



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Ranby
Retford
Nottingham
DN22 8EU

MoJ ref: SUB118644

31 October 2024

Dear Chair,

**HMP RANBY: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 APRIL 2023 – 31 MARCH 2024**

Thank you for submitting your Board's annual report on HMP Ranby. I have read your report with care and it is clear that you and your colleagues have put in a lot of work to produce this report which captures some very helpful observations. This is particularly impressive given the Board's membership was running at a quarter of its complement by the end of the reporting year. I am really grateful to each of you for your contributions and please do pass on my thanks to your colleagues.

I was genuinely saddened to read that two prisoners died during the reporting year, one of which occurred shortly after release. Every death is a tragedy and I offer my profound condolences to their friends and family. I would like to take this opportunity to provide assurances that recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman are taken extremely seriously and this is something that I discuss with Governors whenever I have the opportunity to visit prisons.

I fully understand the Board's concerns about mental health transfers and recognise that some vulnerable people in prison who require a transfer to secure hospital under the Mental Health Act, do experience delays in accessing the specialist treatment they need. There is a role for Government in this and we at the Ministry of Justice are working with the Department of Health and Social Care to introduce the Mental Health Bill as soon as possible. This will include a range of reforms to support people suffering with severe mental illness in the criminal justice system and aims to speed up access to specialist inpatient care so that those affected get the timely treatment they need. NHS England Health and Justice Midlands Team continues to maintain oversight of people in prison waiting to access secure inpatient treatment within the region. Where there are delays, these are escalated both regionally and nationally, given this is a widespread issue not just being experienced at HMP Ranby. I hope I can provide assurance that NHS England are working strategically across the systems to improve the pathways into treatment and fortnightly multi-agency calls are being chaired by the NHS England Health and Justice Midlands Team to support prioritisation and expedite transfers. For people that remain in prison they have access to integrated mental health services which provides a range of treatments and interventions within prisons and all health services continue to be improved to ensure there is access to effective care that is tailored to the individual's needs.

Despite the mental health transfer challenges, it was really encouraging to receive your comments which recognise the efforts of Care and Separation Unit staff who have had to manage some very challenging and complex prisoners during the year.

I was very pleased to read that prisoners are treated fairly and humanely by staff who have good relations with the prisoners in their care. I welcome the greater confidence in the local complaints process and that prisoners are receiving responses in a timely manner as prisoners should trust that we listen and want to improve the care they receive. I was also interested in the creation of 100 new jobs for prisoners, which I'm sure the Board will agree is vital to helping prisoners gain the skills they need once released into the community and I look forward to the Board reporting on progress in the forthcoming year.

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 Secretary of State and I hugely appreciate the valuable role played by members of Independent Monitoring Boards throughout the estate and we are very grateful for to you and your team for the continued hard work on behalf of HMP Ranby.



Lord Timpson
Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending

HMP RANBY: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 APRIL 2023 – 31 MARCH 2024

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Overcrowding

There are no current plans to reduce the operational capacity of HMP Ranby, however, to ensure prisoners have increased time out of their cells the regime and purposeful activity places have been improved. The adult male prison estate has been under acute capacity pressure during the Board's reporting period, which required HMPPS to take action to increase capacity in the existing estate through doubling up cells where safe to do so. However, cells are only shared where a Prison Group Director has assessed them to be of adequate size and condition as required by the cell certification framework. There are other standards set out in the framework, including adequate lighting, heating, ventilation, fittings, and access to water and sanitation. These standards ensure that prisoners are accommodated safely even when held in crowded conditions.

To help reduce the pressure on prisons places, on 12 July 2024 the Lord Chancellor announced temporary changes to standard determinate sentences reducing the time served in prison from 50% to 40% of their sentence. This will not apply to prisoners sentenced for sex offences and certain domestic-abuse-connected offences. It will also exclude serious violent offences with a sentence of four years or more. In addition, the MoJ and HMPPS are continuing to deliver additional modern uncrowded prison places to ensure the right conditions are in place to rehabilitate prisoners, helping to cut crime and protect the public. Investment is also taking place in the existing prison estate to make them safer for both prisoners and staff via a preventative approach to safety, making key changes to the physical environment, testing new technology and undertaking critical prison maintenance and renewal to ensure that as much capacity as possible is kept in use and fit for purpose. These measures will have a positive impact on lowering the proportion of crowding within the prison estate, however, the extent to which the proportion of prisoners held in crowded accommodation can be reduced will always be dependent on levels of demand in the system.

Prisoners with Short Sentences and Resettlement Support

HMP Ranby is a category C prison holding a resettlement and training population and is modelled to have a 60% training and 40% resettlement cohort in line with the national offender flows model. However, it is recognised that the prison is holding a greater level of prisoners in the resettlement cohort that have between 29 days up to 16 months' time left to serve. HMPPS continues to do its best to maintain offender flows despite the remand population continuing to grow to unprecedented levels due to the courts backlog. This impact is being felt in the training estate who have been asked to continue to hold certain cohorts of prisoners so that spaces in the resettlement estate can be prioritised for use by reception prisons. The priority remains to maximise capacity in reception prisons to serve the courts, to encourage prisons to support offender flows and to ensure as much as possible that the rehabilitation needs of each prisoner is met. To enable more effective provision, HMP Ranby has been redesigning the regime and the profile of prisoners on each house block in order to effectively meet the needs of prisoners. A sequencing meeting has also been introduced to ensure every prisoner arriving at HMP Ranby has a realistic set of goals informed by the time they have left to serve and what interventions they can access within that time frame.

In addition, HMP Ranby has an embedded pre-release provision delivered by the Probation Service to identify and address immediate resettlement needs, provide pre-release support and will carry out any release planning activity specifically for those on a short sentence. In addition, an enhanced service for

those serving short prison sentences is being implemented across all probation regions. This will offer timely resettlement support to all prisoners with 10 months or less to serve at the point of sentencing and provide continuity of support from pre-release, through to post-release conversations and support sessions. Prison Offender Managers do communicate with prisoners through the electronic app system, as well as using in cell telephony and making efforts to attend wings. However, it is acknowledged that the Offender Management Unit has large caseloads and the introduction of release schemes, such as the Temporary Presumptive Categorisation Scheme, End of Custody Supervised Licence and changes to HDC eligibility has placed additional strains on staff.

Staff Training

All new Prison Officers attend a two-week induction at their home establishment to provide a period of familiarisation with the environment, as well as completing some independent learning before the next seven weeks of face-to-face foundation training at a Prison Service College. Skills that learners develop during foundation training include the importance of building professional relationships with those in their care and learning how to utilise incident management techniques, as well as skills to defuse potential conflict situations in line with approved protocols.

It is recognised that HMP Ranby has recruited a large number of new staff in the past year who have a range of ages and life experiences to bring to the role. Among the Prison Officer group at HMP Ranby with less than two year's service, the majority are over the age of 25. To support these less experienced staff in their role, the prison operate a Buddy Scheme, where another Prison Officer provides support and guidance to the new Prison Officer, working on the same shift pattern as their Buddy for their first two weeks after foundation training, allowing this shadow period to provide an opportunity to embed knowledge. New staff have access to a New Colleague Mentor, who acts as a single point of contact and continued support is provided by line managers to ensure new staff have the help, support and training needed to assist them in developing the right skillset to manage prisoners. In addition to undertaking mandatory or job specific training, performance is monitored through regular conversations and observations in the working environment with any identified skills gaps addressed promptly. In order to support line managers, HR provides regular upskilling sessions to ensure they have the capability and skills to support their staff. The prison has also introduced monthly shutdown mornings to focus on staff training and team briefings, as well as developing local "upskilling" packages around common issues, such as cell clearances and Accommodation Fabric Checks to be delivered alongside e-learning to support new officer's practical skills.

Illicit Substances

To tackle substance misuse HMPPS must ensure there is a zero-tolerance approach to drugs and provide all prisoners access to high-quality treatment so they can turn their back on addiction. To achieve this, investment has been made in a wide range of interventions to tackle drugs and support prisoners into recovery. This includes investment in Drug Trace Detection equipment to detect the latest drug threats, particularly through the mail, which has been implemented in all public sector prisons, including HMP Ranby. Intelligence informs much of the work locally at HMP Ranby to tackle and intercept illicit items. Risk assessed processes are in place for opening Rule 39 mail and these are reviewed every three months as the prison has experienced a case of tampered Rule 39 mail where the letter was impregnated with an illicit substance. Public Sector Prisons have access to a new forensic testing service for drug finds and seizures which went live in April 2023, enabling identification of a wide range of illicit substances which can be used as evidence for prison adjudications, referrals to the police, and to enhance the intelligence picture across the prison estate. To prevent the smuggling of illicit items into prisons, 75 X-ray body scanners have been installed via the Security Investment Programme, resulting in full coverage across the closed adult male prison estate. In addition, HMPPS is rolling out Incentivised Substance Free Living (ISFL) Units where prisoners receive regular drug testing, peer support and incentives to remain

drug free, as well as recruiting Drug Strategy Leads in key prisons to ensure a whole prison approach to drugs. HMP Ranby has both an ISFL and a Drug Strategy Lead.

Canteen

HMPPS Operational Contract Management Team manage the national retail supplier (DHL) and hold them to account for performance across a range of Key Performance Indicators (KPI). Formal performance reviews take place monthly and the contract is currently performing well with no failed KPIs, although continuous improvement work remains in place to ensure the service meets the needs of people in prison and achieves its identified objectives. The delay in refunds being experienced by HMP Ranby is a result of challenges in the financial process which interfaces between the prison locally and DHL. This financial process is managed independently from the contract and managed locally. The Board will be aware the DHL supplier is required to amend orders at the point of delivery, recording the reason for the fault or error. This record is used to complete the prison administration process to refund prisoners when DHL confirm a refund is due. In light of the concerns raised, DHL and HMP Ranby undertook a review and agreed a number of actions to address the problems identified, including improving the refunds process which has resulted in a significant reduction in canteen discrepancies each week. The success of the change will continue to be monitored and managed by HMP Ranby and DHL.

Prisoners Property

The emphasis must remain on prisoners complying with volumetric control limits, since any property within these limits will be transferred with them by the Prisoner Escort and Custody Services (PECS) suppliers, including items which are exempt such as legal papers. PECS review complaints via monthly formal meetings with the PECS Supplier and during the last 12 months there have been no complaints received from HMP Ranby in relation to the loss of property attributed to PECS. It is not possible to transfer with a prisoner all excess property which they might have accrued above these limits. Where the limit of items allowed in possession has been reached then responsibility for transfer of any remaining items remains with the sending prison and there has been a requirement since the introduction of the Prisoners' Property Policy Framework for prisons to transfer any excess items within four weeks. However, the Board's concerns are recognised and HMPPS is aware of the problems around property and continues to look at what further can be done. Locally, HMP Ranby has improved the process for collecting and moving personal belongings within the prison where a houseblock move takes place resulting in fewer complaints being reported, but this will continue to be monitored by the Head of Residential Services.