



**HM INSPECTORATE OF PRISONS**

3<sup>rd</sup> floor  
10 South Colonnade  
Canary Wharf  
London E14 4PU

Tel: 020 3334 0353

E-mail: [barbara.buchanan@hmiprisons.gov.uk](mailto:barbara.buchanan@hmiprisons.gov.uk)

**HM Chief Inspector of Prisons  
CHARLIE TAYLOR**

Date: 18 November 2022

Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP  
Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice  
Ministry of Justice  
9<sup>th</sup> floor, 102 Petty France  
London  
SW1H 9AJ

Dear Secretary of State

**Urgent Notification: HM Prison Exeter**

In accordance with the Protocol between HM Chief Inspector of Prisons and the Ministry of Justice dated October 2019, I am writing to you to invoke the Urgent Notification process as result of our unannounced inspection of HMP Exeter between 31<sup>st</sup> October and 11<sup>th</sup> November. The protocol sets out that this letter will be placed in the public domain, and that the Secretary of State commits to respond publicly within 28 calendar days.

This prison was subject to an urgent notification in 2018 and this is the first time we have needed to repeat the protocol in consecutive inspections of an adult male prison. At our last inspection, we found that the prison was not safe, and I am disappointed to report that, four years later, this remains the case for the following reasons:

1. There have been 10 self-inflicted deaths in the last four years. This is despite us highlighting our grave concerns at the 2018 inspection before which there had been 6 suicides and in 2016 before which there had been 10.
2. The arrangements for inducting and monitoring prisoners in their first few weeks at the jail, when they are often most at risk, are inadequate. Regular checks are not done, and the supervision from healthcare staff for those prisoners who are substance misusers is poor.
3. The staffing of senior leadership positions has been unstable, with 8 deputy governors and 8 heads of safety since we last inspected. Without these and other critical posts having been permanently and consistently filled, basic standards have not been maintained.

*18/11/22-secretary of state*

4. Rates of self-harm at the prison are the highest of any reception prison in England and Wales and in the last year have been 44% higher than they were in the year before our last inspection.
5. In our survey 77% of prisoners told us they had a mental health problem, some of whom arrive in the prison having been returned from secure hospitals, but the provision of mental health care is not good enough, with too few staff to provide adequate support.
6. Vulnerable prisoners usually spend their first days housed alongside the main population. As a result, they are locked away in their cells for long periods of time and are often subject to abuse through their doors from fellow prisoners.
7. Prisoners are locked in often cramped cells for too long with most spending 21.5 hours a day behind their doors. This is despite the jail having enough provision for all prisoners to be in, at least, part time work, education or training.

Support from the prison service to Exeter has not been good enough since the 2018 inspection and there has not been the sustained improvement that we expect to see as a result of an urgent notification. The prison needs a period of leadership stability, with adequate staffing, much better performance from partners such as healthcare and education, improvements to the physical environment and a relentless focus on making sure that the many vulnerable prisoners at the jail are kept safe.

I also attach a summary that sets out our main findings in more detail.

Yours sincerely



**CHARLIE TAYLOR**