Ministry of Justice

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

Andy Slaughter MP
Chair
Justice Select Committee
House of Commons
London
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Ref:135435

01 July 2026

Dear Andy,

HIS MAJESTY'S CHIEF INSPECTOR OF PRISONS – RECRUITMENT UPDATE

Following my letter of 19 March, I am writing in my capacity as Secretary of State for Justice with an update on the recruitment of a new His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons (HMCIP).

The campaign to recruit a successor to the current HMCIP, Charlie Taylor, was due to be launched in March. However, given the critical importance of this post, the launch was delayed whilst we engaged executive search support to help secure a high calibre candidate with the necessary credibility, experience, and skills.

This has resulted in slight changes to the job description and criteria for the role. I attach an updated copy for your information at **Annex A** along with an updated indicative timeline.

The campaign launched on 12 May 2026 and closed to applications on 19 June, which means a successor to Mr Taylor will not be in place by the time his tenure ends on 31 October 2026. I have therefore agreed with Mr Taylor to extend his tenure to 31 March 2027 to allow sufficient time to complete the campaign and allow for any notice period required of the successful candidate.

My officials will be in touch to agree a suitable date for the pre-appointment hearing, which I hope might now take place in October 2026 following the conference recess.

Yours sincerely,

RT HON DAVID LAMMY MP

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
LORD CHANCELLOR AND SECRETARY OF STATE FOR JUSTICE

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Annex A

Job Description

The role of the Chief Inspector

The Chief Inspector is the independent head of His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) and its public voice. This is a high-profile national leadership role, combining organisational leadership with external scrutiny, influence, and accountability.

The Chief Inspector leads an organisation whose findings can have immediate and significant impact on public debate, policy direction, and operational practice across the custodial system. The role requires operating at the interface between government, the justice system, and the public, often in high-profile and sensitive contexts.

Reporting to Ministers, the Chief Inspector must act with clear independence from government and from the services under inspection. The role demands the confidence and judgement to provide robust, evidence-based challenge, including where this may be publicly visible or politically sensitive.

The Chief Inspector is responsible not only for setting the strategic direction and performance of the Inspectorate, but also for ensuring that its work maintains credibility, authority, and impact. This includes acting as a trusted and authoritative voice in the media and in Parliament and engaging with a wide range of stakeholders across the system.

The role requires a leader who can combine independence with influence: able to hold the system to account while maintaining constructive and effective working relationships with ministers, senior officials, and operational leaders.

Key Responsibilities

Inspection and Scrutiny

- Deliver an independent inspection programme across prisons, young offender institutions, immigration detention, court custody, and other places of detention.
- Assess outcomes for detainees against HMIP's expectations, grounded in international human rights standards.
- Oversee thematic inspections and Independent Reviews of Progress (follow-up visits to check on progress).
- Fulfil the UK's obligations under Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture (OPCAT) within the Inspectorate's remit.

Public Accountability and Influence

- Publish authoritative, evidence-based inspection reports.
- Act as the public voice of the Inspectorate, including regular engagement with national media and Parliament.
- Provide evidence to Parliamentary Select Committees and contribute to policy discussions.
- Hold government and system leaders to account, while maintaining constructive and credible relationships.
- Work collaboratively with other criminal justice inspectorates through the Criminal Justice Joint Inspection programme.

Organisational Leadership

- Provide effective leadership of HMIP, including strategy, performance, culture, and capability.

- Ensure the Inspectorate continues to evolve, maintaining credibility and relevance in a changing environment.
- Lead through change where required to strengthen governance, efficiency, and impact.
- Ensure effective stewardship of public resources.

Eligibility

There must be no employment restrictions, or limit on your permitted stay in the UK.

Candidate Profile:

We are seeking an individual with the credibility, judgement, and resilience to operate effectively in a high-profile, high-accountability role.

Essential Criteria

Knowledge and insight

- A clear understanding of the work, priorities and challenges of HMIP and the context within which it operates, or the ability to develop this rapidly.
- An understanding of the prison system, custodial environments, or closely related sectors, including key operational and systemic challenges, or the ability to develop this understanding rapidly in a complex public service environment.

Leadership

- Proven track record of leading complex organisations, functions, or systems at a senior level, managing resources appropriately.
- Ability to set strategic direction, drive performance, and lead teams in demanding environments.
- Ability to make sound, evidence-based decisions in complex and high-profile settings.

Experience and delivery

- Experience operating in complex, high-profile environments with accountability for delivery, people, and resources.

Communication and public credibility

- Exceptional communication skills, including the ability to operate credibly in the media and public domain.
- Ability to present complex and sensitive findings with clarity, authority, and impact.

Stakeholder engagement

- Ability to build and maintain effective relationships with a wide range of stakeholders, including ministers, senior officials, practitioners, and those with lived experience.
- Ability to engage stakeholders collaboratively and with constructive challenge.

Desirable Criteria

- Experience within or alongside the criminal justice system (e.g., prisons, policing, probation, youth justice).
- Experience engaging with political and media stakeholders in high-profile contexts.

Pre-Appointment Scrutiny

The preferred candidate for the post of HMCIP will be subject to scrutiny by Parliamentary select committee prior to appointment and is appointed by His Majesty the King on the recommendation of the Secretary of State.

Tenure:

Public appointments are offered on a fixed term basis. We do this to ensure that the leadership of our public bodies is regularly refreshed and HMIP can benefit from new perspectives and ideas.

The appointment will be for up to three years with the possibility of reappointment for a further term subject to satisfactory appraisal and on advice of Ministers.

In line with the Governance Code for Public Appointments, there is a strong presumption that no individual should serve more than two consecutive terms or serve in any one post for more than ten years.

Time commitment and remuneration:

This is a full-time role with remuneration of £144,000 per annum based on a 37-hour working week. Remuneration is taxable and subject to Class 1 National Insurance contributions.

The post is pensionable under the Civil Service Pension arrangements. Details of the pensions available can be found on the following website: http://www.civilservicepensionscheme.org.uk/. Your remuneration may be abated if you receive a public service pension.

Annual leave allowance will be 31 ½ days with pay. In addition, one privilege day and eight bank holidays are to be taken at fixed times of the year.

Location and Expenses:
The post-holder will be based at HMI Prisons offices in 10 South Colonnade, Canary Wharf, London. Travelling expenses may not be paid for journeys from home to the base Inspectorate office, but travel and subsistence allowances may be payable when the HMIP is required to travel and/or stay away overnight in the course of their duties on the same basis as that applicable to senior civil servants.

Proposed Advisory Assessment Panel

- Emma Churchill, MoJ Director-General Policy (Panel Chair)
- Wendy Williams, former HM Inspector of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services
- Paula McDonald CBE (Senior Independent Panel Member)

The indicative timeframe for the competition is:

- May - Advert went live
- June - Advert closed
- Late June 2026 - Sift
- July & August 2026 - Interviews
- September/October 2026 - Ministers select appointee; No 10 consulted
- October 2026 - JSC Hearing; appointment confirmed and announced.