



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Erlestoke
Devizes
Wiltshire
SN10 5TU

MoJ ref: SUB118299

22 October 2024

Dear Chair,

**HMP ERLESTOKE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 APRIL 2023 - 31 MARCH 2024**

Thank you for submitting your Board's annual report on HMP Erlestoke. I appreciate the hard work and effort that you and your colleagues put into capturing the current state of the prison, particularly as you operated with several vacancies at the start of the reporting period.

I share the Board's concern about mental health provision at HMP Erlestoke. Following meetings with NHS England to discuss service planning for 2024/25, the provider (Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust) has been asked to look at flexing the service delivery model for prisons in the south-west of England to meet the ever-changing needs of the regional prison population which is an ongoing contractual expectation. Continued developments include a progressing neurodiversity pathway and the addition of Trauma Informed Psychosocial Groups. The recruitment strategy is being reviewed to secure a long-term vacancy to the mental health team. The prison will also be introducing a local Health Improvement Board (HIB) which will address any concerns from the Local Delivery Quality Board. These improvement board meetings will be attended by NHS England and periodically by the Prison Group Director, to closely oversee improvements across key areas.

I understand and sympathise with the Board's ongoing concerns about prisoners subject to Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentences. The Lord Chancellor has announced that from November 2024, anyone who was released on IPP licence five or more years ago and has spent at least the last two years of that period in the community without being recalled, will have their IPP licence terminated without the need for a review by the Parole Board. The Secretary of State will also have two new 'Risk Assessed Recall Review' powers. The first enables her to not reset the two-year period after someone is re-released from a recall. Secondly, she will be able to re-release people who have been recalled at any point without referring the case to the Parole Board. I am confident that these measures will in due course make an overall difference to the number of IPP prisoners held across the estate and at HMP Erlestoke and mark a positive first step. The Lord Chancellor is committed to making progress towards a safe and sustainable release for those continuing to serve an IPP sentence whilst ensuring that protection of the public is not compromised. Area Executive Directors for England and Wales will continue to develop and implement operational IPP delivery plans that will improve front line support to help those serving IPP sentences achieve the objectives within their sentence plans and move towards a prospective safe and sustainable release.

HMP Erlestoke is expected to have an increased operational capacity following the commissioning of the new small secure house blocks in 2025. The Small Secure Houseblocks Project (SSHP) has ensured that necessary ancillaries will be in place to match the uplift in prisoner numbers resulting from the programme. These additional ancillary requirements were identified via an independent assessment conducted by the Prison Capacity Management Team and Prison Governors. All functional ancillaries such as staff office, group rooms, laundry, servery, dispensary, staff toilets, and an interview room will be contained within the new houseblocks. Additional ancillaries such as, but not limited to, the gym, multi-faith facility, kitchen, and activity space are not included within the houseblock design and are being made available through either current provisions or through additional works being delivered by the programme elsewhere on the site.

Despite the challenges identified, I was pleased to note your comments about the beneficial impact on staff and prisoner interactions as a result of the young adult prisoner Olympics event and the general positive relationships observed between prisoners and staff. I was also encouraged to hear about the regular protected characteristics prisoner forums that are held and the good work of the Substance Misuse Officers in supporting prisoners with debt management, avoiding violence, and post-release activity. It was pleasing to hear that the visit by the Archbishop of Canterbury had been welcomed by all involved.

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. 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 invaluable 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 Erlestoke.



Lord Timpson
Minister for Prisons, Probation, and Reducing Reoffending

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Maintenance

Gov Facility Services Limited's (GFSL) new Site Manager is prioritising the workflow and reducing the reactive backlog in line with other sites in the region. However, HMP Erlestoke remains one of the highest sites within the region for vandalism and this adds additional pressures onto the site team. The Area Property Operations Manager (APOM) works closely with the GFSL site-manager to monitor performance and delivery and the backlog has been steadily reducing since the new site manager took up post at the end of 2023. The establishment Tri-Partite meeting report has been revised to provide improved oversight of issues which impact living conditions and decency. Property Services have been working with the establishment to reduce the disposal of items such as clothing and reusable cleaning cloths into the sewage system which were causing problems with pumps and blocked pipes.

Prisoners' Property

HMPPS notes the Board's concerns about prisoners' property following a transfer between establishments. The introduction of the digitally recorded Prisoner Escort Record (dPER) included a property section that accurately records the number and type of sealed property 'owned' by and transferred with the prisoner and an accurate record of property handover between different stakeholders. This is now embedded as business as usual. The digital process has assisted with investigations for property that is lost in transit with the transport suppliers, and complaints are reviewed monthly during formal meetings with transport suppliers. For property delay, in-line with the HMPPS Prisoner Property Framework, if the limit of items allowed in possession has been reached, and if there is no space on the Escort Vehicle to transport items safely and securely, then responsibility for transfer of any remaining items remains with the sending prison.

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. There has been a requirement since the introduction of the Prisoners' Property Policy Framework for prisons to transfer any excess items within four weeks. Previously, there was no time limit in place. The establishment has revised its cell clearance policy, and this has been published to all staff to improve local processes and reduce the loss of property when prisoners move cells within the establishment. HMPPS is aware of the problems around property and continues to look at what further can be done.

Offending Behaviour Programmes (OBP)

Attendance on a programme depends on both eligibility and suitability. For some programmes, eligibility can be clarified prior to transfer if there is an up-to-date Offender Assessment System (OASys) Report. For others, the specialist resource based at the high intensity site is needed to complete the eligibility assessment.

For many of the current Accredited Programmes managed by HMPPS' Interventions Services, an individual's suitability can be determined at the site at which they are currently detained

without the need for a transfer. In some cases, such as with Kaizen and Becoming New Me Plus (BNM+) programmes, there has historically been an operational challenge in that a Programme Needs Assessment (PNA) needs to be completed. At sites where there is minimal or no programme team support, including staff not trained to carry out this process, then decisions would need to be made regarding transfers of these individuals within the prison estate to relevant sites to have a PNA completed.

HMPPS has recently rolled down the PNA and introduced the new Programme Needs Identifier (PNI) in its place. It is envisaged this will reduce the need for transfers to delivery sites and instead support the capability for individuals to be assessed for suitability at the establishments in which they are detained. It is important to note that the PNI is a new process, and we are continuing to receive feedback from sites and providing more bespoke support where needed during the implementation. The Healthy Sex Programme (HSP), also requires a suitability and readiness assessment to be carried out by specifically trained staff who may not be present at every site. HMPPS is currently exploring plans to introduce a triage process that we hope will help support this process better moving forward, again with the intended benefit of reducing transfers across the prison estate.

Assessment Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) Reviews

The timings of the ACCT first case reviews are now agreed at the daily prison operational briefings, which are attended by a Primary Care Senior Nurse, Mental Health Practitioner and Psychosocial Substance Misuse Team Leader. Any ACCT reviews during operating hours are attended by healthcare. Invitations to ACCT reviews will be discussed at monthly Local Delivery Board meetings and any barriers to attendance reviewed and resolved. Attendance will be monitored by the Head of Safety and Head of Healthcare.