



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP/YOI Stanford Hill
Church Road
Eastchurch
ME12 4AA

MoJ ref: SUB118648

1 November 2024

Dear Chair,

**HMP/YOI STANFORD HILL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 APRIL 2023 – 31 MARCH 2024**

Thank you for submitting your Board's annual report on HMP/YOI Stanford Hill. I have read your report with care and 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. I would like to express my gratitude to you all, particularly as you continued to operate with several vacancies.

I fully understand the Board's concern around population pressures and the impact this has on the open estate. On 12 July, the Lord Chancellor announced an interim measure to free up prison places by temporarily reducing the time those sentenced to Standard Determinate Sentences (SDS) will serve in prison from 50% to 40%. This measure, known as SDS40, will not apply to prisoners sentenced for most sexual offences and certain domestic-abuse related offences irrespective of length. It will also exclude serious violent offences with a sentence of four years or more.

There are no easy or risk-free options given the challenges HM Prisons and Probation Service (HMPPS) is currently facing across both services and I appreciate the pressures that come with this. However, I am confident that once the SDS40 changes have been implemented, it will enable HMPPS to cease the use of End of Custody Supervised Licence (ECSL) and return to a period of stability. We also recognise that there is a likelihood SDS40 will have a considerable effect on the open estate with a large turnover of prisoners, particularly with the second tranche of releases later this October. I would like to reassure the Board that the Prison Group Director and his team will monitor and work closely to ensure prisoners are held in appropriate prisons in accordance with their categorisation as much as possible. The utilisation of spaces will be carefully monitored to ensure stability is maintained, with adjustments made to meet any new population needs whilst ensuring there is minimal impact on the delivery of services. We will assess the impact of these measures on the estate-wide population as time goes by.

Our immediate focus is on the implementation of the SDS40 policy and work is ongoing across all probation regions to deliver the changes. These measures are being applied both prospectively and retrospectively to the current prison population to prevent us from reaching critical capacity and enable HMPPS to gain the headroom needed in the system. HMPPS will deliver SDS40 in a way that prioritises public safety and those released will be subject to strict probation supervision, and where necessary conditions like tagging and curfews, and they will be subject to return to prison if these conditions are breached. HMPPS is continuing to utilise the open estate as efficiently as possible in order to maximise

usage across the whole of the prison estate.

It was regrettable to hear of the Board's ongoing dissatisfaction around the performance of Gov Facilities Services Ltd (GFSL). GFSL Projects have continued to have issues with staffing and their suppliers, particularly the consultants carrying out the structural surveys. Whilst there are no doubts concerns exist around overall performance and management of facilities, I have been informed that locally the prison has a good working relationship with the GFSL Site Team and most issues have been resolved when raised. I understand the aging of the site also provides challenges to the local team based on their current resources. Local management are aware of the need to improve certain areas of the prison that falls within GFSL responsibility and will continue to closely monitor the progress of work required.

I was very pleased to receive your comments about the continued improvements made in relation to healthcare provision across the year, including how the service has been significantly enhanced by the appointment of a neurodiversity support manager which you have described as transformational. I was also very encouraged to read your observations that the prison provides an excellent rehabilitative service to prisoners and that the working out scheme provides a good pathway to work after release, something very personal to me.

I note you have raised some local issues of concern which the Governor will continue to keep you aware of progress 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 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/YOI Stanford Hill.



Lord Timpson
Minister for Prisons, Probation, and Reducing Reoffending

HMP/YOI STANDFORD HILL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 APRIL 2023 – 31 MARCH 2024

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Maintenance, Facilities, and Buildings

Maintenance and Facilities

There have been issues obtaining funding for the Offender Management Unit (OMU) Portacabin and the laundry dryers. Funding has now been confirmed to replace four end-of-life tumble dryers and GFSL are awaiting quotes to conduct surveys on the leaking laundry roof. A start date to investigate and address possible subsidence to the OMU offices, Mclean House, and Quad Stores Building remains an outstanding issue. This is the same for the proposed extensive investigations/excavations of the swimming pool and gymnasium. A new Portacabin to house OMU staff is currently being tendered, and repairs to the Salt Barn roof/walls and scope of works have been agreed and are currently going through the tender process.

Unsafe Buildings

Areas identified as having potential health and safety issues were the OMU and IMB offices. The OMU offices were immediately decanted and taken out of use. A survey of the IMB office was completed in September 2024 and a report is awaited before remedial action can be taken accordingly. The Salt Barn Building was also considered as being potentially dangerous in high winds. GFSL carried out their own risk assessment on this. Currently, there are no plans to refurbish HMP/YOI Standford Hill however, all requests from the establishment will be considered, noting that demands for maintenance are much greater than the available funding. Therefore, once a bid for a project is received, HMPPS has to prioritise works very carefully to make best use of that funding, focusing on risk to life and risk to capacity and decency.

Scanning Equipment

The X-ray Body Scanner Policy Framework which governs the use of this technology is only applicable for the adult male closed estate. There are currently no plans or central funds to extend this to the open estate. Given open prisons have different risks of conveyance and several potential entry routes for illicit items to enter, it is unlikely that X-ray body scanners would be an effective solution. With regards to X-ray baggage scanners, a national contract is place if local investment is available and it is deemed necessary by the site. Local management are making an effort to secure an X-Ray machine to be installed in the reception area for use on property entering the site.

Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL)

HMPPS recognises that technology could play a useful role in streamlining the monitoring of individuals that are granted Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL). Further to last years' response, HMPPS has now piloted the technology used to facilitate remote medical appointments. This was completed in December 2023 and an evaluation process is being conducted before determining whether this could be implemented more widely. Policy officials are working to explore what else could be done in this area. Locally, in addition to the pilot, HMP/YOI Standford Hill are exploring possibilities of purchasing geo-tagged photo technology from existing providers available within the private sector. The aim is to complete a pilot for this technology for use as a ROTL monitoring tool.