



Dame Antonia Romeo DCB
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Justice

102 Petty France
London SW1A 9AJ
E: permanent.secretary@justice.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/MoJ

Lynne Abrams, Senior Responsible Owner Secure Children's Homes (SCH) Commissioning

[By email]

23 September 2024

Dear Lynne,

APPOINTMENT AS SENIOR RESPONSIBLE OWNER FOR THE SECURE CHILDREN'S HOME COMMISSIONING

We are writing to confirm your appointment as Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) of Secure Children's Homes (SCH) Commissioning project with effect from 06 November 2023. The issuance of this letter has been delayed due to an internal review of the SRO letter approvals process within the department. This letter sets out your responsibilities and the support you can expect from the Ministry of Justice and the Infrastructure and Projects Authority.

As SRO, you are directly accountable to Director General HMPPS Chief Executive Officer, under the oversight of the Permanent Secretary as Principal Accounting Officer for the Ministry of Justice, and the Minister of State for Prisons and Probation.

The project 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 project is due to be included in the Government Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP).

You have personal responsibility for delivering the project 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 project. You are also responsible for ensuring the ongoing viability of the project 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's Investment Committee.

You remain accountable to Ministers, as set out in the Civil Service Code, and should deliver the project 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 project.

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's 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 until completion and closure of the SCH Commissioning project, planned for March 2026.

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

The policy intent supported by this project is to provide safe, decent and appropriate care and support for children in custody, contributing to better life outcomes and reduced re-offending.

Any proposed changes to scope which impacts on this intent or the realisation of benefits must be authorised by the SCH Commissioning Project Board and subject to tolerance thresholds, subsequently the Youth Custody Service Transformation Board and may be subject to further levels of approval.

The vision of the SCH Commissioning project is to improve children's experiences in custody and their life outcomes by ensuring that there is an aligned cross government approach to Secure

Children's Homes and that justice provision is commissioned to consistently deliver the best possible integrated (health, education) care.

The objectives of the project are to:

1. **Obtain** justice provision within the SCH sector by December 2025, ensuring bed numbers are within an agreed range of demand requirements, as established by the project and secure availability until 2032.
2. **Acquire** SCH services by December 2025 that are consistent with the principles of 'child first'; providing both structural support to meet their diverse needs, and personal support that helps positive identity shift towards healthier lives.
3. **Establish** where SCH places are required and secure agreements/arrangements with enough homes, by December 2025, to ensure a sufficient geographical spread across England and Wales to maintain current or better tailor our future SCH provision proportionate to demand.
4. **Ensure** SCH services by December 2025 that are committed to prioritisation of children's safety and wellbeing, promoting equity of provision and preserves the safety and security of children and young people while in custody.

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

1. To provide leadership and direction to the project executive throughout the life of the project.
2. To act as champion for the project, brokering relationships with senior stakeholders in order to support successful project delivery, including realisation of its benefits and objectives.
3. To ensure the SCH Commissioning Project remains a central component of the Youth Custody Service Strategy in progressing towards the future vision for youth custody services.
4. To successfully complete MPLA and build competence and confidence as a leader of major projects.

You are expected to run your project in accordance with the [Government Functional Standard for Project Delivery](#), the other [Functional Standards](#) as applicable to this project and the requirements of the Government Project Delivery Framework, ensuring that the project 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 project 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 project 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 project will be agreed as part of the approval process. It is expected that you deliver within the agreed cost and deliverability tolerances and to 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 SCH Commissioning Project. Information on these controls can be found here: [Cabinet Office controls](#).

Delegated authority

The total cost of the preferred options as presented in the Outline Business Case (OBC) is estimated to be £226M based on baseline funding from the last Spending Review.

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 Chief Executive Officer, HMPPS.

You are also authorised to:

- Agree project rescheduling within 30 days of baselined milestones, but rescheduling beyond that must be agreed with Youth Custody Service Transformation Board, and projected delay to a critical (L0-1) milestone of 8+ weeks (2 months) reported to HMPPS Higher Leadership Team and InvestCo respectively, and;
- Recommend to Youth Custody Service Executive Director and the Youth Custody Service Transformation Board the need to either pause or terminate the project 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 within which you should then operate. Where issues arise, which take you outside of these authority limits and which you are unable to resolve, you are responsible for escalating these issues to the Youth Custody Service Transformation Board, subject to tolerances, HMPPS Higher Leadership Team and the Ministry of Justice's Investment Committee.

Appointments

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

Governance and assurance

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

As primary owner, you must ensure that the project secures business case approval from the SCH Commissioning Project Board, Transformation Board, HMPPS Higher Leadership Team, the Ministry of Justice's Investment Committee and Cabinet Office and HM Treasury.

You should also ensure that the project 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 project 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 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 project 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 project, 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's 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.

Project status, reporting and transparency requirements

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

You are responsible for ensuring the honest and timely reporting on the position of the project 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 keyholder process and relevant boards. Where appropriate, governance will include reference to the Ministry of Justice's Investment Committee and Executive Committee. Information on the project 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 Outline Business Case and summaries of any subsequent assessments should they be required.

Development and support

As a member of a current cohort of the Major Projects Leadership Academy, once graduated you are expected to maintain your continuing professional development as a project leader, including your status as an accredited assurance reviewer. 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 project, 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 Ministry of Justice'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 project's time on the GMPP.

Following approval of the business case and entry onto the Ministry of Justice Portfolio, 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,



DAME ANTONIA ROMEO DCB

Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Justice



NICK SMALLWOOD

Chief Executive Officer, Infrastructure and
Projects Authority

CONFIRMATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF APPOINTMENT

I confirm that I accept the appointment of Senior Responsible Owner for the Secure Children's Homes Commissioning project, including my personal accountability for implementation, as set out in the letter above.



Lynne Abrams