



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Leyhill
Wootton-Under-Edge
GL12 8BT

MoJ Ref: SUB117906

8 October 2024

Dear Chair,

**HMP LEYHILL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 FEBRUARY 2023 – 31 JANUARY 2024**

Thank you for providing your annual report on HMP Leyhill. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for carrying out your statutory role effectively and for your hard work in preparing this report.

I was deeply saddened to hear four prisoners died during the reporting year. I offer my condolences to all their friends and family, and I would like to reassure the Board that recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman are taken very seriously.

I note the Board's continued concerns about the capacity of Approved Premises. This issue continues to remain a challenge. Further to last years' response, a National Central Referral Unit has now been established, and will handle and process applications and support the arrangement of suitable Approved Premises placements. The pilot digital service was launched nationally for male sites in March 2024. This service is supporting probation practitioners to create higher quality applications in a more timely way in addition to a streamlined and standardised assessment process. Further digital capability to match individuals to suitable and available placements and manage occupancy is also planned for delivery by March 2025.

I appreciate that food budgets and associated inflationary pressures remain a concern for the Board. The budget allocated for food at HMP Leyhill has seen successive increases, rising from £2.18 in 2022/23 to £2.68 in 2023/24. Whilst settling the budget for 2024-25, HM Prisons and Probation Service (HMPPS) took into account market price projections for the local utility budget. The food budget at HMP Leyhill for 2024/25 increased by approximately 11.5% to £3.01. The menu at HMP Leyhill is now co-created with prisoner engagement and I was reassured to have been informed that there were no complaints regarding portions sizes in the last year.

As the Board will be aware, the prison food budget is kept under local review, and as such Governors in Public Sector Prisons (or the Director in privately managed prisons) are able to vary expenditure as part of normal budget allocation planning. Prison Rules require that prisoners are provided with three meals a day that are varied, nutritious and meet the religious, cultural, and medical needs of all.

I was encouraged to receive your comments about a noticeable focus being placed on meeting the needs of the elderly and disabled who make up over half of the prison's population. I was also pleased to learn about the new strategy for coordinating education, skills, and work to rehabilitate prisoners and enhance their employability. I wish HMP Leyhill well with its recycling scheme which provides purposeful employment, together with the prison's market gardens that may potentially have significant external market for their produce.

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 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 Leyhill.



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

HMP LEYHILL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 FEBRUARY 2023 – 31 JANUARY 2024

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) Prisoners

HMPPS appreciates the Board's continued concerns about IPP prisoners. Further to last years' response, in February 2024 the Director General of Operations at HMPPS commissioned each of the seven Area Executive Directors commands for England and Wales, as well as the Executive Directors of the Long-Term High Security Estate, the Women's Estate, and Contracted Prisons, to develop operational IPP delivery plans and to begin delivering those plans in the Summer of 2024. These Delivery Plans will directly target front-line delivery in support of helping those serving IPP sentences to work on and achieve the objectives within their sentence plans and move towards a future prospective safe and sustainable release and, when in the community, towards a future termination of their licence.

The Board may also be aware the IPP sentence was recently reformed in the Victims and Prisoners Act which gained Royal Assent on 24 May 2024. The measures reform the termination of the licence for IPP offenders by making amendments to section 31A of the Crime (Sentences) Act 1997. On 5 September 2024 the Lord Chancellor announced the timings for important legislative changes which will directly impact IPP offenders being supervised in the community. From 1 November 2024, anyone who was released on IPP licence for the first time five or more years ago and has spent at least the last two years of that period continuously 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 have two new 'Risk Assessed Recall Review' (RARR) powers. The first enables her to not reset the 2-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.

Whilst this does not change anything for IPP prisoners currently in prison or when they might be released, these measures will make an overall difference to the number of IPP prisoners held across the estate. It is right that IPP sentences were abolished and The Lord Chancellor is committed to working with organisations and campaign groups to ensure the appropriate course of action is taken to support those still serving IPP sentences.

Community Offender Managers (COMs)

HMPPS recognises there is COM efficiency issue in the South West region which is exacerbated by workload and resource pressures. These issues should be mitigated by the introduction of the Probation Reset which commenced in July 2024. This is our anticipated pipeline of newly Qualified Probation Officers, over 100 this year, and our continued focus on recruitment, retention and workforce planning, as well as improving the quality of practice through our Quality Improvement Plans. A Prioritisation Framework was also implemented to support demand management on priority areas of delivery where there are workload and staffing challenges. The framework enables Probation regions to re-prioritise tasks for front line staff to ensure staff workloads are controlled as and when adjustments are required. The Governor will continue to work with Probation Local Delivery Unit Heads and the Local Leadership Forum to resolve a minority of cases (approximately 2%) that are not managed effectively and are outside of the 12-week target date for assessment completion.

Separately, recruitment and retention remains a priority across the entire Probation Service. Since the £155m investment in 2021/22, overall staffing numbers are up 17% across the whole Probation Service (between 30 June 2021 and 31 March 2024). In the 12-month period ending 31 March 2024, there was an increase of 19% in Band 4 Probation Officers in the South West Probation Service region. In March 2024, the latest launch of the Trainee Probation Officer campaign included a non-graduate pathway aimed at improving the diversity of our workforce and increasing application volumes. The introduction of the Probation Alumni Scheme in January 2024 encouraged qualified probation officers and senior probation officers who left the service within the last five years to return, enabling HMPPS to significantly reduce time to hire and streamline the process.

In-Cell Telephony

The roll-out of in-cell telephony throughout the closed estate is now complete, but currently there are no plans for the same in open prisons. Greater freedom for prisoners in the open estate has indicated that the prisoners would have better options. Provision may be a possibility in the future but currently there are no plans. Whilst it is not permanent provision, HMP Leyhill has been selected as a trial site for an October 2024 in-cell mobile phone telephone pilot. This aims to provide each room with its own telephony and will mirror the telephone access provided within the closed estate.

Operational Capacity

An increase in both facilities and staffing levels is recognised as essential for the safe and effective expansion of HMP Leyhill. Whilst these plans continue to be negotiated, HMPPS and the Governor remain committed to collaborating with all stakeholders, including the Independent Monitoring Board, to ensure that the facilities are fit for purpose. From a staffing perspective a separate expansion workstream will ensure an appropriate increase in the target staffing figure that is proportionate to the staged increases in operational capacity.

The expansion project includes four new 60-bed houseblocks, together with supporting ancillaries, and completion and commissioning is expected in 2026. Alongside this expansion, ninety-eight Rapid Deployment Cells (RDC) are also forecasted to be delivered in 2026. Both programmes of work form part of the 20,000 additional prison places portfolio. During the tender process, and prior to finalising scope, a full assessment of current provision, including staffing, was undertaken to identify where any additionality is necessary. Following that, the proposed scope, ancillary and staffing provision underwent a rigorous and independently verified process, with input from both the establishment and an independent Prison Group Director in order to appportionate the proposed uplift in capacity.