



Ministry
of Justice

Sir Nic Dakin MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary
of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMYOI Werrington
Werrington
Stoke-On-Trent
ST9 0DX

MoJ ref: 124165

21 May 2025

Dear Chair,

**HMYOI WERRINGTON: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 SEPTEMBER 2023 – 31 AUGUST 2024**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMYOI Werrington. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work that has been put into capturing your helpful observations, especially as you continued to operate with several vacancies, but were able to undertake your monitoring accordingly.

I have read your report with care and understand the Board's concern about the location of young people in custody in proximity to their family following the function change of HMYOI Cookham Wood from children to adults. Whilst this Government has inherited an incredibly challenging financial position, we recognise that we do need to take realistic steps towards changing the youth custodial estate, as well as improving the outcomes for the young people in our care. We also realise that longer term, we should be moving away from large-scale institutions. Instead, we should be working towards a secure estate made up of smaller units, as we know that these units, with higher ratios of staff, lead to better outcomes for young people and this is in our future strategy. As a first step, the opening of the Oasis Restore Secure School marks a significant shift in the secure estate with its aim to provide the best possible environment for the care and rehabilitation of young people.

In addition, further focus is being put on the principles of the Framework for Integrated Care to drive improvement and provide these better outcomes. The Youth Custody Service (YCS) has developed a clear roadmap to effective practice, in partnership with NHS England, education providers and psychology services. The roadmap will use these principles to focus on critical outcomes which every Young Offenders Institution (YOI) in England within the YCS will use as a business plan with clear performance metrics to drive change in areas such as safety, behaviour management, and education.

Whilst there is still work to do, I was reassured to read that there have been improvements in conflict resolution which is helping to tackle violence and reduce young people having to be kept apart. It was encouraging to receive your comments about the impressive resettlement work,

including setting up young people with a bank account prior to their discharge. It was really positive to read that the health and wellbeing needs of young people continue to be met and that prison management showed a great deal of care for their wellbeing too. I was also pleased to hear about the energy and compassion of the chaplaincy and their superb pastoral care for young people who were experiencing bereavement and family problems.

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. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) comments in response to other issues raised in your report to the YCS and Local Authority 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 HMYOI Werrington.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Nic', with a stylized flourish above it.

SIR NIC DAKIN MP

HMYOI WERRINGTON: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 SEPTEMBER 2023 – 31 AUGUST 2024

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Education

Qualifications

The Board's concern about academic qualification provision is acknowledged and the education provider for HMYOI Werrington has already been issued with an Improvement Notice by the YCS as a contractual mechanism to address provision. The improvement notice covers the lack of learner outcomes and the education providers delivery of appropriate GCSE qualifications.

Key Performance Indicators

As noted in the Minister's response, performance metrics are currently being reviewed as part of the roadmap to effective practice. This includes the existing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and changes will be made to the current education contract to reflect this. The Governor locally will keep the Board informed of these changes.

Allocations

To monitor how many young people receive their preferred education options, the YCS keeps a record of their chosen course and keeps this under review. Whilst every effort is made to ensure they can attend their preferred options this may not always be possible. Where this is due to classes being full, the young person will be added to a waiting list. However, in some instances there may be mixing issues and it is important to make sure young people are able to learn safely.

Higher Learning

The Board's frustration is understood as this has been an ongoing issue and forms part of the Improvement Notice. It is recognised that progress has been slow in this area and the YCS have escalated the lack of support, choice and enrolment for higher-level learners.

Food Portions

The standards that must be met when planning food and drink provision in custody are currently set out in the Catering Operating Manual. These standards are based on UK Government dietary recommendations which are specific to adult males, adult women and young people. The Board can be assured that the average daily calorie count at HMYOI Werrington is 3030 which is slightly above what is recommended for an active teenager. In addition, the Catering Operating Manual is being reviewed and will be replaced by a Catering Policy Framework in due course. In the interim a standardised recipe bank, analysed by a dietitian and nutritionist, is currently being tested by over 30 sites. The recipes which plan to be used throughout HMPPS, will provide an average calorie counts and the Red Amber Green nutritional colour coded labelling.

Matter raised in the report for the Local Authority

Safeguarding

The YCS has a Transitions Framework to support those who are turning 18 and are transferring to the adult estate to ensure a comprehensive handover is completed. It remains the case that any safeguarding concerns for those under 18 years old are referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer. Those who have turned 18 years old and have looked after status will continue to be supported by their Local Authority. The YCS continues to work alongside the national Young Adults lead to ensure there is ongoing support and learning in place.