



Ministry
of Justice

The Right Honourable
Shabana Mahmood MP
Lord Chancellor & Secretary
of State for Justice

Charlie Taylor
HM Chief Inspector of Prisons
HM Inspectorate of Prisons
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London
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MoJ ref: ADR117642

27th September 2024

Dear *Charlie*

URGENT NOTIFICATION – HMP ROCHESTER

Thank you for your letter of 30 August 2024, setting out your concerns following the full inspection at HMP Rochester, which was published on gov.uk on 2 September, invoking an Urgent Notification. I am providing you with this response within 28 calendar days of the Urgent Notification as set out in the protocol.

You have raised a number of concerning issues at HMP Rochester around leadership, health, regime, living conditions and safety, all of which I take very seriously. As an immediate action, we have introduced additional oversight, and we will continue to monitor progress well beyond this initial 28-day period until we are satisfied that there is sustained improvement.

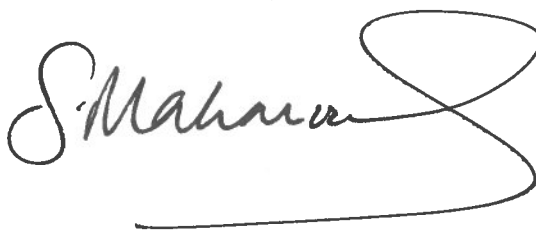
I am conscious that HMP Rochester is the fourth Urgent Notification in the last twelve months after HMP Woodhill, HMP Bedford and HMP Wandsworth. This is concerning and we must not simply accept it as an occupational hazard of running the prison system. I am therefore determined not only to tackle the issues found at HMP Rochester but to work with HMPPS leadership to drive up performance across the estate with the aim of preventing future Urgent Notifications.

I have enclosed a copy of the initial action plan for HMP Rochester that will be published alongside this letter. It covers the main concerns identified in your inspection and includes measures that we will take in relation to leadership; staff capability; culture; healthcare provision; purposeful activity; living conditions; safety; security and drug strategy; and public protection and resettlement planning.

I can assure you that I will be monitoring the situation at HMP Rochester very closely in the coming months to ensure that there is sustained improvement. I would also like to thank you, and your

team, for the robust scrutiny of our prisons, and I look forward to receiving your full inspection report in due course.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Mahmood', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

RT HON SHABANA MAHMOOD MP

LORD CHANCELLOR AND SECRETARY OF STATE FOR JUSTICE