



Ministry  
of Justice

The Right Honourable  
**David Lammy MP**  
Deputy Prime Minister  
Lord Chancellor &  
Secretary of State for  
Justice

**Charlie Taylor**

HM Chief Inspector of Prisons  
HM Inspectorate of Prisons  
3rd Floor, 10 South Colonnade  
Canary Wharf  
London  
E14 4PU

**MoJ ref:** SUB133397

15 April 2026

Dear Charlie,

**URGENT NOTIFICATION – HMP WOODHILL**

Thank you for your letter setting out your concerns following the latest full inspection of HMP Woodhill, published on 19 March, which invokes the Urgent Notification process. I am pleased to provide this response within the 28-day timeframe, in accordance with the established protocol between the Ministry of Justice and HM Inspectorate of Prisons.

You have raised significant concerns including very high rates of violence and self-harm, in part linked to the availability and use of drugs. You found many staff lacked competence and confidence to enforce rules or engage with prisoners proactively. Cleanliness was poor in some areas; the prison needed refurbishment and considered to not be fulfilling its function as a training prison with limited access to education and purposeful activity. You found inadequate support to reduce risks posed by prisoners and plan for release, raising serious public protection concerns. You also highlighted delays in taking patients to A&E and significant waiting times for transfer to secure hospitals where prisoners had acute mental health issues.

I am grateful that you acknowledge the appointment of a new experienced governor, who has taken the right priority steps to help stabilise the prison and has a good understanding of what needs to happen. It is though disappointing that this is the second consecutive UN received and I note your comments about the need for sustained, significant support to tackle the persistent issues identified. Please be assured that this will be provided through both regional and national support from the Long-Term and High Security (LTHSE) Group and specialist central teams. As you know, in response to the wider risks to safety and security in the LTHSE, a dedicated LTHSE taskforce is operating nationally to drive improvements and is already seeing progress. As part of this work, a dedicated project to consider the future function, role and shape of the LTHSE has also been established.

This Government is committed to taking the necessary steps to secure positive and sustained change across our prisons, including at HMP Woodhill. I enclose the initial action plan, which will be published alongside this letter and builds on some of the work already started at HMP Woodhill.

This prioritises decisive action on the most urgent issues including safety, security and drugs, staff resource and capability, purposeful activity, release planning and decency and respect.

I recognise that your findings are deeply concerning, particularly given this is the prison's second UN and you have found persistently poor outcomes for safety and purposeful activity since 2018. I am determined to tackle the entrenched issues at HMP Woodhill, and I will be monitoring the situation closely to ensure sustained progress is achieved this time. I have confidence that the actions set out and further support being given will deliver the improvements required.

Thank you to you and your team for your rigorous scrutiny of our prisons. I look forward to receiving your full inspection report in due course.

Yours sincerely,

**RT HON DAVID LAMMY MP**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Lammy', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER  
LORD CHANCELLOR AND SECRETARY OF STATE FOR JUSTICE**