



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Wymott
Ulnes Walton Lane
Leyland
Preston
PR26 8LW

MoJ ref: SUB121095

6 February 2025

Dear Chair,

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

Thank you for submitting your Board's annual report on HMP Wymott which I have read with great care. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to you and your colleagues for your work in producing the report and for capturing such helpful observations despite continuing to operate with a severely depleted complement of members. Whilst the number of members may currently be low, it was encouraging to note that you are optimistic about the Board's position going forward.

I was deeply saddened and troubled to hear that fourteen prisoners died during the reporting year. Although eight of these deaths occurred at hospital, it was upsetting to learn that of the six deaths at the prison two were apparently self-inflicted and in the same month. I offer my heartfelt condolences to all their friends and family and would like to reassure the Board that recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman are taken very seriously. I have noted that where the PPO has published their reports, all but one of the recommendations were directed towards healthcare rather than the prison. I also noted your observations about the good work carried out by family liaison officers and the support available to staff and prisoners alike who might have been impacted by these deaths.

I appreciate the Board's continued concerns about prisoners serving Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentences. I am very mindful of the specific challenges faced by those serving IPP sentences and this is an issue I feel passionately about. In opposition, we supported changes to the IPP licence period and the creation of a statutory requirement for the Government to publish an annual report in the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024. These commenced on 1 November 2024, when the licences for 1,742 IPP offenders in the community were terminated. The remaining reforms will be implemented on 1 February 2025, when the reduced qualifying period for consideration of licence termination will see around 600 additional referrals made to the Parole Board. The Lord Chancellor will also have two new powers, the power to use 'Risk Assessed Recall Review' (RARR) for recalled IPP prisoners and the power to disapply a recall. The first enables her to re-release people who have been recalled at any point without referring the case to the Parole Board, where safe to do so. The second enables her to not reset the two-year period after someone is re-released from a recall.

Additionally, the Government is determined to support the rehabilitation of IPP offenders through a refreshed Action Plan which we published on 15 November 2024. The Plan puts an important emphasis on effective frontline delivery in our prisons and the Probation Service, to ensure that those serving IPP sentences have robust and effective sentence plans, which they are actively engaging with, and that they are in the correct prison to access the right interventions and rehabilitative services. This is the most

effective way to help them to reduce their risk so that they can progress towards safe release from custody. The refreshed Action Plan was published in our IPP Annual Report and can be accessed online at GOV.UK. I can assure you that the Government is committed to working with organisations and campaign groups to ensure the appropriate course of action is taken to support those still serving IPP sentences.

Turning to the plans for a new prison near HMP Wymott, following the planning appeal inquiry, the Board may be aware that a decision was made by the Secretary of State for Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in early December 2024 to give the go ahead for a new prison in Lancashire next to HMPs Wymott and Garth on greenbelt land. This will allow for around 1700 prison places to be built on the site.

Whilst this announcement will help manage the prison population in the longer term, the Government and I share your concerns around pressures on capacity across the prison estate which is well documented. In October 2024 the Government announced additional steps to address the challenge both in the short and long term. This includes the launch of the Independent Sentencing Review to ensure we are never again in a position where we have more prisoners than space in our prisons. To allow the Sentencing Review adequate time to complete, the Lord Chancellor announced a package of bridging measures to reduce demand on the system, including increasing the time eligible offenders can spend on Home Detention Curfew from six to twelve months and reforming how we review recalls to prison to target the unsustainable growth in the recall population.

Prior to this, on 12 July 2024 the Lord Chancellor announced a measure to alleviate prison capacity pressures by reducing the time those sentenced to eligible standard determinate sentences (SDS) serve in prison from 50% to 40% of that sentence. This measure, known as SDS40, excludes prisoners sentenced for sex offences, serious violent offences with a sentence of four years or more, and certain domestic-abuse-connected offences irrespective of length. The construction of a further four new prisons is ongoing as well as the expansion and refurbishment of the existing estate, including through temporary accommodation. In December 2024 we also published our ten-year prison capacity strategy. These measures will have a positive impact on lowering the proportion of crowding in the prison estate by providing accommodation that is safe, decent and uncrowded.

Although I agree with and share the Board's concerns, it was encouraging to receive your comments about the work of the safer living team at HMP Wymott, the well-attended celebratory events and activities throughout the year, and that staff training now includes neurodiversity and dementia awareness in light of the increasing number of older prisoners presenting with signs of these issues. It was also heartening to read your commendation of the staff and prisoners who care for the gardens and outside areas which will no doubt create a better environment and help wellbeing.

I note you have raised some local issues of concern in your report which the Governor will continue to keep you aware of progress as work continues. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) comments in response to other issues raised in your report are set out in the attached annex. The Lord Chancellor and I sincerely appreciate the invaluable role 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 Wymott.



Lord Timpson
Minister for Prisons, Probation, and Reducing Reoffending

HMP WYMOTT: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JUNE 2023 – 31 MAY 2024

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Workshop Roof

Funding has been provided to replace the roof and the work is to be delivered by Amey Projects. A design and quotation process is underway, however a delivery date cannot be confirmed at present. Separately, HMPPS has committed approximately £62.5 million to the refurbishment of A and D wings, which is currently in the design stage.

Kitchens

A business case for a project to upgrade the kitchen has been submitted. A number of designs have been proposed and they include an upgrade of the existing kitchen to the building of a new purpose-built facility. HMPPS is unable to confirm which option is likely to be progressed at this time and funding has not been provided for the kitchen upgrade. Due to the importance of the kitchens, local management have decided to make kitchen equipment a standing agenda item on their monthly Estates and Accommodation meeting where the catering manager provides a rated assessment that includes maintenance requests and the contractor is held to account.

Staff Recruitment and Retention

Further to last years' response, HMPPS has undertaken significant levels of recruitment over the past two years and consequently some prisons are having to address the need to support a much larger cohort of new officers which has resulted in a greater level of inexperience than previously encountered. A number of initiatives have been put into place to address this position and in particular to support retention efforts among new staff. The service has invested in New Colleague Mentors who are experienced staff within prison to provide support and assistance to new officers. HMPPS has also launched an Alumni scheme which encourages former officers to return to the service, bringing with them their previous levels of experience.

At HMP Wymott, it is recognised that prison has been experiencing a deficit of Band 3 Prison Officers for many years. This has resulted in the curtailment of tasks and the regime to meet priorities. Owing to the aging population and a host of unprofiled tasks, resources are prioritised accordingly which can also be resource-intensive. The prison will continue to work hard to support staff on sick absence back to work and to manage those on long-term sick absence through the attendance management policy.

Hospital Escorts and Triaging

A joint HMPPS/NHS England review of escort, bedwatch, and constant supervision is expected to gain momentum in the coming months. The review will consider good practice in the use of the 'telemeds' system, locally delivered clinics and treatments, and other local health interventions that might reduce the need for external health escorts. The review may also establish the true demand for external health escorts and the factors driving this to enable better forward planning of resources. The review will closely examine the financial arrangements for cross-charging NHS England for security services in relation to health escorts, to ensure the cost of providing additional escorting services does not form a barrier to improving health access.

More generally, HMPPS' Workforce Delivery Project aspires to increase the number of planned health escorts in prison profiles, although it is too early to say what impact this will have on HMP Wymott specifically. The increased staffing profile linked to capacity expansion at HMP Wymott should enable a

small increase in the number of planned escort sessions available. Currently, HMP Wymott operates a planned escort programme to enable delivery of the NHS England-commissioned healthcare services, and three planned escorts is provided Monday to Friday. The prison has introduced a weekly triage meeting with healthcare and an operational Custodial Manager to work through the cases together so that they can be planned in advance. The new Head of Healthcare has made a positive impact and has reviewed and introduced improved systems for planning.

Resettlement Provision

The resourcing for pre-release teams in prisons is managed by Regional Probation Directors. All reception/resettlement prisons should have an embedded pre-release team and all other sites an in-reach service managed by or otherwise linked to a Probation Delivery Unit (PDU). Pre-release teams identify and address immediate resettlement needs and provide pre-release support for all people in prison, including those people on remand. Their role is to screen for resettlement needs via a Basic Custody Screening Tool completion, and signpost to specialist services within the prison such as Prison Banking Administrators, Healthcare and Rehabilitative Services.

Locally, an in-reach service has been offered to HMP Wymott as part of pre-release probation delivery. Based on an estimated 20-30 releases per month, this equates to a one day per week service. A number of meetings have been held with the prison to establish this support but there has been a continued preference for maintaining existing arrangements at the prison. As such there is currently no probation-led pre-release delivery at HMP Wymott. This resource remains available and the pre-release team has supported SDS40 delivery.