



To: Sarah McKnight, Senior Responsible Owner for the Reducing Reoffending – HMPPS Education, Skills and Work Provision Programme

From: Dr Jo Farrar, Second Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Justice; and  
Nick Smallwood, Chief Executive Officer of the Infrastructure and Projects Authority

July 2022

Dear Sarah McKnight,

## **APPOINTMENT AS SENIOR RESPONSIBLE OWNER FOR THE REDUCING REOFFENDING – HMPPS EDUCATION, SKILLS AND WORK PROVISION PROGRAMME**

We are writing to confirm your appointment as Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) of the HMPPS Education, Skills and Work Provision Programme that took effect from June 2021. This letter sets out your responsibilities and the support you can expect from your department and the Infrastructure and Projects Authority.

As SRO, you are directly accountable to the CEO of HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), under the oversight of the Permanent Secretary as Principal Accounting Officer for the Ministry of Justice and the Minister of State for Prisons and Probatio).

Your programme will report to the Executive Director Reducing Reoffending. Your programme forms part of the Ministry of Justice's Portfolio, under the oversight of the Chair of the Portfolio Committee within the tolerances set by the Investment Committee at each approvals point. The programme is included in the Government Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP).

You have personal responsibility for the delivery of the HMPPS Education, Skills and Work Provision Programme and will be held accountable for the delivery of its objectives, with policy intent and outcomes expected. This encompasses securing and protecting its vision, ensuring that it is governed responsibly, reported on honestly, escalated appropriately and for influencing the context, culture, and operating environment of the programme. You are also responsible for ensuring the ongoing viability of the programme and recommending its pause or termination if appropriate. Where issues arise, which you are unable to resolve, you are responsible for escalating these to the Ministry of Justice Investment Committee.

You remain accountable to Ministers, as set out in the Civil Service Code, and should deliver the programme in accordance with the objectives and policy intent as set by Ministers.

In addition to your internal accountabilities, SROs for GMPP projects and programmes are personally accountable to Parliamentary Select Committees. This means that, from the date of this letter, you will be

held personally accountable to and could be called by Select Committees to account for and explain the decisions and actions you have taken to deliver the HMPPS Education, Skills and Work Provision Programme.

It is important to be clear that your accountability relates only to implementation, within the agreed terms in this letter; it will remain for the Minister to account for the relevant policy decisions and development.

More information on this is set out in [Giving Evidence to Select Committees - Guidance for Civil Servants](#), sometimes known as the Osmotherly Rules. Information on the roles and responsibilities of the SRO are detailed in the Infrastructure and Project Authority's guidance on [the role of the senior responsible owner](#). You should also make yourself familiar with the [Government Functional Standard for Project Delivery](#), the requirements of the Government Project Delivery Framework, and the guidance and requirements for project delivery as set by the Ministry of Justice Portfolio Management Office.

### **Time commitment and tenure**

This role will require 50% of your time to enable effective delivery of the role and execute your responsibilities in full.

You are required to undertake this role from June 2021 until achievement of programme closure in Spring 2025 or 2027, depending on the contracting route, still to be decided and approved in 2022. Progress towards this will be reflected in your personal objectives. Any changes to the agreed time commitment or tenure of the role, as set out above, will require both departmental and Infrastructure and Projects Authority consent.

### **Objectives and performance criteria**

HMPPS are taking a whole-system approach to improve prison education: Governors are responsible for setting the curriculum and ensuring prisoners offer the right learning environment, and our suppliers provide the people and services needed to deliver that.

The programme will drive improvements within the current landscape, get the most from our current contracts and deliver the next generation of contracts.

Delivering on the Prison Strategy White Paper the Programme will;

- invest in the digital and data platform needed to develop personal learning plans for prisoners, which will record clear career goals and the progress we expect prisoners to make towards them
- integrate learning and skills across the prison regime, better support literacy and numeracy and provide clearer and stronger expectations that prisoners will acquire the additional qualifications they need to increase job prospects
- build stronger links with employers, particularly those with skills shortages, who will work closely with prisons to maximise job opportunities (inside and outside the estate) and help to shape the curriculum on offer.

The policy intent supported by this programme is included in the Reducing Reoffending strategic objective of the Outcome Delivery Plan 2021-22.

Ministry of Justice is focusing on the interventions that are known to work: a home, a job and access to treatment for substance misuse, and fulfil our manifesto commitment to create a new Prisoner Education Service.

The vision for a new prisoner education service was outlined in the Prison Strategy White Paper to deliver “an improved Prisoner Education Service which equips prisoners with core baseline skills in numeracy and literacy and improving the skills for jobs on release”.

The overarching goals are to:

- Improve the numeracy and literacy of all prisoners;
- Incentivise them to improve their qualifications and skills to increase their prospects of finding work; and
- Ensure Governors have the tools, support and accountabilities they need to lead this work.

Any proposed changes to scope which impacts on this intent or the realisation of benefits must be authorised by the Ministry of Justice Investment Committee and may be subject to further levels of approval.

Your personal objectives and performance criteria which relate to the programme are:

- To deliver the manifesto commitment of a prisoner education service focused on work-based training and skills
- Develop an improved prisoner education service that contributes to the agreed Criminal Justice Taskforce target and an increased percentage of prisoners will be in work 6 months after release
- Develop and deliver enhancements to current prisoner education provision
- Strengthen HMPPS capability, inspire others and create conditions (space and freedom, as well as tools and a new operational framework) so our leaders can drive change in their localities as system leaders
- Work collaboratively to review, design and develop future services and secure funding for the delivery of the programme.
- Develop the Business Case to approve the extension of current education contracts and the strategic approach for a future education service

You are expected to run your programme in accordance with the [Government Functional Standard for Project Delivery](#), and other [Functional Standards](#) as applicable to this programme and the requirements of the Government Project Delivery Framework, ensuring that the programme follows best project delivery practices and effective risk management processes.

## **Extent and limit of accountability**

### Finance and Controls

HM Treasury spending controls will apply on the basis set out within the department’s delegated authority letter. Where the programme exceeds the delegated authority set by HM Treasury, the Treasury Approval Point process will apply, and the details of each approval process must be agreed with your HM Treasury spending team. You should consult departmental finance colleagues on how to go about this.

You should note that where expenditure is considered novel, contentious, repercussive, or likely to result in costs to other parts of the public sector, HM Treasury approval will be required, regardless of whether the programme expenditure exceeds the delegated authority set by HM Treasury. If in doubt about whether approval is required you should, in the first instance, consult departmental finance colleagues before raising with the relevant HM Treasury spending team.

The overall estimated budget, resourcing requirements and tolerances for your programme will be agreed as part of the approval process. It is expected that you will deliver within the agreed cost and deliverability tolerances and report quarterly on these as part of GMPP reporting.

You should operate at all times within the rules set out in [Managing Public Money](#). In addition, you must be mindful of, and act in accordance with, the specific HM Treasury delegated limits and Cabinet Office controls relevant to the HMPPS Education, Skills and Work Provision Programme. Information on these controls can be found here: [Cabinet Office controls](#).

### Delegated authority

The Whole Life Cost (WLC) is estimated in the Strategic Outline Business Case at £1.5bn until 2031/32. As part of the departmental annual allocations process, you will be authorised to approve a set level of expenditure each financial year. This will be set out in your annual financial delegation letter from the CEO of HMPPS.

You are authorised to agree programme rescheduling within agreed tolerance levels with CEO of HMPPS and the chair of the Ministry of Justice Investment Committee.

You should recommend to CEO of HMPPS and the Ministry of Justice Investment Committee the need to either pause or terminate the programme where necessary and in a timely manner.

These authority limits are subject to change and other conditions or tolerances may be set as part of the business case approval and ongoing monitoring processes which you should then operate within.

Where issues arise, which take you outside of these authority limits which you are unable to resolve, you are responsible for escalating these issues to the CEO of HMPPS and the Ministry of Justice Investment Committee.

## **Appointments**

You should appoint a full-time programme director to support you in the management of this programme and make other appointments as required for the control and delivery of your programme within your delegated authority.

## **Governance and assurance**

You should pay attention to ensuring effective governance for your programme, including the establishment of a programme board with appropriate membership and clear terms of reference.

As primary owner, you must ensure that the programme secures business case approval from the Ministry of Justice Investment Committee, Cabinet Office and HM Treasury as relevant. You should also ensure that the programme remains aligned to the strategic outcomes, costs, timescales, and benefits in line with the approved business case as well as monitoring the context within which the programme is being delivered to ensure it remains valid.

Where a change impacts the scope, costs, benefits or planned delivery milestones agreed as part of an agreed business case, you are responsible for following the agreed change request approval process and setting a new, approved business case baseline.

You should ensure that an accounting officer assessment is completed alongside the approval of the Outline Business Case (OBC) and that this is published on GOV.UK as part of the government's transparency requirements on major projects. You are responsible for bringing to the attention of the accounting officer any material changes in the programme which could require a new accounting officer assessment to be completed and published. [Guidance on completing accounting officer assessments](#) for major projects is available from HM Treasury.

Although you are directly accountable for this programme, you are also expected to support delivery of the department's overall strategic objectives. This means that you are expected to work collaboratively with other SROs and project directors in adjacent projects and programmes and with the Ministry of Justice Portfolio Management Office and Head of Portfolio to manage dependencies, resources, schedules, and funding to support delivery of the overall change the department needs to achieve its strategic objectives.

You should ensure that appropriate and proportionate assurance is in place and agree on the level and frequency of assurance reviews through the maintenance of an integrated assurance and approvals plan. You should develop this plan and its maintenance in collaboration with the Departmental Assurance Coordinator and the Infrastructure and Projects Authority.

## **Programme status, reporting and transparency requirements**

The programme status at the date of your appointment is reflected in the most recent quarterly return on the programme to the Infrastructure and Projects Authority and is the agreed position as you assume formal ownership of the programme.

You are responsible for ensuring the honest and timely reporting on the position of the programme to the Infrastructure and Projects Authority while it remains on the GMPP and for providing reports and information to the Ministry of Justice Portfolio Management Office as required and for submitting business cases and reports to the Key Holder process and relevant boards. Where appropriate, governance will include reference to the Ministry of Justice Investment Committee and Executive Committee. Information on the programme will be published annually by the Infrastructure and Projects Authority.

You should monitor and report on status, forecast timescales, costs and benefits, key risks established using the GMPP RAG rating (if appropriate) and dependencies, and ensure that any issues (including any likelihood of exceeding approved tolerances) are reported openly and transparently both within the Ministry of Justice and to the Infrastructure and Projects Authority.

You are responsible for publishing on GOV.UK a summary of the accounting office assessment completed in line with the approval of the OBC and summaries of any subsequent assessments should they be required.

## **Development and support**

As SRO of a GMPP programme, you are required to complete the Major Projects Leadership Academy, and you are attending Cohort 31.

Becoming an assurance reviewer and completing a review will form part of your time at the Major Projects Leadership Academy. To maintain your accreditation, you will be required to participate in a review at least once every 12 months.

The department will assist you in securing the necessary resources to support the programme, and will set clear guidance, requirements and standards, which align to the [Government Functional Standard on](#)

[Project Delivery](#), to enable good governance and effective delivery. You will be part of the department's cohort of major project leaders who will be expected to support each other, share good practice and lessons learned and to collectively develop solutions. You should liaise with the department's Head of Profession for project delivery to discuss the maintenance and development of your delivery and leadership skills.

The Infrastructure and Projects Authority will be available to you for support, advice, and assurance throughout the programme's time on the GMPP.

Following approval of the business case and entry onto the Ministry of Justice Portfolio, the Portfolio Committee will provide ongoing oversight and support and will take steps to help resolve and escalate risks, issues or constraints that are acting as a blocker to successful delivery.


We would like to take this opportunity to wish you every success in your role as SRO.

Yours sincerely,



**Dr JO FARRAR**

Second Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Justice and Accounting Officer for HMPPS



**NICK SMALLWOOD**

Chief Executive Officer, Infrastructure and Projects Authority

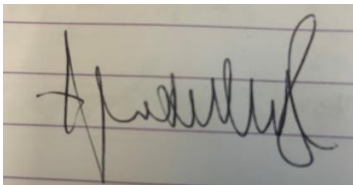
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**Appointment endorsed by:**

**Antonia Romeo, Principal Accounting Officer of Ministry of Justice: 2 September 2022**

## **CONFIRMATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF APPOINTMENT**

I confirm that I accept the appointment of Senior Responsible Owner for the programme, including my personal accountability for implementation, as set out in the letter above.

A photograph of a handwritten signature in black ink on lined paper. The signature is cursive and appears to read 'Sarah McKnight'.

**SARAH MCKNIGHT**

Reducing Reoffending – HMPPS Education, Skills and Work Provision Programme

05/09/2022