Dear [Mr. Neill],

I am writing to update you on two new processes at HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMI Prisons), both of which have come into effect with the start of the financial year 2019-20.

**Independent Reviews of Progress**

As of April 2019, HMI Prisons will introduce new Independent Reviews of Progress (IRPs) into its annual programme. The purpose of an IRP is to assess progress made in implementing recommendations from the previous inspection report, in order to support improvement in prisons and to identify barriers to progress. IRPs differ from inspections and will not assess prisons against HMI Prisons’ Expectations and four healthy prison tests; they will instead follow up on a selection of key concerns and recommendations from inspection reports and make judgements about the extent of progress made. They aim to give Ministers independent evidence about how far prisons have implemented recommendations following particularly concerning inspections.

HMI Prisons will identify prisons for an IRP based on a number of factors, including healthy prison test scores over time and the key risks at the establishment. Prisons which have received an Urgent Notification will be a priority, but other prisons which have received poor healthy prison test scores can also expect to be...
subject to an Independent Review of Progress. We will carry out between 15 and 20 IRP visits a year in prisons for adults.

Over recent months we have developed a methodology for IRP visits and have piloted it at two prisons – HMP Woodhill and HMP Nottingham. We have determined that IRPs will be short visits, lasting for 2.5 days, and will be announced between two and three months in advance. They will typically take place between 8 and 12 months after an inspection. Four or five inspectors will assess the degree of improvement since that inspection against a maximum of 15 recommendations, coming to one of four possible judgements in relation to each recommendation:

- **No meaningful progress**: managers have not yet formulated, resourced or begun to implement a realistic improvement plan for this recommendation.
- **Insufficient progress**: managers have begun to implement a realistic improvement strategy for this recommendation, but the actions taken have not yet resulted in any discernible evidence of progress (for example, better systems and processes) or improved outcomes for prisoners.
- **Reasonable progress**: managers are implementing a realistic improvement strategy for this recommendation, and there is evidence of progress (for example, better systems and processes) and/or early evidence of some improving outcomes for prisoners.
- **Good progress**: managers have implemented a realistic improvement strategy for this recommendation and have delivered a clear improvement in outcomes for prisoners.

IRP reports will be published 25 working days after the end of the review. They will be published electronically only and will be available on our website. We will also email an embargoed copy directly to you shortly before publication, as we currently do for full inspection reports.

The first IRPs will take place in April and we have already informed six prisons that they will receive an IRP visit: HMP Exeter, HMP Chelmsford, HMP The Mount, HMP Birmingham, HMP Manchester and HMP Highdown.

More information on IRPs, including our guide to IRPs for prison staff, can be found on our website: [https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/HMI Prisonsrisons/about-hmi-prisons/independent-reviews-of-progress-irps/](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/HMI Prisonsrisons/about-hmi-prisons/independent-reviews-of-progress-irps/)
Publication of full inspection reports

In response to stakeholder feedback about the length of time between the inspection of an establishment and the publication of the inspection report, we have revised our process in order to accelerate report publication. We now aim to publish reports within 14 weeks of the inspection, a saving of three weeks, which we hope will support establishments in responding in a timely manner to key concerns and recommendations. This new publication timeline will come into effect for prisons inspected from 1 April 2019.

Yours sincerely

PETER CLARKE