



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP/YOI Winchester
Romsey Road
Winchester
SO22 5DF

MoJ Ref: 120318

2 January 2025

Dear Chair,

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

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP/YOI Winchester. Having read your report with care, I am really grateful to you and your colleagues for the huge amount of hard work that has been put into capturing your helpful observations. This is all the more impressive given the membership changes and training provided to new members during the year. As you know I also had the chance to visit the prison earlier this month which was insightful and I appreciated the opportunity to discuss matters in more detail with the Governor, staff and members of the Board.

I was deeply saddened to hear that one prisoner died in custody during the reporting year who has yet to be publicly named through the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) and I offer my profound condolences to all their friends and family. I would like to reassure the Board and loved ones that recommendations made by the PPO are taken extremely seriously. This is an important topic that I discuss with Governors when I have the opportunity to visit prisons.

I fully understand the Board's query regarding further resources for prison and probation services, and particularly to lessen the effect of release schemes on staff and prisoners. I can clarify for the Board that national initiatives have been in place through the Operation Resourcing and Stability Panel since October 2023 to provide an uplift in resource, including Case Administrators to support the surge in work related to capacity management and a submission was made to the HM Treasury to extend this until March 2025. Recruitment and retention also remains a priority across the Probation Service, with the launch of various initiatives to deliver more robust supervision, recruit more staff and reduce caseloads. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) will continue focusing on recruiting through the centralised campaigns to achieve its commitment to recruit at least 1,000 new trainee probation officers by March 2025. HMP/YOI Winchester did benefit from the Operational Stability Payment (OSP) scheme to assist with the backlogs whilst staffing levels were low, but the Offender Management Unit (OMU) permanent vacancies are all filled now and am grateful to the Board for highlighting the extraordinary effort of the OMU staff during a challenging period to help HMPPS ensure that there were sufficient prison places to serve our courts.

I can sympathise with the Board's further concern about the high number of people on remand who are released immediately from court on bail, licence or as time served and the support they need. The Crown Court outstanding caseload remains one of the biggest challenges facing the Criminal Justice System. The caseload has risen substantially over recent years because of the pandemic and an increase in the

number of cases coming before the criminal courts. We at the Ministry of Justice want to make sure every victim has the swift access to justice they deserve, and we are committed to reducing the caseload and bringing waiting times down. Accommodation support services do support all people in prison at HMP/YOI Winchester, including those un-convicted, convicted but unsentenced and those who are un-convicted, held on remand and then acquitted. However, it is recognised that the increase in people in prison being released time served, or with very short periods left to serve, can present particular challenges in assessing risk and needs to put in place robust plans in advance of the day of release. This is particularly true for immediate release from court, as this is difficult to predict. The South Central Probation region has actively engaged with a National Immediate Release “Task and Finish Group” to improve the understanding of immediate release. This has resulted in a series of recommendations that have been accepted by the Senior Operational Leadership Team in an effort to improve outcomes for prison leavers and people in the community.

Turning to the progress being made, I was pleased with the Board’s assessment and praise for the prison as it continues to improve the conditions and outcomes for prisoners and reduces the level of violence. It was very encouraging to read there was a 25% reduction in the number of property-related applications, which may be linked to the appointment of a dedicated officer to the processing of property issues and that there was a positive change with the number of prisoner healthcare complaints also falling.

However, you will be aware of the recent invocation of an Urgent Notification by HM Inspectorate of Prisons on 23 October 2024 which the Secretary of State responded to on 20 November 2024 with the immediate 28-day action plan. The subsequent action plan in response to the full inspection report will be issued shortly and there will be enhanced supervision to regularly review progress against both the immediate and the full action plan once published. This will be undertaken via a UN Strategy and Action Group (SAG) with oversight by the HMPPS Director General Operations.

I note you have raised two 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 played by members of Independent Monitoring Boards throughout the estate and we are very grateful to you and your team for your continued hard work on behalf of HMP/YOI Winchester.



Lord Timpson
Minister for Prisons, Probation, and Reducing Reoffending

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Care and Separation Unit (CSU)

The CSU project was in the process of mobilising to restart, with a projected completion date of November 2025, when the primary contractor ISG went into administration. Once the commercial process with ISG is complete, the project will be retendered as a priority and a revised programme scheduled.

Control Room and CCTV System

A feasibility and options study for the Control Room, including the CCTV system, has been completed and a business case was presented to the capital maintenance assurance panel in October 2024 to allow funding to be considered. In the interim, the existing current control room remains able to provide the correct level of operations to keep everyone living and working at HMP/YOI Winchester safe and there is a robust local contingency plan in place in case of loss of service. Repairs will also be managed via the Computer Aided Facilities Management system (CAFM) where control room staff report faulty cameras and associated equipment.

Healthcare Service Accountability

NHS England is fully committed to ensuring that the highest standards of healthcare are provided, especially for vulnerable groups such as segregated prisoners, including through closer monitoring and evaluation of the service delivered by healthcare providers. NHS England will continue to work closely with the healthcare provider at HMP/YOI Winchester to ensure that the healthcare services meet the expected standards under *Prison Service Order 1700 Segregation* and the terms of the contract.

NHS England are in the process of strengthening its performance review mechanisms through regular audits to ensure that contractual obligations are met, which will particularly emphasise key performance indicators (KPIs) tied to patient care and outcomes. An established regular contract meeting to examine service performance is already held between NHS England and the healthcare provider locally at HMP/YOI Winchester, allowing challenges related to service delivery to be discussed and this has an ongoing focus on healthcare staffing and service provision to segregated prisoners. NHS England are exploring opportunities for additional independent oversight of healthcare services to further bolster accountability and have commissioned an independent consultant to review the current healthcare support available to care and separation units, which is due to be completed by March 2025. In addition, NHS England acknowledges the healthcare staff challenges that have been experienced at the prison. While there has been progress in recruitment efforts and staffing levels, these are being closely monitored and contingency plans are in place to address any shortfalls in personnel that might impact service delivery.