



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Official

30 September 2024

Andy Slaughter MP
Chair of the Justice Select Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Dear Andy,

URGENT NOTIFICATION – HMP ROCHESTER

I would firstly like to congratulate you on being elected as the new Chair of the Justice Select Committee. I look forward to working closely with you and the other members of the Committee in the months and years ahead.

However, today, I am writing on specific and urgent concerns in relation to the recent Urgent Notification at HMP Rochester and to provide an overview of Urgent Notifications.

The Urgent Notification process provides an opportunity for the Chief Inspector of Prisons to inform the Lord Chancellor, directly and publicly, in situations where there is an urgent and significant concern about the performance of a prison or Young Offender Institution. The decision on whether to invoke an Urgent Notification rest solely with the Chief Inspector. The Lord Chancellor then has 28 calendar days to publish a response and an initial plan of action.

We take all Urgent Notifications from the Inspectorate very seriously and publish an urgent action plan within 28 days, outlining how the relevant prisons will be improved in both the immediate and longer term.

HM Chief Inspectorate of Prisons (HMCIP) issued an Urgent Notification at HMP Rochester on 2 September 2024. The serious issues identified at HMP Rochester related to safety, illicit drug use, living conditions and regime. These findings are unacceptable, and the Lord Chancellor and I will continue to work closely with His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) leadership to improve standards and ensure the safety of staff and prisoners.

Over the last 28 days, senior officials from HMPPS have been implementing immediate actions to deliver improvements on the most urgent concerns raised by the inspectorate. More information on the actions that have been embedded or planned are detailed in the Lord Chancellor's response letter to the Chief Inspector and in the initial action plan.

Both documents have been published on the UN page of the GOV.UK website and I am enclosing copies with this letter for your information. HMIP's final report will most likely be published within three months from the end of the inspection; this will be found on the report page of HMIP's website.

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I personally assure you that we are doing all we can to support HMP Rochester throughout this process. The Lord Chancellor and I will follow the progress made at the establishment very closely and we will maintain this focus until we are satisfied that there is sustained improvement.

If you have any questions or would like to meet with me to discuss these matters further, please contact my Private Secretary (PS.JamesTimpson@justice.gov.uk) to make the necessary arrangements.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James Timpson". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Lord Timpson
Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending

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