



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for
Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Berwyn
Bridge Road
Wrexham Industrial Estates
Wrexham
North Wales
LL13 9QE

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22 October 2024

Dear Chair,

**HMP BERWYN: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 MARCH 2023 – 29 FEBRUARY 2024**

Thank you for submitting your Board's annual report on HMP Berwyn. Having read the report, it is clear that you and your colleagues have, as ever, put in a huge amount of work to capture the current state of the prison. This is particularly impressive given the fact that you have continued to be so short of members. I am really grateful to each and every one for their contributions and I look forward to being able to thank you in person and discuss further matters with you and colleagues at the North West and Wales Independent Monitoring Board Event on 11 November 2024 at the prison, but please do pass on my thanks to your colleagues in the meantime.

I was deeply saddened to read about the death of a prisoner at HMP Berwyn during the reporting year. Any death in our prisons is a tragedy and I offer my heartfelt condolences to the friends and family. I would like to reassure the loved ones that deaths in custody are taken extremely seriously. As the Board will know, it is important in these tragic circumstances that we act on recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman. This is something that I discuss with Governors whenever I have the opportunity to visit prisons.

I share the Board's continued concerns about specialist settings for prisoners with mental health issues and personality disorders. It is recognised that vulnerable prisoners, who meet the threshold for detention under the Mental Health Act and require a transfer to a mental health hospital, do experience delays in accessing the specialist care and treatment they need with waits in segregated conditions. I'm informed that delays are rare with the transfers to the local medium secure unit in North Wales but can be more challenging when referring to the secure units in England and it is clear that more work needs to be done to ensure that secure hospital beds are made available as quickly as possible. There is a role for the Government on this and we at the Ministry of Justice are working with the Department of Health and Social Care to introduce a Mental Health Bill as soon as possible. This will include a range of reforms to support people suffering severe mental illness in the criminal justice system and improve the access to specialist inpatient treatment to provide those affected with the timely care they need.

I was really encouraged to read about the range of education and training, with links to external employers providing prisoners with Released on Temporary Licence placements, and that the Employment Advisory Board, chaired by an established construction employer, is advising on

helping prison leavers into employment. I also welcome the monthly employment event taking place at the prison, which is attended by potential employers and covers the five established academies at the prison. It is support and opportunities like these that improve the chances of prisoners gaining employment once released.

I note you have raised three 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.

The Secretary of State and I are hugely appreciative of the valuable role Independent Monitoring Boards play throughout the estate and we are extremely grateful to you and your team for your continued hard work on behalf of HMP Berwyn.

I look forward to seeing you at the upcoming IMB event at HMP Berwyn on 11 November.



Lord Timpson
Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Mental Health

HMPPS recognises and does not underestimate the challenges that are presented by those prisoners with mental health issues. All prisoners are seen by mental health professionals on a regular basis and information is shared with operational colleagues where necessary to assist with their daily management. NHS Wales continues to develop new services to meet the needs of the population at HMP Berwyn, which is informed by a commissioned health needs assessment that is carried out every three years. Completion of mental health awareness training is already mandated as part of the suicide and self-harm course for all operational staff, including those who may then go on to work in segregation units. A selection process takes place for Prison Officers to work in Ogwen at HMP Berwyn to ensure that they have the required skills for the role and have the ability to support prisoners with a variety of complex needs. HMPPS has also issued a learning guide, highlighting promising practice within segregation. This provides information on staff upskilling and signposting to mental health training and resources. In addition, the segregation policy framework is currently under review and ongoing areas for development will continue to be considered.

Heating

In May 2024, the programme for replacing the Main District Heating Valves was successfully concluded. This will assist in keeping the main heated supply free from pressure loss and leaks, providing improved heat transfer into House Blocks and other areas from the Energy Centre. In addition, a flushing programme to remove any contamination from the secondary side of the heating systems has taken place. The Combined Heating and Power (CHPs) will undergo a reset and seasonal testing, which will provide increased heat output using these assets as the main source of heating instead of the backup boilers.

Cell Refurbishment

As the Board will be aware the prison estate has been under severe capacity pressure and HMPPS had to take decisive action to quickly increase capacity in the existing estate. This involved many decisions around required maintenance and refurbishment across the estate, including the paint work programme at HMP Berwyn. It is recognised that there are cells that remain below the standards expected because they could not be remedied before having to be brought back in to use. In the interim the prison has been continuing to make progress to address this when space allows but it is acknowledged this has been at a much slower pace than the original programme. To also help alleviate the pressure on prison places, on 12 July 2024, the Secretary of State announced temporary changes to reduce the time those prisoners that are sentenced to Standard Determinate Sentences serve in prison from 50% to 40% of that sentence. HMPPS will assess the impact of these measures on the prison population, which may lead to an expansion of maintenance and refurbishment commitments across the prison estate.