



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Forest Bank
Age Croft Road
Salford
M27 8FB

Dear Chair,

17 July 2024

**HMP FOREST BANK: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 NOVEMBER 2022 – 31 OCTOBER 2023**

Thank you for your Board's annual report on HMP Forest Bank. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work that has been put into capturing these helpful observations, particularly as you were short of members. I was deeply saddened to hear that six prisoners died during the reporting year, two of which were due to natural causes. I offer my condolences to all their friends, family and colleagues. 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 continued concerns for prisoners with mental health issues who require a transfer to secure hospital. The Government is determined to reduce unnecessary delays for those prisoners who meet the threshold for detention under the Mental Health Act and require a transfer to hospital to access the specialist care and treatment they need. Segregation is an absolute last resort for prisoners with mental health issues who are deemed a risk to themselves or others and placement into segregation is only taken following a risk assessment involving clinicians at the prison. The Ministry of Justice and NHS England are working to introduce a 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. In addition, the National Partnership Agreement on Health and Social Care in England was published in February 2023 to deliver safe, decent and effective care that improves health outcomes for people in prison which includes people who require detention and treatment in hospital under the Mental Health Act.

NHS England Health and Justice North West continues to maintain oversight of those prisoners in the region that are waiting to access secure inpatient treatment in a mental health hospital. Where there are transfer delays these are escalated to the mental health Provider Collaboratives and mental health specialised Commissioners both regionally and nationally, given this is a widespread national issue which is not just being experienced at HMP Forest Bank. Increased patient acuity, reduced bed capacity and staffing issues within secure hospital settings were observed as a result of the pandemic and this has affected bed availability and transfer times. A data collection exercise is underway to determine the scale of demand and waiting times for patients and once completed, further delivery actions will be put in place by NHS England.

Despite your concerns, it was encouraging to hear about the prisons efforts to action the Temporary Presumptive Recategorisation Scheme and End of Custody Supervised License. These were resource intensive for staff and implementing these swiftly and accurately at the time created much needed prison capacity. It was reassuring to read that levels of violence and the need to use force has reduced and that there have been new preventative measures introduced to improve security, particularly to combat

throwovers. I was also pleased to read that reception and all of the wings have undergone improvements to the environment to raise the standards of decency for both prisoners and staff.

I note you have raised one local issue of concern in your report which the Director will continue to keep you aware of as work continues. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) comments in response to the other issue raised in your report are set out in the attached annex.

The Lord Chancellor and I appreciated the valuable role played by members of Independent Monitoring Boards throughout the estate and we are grateful for your continued hard work on behalf of HMP Forest Bank.



JAMES TIMPSON OBE
MINISTER OF STATE FOR PRISONS, PAROLE AND PROBATION

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Prisoner Transfers

Prisoner Escort and Custody Service (PECS) suppliers support the transfer of disruptive prisoners on a case-by-case basis. The PECS 4 contract provided clarity on the agreed process, including guidance on the application of control and restraint, the requirement for an adequate risk assessment and liaison with the receiving prison. HMP Forest Bank takes all appropriate action locally that is required to ensure transfers can take place by the PECS supplier and action is always taken to appropriately manage those prisoners who deliberately disrupt the transfer process.

