



HM Prison &
Probation Service

Area Executive Director
Northeast, Yorkshire and the Humber
HM Prison & Probation Service

Area Office, HMYOI Wetherby

Charlie Taylor,
HM Chief Inspector of Prisons
3rd floor, 10 South Colonnade
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10th February 2025

Dear Charlie,

**HMIP report on an independent review of progress at HMP Durham -
6th – 8th January 2025**

Thank you for your Independent Review of Progress report at HMP Durham, whereby you followed up six priority and key concerns and three Ofsted themes from your most recent inspection in April/May 2024.

I am encouraged to note that you have seen reasonable progress being made across four of the concerns and Ofsted themes and note the following.

- Leaders and managers had refreshed the prisoner pay policy in response to the findings of the previous inspection, and it was now significantly improved and more equitable. It encouraged prisoners to work towards qualifications and sentence plan targets, supporting rehabilitation and positive resettlement.
- Leaders and managers placed a strong focus on reading as part of the enrichment curriculum. Prisoner reading champions promoted reading for all.
- The recognition of creation of purposeful activity places and skill-based areas, such as painting and decorating, mentor roles and a manufacturing workshop building transformers.
- Leaders had sought to identify any potential housing issues for prisoners on their release at the earliest opportunity and as part of the initial resettlement screening. Work with the accommodation support provider and prison offender manager (POM) to increase engagement with prisoners who needed accommodation had seen housing referrals increase by around a third since your inspection.

In respect of the five key areas 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.

- The continued drive by the prison to reduce the availability of drugs will continue with support from the regional team and other local agencies e.g. Police. The prison will continue to drive their well-coordinated drug action plan with the aim to prevent entry and use of drugs in the prison. As well as providing appropriate support from their local substance misuse teams and their Incentivised Substance Free Living Unit (ISFL) to support those with an identified drug need.
- The prison and its local health provider will work to ensure that health screens are conducted on the first night in custody. Appropriate changes in data recording have been introduced to ensure that the prison and health team fully record safety and health risk information, considered for prisoners on their first night in custody. The prison Governor has introduced a monthly meeting with regional health leads to ensure this remains a high priority to address the concerns raised.
- The prison has increased the number of activity spaces in work and education for prisoners and created more part-time work to expand access to purposeful activity. The Governor and his team's focus is now to ensure they have an improved allocation system and appropriately encourage attendance and follow up non-attendance. The core day will be reviewed in line with the new profiles and a robust assurance system will be introduced to ensure compliance of delivery to the published timings.
- The Lord Chancellor announced a package of measures aimed at addressing prison capacity, which included publication of a 10-year prison capacity strategy. This will allow the department to consider longer term reform of the system, including decency across the estate. The strategy sets out plans to deliver 14,000 prison places and maintain places in our estate to ensure sufficient accommodation. This could enable targeted reductions of the least suitable prison places, but it is not possible to commit to numbers or locations until the overall capacity position has stabilised.
- Commissioners and providers from all establishments meet monthly with colleagues from the Mental Health Provider Collaboratives to discuss individual cases in relation to referrals and admissions to appropriate mental health facilities. They continue to escalate to Specialised Commissioning Colleagues, and/or wider HMPPS colleagues in the case of delayed remittals where appropriate or required

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 HMP Durham's agreed Action Plan and can assure you that through my operational assurance functions and the support of the Performance and Risk Group (PAR), we continue to closely monitor progress.

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

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