



Ministry
of Justice

The Right Honourable
David Gauke MP
Lord Chancellor & Secretary of
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Peter Clarke CVO OBE QPM

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Dear Peter

URGENT NOTIFICATION – HMP EXETER

Thank you for your letter dated 30th May 2018, setting out your concerns following the inspection at HMP Exeter and invoking the Urgent Notification protocol. As set out in the Protocol between you and my Department, I am committed to providing you with a response within 28 days of your letter.

I take very seriously the issues you raised and I am committed to ensuring they are addressed. I set out below an overview of the immediate actions we have prioritised to address the most serious and urgent matters. I also enclose an initial action plan providing more detail on the specific actions that have been completed or are underway.

Safety

HMP Exeter has been identified as a Prison of Concern for Safety and will receive bespoke support from the National Safety and Group Safety Teams to help address their safety issues. The establishment will put in place an updated safety strategy by the end of July, which will set out their priorities and supporting actions to address the drivers of violence and self-harm. This will take account of your findings and the review conducted previously by the internal Operational Systems and Assurance Group (OSAG), along with the findings from Prisons and Probation Ombudsman reports.

While there has been some good work to date to reduce the risk of self-harm and self-inflicted deaths, more can and will be done. This will include improvements in the experience of prisoners, particularly vulnerable prisoners in their first night and early days in prison custody. The establishment is strengthening assurance processes to ensure more timely responses to cell call bells, supported by the National Safety Team. An additional constant supervision cell will be provided for prisoners assessed to be an acute suicide risk. The constant supervision cell in the Care and Separation Unit will only be used for constant supervision when no facility is available on normal location, and a risk assessment determines that its use is safer for the prisoner than moving him to another prison.

Additionally, to help in addressing violence, the new violence case management model 'Challenge, Support and Intervention Plan' (CSIP) will be implemented, alongside the new key worker model, also aimed at reducing violence as part of wider efforts to improve safety.

We will also undertake, as a matter of urgency, a vulnerability assessment to identify immediate action to reduce drug supply and a full diagnostic process to identify action on supply and demand reduction, treatment and recovery, and continuity of care. Both these reviews will be led by local leadership and supported by the National Drugs Taskforce and other partners.

National control and restraint specialists and subject matter experts from within the Security, Order and Counter Terrorism (SOCT) Directorate in Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) will undertake a targeted review of specific use of force incidents within HMP Exeter. This will focus on

governance, reporting procedures, techniques and practice, following which local management will introduce improvements in these areas.

In addition, OSAG will be completing the following audit activity:

- A bespoke audit looking at the use of force in HMP Exeter to be completed during the week commencing 25th June, following which local management will implement actions to address its findings.
- A further full safety audit to be carried out in the prison in December.

Living conditions

Support is being provided to the prison to improve prisoners' living conditions. The Governor and Government Facility Services Limited (GFSL) are collaborating to prioritise the repairs which must be completed to keep cells at an appropriate standard to ensure decency and kept in use via reactive maintenance. A manager and two seconded trades staff from GFSL, in addition to the resource at HMP Exeter, are being deployed to address the maintenance backlog. This work includes replacing broken windows, repairing observation panels and repairing leaking toilets, sinks and toilet privacy screens.

Senior managers are particularly focussed on getting the basics right. Cellular accommodation is being prioritised for new cell furniture which includes toilet seats and guard rails for beds. Faulty cell bells at the time of the inspection have been identified and repaired. Additionally, a system of regular accommodation inspections and daily checks will ensure that any cells not fit for purpose are taken out of use pending repairs.

Finally, the initial phase of the Care and Separation Unit refurbishment project is almost complete, and the remainder of the unit's refurbishment is scheduled to take place by the end of the 2018/19 business year. Further investment will be made to upgrade showers on residential units and in the gymnasium.

Progress against recommendations

All of the above will be underpinned by robust assurance processes which will drive improvements locally.

In April 2018 changes were made to Prison Group structures, giving Prison Group Directors (PGDs) smaller commands that enable greater management grip and support to Governors.

HMP Exeter is one of the four prisons in the Devon and North Dorset Group. The PGD structure will support increased oversight in the delivery of the action plan responses to your recommendations within the full inspection report, when it is received in due course. Central oversight of this by the HMPPS Scrutiny Unit will also add an additional layer of assurance to this process.

In addition, approximately six months after your full report is published, OSAG will carry out a full and bespoke audit at HMP Exeter focusing on progress against your recommendations.

I hope that this letter reassures you that we are taking seriously the outcomes of the inspection and that appropriate action is being taken by the prison and the wider system over the coming weeks and months.



RT HON DAVID GAUKE MP