

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Huntercombe  
Nuffield  
Henley-On-Thames  
RG9 5SB

MoJ Ref: SUB117448

19 September 2024

Dear Chair,

**HMP HUNTERCOMBE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 JANUARY 2023 – 31 DECEMBER 2023**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Huntercombe which I have read with care. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for all the hard work that has been put into capturing these helpful observations, particularly as you continued to be short of members.

I appreciate the Board's continued concerns about Foreign National Offender (FNO) flows across the prison estate and their preparation for deportation. FNOs are referred to the Home Office for deportation immediately following sentencing. The timeliness of criminal court proceedings and consequent extensive periods on remand mean many prisoners will reach their Early Removal Scheme (ERS) window immediately or very soon after they are sentenced. It is therefore not always possible for the Home Office to carry out all the case working and administrative processes as soon as an FNO becomes eligible for removal under ERS, even when they wish to return voluntarily. Despite these issues, HM Prisons and Probation Service (HMPPS) continues to strive to maintain offender flows in the face of ongoing and unprecedented population pressures across the entire adult male prison estate.

All sentenced adult male prisoners who are subject to immigration proceedings with more than three months but less than thirty months left to serve to the Conditional Release Date and are category C prisoners, are expected to be considered for allocation to one of the prisons listed in Annex A of Prison Service Instruction (PSI) 01/2015 *The Allocation of prisoners liable to deportation or removal from the United Kingdom* at the earliest opportunity. The interim measure to free up prison places through the temporary reduction of time served in prisons for eligible prisoners sentenced to standard determinate sentences will help alleviate some of the pressures. It is however, not possible to commit to numbers or locations until the policy is successfully implemented and the overall capacity position has stabilised. Whilst HMP Huntercombe has no control over prisoners sent there, I can assure the Board that steps are taken locally to monitor ERS timeliness. The Governor personally raises the issue on a monthly basis within HMPPS, the Home Office, and with other stakeholders.

All prisoners presenting with mental health issues are clinically reviewed by the integrated mental health teams and the appropriate care pathway is sought. The mental health team at HMP Huntercombe are aware of the national target timeframes for the transfer of patients from prison to a mental health hospital under the Mental Health Act. These timeframes are monitored and reviewed via contract reviews and for quality improvement. There are support structures

available for healthcare providers to access using weekly calls with commissioners together with escalation processes. Nationally there is pressure on mental health establishments as the number of patients increases and these people are presenting with more complexity. NHS England has a National Mental Health team leading on reviews of mental health pathways and service specifications for secure care at a strategic level. The South East Health and Justice team have representation and are part of this strategic review.

In the meantime, HMP Huntercombe will continue to operate the well-attended and multi-disciplinary Safety Intervention Meeting weekly discussion of complex cases. For prisoners with challenging behaviour which may arise or stem from mental health issues, local management plans will continue to be developed with input from the mental health team and HMPPS psychologists. This ensures consistency of treatment and helps protect prisoners and staff alike as best as possible. However, I recognise that there is no adequate substitute for the specialist treatment available in secure mental health settings.

I was reassured to note that generally prisoners are treated fairly and humanely, that there has been a reduction in the number of prisoners past their sentence end date but detained under immigration powers, and the continued year-on-year decrease in the number of assessments, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) plans. I was also pleased to hear about the opening of the new kitchen together with the initiatives to improve space and facilities across the grounds of prison such as the repurposing of the old kitchen as a multi-faith centre; the new kitchen being built on Rich wing; and the new unit for men on a super-enhanced level of the incentives scheme.

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. HMPPS comments in response to other issues raised in your report are set out in the attached annex.

The Lord Chancellor and I appreciate the valuable role played by members of Independent Monitoring Boards throughout the estate and we are very grateful for your continued hard work on behalf of HMP Huntercombe. I hope to visit the establishment in the near future and trust I will then have the opportunity to express our thanks to you in person.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Yavir James'.

**Lord Timpson**  
**Minister of State for Prisons, Probation, and Reducing Reoffending**

## **HMP HUNTERCOMBE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JANUARY 2023 – 31 DECEMBER 2023**

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

#### **Heating and Hot Water System**

HMPPS recognises the Board's frustrations with the project delivery and timeliness. Further to last years' response, the main boiler and the site wide Heating Ring Main project is currently in the design and performance requirements phase which will inform the tender documentation. In the meantime, HMP Huntercombe has been provided with temporary boilers and is likely to be reliant on these for some time. HMPPS is aware of the monthly hire and fuelling costs of the temporary boilers.

#### **Healthcare Facility**

Further to last year's response, the old portable building housing the healthcare facility has been demolished and a modular building replacement is currently going through design/scope stage to ensure requirements are met. It is envisaged the replacement project will be completed by the end of this year. HMPPS is aware that whilst the project is progressing, healthcare staff are using offices in other locations or encroaching on clinical space and this is impacting treatment delivery.

#### **Prisoners' Property**

HMPPS notes the Board's continued concerns about prisoners' property following transfers between establishments. The emphasis must remain on prisoners complying with volumetric control limits, since any property within these limits will be transferred with them. This includes items which are exempt from volumetric control, such as legal papers. It is not possible to transfer all excess property with a prisoner which they might have accrued above these limits. Since the introduction of the Prisoners' Property Policy Framework during September 2022, there has been a requirement for prisons to transfer any excess items within four weeks. Previously there was no time limit in place. HMPPS is aware of the problems around prisoners' property and continues to look at what further can be done.

The Board will be aware that HMP Huntercombe does not repatriate deported FNO property, the individual either takes it with them at the point of deportation or it does not go at all. However, if a prisoner's property has not arrived at HMP Huntercombe from a previous establishment by the time a prisoner is deported, then they will be unable to take this property with them through no fault of their own. HMP Huntercombe recognises this issue and consequently spends a lot of time chasing property from other establishments, including the offer of a service within the Resettlement Department dedicated to property still held at police stations. Frequently prisoners wish to take items with them which are held by family or friends in the UK. Due to lack of storage space at HMP Huntercombe, these items cannot be accepted any earlier than one week prior to deportation. HMPPS acknowledges that quite often the timing and scheduling of deportation is very tight and this can lead to anxiety and frustration.