



Ministry  
of Justice

**Rt Hon Edward Argar MP**  
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Cardiff  
Knox Road  
Cardiff  
CF24 0UG

5 April 2024

Dear Chair,

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

Thank you for providing your annual report on HMP Cardiff which I have read with care. I commend the Board for carrying out its statutory role effectively, particularly as you operated with several vacancies. I was deeply saddened to read that a prisoner died during the reporting year, and I would like to reassure the Board that recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman are taken very seriously.

I understand the Board's concerns about the infrastructure of an ageing prison and it is acknowledged that failure of the boilers has resulted in periods of reduced hot water or no hot water at all. Additional critical spares have been purchased and are now held on site to minimise future down time. An estates investment proposal is also being drafted to replace the boilers and improve the design of the current hot water infrastructure. Requests for funding to refurbish cell accommodation is also being submitted annually and will continue until all cells are refurbished to the required standards. However, it should be noted that these and all other funding proposals from across the estate are being considered taking into account that demands for maintenance are much greater than the available funding. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is therefore prioritising work very carefully to make best use of that funding, focusing on risk to life and risk to capacity and decency. Regarding the issue of vermin, increased baiting has reduced the levels of rats and mice around the prison site. Activity continues to be monitored and recommendations made of the pest control contractor are acted on accordingly.

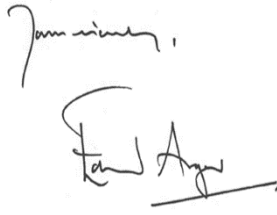
Turning to the Board's concerns about security vetting of new staff, whilst it is crucial this is conducted in a timely manner, the vetting checks are vital to assess individuals against a range of pre-employment legislative requirements and to protect the security and integrity of prisons. Vetting is being reviewed with enhancements implemented to combat new and emerging threats which will support thorough and timely vetting for anyone coming to work or provide services within HMPPS. Vetting delays are not currently being experienced with data showing vetting taking on average 17 working days for directly employed staff and averaging 9 working days for non-directly employed staff. However, this does not take account of any other stages of the recruitment process. HMP Cardiff have a strong working relationship with the vetting team and keep in regular contact with them to address any issues which may result in vetting delays. The local vetting processes at the prison have also been reviewed with an increased number of local vetting contact points introduced, including a new vetting contact point within the healthcare department. These changes have resulted in vetting times decreasing.

Despite your concerns, it was encouraging to receive your comments that staff have a good relationship with prisoners and there is a particularly high level of professionalism among reception staff to support

arriving prisoners. I was reassured to read that vulnerable prisoners are being supported through effective Assessment Care in Custody and Teamwork and that the new units for Neurodivergent and Incentivised Substance-Free Living are already supporting prisoners to make progress. It was pleasing to note that there have been improvements in healthcare staffing and the health and wellbeing needs of prisoners being met. I also welcome the recognition given to prisoner volunteers across the prison for their efforts in supporting their peers whether this is through forums, wing mentoring or being a listener to mention a few examples.

I note you have raised one local issue 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 I am grateful for the work you do.

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

**RT HON EDWARD ARGAR MP**

## **HMP CARDIFF: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 SEPTEMBER 2022 – 31 AUGUST 2023**

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

#### **Probation Staffing**

Over the last 24 months Wales Probation have invested in recruiting to the vacancies for Probation Officers and Probation Service Officers (PSO) within the Offender Management Unit and Resettlement teams. There have been rolling recruitment campaigns for both roles and a Wales Probation Outreach Worker has supported these campaigns to promote the roles and working for HMPPS at job fairs, colleges and universities. There have also been targeted webinars held for potential applicants to join and find out more about these roles and these actions have reduced the vacancies in Offender Management Units across Welsh prisons in the last 12 months.

Investment in the trainee probation officer cohorts over the last two years has resulted in 220 staff undertaking the Professional Qualification in Probation (PQIP) training, which is providing a flow of newly qualified Probation Officers. As it is recognised that it takes time to recruit and train these staff there has been additional investment to increase the number of PSO staff to support service delivery, as well as Probation Officers within Sentence Management Teams undertaking Offender Assessment system and other prison reports. It is also acknowledged that despite recruitment there has been attrition and to retain new starters, new colleague mentors have been put in place to support them from the start date of employment. HMP Cardiff has successfully filled its Prison Offender Managers roles and a further recruitment drive is planned in March 2024 to address vacancies within the Resettlement Team. The staffing at Probation Officer grade in HMP Cardiff is now at 80% which will increase as the PQIP trainees qualify. In the interim there is a policy within the Probation Delivery Units to support the rotation of existing skilled staff into different roles.

#### **Social Visits Booking**

Prior to HMPPS Family Services taking over the management of telephone bookings for social visits, HMP Cardiff staff followed the same process as Family Services currently follow. HMP Cardiff had set opening times which were expanded by Family Services with telephone bookings available Monday to Friday. Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings are being used to process the digital online bookings only to ensure an equal opportunity to confirm a visit without the slot being taken. It is recognised in some instances requested visits cannot be booked due to factors such as space on the requested session or markers where certain prisoners are unable to associate. For example, in June 2023 the number of visit spaces available was 969 with the total number of visits requested being 1879. There were also 329 calls answered with 203 visits booked and 1550 online requests of which 920 visits were booked. Regarding excessive call waiting times during the last three months of the reporting period these were on average 19 minutes in June 2023, 20 minutes in July 2023, and 18 minutes in August 2023. However, when a call reaches 18 minutes callers are offered the option of a call back service which is responded to on the same day of the request. HMP Cardiff has worked with Family Services to inform prisoners and their families of the process to follow to book a visit and the Helpline has not previously received any complaints from families at HMP Cardiff or the Independent Monitoring Board. In addition, all callers to the National Visits Helpline are asked to complete a one question survey, which asks the caller to grade the service received - 1 being poor to 5 being excellent and to date Family Services score on average is 4.

### **Out of Cell Dining**

As the Board recognises HMP Cardiff does not have the provision for out of cell dining for all prisoners due to the limitations of the infrastructure. The prison continues to review options as part of its regime which has previously introduced an on-site Barista which can be accessed by prisoners through their work parties on a regular basis and communal dining is offered with family members as part of the visits provision. To ensure cell spaces are as comfortable as possible for eating, all toilets have lids on the seats to minimise water droplets and misting caused by flushing.

### **Transgender Prisoners**

The importance of building on previous training completed by staff to allow them to support the management of transgender prisoners is recognised. A new training package for transgender Single Points of Contacts in all prisons will be introduced later in 2024 to support them and their colleagues in delivering *The Care and Management of Individuals who are Transgender policy framework* and supporting operational guidance. In the interim HMP Cardiff continues to support a number of transgender prisoners locally and the B1 unit is primarily utilised to provide additional support for transgender prisoners. *The Care and Management of Individuals who are Transgender policy framework* has been shared with all staff locally and a Transgender Awareness session has been delivered to 89 members of staff. In addition, a local transgender prisoner information sheet has been shared with staff and these are also available in reception to issue to transgender prisoners.

### **Health Needs Analysis**

It is recognised that there has been a long period of time since the last health needs analysis took place at HMP Cardiff and this has been arranged to commence in April 2024.

### **Medication**

In line with National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guideline NG57 - *Physical Health of People, in Prison* and NG5 - *Medicines Optimisation*, all patients who are prescribed medication in prison will have a medicines reconciliation review performed within 72 hours of arrival. This considers medication which was prescribed in the community and the GP at HMP Cardiff will make a clinical decision to either continue the same medication, alter the dosage, switch or stop medications. The Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) *Safer Prescribing in Prisons 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* provides the context for prescribing decisions and helps prescribers in their duty to prescribe appropriately in order to reduce misuse, diversion and violence. The GPs clinical decision will consider community records, hospital letters, the patients existing medication and the clinical findings on admission to prison. In some instances, the GP will also need to source additional information regarding diagnosis before making their clinical decision. Where medication is reduced or stopped it is often initially done on the basis of safety. This may happen without the patient seeing the GP face to face but in more complex cases the assessment will take place in person. Patients will be informed via a letter where medication changes take place remotely and the prisoner can make a GP appointment if they wish to discuss their medication and circumstances further.