



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Featherstone
Featherstone
Wolverhampton
Suffolk
WV10 7PU

MoJ ref: SUB119177

4 December 2024

Dear Chair,

**HMP FEATHERSTONE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 NOVEMBER 2022 – 31 OCTOBER 2023**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Featherstone. I have read your report carefully and I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work in preparing this report. This is particularly noteworthy given that you have been working below your recommended complement of Board members and I would like to express my appreciation to you and your members for this.

I was deeply saddened to read that one prisoner died whilst in custody during the reporting year. I offer my heartfelt condolences to their friends and family, and I would like to reassure the Board that any recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman in such tragic circumstances are taken very seriously.

I understand the Board's continued concerns and frustrations regarding the infrastructure of HMP Featherstone. A major programme of fire safety improvements is scheduled to commence in 2025/26. However, I appreciate that this does not address your immediate concerns and, in the interim, a project to provide wired, automated fire detection in 27 cells has completed design and will be delivered this financial year, which will provide additional support to the Governor in managing fire starters. Due to current funding and capacity pressures, HM Prisons and Probation Service (HMPPS) has unfortunately been unable to commit to the refurbishment of houseblocks 1-5 and replacement of windows across the entire prison, but will continue to seek opportunities to do so.

As the Board will be aware, an options appraisal was commissioned in November 2020 and was reviewed again in 2021, as part of the possible expansion reviews across the estate, which is still under review. In the meantime, the MoJ Property Directorate has commissioned a feasibility study, which is being considered, for redevelopment of the site.

HMPPS will make every effort to ensure a safe and decent environment is maintained despite the infrastructure challenges. Residential Managers at HMP Featherstone undertake regular assurance checks to ensure that a decent environment is maintained and any arising concerns are raised with Amey.

I was encouraged to receive your comments about the approach that was taken by the Head of Reducing Re-offending, which resulted in an improvement to the number of prisoners leaving prison with suitable arrangements for release along with more prisoners having access to a bank account. I was also pleased

to see that the process for discharging prisoners was thorough, organised, and a positive experience for them and that prison officers were explaining to each prisoner their post-sentence conditions in a clear and concise method.

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 are hugely appreciative of the invaluable role played by members of Independent Monitoring Boards throughout the estate and we are extremely grateful to you and your team for your continued hard work on behalf of HMP Featherstone.



Lord Timpson
Minister for Prisons, Probation, and Reducing Reoffending

HMP FEATHERSTONE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 NOVEMBER 2023 – 31 OCTOBER 2024

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Mental Health

Various approaches are being taken from both national and local levels to expedite prisoners from custody to a suitable secure mental health setting. NHS England is working with regions to prioritise improvement approaches to tackle long-waits. In the Midlands Region, a group of senior leaders across Health and Justice Commissioning, Specialised Commissioning, and Provider Collaboratives, has been established to explore strategic changes that will improve access to secure beds. The West Midlands Health and Justice Commissioning team continue to chair a fortnightly call with the commissioners and providers of secure mental health services to discuss and support the transfer of prisoners, whilst it is recognised that the availability of suitable beds is a constraining factor.

As the Board will be aware, ensuring the safety and fair treatment of prisoners experiencing severe mental illness, whilst also maintaining the safety and wellbeing of their peers, remains a challenge. In order to keep both the prisoner and those around them safe, it has often meant using the Care and Separation Unit (CSU) as the most appropriate option in the short-term. However, HMP Featherstone has recently not held prisoners suffering from mental health in CSU for long periods of time. The prison continues to work collaboratively with Practice Plus and Inclusion partners, in supporting and managing prisoners and ensuring that all referrals are completed in a timely manner. Multidisciplinary meetings are conducted regarding those in a period of crisis, enabling a comprehensive, collaborative and fully informed support plan to be developed and potential transfers arranged accordingly.