



# Ministry of Justice

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The Right Honourable  
**Alex Chalk KC MP**  
Lord Chancellor & Secretary of  
State for Justice

**MoJ ref:** 108317

25 August 2023

Dear Charlie,

## **URGENT NOTIFICATION – HMP BRISTOL**

Thank you for your letter of 28 July 2023, setting out your concerns following the full inspection at HMP Bristol. I am providing you with this response within 28 calendar days of the Urgent Notification (UN) as set out in the protocol. This is the second time a UN has been invoked at HMP Bristol, and I agree that the circumstances leading to this are not acceptable.

You have raised a number of concerning issues at HMP Bristol around safety, prison capacity, regime, stability and staffing, which I take very seriously. As an immediate action we have introduced additional oversight and we will continue to monitor progress well beyond this initial 28-day period until we are satisfied that there is sustained improvement.

I have set out below in more detail the urgent action we are taking to address the concerns identified in your letter and to prioritise the safety of staff and prisoners in HMP Bristol. I have also enclosed a copy of the action plan that I intend to publish alongside this letter.

### **Management and staffing**

You raised in your letter that many of the senior team members were new to post which has led to instability in key roles and leaders not having a firm grip of challenges facing the prison. To build a shared understanding of goals and priorities across the prison to ensure better outcomes for prisoners, support will be provided to further develop the Governor's vision and to promote this across the prison. The National Standards Coaching Team will also be deployed to HMP Bristol for 16 weeks to improve delivery standards via on the job coaching and mentoring.

### **Levels of violence and safety**

To tackle violence and ensure safety for both staff and prisoners, the HMPPS National Safety Team (NST) will coordinate learning to understand drivers of violence and self-harm. HMP Bristol's Safety team will coordinate partnership working with HMP Swansea to understand how they are effectively managing self-harm and violence, in order to incorporate learning and best practice for HMP Bristol. We will also allocate two staff to act as Challenge Support Intervention Plan (CSIP) floorwalkers to support, coach and share best practice. We will also use learning from a recent safety summit and evidence-based research to inform and update the prison's safety strategy and action plan.

### **Self-harm and risk of self-inflicted deaths**

I want to assure you that I am committed to improving mental health support for prisoners at HMP Bristol and I deeply regret any self-inflicted death that occurs in prison.

At HMP Bristol, we are reviewing the actions put in place to address the recent deaths alongside improving support for vulnerable prisoners at risk of self-harm and suicide. National and Regional Safety Teams will coach and upskill Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) case co-ordinators in the identification of risks and triggers.

We will complete a review of all actions from Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) and Early Learning Reviews (ELRs) reports from deaths in custody at HMP Bristol and action recommendations. National and regional support will continue to be provided to the prison to address the recent cluster of self-inflicted deaths and a post will be included in HMP Bristol's safety team to act as an inquest manager, PPO support and to complete ELRs.

### **Prison capacity and condition of the buildings**

Improvements to facilities are planned to address decency concerns, such as completing the outstanding toilet and shower upgrades, stairway flooring replacement, a deep clean of the segregation block and refurbishment of the shared toilets in B wing. These refurbishments will be delivered by March 2024.

### **Healthcare outcomes**

To improve healthcare outcomes, we are working with our Healthcare provider to increase the number of healthcare staff and they will complete a review of staffing. A joint regional action group will also be established to lead delivery of the mental health aspects of the action plan to improve the timeliness of transfer to appropriate mental health inpatient services and review the care provided to those prisoners who are unwell whilst waiting transfer.

### **Regime and daily life**

We will increase budgets to enable additional education, skills, and work to ensure prisoners have the appropriate and necessary time out of cell to engage with activities. A Regime Manager will be recruited and will be in post for 12 months to embed, drive and quality assure the consistent allocation of and attendance at, all activity spaces.

### **Resettlement**

In order to help prisoners secure accommodation on release, Community Accommodation Services has been introduced to provide emergency accommodation. This will provide 189 bedspaces of transitional accommodation for prison leavers at risk of homelessness.

I can assure you that I will be monitoring the situation at HMP Bristol very closely in the coming weeks and months to ensure that there is sustained improvement. I would also like to thank you and your team for the robust scrutiny of our prisons, and I look forward to receiving your full inspection report in due course.

Yours sincerely,



**RT HON ALEX CHALK KC MP**

**LORD CHANCELLOR AND SECRETARY OF STATE FOR JUSTICE**