



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Berwyn
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D. Chair,

**HMP BERWYN: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 MARCH 2021 – 28 FEBRUARY 2022**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 28 February 2022. I was saddened to hear there were two deaths in custody during the reporting year. As you are aware the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) carry out independent investigations into deaths in custody and I would like to assure the Board my officials take recommendations from the PPO very seriously.

I am very much aware of the amount of effort that goes into producing annual reports and thank you for providing a comprehensive picture of HMP Berwyn over the reporting year. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work, especially as you had a number of vacancies.

I understand that the former Prisons Minister, Alex Chalk MP, visited the prison on 16 August 2021 and I hope this visit proved useful.

I would like to assure the Board that every effort is being made to recruit to the new staffing levels. We look forward to delivering on our Prisons Strategy White Paper commitment to employ up to 5,000 additional prison officers in line with the expansion of the estate. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) has a number of initiatives in place to support prison officer recruitment which includes Advance into Justice. This is a fast-track scheme designed to support armed forces staff and veterans to become prison officers. The centralised recruitment team also continue to tailor marketing materials to highlight the challenges but also the skills and abilities HMPPS is looking for.

The Government recently announced a pay award which gives at least a 4% increase to all prison staff, and significantly more than this to Prison Officers and Operational Support Grades who are on modernised pay arrangements. This is expected to positively affect both recruitment and retention. To further improve prison officer retention, work is being undertaken to embed an outreach strategy to ensure all candidates are engaged with prior to joining the service, and that they have the opportunity to visit the prison and ask any questions that they may have around the role and HR issues. HMPPS has also implemented a 'supporting each other' initiative which includes New Colleague Mentor and Buddy Schemes which are being implemented across all prison regions throughout 2022–23. This package of initiatives is specifically designed to create a supportive and helpful environment for prison staff and to ensure that they feel capable and confident in their role.


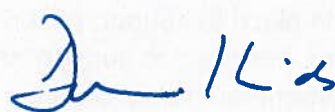
I was concerned to read some staff had encountered gender abuse and would like to affirm that there is no place for any form of unacceptable behaviour in HMPPS. Such behaviour is contrary to the service's core values and will not be tolerated. All allegations of unacceptable behaviour are taken seriously, investigated and, where appropriate, disciplinary action will be taken. The Tackling Unacceptable Behaviour Unit (TUBU) was established in August 2020 and works to support staff through a confidential helpline, mediation service and programme of Climate Assessments to surface and address unacceptable behaviour. In addition, a specialist investigation service is being developed to deal with the most serious cases involving bullying, harassment, discrimination or victimisation. This work aims to provide a confidential place to enable staff to raise concerns and talk through options. It also enables HMPPS to identify particular areas of concern, and take a proactive approach toward both building staff confidence in reporting issues such as gender abuse, and driving positive behaviour change across the Service.

TUBU has already been in communication with the Prison Group Director about the timing of Climate Assessments in this area, and there are plans to undertake an assessment at HMP Berwyn within the next few months. HMP Berwyn has supported staff with the launch of a local female staff support group. The group helps to provide assistance and improved support to staff who are subject to inappropriate abuse and/or behaviour.

Turning to the positives in the report, it was encouraging to receive your comments about the support given to self-isolating prisoners following a positive Covid test during lockdown, and then to those who had not received family visits for over a month following the easing of restrictions. I was also pleased to learn about the Chain-breakers peer support system, the introduction of a resettlement hub, and the development of the Monopoly-inspired game called H.O.M.E (home options made easier) leading to an improvement in fewer prisoners being released with no fixed abode.

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 Justice Secretary 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 HMP Berwyn.

Damian Hinds

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Workshops

The pandemic led to the transfer of workshop provision to the prison from the previous contracted provider (Interserve) under Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment (TUPE) Regulations 2006.

Workshop provision has now resumed following the easing of restrictions, providing improved workplaces that will help support prisoners obtain employment on release. HMP Berwyn also has plans to recruit to fill all instructor vacancies. The Governor has committed to update the Board on progress at his monthly meeting.