



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP/YOI Swinfen Hall
Swinfen Hall
Lichfield
Staffordshire
WS14 9QS

MoJ ref: SUB119985

17 December 2024

Dear Chair,

**HMP/YOI SWINFEN HALL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 MAY 2023 – 30 APRIL 2024**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP/YOI Swinfen Hall. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work that has been put into capturing your helpful observations, particularly as you continued to operate with several vacancies during the reporting period.

I note the concerns of the board around the affect of parental imprisonment on children. On 18 July this year, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) published "Estimates of children with a parent in prison" statistics (available on GOV.UK) which applies to England and Wales. The MoJ is working closely with the Department for Education in designing the process to identify these children and provide support for both them and for the parent in prison. The support will be informed by evaluation of previous interventions and pilots, and engagement both with those with lived experience and organisations from the Voluntary, Charity and Social Enterprise sector.

Whilst there is no probation service recording system of all children whose parent has been imprisoned, probation service court staff will record any child's details on the case management system. Pre-sentence report authors should also check, and reference within the pre-sentence report, what care arrangements will be in place for dependent children when custody is a stated option and consider and highlight the impact in the report that imprisonment may have on individuals who have childcare responsibilities. Similarly, at HMP/YOI Swinfen Hall, whilst there is no local database of all prisoners who are parents, during induction all prisoners are asked whether they are parents, and this information is updated on the Digital Prison System.

As you know, at HMP/YOI Swinfen Hall a wide range of themed family days, in addition to the standard family days offered by Prison Advice Care Trust (PACT), are available, such as a specific lifer day. The chaplaincy also works closely with Mother's Union, who have volunteers working with prisoners and children who also deliver the 'Being Dad' course, which is used to refer prisoners to family visits. The most recent course was completed in September 2024.

I am pleased to note that the Board has included neurodiversity in the report as HM Prisons and Probation Service (HMPPS) is committed to improving the support for neurodiverse people in prison. It was encouraging to receive your comments that the concerns you had raised in previous years over delays in the handing of prisoner property had now been resolved with the appointment of a new manager. I was also pleased to read about the excellent support the chaplaincy staff provide to prisoners

and that their work and support are generally regarded very favourably by prisoners across the various faith groups.

I note that although you have no specific questions for the Governor, some local issues of concern are raised 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 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/YOI Swinfen Hall.



Lord Timpson
Minister for Prisons, Probation, and Reducing Reoffending

HMP/YOI SWINFEN HALL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 MAY 2023 – 30 APRIL 2024

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Prison Officer Appointments

The current national delivery model allows for a large volume of interviews and assessments to be processed without putting strain on individual sites to carry out this activity, whereas a local recruitment process would divert resources away from frontline delivery. The assessment process is regularly evaluated and tested to ensure it remains relevant and supports on-the-job performance, with feedback from operational colleagues being an important part of this review, feeding into ongoing improvements. All sites are encouraged to engage with applicants locally, especially regarding early steps to ensure new colleagues are prepared before they begin their new role.

HMP Berwyn has begun a localised recruitment initiative to test whether increased engagement locally will deliver better results with respect to the quality of candidates and retention rates. Phase 2 of the pilot is now underway, with all elements of the assessment centre delivered on site and by colleagues from HMP Berwyn. HMPPS will draw lessons from the pilot to inform future recruitment strategies.

Prison Officer Suitability

An offer of employment is a legally binding contract and therefore cannot be withdrawn. HMPPS onboarding processes allow for Prison Officers to begin their role prior to their residential course as this enhances their learning opportunities, due to having some familiarisation, when on the residential course.

New entrant Prison officers, whether residential or daily attendees, complete several assessments throughout the foundation course, which measures their ability and suitability to fulfil the role of a Prison officer against set criteria. In addition, they are continuously monitored and assessed by trainers regarding their attitude and professionalism. Prison Learning Delivery work with establishments at the earliest opportunity, should a concern regarding knowledge, skills, behaviour or attitude of a learner emerge during their Prison officer foundation training. If new officers are not developing as intended, additional support will be provided in line with the relevant Prison Service Instruction (PSI). If this support has been exhausted and concerns remain, necessary action is taken to address poor performance.

Support For Prisoners Upon Release

HMPPS continues to strive to maintain offender flows in the face of ongoing population pressures across the entire adult male prison estate, despite the recent government announcement and change in legislation to automatically release certain Standard Determinate Sentenced prisoners after serving 40% of their sentences. The growth of the remand population to unprecedented levels because of the courts backlog are also impacting the training estate and the landscape remains extremely challenging.

From July 2024, a pre-release officer from the probation service attends HMP/YOI Swinfen Hall weekly to support those prisoners who require accommodation on release. All prisoners within 12 weeks of release are seen by the careers information, advice and guidance advisor, alongside the Offender Management Unit and Jobs Inside to provide further pre-release support.