



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP/YOI Norwich
Knox Road
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16 December 2024

Dear Chair,

**HMP/YOI NORWICH: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 MARCH 2023 – 29 FEBRUARY 2024**

Thank you for submitting your Board's annual report on HMP/YOI Norwich. I am very grateful for the huge amount of work by you and your colleagues to capture your helpful observations about the prison, which is particularly impressive given shortage of active members you have had. Please do pass on my thanks to everyone for their contributions during this challenging period.

I was truly saddened to read that four prisoners died during the reporting year. These are heart-breaking moments for the family and friends and I offer my profound condolences. I would like to reassure the loved ones of those who have passed away and the Board that any recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman are taken extremely seriously and are something that I discuss with Governors when I have the opportunity to visit prisons.

I sympathise with the Board's concerns for people who are sent to prison presenting with severe mental ill health or learning difficulties. Whilst it remains a matter for the judiciary who is sentenced to prison, we continue to work with partners to strengthen the pathways from police custody and courts into treatment through the Liaison and Diversion services funded by NHS England. HM Courts and Tribunal Service and NHS England are piloting a regional Health and Justice Hub in the North East to improve the way that courts, health services and prisons work together to better support defendants with severe mental illness into the right treatment in hospital or in the community. I look forward to seeing whether learning from this pilot can be used to inform improvements elsewhere in the country. I can also provide assurance to the Board that we at the Ministry of Justice are working with the Department of Health and Social Care to introduce a Mental Health Bill as soon as possible. This will include a range of reforms to support people suffering severe mental illness in the criminal justice system, aimed at speeding up access to specialist inpatient treatment so that those affected get the timely care they need.

Nationally NHS England has also issued a call to action asking regions to prioritise improvement approaches to tackle long-waits and the NHS England, Health and Justice East of England are working closely with commissioners and providers to strengthen the patient pathway to secure inpatient hospital treatment. This is being supported by a new national clinical template that has been implemented across all prisons to determine the scale of demand and waiting times. Whilst it is not ideal that HMP/YOI Norwich have had to manage some very ill and challenging prisoners whilst they await places in secure hospitals, these prisoners have continued to be treated humanely and with decency, and received regular

support. To ensure prisoners continue to receive the right health support in prison, NHS England Health and Justice is nationally undertaking a mental health pathway review across all areas of the criminal justice system to identify opportunities for earlier intervention and diversion, and more generally, improvement in the quality of mental health care.

I fully recognise the Board's concerns about the minimum rates of pay for prisoners and can provide clarity that the Prison Service Order 4460 *Prisoners' Pay* is kept under constant review to determine whether any published updates are required. Although this national policy sets out the minimum and flat pay rates for prisoners, prisons do have the discretion to pay above these rates and are required to review their local pay policy annually. I understand at HMP/YOI Norwich there was a large disparity in pay rates during the Covid-19 period and when the prison reviewed these alongside the budget it was only able to pay on average £10 per week with education incentivised at £11 per week, which still results in some overspend.

I can provide assurance that HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is aware of the impact that the cost of living is having on prisoners and is actively looking at ways to respond to this. Previous support has included a 10% uplift in private cash allowances (money that can be sent in by family and friends of prisoners) to help mitigate against price increases and the introduction of several new value brand product lines through the Prison Retail service. This gives prisoners the choice to purchase less expensive, non-premium branded items just as people in the community are doing and as these value brands are becoming increasingly popular, work is underway to increase the range. Selling prices of products through the Prison Retail service also continue to be set at the Manufactures Recommended Retail Price (MRRP) and if circumstances allow, prices may be set lower but will not be set higher than the MRRP. In addition, the introduction of in-cell phones and the increased use by prisoners allowed the cost calls to be reduced from 6.33p to 3.10p per minute to a landline on weekdays during the Covid-19 pandemic and these have remained at this reduced rate.

Turning to some of the positives within your report, your observations that staff are committed to maintaining safety and have shown great care for prisoners who they also have good professional relationships with was really reassuring to read. I was encouraged by the active work of the equality and diversity team and that there is dedicated support for prisoners that are neurodiverse. I was very pleased that the work of the Offender Management Unit has been recognised and I know that the Governor is particularly proud of the team given the changes to sentences and early release schemes over the past year. I also read with great interest the work of the reducing reoffending team, particularly the links established with local employers, as I know that supporting prisoners into employment on release can have a transformative impact.

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 Independent Monitoring Boards play throughout the estate and we are extremely thankful to you and your team for your continued hard work on behalf of HMP/YOI Norwich.



Lord James Timpson
Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending

HMP/YOI NORWICH: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 MARCH 2023 – 29 FEBRUARY 2024

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Segregation Policy

HMPPS is actively working on revising the national segregation policy, but due to the extent of the revisions being considered and the new resources being developed this has required more detailed consultation and engagement with stakeholders than anticipated, as well as an assessment of the impact on operational pressures. The new policy is now expected to be issued in 2025. Amendments include flexibility for prisons and local healthcare providers to deliver an alternative multidisciplinary, person-centred model of care to those in segregation, following a recent joint HMPPS and NHS England pilot. To help support segregation staff in implementing processes effectively, the revised policy will be accompanied by improved templates and capability-building products. In addition, consideration is being given to incorporating learning and feedback from independent scrutiny bodies and operations.

Heating

Multiple projects have been taking place across the prison site to improve the heating and hot water service, including a re-design of the boiler house. Once these projects are fully completed these services will be re-assessed to ascertain whether any further work is required. HMP/YOI Norwich is also prepared for periods of cold weather with on average 400 blankets in the prison stores at any given time.

Segregation

There are no immediate plans to expand the Care and Separation Unit provision (Ketts Unit) in line with the prison's expansion programme, however, this will be reviewed once the new accommodation is occupied and if there is an identified need this will be explored further. It is recognised that there is a need to improve the existing showers on the unit and various funding streams continue to be investigated as to the best way to fund this.

Laundry

It is acknowledged that issues can and do occur, particularly where the designated laundry site is unavailable and prison laundry has to be redirected to another site. The laundry at HMP Whitemoor, which services HMP/YOI Norwich along with HMP Bure, has in the last 12 to 14 months been closed for a mixture of short notice days and longer periods with notice due to infrastructure and staffing issues. In these circumstances, the laundry for HMP/YOI Norwich has either been redirected to other laundries, HMP Whitemoor has made alternative arrangements to return kit the following week or HMP/YOI Norwich has washed some of its own clothing putting kit back into the system from its own stock. Although every step is taken to avoid these incidents, it would be uneconomical to have an industrial laundry at every prison. There are no plans to provide inhouse laundry facilities at HMP/YOI Norwich as there are already 29 industrial laundries which accommodate the prison estate. The Board will be aware that there are domestic washing machines on the residential units which allow prisoners to be able to wash their own clothes. These are well used and can take time when they need to be replaced. There are also some industrial machines on the Category C Unit which are maintained by a contracted provider where they breakdown.