



# HM Prison & Probation Service

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Dear Charlie,

## **HMIP report on an independent review of progress at HMP The Mount - 6-8 February 2023**

Thank you for your Independent Review of Progress report at HMP The Mount, whereby you followed up 9 key recommendations and 3 Ofsted themes from your most recent inspection in March 2022.

I am encouraged to note that you have seen good and reasonable progress being made across some of the recommendations and Ofsted themes, and note the following;

- **Safety (Self Harm or Suicide)** - prisoners reported to Inspectors that the regime was now more reliable and that it had alleviated some of their frustrations. The prison has undertaken a significant refocus of its support available to prisoners and as noted in your report, these include weekly face-to-face contact with the Samaritans, meetings with the mental health and psychology teams, as well as the inclusion of the Samaritans in meetings to discuss prisoners with complex requirements. The prison's more integrated approach to its support of vulnerable prisoners has also included wider engagement with residential staff responsible for managing them and it was reported that staff were knowledgeable of the prisoners in their care, and prisoners Inspectors had spoken to said that they felt supported.
- **Living Conditions** - The investment in improving the decency of living conditions has been successful. The replacement of damaged or deficient cell furniture has been carried out and further work to improve prisoner safety is intended for later this calendar year, including but not limited to the upgrade of fire detection systems. The use of prisoner work parties to assist with the refurbishment of the older accommodation in the prison has also enhanced the decency of accommodation.
- **Children and families** - improvements in work to encourage prisoners to maintain relationships with family and friends were reported, as well as the resumption of both Family Days and Family Links courses following restrictions imposed due to Covid-19, while in-cell technology introduced to the prison had also helped maintain contact with families.

In respect of the three key areas and Ofsted themes where you found insufficient or no meaningful progress, I can confirm that all the IRP findings have been carefully considered and steps will be taken to address them as appropriate. This will include the following;

- It is noted that you considered that The Mount had made insufficient progress on improving staff retention and the proportion of officers not deployable to operational duties. Whilst it is noted that Officers unavailable for operational duties has decreased from 40% to 32%, this figure remains a challenge for the establishment. The Mount will be increasing its level of recruiting to offset expected staffing attrition and to ensure that purposeful activity can be delivered to enable it to fulfil its role as a Category C training prison. Although additional recruitment has increased the number of inexperienced officers from 43% to 60%, this is an essential step in ensuring that sufficient staff are present to deliver purposeful activity.
- The operational staffing of the prison has impacted delivery in a number of areas, one of which is that prisoners should have far more time out of their cell each day and be able to engage in a meaningful range of constructive activities to promote their well-being. As noted previously, the regime has been redesigned and staff redeployed to increase purposeful activity, and the report notes that the time spent unlocked for most prisoners has increased. Whilst it remains a concern that this time is reported to remain inadequate, the increase in staffing and enhanced regime is intended to progressively increase the level of activity, whilst simultaneously reducing unemployment within the prison.
- It remains a concern that too many prisoners do not have an up-to-date OASys and were reported to have waited too long to receive a sentence plan, however as noted in your report, the Offender Management Unit has faced staffing challenges. Recruitment for these posts has taken place and the prison will undertake to reduce its backlog in assessments, as well as in the use of non-accredited interventions which was positively received in the report, and which we believe is vital to helping to reduce the risk posed by prisoners who do not meet the criteria for accredited offending behaviour programmes.

The Governor with the support of the Prison Group Director will continue to progress the full Action Plan covering all the original recommendations.

I remain committed to ensuring continued progress against the agreed action plan at HMP The Mount. I would like to provide my assurance that through operational assurance frameworks and the support of OSAG we will continue to closely monitor the prisons progress.

Whilst I acknowledge that there is still much work to be carried out at the prison, I am encouraged that progress is being made and that our monitoring of the prison is in line with your findings.

**Sarah Coccia**  
**Executive Director, Public Sector Prisons South**

CC: Private Office  
Phil Copple, Director General Operations