



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP/YOI Sudbury
Sudbury
Ashbourne
DE6 5HW

MoJ ref: SUB119983

17 December 2024

Dear Chair,

**HMP/YOI SUDBURY: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 JUNE 2023 TO 31 MAY 2024**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP/YOI Sudbury which I have read in detail. I would like to express my gratitude to you and your colleagues for your work in producing the report and for capturing such helpful observations. I recognise the hard work that has gone into producing this report, particularly as you continued to operate with several vacancies during the reporting year.

I appreciate your concerns around the age of the building and the poor-quality dormitory accommodation. I can confirm that an estates investment proposal bid was submitted in August 2024 to replace the existing accommodation across East and West dormitories. In the interim, reactive and planned maintenance will continue as well as painting across all dormitories and cellular accommodation. Two new accommodation units have also been opened which provide quality accommodation for 120 prisoners. This facility has been prioritised for those prisoners engaging with the incentivised substance free living programme and those on Release on Temporary Licence outwork.

HM Prison & Probation Service (HMPPS) is committed to making all prisons safe and fire safety compliant for staff and prisoners. The fire safety improvement project at HMP/YOI Sudbury has been funded across all residential accommodation. Unfortunately, plans to start this work in October have been delayed due to the collapse of the main contractor - alternative contractors will therefore be sought to pick up this work going forward. I am pleased to report that there has been a power upgrade at HMP/YOI Sudbury, and testing shows that there is now sufficient electricity capacity across the establishment.

I was disappointed to read about the issues around technical connectivity at HMP/YOI Sudbury during this reporting period and note that this has been raised previously by the Board. I am, however, encouraged that in line with the planned Prison Education Service preparations, the project to deploy improved Wi-Fi and network infrastructure in prison education departments and provide new laptops at HMP/YOI Sudbury is due to be completed by end of March 2025. In the meantime, 'Open Borders' remains available for access in education and the Through the Gate department, which provides a less restrictive internet access for prisoners to use for release planning.

I was heartened to read your observations of the efforts by the Through the Gate staff to prepare prisoners for life on release and that this support is recognised by prisoners. Ensuring prisoners have accommodation upon release is an important aspect of resettlement and I was pleased to read of the strenuous efforts of staff to support prisoners with securing accommodation and that in the year April 2023 to March 2024, 96% of prisoners released from HMP/YOI Sudbury had accommodation to go to.

I note that you have raised four 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 Lord Chancellor and I greatly value the role played by members of Independent Monitoring Boards throughout the estate and we would like to express our gratitude for your continued hard work on behalf of HMP/YOI Sudbury.



Lord Timpson
Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending

HM/YOI SUDBURY: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JUNE 2023 – 31 MAY 2024

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Wi-fi and Connectivity

We note the continued concerns regarding the lack of connectivity affecting Wi-fi availability. The lack of IT infrastructure, connectivity, Wi-Fi and the roll out of technology at HMP/YOI Sudbury compared to prisons in the closed estate continued to be an issue during this reporting period. As outlined in the Minister's response, the project to deploy improved Wi-Fi and network infrastructure in prison education departments and provide new laptops at HMP/YOI Sudbury is due to be completed by end of March 2025. We hope that this will result in positive improvements in preparing prisoners for life in the community.

Late arrivals

We note the Board's repeated concerns around late arrivals. As outlined in last year's response, Prison Escort Custody Services (PECS) are contractually required to return prisoners by the establishment 'latest reception time' but owing to various factors, this is not always possible and has been further exacerbated by high volumes of transfers in response to wider capacity issues across the estate. Escorts are required to ensure that the receiving prisons are informed of delays and agreement is sought in advance for the safe receipt of any late arrivals. PECS will continue to monitor all aspects of the contractors' performance and where it fails to meet the agreed levels it is raised with the contractor for improvement.

When prisoners are expected to arrive outside of usual hours, the prison team at HMP/YOI Sudbury work closely with healthcare colleagues so any concerns can be highlighted prior to arrival and healthcare colleagues are regularly staying on beyond the end of the shift to see late receptions arriving at the prison. In other cases, patients are scheduled to be seen by healthcare as a priority the following day. All prisoners receive their first screening within 24 hours of arrival. NHS England has commissioned a Health & Social Care Needs Analysis which identified a need to increase reception cover to meet the population changes. Commissioners have asked the healthcare provider to submit a business case to meet this gap in service.

Accommodation

As outlined in the Minister's response, an estates investment proposal bid has been submitted to replace some existing dormitory accommodation. In preparation for the up-and-coming fire safety improvement project, there is now a programme of redecoration for prisoners' rooms planned. HMPPS will continue to improve the standard of accommodation by redecorating communal areas (showers, washrooms and kitchens). There are limited opportunities for self-cook facilities, however, the standard of equipment will continue to be monitored, and items replaced as needed.

Prisoners' Property

HMPPS note the Board's continuing concerns about the handling of prisoners' property. This is an area to which HMPPS is currently giving further attention. Careful consideration will be given to the findings in the recently received IMB national thematic report on how property loss impacts on prisoners, as well as those due to be received from Independent Prisoner Complaint Investigations in the coming months following a thematic review of the property complaints they have received in the last five years.

As the Board identifies, a common area for problems is when excess prisoner property is forwarded on when a prisoner transfers. It is therefore key that prisoners comply with volumetric control limits, since

anything within those limits will transfer with them. HMPPS is focusing on what more can be done to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Prisoners' Property Framework.

HMP/YOI Sudbury has reviewed its processes and procedures to manage prisoners' property prior to transfer and there are now robust processes in place that provide a clear record of accountability for the management of prisoner property. There continue to be challenges with the volume of property that prisoners have and to manage this issue, prisoners who have been assessed suitable for domestic ROTL are encouraged to take out their stored property over time which reduces impact for final day of release or impact on the amount of property transfer with the prisoner if returned to closed conditions.