



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Official

Rt Hon the Lord Foster of Bath
Chair of the Justice and Home Affairs Committee
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

MoJ ref: SUB133398

15 April 2026

Dear Don

URGENT NOTIFICATION – HMP WOODHILL

As you are aware, Charlie Taylor, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (HMCIP), issued an Urgent Notification (UN) at HMP Woodhill on 19 March 2026.

The Chief Inspector has raised several serious concerns including some of the highest rates of violence and self-harm in male prisons, ready access to drugs, concerns around staff competence and confidence leading to poor staff-prisoner relations and dirty conditions with parts of the prison in need of refurbishment. The prison was found to not be fulfilling its function as a training prison with limited access to education and purposeful activity. Concerns were also raised around offender management and release planning, heightening risks around public protection. These findings are all the more concerning given it is the prison's second consecutive UN and the inspectorate has found poor outcomes in safety and purposeful activity since 2018. The Deputy Prime Minister and I are determined to effect change and are working closely with His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) to deliver lasting improvements that secure a safe and decent environment. The majority of reports that have been published in 2026 have shown an improvement.

Since the UN was invoked, HMPPS has been building on early inroads made by the new Governor to tackle the most pressing concerns raised by HMCIP. More detail on critical actions being taken is provided in the Deputy Prime Minister's response letter and action plan which have been published on gov.uk. I have also enclosed copies with this letter. Following receipt of the inspectorate's full report, HMPPS will publish a full action plan within three months that addresses all the concerns raised and will be available on the report page of HMIP's website.

I want to offer you assurance that we are doing all we can to support HMP Woodhill to tackle the entrenched issues and achieve positive and prolonged change. The Deputy Prime Minister and I will closely monitor the progress made at the prison and will continue to do so until we are satisfied that sustained improvements have been made.

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Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at
ps.JamesTimpson@justice.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James". The script is cursive and fluid, with the 'J' being particularly large and stylized.

Lord Timpson
Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending

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