Dear Peter,

HMIP report on an independent review of progress at HMP Pentonville

Thank you for your Independent Review of Progress report at HMP Pentonville, whereby you followed up on 15 key recommendations, and 3 OFSTED themes from your most recent inspection in April 2019.

Following the Secretary of State’s letter to you of 29th February 2020, I have set out below the action we are taking at HMP Pentonville. Please be assured I take your findings from this very concerning IRP seriously and we are committed to supporting the Governor and his team in making the necessary changes.

Whilst recognising the continuing challenges at the site I am encouraged to note that you have seen good or reasonable progress being made in four of the recommendations that you have reviewed and one OFSTED theme. You have specifically identified improvement in the following key areas:

**Drug Strategy** - A coherent supply reduction strategy had been developed supported by an agreed action plan which incorporated a range of pertinent measures to deliver the aims of the strategy. MDT positive rates have reduced but they do remain high. A multi-disciplinary group meets regularly to review the action plan which includes an increase in the use of security measures and better use of intelligence-led drug testing.

**Improved Physical Security** - The window replacement programme is underway but not complete although there is a plan in place to ensure all windows are replaced. CCTV is currently being installed on A wing and funding has been secured to cover J wing. E and F wing do not currently have CCTV but this will be requested through the Prison Performance Support Programme (PPSP).
Access to health care, safe storage of in-possession medicines, and a prison-wide strategy for health and well-being – Arrangements to enable prisoners to access health clinics has improved significantly. Dedicated officers facilitate movements and many clinics are run from the wings which provides more flexible and enhanced access. The health and well-being unit provides very good support for prisoners. A prison wide health and well-being strategy has been developed following stakeholder consultation and will be launched in the spring.

Risk Management - At the time of the IRP assessment, there were only 38 outstanding OASys assessments, but 11 of them were more than six months overdue. The establishment are working with the group Reducing Reoffending lead and the national OASys team to ensure this reduction in backlog is sustained and that there is a plan in place to ensure men are not transferred without an OASys other than in exceptional circumstances.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment – Quality assurance procedures for education and training are now robust and consequently, the quality of teaching is better, especially in functional skills, although the use of individual learning plans and the development of prisoners’ English skills outside specific English lessons still requires improvement. The quality and extent of support for prisoners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is much improved and arrangements to quality assure teaching and learning within industries and work areas is now in place.

In respect of the six key recommendations where you did not find any meaningful progress, I can confirm:

Violence reduction – The drivers of violence will be analysed and monitored at the monthly safety meeting with a focus on improving staff prisoner relations, producing a more constructive regime, intensively focusing on the most challenging prisoners and intervening in postcode/gang related issues. Key work has been reintroduced and since January, over 300 sessions per week have been delivered and there are plans for this to exceed 500 by the end of February. Tackling the low levels of engagement with the regime are also a priority in making the prison safer and an Activities Task Force will focus on driving up attendance rates at activity. Challenge Support Intervention Plan (CSIP) was launched at HMP Pentonville in December 2019 and a weekly Safety Intervention meeting has been recently established and all men subject to CSIP are monitored as part of this meeting. The establishment have worked hard in reducing the supply of illicit substances and a drug strategy diagnostic visit will take place on 24 March to better inform the gaps and capability around both supply and demand reduction in the prison.

Use of Force - A local weekly Use of Force governance committee has been established and the evidence obtained at this meeting will be used to inform both training and advice/action given to members of staff. Body Worn Video Camera usage has been increasing since January 2020 and the intention is to purchase more cameras to give greater usage. CCTV coverage is increasing with A wing now having CCTV installed.

Implementation of Prison and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) recommendations and Management of Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) documents - A revised management structure will be launched in March 2020 to give much simpler and clearer lines of accountability for the Safer Custody Team to focus on ACCT management and PPO recommendations. The establishment is currently rolling out single case management of ACCT plans across the site and to support this the Governor has now introduced daily monitoring at the operational meeting to ensure that all assigned cases are appropriately scheduled each day.
The Group Safety Lead will offer dedicated support with the implementation of a process for monitoring PPO recommendations and once the process is in place, the monthly safety meeting will also have a dedicated focus on PPO recommendation compliance.

**Equalities** - The establishment is currently in the process of recruiting a dedicated equalities manager to improve delivery in this area. The regional equalities advisor is now working with the establishment to support the prison and produce an action plan which allocates key responsibilities to senior managers. A series of events recognising diversity and equality are planned over the course of the year and managers will harness the input of the prisoner group to maximise outcomes in this area. External organisations will offer support with the Discrimination Incident Report Form (DIRF) QA processes to ensure responses are of a high quality and that any themes are identified.

**Regime and activity attendance** - The core day has expanded to allow greater access to activities and the regime. An Activities Task Force will be launched in early March 2020 to maximise the use of existing educational and vocational activity spaces. This will focus on improving daily attendance as well as improving outcomes in work areas. In addition, Key Workers will use their relationships to encourage men into activity which is both regular and purposeful. Public Sector Prison Industries will work with the establishment to help implement an improved core day and regime across the prison and allow further improved access to activities.

A new, experienced Governor has recently been appointed at HMP Pentonville and the Governor with the support of the Prison Group Director will continue to progress the full Action Plan covering all the original recommendations, and I am confident that more progress will be made before the announced inspection on the 9th November 2020. Alongside this, you will be aware that HMP Pentonville has been part of the PPSP since November 2019 and significant investment has already been provided as part of this.

I remain committed to ensuring continued progress against HMP Pentonville’s agreed Action Plan and I can assure you that through my operational assurance functions and the support of OSAG we continue to closely monitor the progress.

Whilst I acknowledge that there is still much work to be carried out at the prison and that there are a large number of recommendations that have seen no meaningful or insufficient progress, I am encouraged that our monitoring of the prison is in accord with your findings and that the plan that was produced by the Governor and PGD in preparation for the IRP has enabled some progress to be made.

Yours sincerely,

Michelle Jarman-Howe
Executive Director (PSP South)
CC: Private Office
    Phil Copple, Director General Prisons