectively, particularly as you continued to operate with several vacancies. I was deeply saddened to hear three prisoners died during the reporting year. I would like to reassure the Board that I take recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman very seriously.

I have read your report with care. I appreciate the Board's concerns about the difficulty in transferring prisoners to appropriate mental health facilities in the community and thank you for drawing this to my attention. NHS England works closely with the Governor and their team and the healthcare service provider to understand each case where men have been assessed for transfer to secure beds. The time taken to arrange the transfer is subject to clear guidance and there is continuous monitoring and audit of all cases.

I would like to assure the Board that the Governor will continue to support the healthcare team as best as possible by expediting transfers once approved and liaising with NHS Commissioners where appropriate to improve outcomes. HMP/YOI Chelmsford has very good partnership working with its healthcare provider which ensures prisoners receive the best possible care available whilst awaiting transfer to a secure bed.

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. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) comments in response to other issues raised in your report are set out in the attached annex.

I was encouraged to note the numerous positive comments throughout the report and particularly the good interaction between staff and prisoners together with the second consecutive annual decline in prisoner violence. I was also impressed to learn of the innovative measures taken by the education staff, the good work of the library team, and the reintroduction of the football matches and excellent work of the gym staff. The prisoner that constructed the garden polytunnel, resulting in an impressive harvest, should also be commended. I appreciate the valuable contribution from members of Independent Monitoring Boards and am grateful for the work you do.

RT HON EDWARD ARGAR MP

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Overcrowding

HMPPS understands the Board's continued concerns about overcrowding. The prison estate is facing population pressures as is well documented 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. As mentioned last year, accommodating two prisoners in a cell designed for one is never desirable but continues to be necessary across the estate to accommodate all those committed to custody by the courts. Operational capacities, including manageable levels of crowding, are set by senior operational managers responsible for managing the prison, considering risks to safety and stability.

For the longer term, HMPPS is delivering 20,000 additional modern uncrowded prison places, 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 over 5,800 of these places, including two brand new prisons HMP Fosse Way and HMP Five Wells.