



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP/YOI Bronzefield  
Woodthorpe Road  
Ashford  
Middlesex  
TW15 3JZ

14<sup>th</sup> March 2024

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

Thank you for providing your annual report on HMP/YOI Bronzefield which I have read with care. I commend the Board for carrying out its statutory role effectively, particularly as you operated with several vacancies. Please accept my apologies for the delay in replying.

I understand the Board's continued concerns about the resettlement support prisoners are receiving due to probation staffing. Funding for the Probation Service has increased by an additional £155 million a year to deliver tougher supervision, reduce caseloads and to recruit more staff to keep the public safer. The Probation Service workforce position including those working in Approved Premises, as of 31 December 2023, increased by 1,852 full time equivalent (FTE) staff since the same time last year. Specifically, Kent, Surrey and Sussex Probation Service saw an increase of 142 FTE staff over the same 12 month period. It is acknowledged that the London region has a shortage of staff and steps continue to be taken to recruit the right people needed to provide consistent probation services. Like other large organisations, HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is experiencing recruitment challenges, exacerbated by the volatility of the post pandemic labour market and cost of living crisis, particularly in London and the South East. Progress is being made in increasing staffing levels which will reduce the workloads of staff, with accelerated recruitment of trainee Probation Officers, particularly to Probation Delivery Units with the most significant staffing challenges. Targeted recruitment campaigns continue to increase the number of applications and recruitment will continue in volume and at pace for operational roles. The Kent, Surrey and Sussex probation region has also prioritised deployment of new staff to HMP/YOI Bronzefield as the importance of supporting the needs of prisoners located there is recognised. However, recruitment and training does take time, which is why there remains the focus on retaining experienced and valuable staff. Initiatives to improve recruitment and retention include the multi-year pay deal which provides a year-on-year pay increases for all probation staff until the end of financial year 2024/25.

It is recognised that prisoners at HMP/YOI Bronzefield experience significant challenges in securing stable accommodation on release because accommodation is often simply not available. Probation staff and other commissioned service providers do provide accommodation support but regrettably this does not guarantee that stable accommodation can be secured for every woman leaving HMP/YOI Bronzefield. Kent, Surrey and Sussex Probation Region have accepted Sodexo's proposal to provide four additional Probation Service Officers equivalent staff for 12 months to fill pre-release team vacancies at HMP/YOI Bronzefield (from January 2024). For those that otherwise would be homeless, CAS3 provides up to 12 weeks accommodation on release with support to move to settled accommodation. HMPPS expanded this service to Wales in June 2022 and was rolled out to the remaining six English probation regions in May 2023, including London.

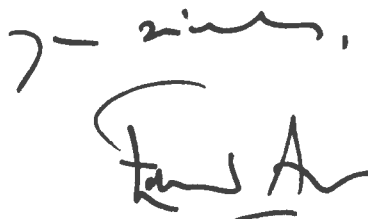
The Ministry of Justice remains committed to ending the use of prison as a place of safety for those who are awaiting treatment or assessment under the Mental Health Act, as well as tackling inappropriate remands to prison on the grounds of mental health. A Regional Health and Justice Hub is being piloted in the North East of England, which will work to improve the way that courts, health services and prisons work together at a local level to better support defendants with severe mental illness into the right treatment pathway, whether that is in hospital or in the community. The expansion of the HMPPS Bail Information Service will also help to ensure judges have the necessary information to make a timely and informed decision on bailing a vulnerable individual with confidence. Bail Information Officers will strengthen links between courts and bail accommodation services and build effective bail packages to support more offenders with mental health needs to access support in the community, avoiding unnecessary remands into custody.

NHS England and Health Partners are also continuing to work collaboratively together in order to support those who are mentally unwell people coming to prison. Locally the Mental Health Partnership Monitoring Board consisting of prison and Healthcare staff, Police, the Local Authority and Liaison and Diversion teams continue to meet monthly to review the overall position and individual cases. This partnership has actively encouraged and supported engagement of Magistrates through site visits to demonstrate that prison is not the best place for those who are mentally unwell. It is also recognised that when vulnerable offenders in prison meet the threshold for detention under the Mental Health Act and require a transfer to hospital, they continue to experience delays in accessing the specialist treatment they need. To reduce unnecessary delays and ensure patients can access the care they need in a timely manner, the Ministry of Justice is working with health and justice partners to introduce the non-statutory independent role designed to improve oversight and monitor delivery of the 28-day time limit set out in NHS England's good practice guidance.

Despite your concerns and the challenges that the prison has faced, it was encouraging to receive your comments that staff and prisoners' relationships have been positive. I also thank the Board for commending the staff within the prison's healthcare for their compassion and care of some seriously ill and complex prisoners. It is pleasing to note the prison environment is modern clean and bright and the re-introduction of the gardening team has improved the external spaces and provided purposeful work for prisoners. I was also reassured to read that there were no deaths in custody during the year and following the tragic death of Baby A the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman's recommendations have been fully implemented.

I note you have raised some local issues of concern in your report which the Director 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 stylized flourish underneath.

**RT HON EDWARD ARGAR MP**

## **HMP/YOI BRONZEFIELD: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 AUGUST 2022 – 31 JULY 2023**

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

#### **Mental Health Services in Prison**

Together with NHS England, services in prison continue to be improved to ensure that people have access to timely and effective mental health care that is tailored to their needs. This is reflected in the National Partnership Agreement on Health and Social Care in England which was published on 23 February 2023. The agreement sets out a shared priority workplan to deliver safe, decent, and effective care that improves health outcomes for people in prison and those subject to statutory supervision by the probation service in the community. All prisoners have access to integrated mental health services commissioned by NHS England which includes access to a range of treatments and interventions within prisons. In April 2023 a new contract was implemented for the Integrated Healthcare Services across Surrey which includes HMP/YOI Bronzefield. This now provides a fully integrated mental health model such as psychology, primary care mental health and longer-term interventions with complex trauma. There is also an acute mental health service which is led by a lead Consultant Psychiatrist with dedicated sessions, as well as ongoing Mental Health and Wellbeing Patient Interventions.

The HMPPS Women's Estate Case Advice and Support Panel (WECASP) also provides multidisciplinary support to prisons in the management of Restricted Status prisoners and those with complex needs who are not progressing in their sentence plan. Part of the criteria for a referral to the WECASP includes a severe or enduring mental illness that impacts daily functioning and there are currently 20 prisoners at HMP/YOI Bronzefield who are on the WECASP caseload. HMP/YOI Bronzefield also operates an Enhanced Offender Management programme, as part of the Offender Personality Disorder pathway, which uses a psychologically informed approach to provides prisoners with severe and complex needs with additional support and tailored management plans.

#### **Late Receptions**

Prisoner Escort and Custody Services (PECS) provider are contractually required to return prisoners by the prison's latest Reception time. Performance measures are in place to monitor the return journey of prisoners dealt with by the court, focusing the contractor to transport them within two hours of their court appearance. It is for the escort contractor to effectively manage their fleet however there may be occasions when late court sittings, together with the travel distance, traffic conditions or adverse weather that the contractor encounter on route have a detrimental impact on arrival times. The escort provider is required to ensure that the receiving prisons are informed of delays and agreement is sought in advance for the safe receipt of any late arrivals. PECS continues 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. Locally the reception processes at HMP/YOI Bronzefield are being reviewed to ensure that effective and efficient running of reception takes place and that prisoners are located on wings as quickly as possible, especially late at night. Due to the risks involved with vulnerable prisoners arriving late, this review includes considering whether more resources are required to ensure those who arrive after reception has closed can still undergo the full reception assessments by trained staff.

#### **Healthcare**

##### *GP Access*

NHS England are supporting an increase to the GP provision at HMP/YOI Bronzefield to ensure there is a physical presence at the prison during the weekend and to provide an appropriate level of substance

misuse GP cover. This increased provision will also provide additional specialities via a GP with special interests in Obstetrics and Primary Care, as well as a Clinical Lead who will enable more effective management of complex and challenging patients, provide a regular pain clinic and improve the collaborative partnership working across all healthcare services.

#### *Recovery Services*

A recruitment campaign has now taken place which has successfully resulted in several positions being filled. Since January 2024, the new staff have allowed there to be an increase in therapeutic group sessions and alcohol misuse services.

#### **Canteen Prices**

At the time that the Board refers to in the report, HMP Peterborough, which is recognised as the most directly comparable Sodexo prison to HMP/YOI Bronzefield, was in the process of conducting their own price review which had not yet been implemented. The Board may be aware that other prisons don't always offer the same brand or size of product that was being compared in the survey, so the prices are not always comparable. To ensure that HMP/YOI Bronzefield is being fair to prisoners a price review is conducted every six months with the on-site HMPPS Controllers Team ensuring that the retail price being charged to prisoners are within the prisons guideline which is a maximum of 10% above cost price. Once this process has been completed and signed off then the prices offered to prisoner are updated.

#### **The Mayor of London's comments on matters raised in the report**

To clarify for the Board, the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) does not have statutory powers, nor statutory duties to increase the availability of accommodation for prisoner leavers. However, the distinct accommodation needs are recognised as being crucial to their rehabilitation and turning their lives around to make valuable contributions to society, their families and reduced reoffending. MOPAC has therefore used convening powers to establish the London Blueprint Delivery Group, comprised of both statutory and Third Sector agencies, who have committed to prioritising accommodation in its refreshed Action Plan for 2023-2025. To help improve accommodation outcomes for people leaving prison the London Blueprint Delivery Group has produced the Women's Prison Release Practice Briefing. This has led to HMP Send developing a resource for their staff on women's housing post-release. Further work is also planned to use the briefing to help embed improvements in practice, particularly amongst London's local authorities. There will remain a focus by the Blueprint Delivery Group on the accommodation needs of women in contact with the Criminal Justice System of which HMP/YOI Bronzefield is a member and it is expected to adopt and utilize the Practice Briefing to reduce the number of people leaving prison homeless.

MOPAC supported Housing for Women (H4W) to a successful bid for Ministry of Justice funding which in April 2023, introduced a ReConnect+ supported housing service, with accommodation provision for 3-6 months, dependent on the resettlement needs of the women leaving prison. The service will expand from 4 to 12 accommodation units and in late 2024/2025 the service will move to a 'residential alternative to custody model' for appropriate women. MOPAC has also successfully lobbied the London Borough of Islington to allocate 5% of new social housing being built as part of the development of the former Holloway Prison site to be reserved to women in the criminal justice system, together with a new bespoke dedicated women's-only space. Phase 1 works are already underway, and Peabody Trust are forecasting completion in early 2027. In addition, as part of the Mayor's Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation (DASA) programme the support needs of vulnerable women offenders that have experienced domestic abuse will be considered to determine action the Mayor can take to tackle this.