

Prison Governors Association

Representing: The Prison Governors of the United Kingdom since 1987



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Bulletin 830

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Dear Colleagues,

Prison Service Pay Review Body – Update and Oral Evidence

Our submission was made on time, and members of the NEC will be attending an oral evidence session in front of the Prison Service Pay Review Body (PSPRB) on 7th April.

Having reviewed all parties evidence in preparation for this session, it is clear that recruitment and retention features strongly in all submitted evidence. The purpose of the oral evidence session on the 7th, is to give the PSPRB the opportunity to both challenge the PGA's evidence and to respond to some parts of HMPPS's evidence. There are significant concerns that recruitment and retention of all grades across HMPPS is placing unsustainable pressures on frontline delivery.

We will be making the strongest possible case to the PSPRB, that investment in pay is needed and it is needed now.

Performance Monitoring

Members should now have seen and be aware of the 'new' performance monitoring arrangements which HMPPS has put in place. As an organisation, and for as long as most of us will remember, our organisation's performance has always been measured. We have seen many variations of 'scorecards' - some weighted, some not. We have seen national league tables which have crudely ranked a prison's performance against all those across the estate – It would be safe to say, that as an organisation we are used to being assessed and our performance measured, this is nothing new for us.

However, what appears slightly different in this current iteration of performance monitoring, is the inclusion of oversight and involvement of both the junior minister, prisons minister and the Lord Chancellor, The Deputy Prime Minister. Described within the performance framework are meetings where governors will be invited to attend with the DPM, where it is intended the DPM will provide an opportunity for Governors to explain specific challenges they are facing at their prison. It is anticipated that in addition to these smaller meetings, larger round table events will also take place, where similar concerns may be raised.

We have raised concerns of members with both Phil Copple and Jo Farrar, that these meetings must not be used as an extension of current line management or performance management of our members. We have been given an assurance that these meetings are solely intended to allow the DPM to gain first-hand some of the many challenges our members are struggling to overcome.

It would not surprise us if these meetings did not focus heavily on the lack of support Governors currently receive in getting appropriate housing for prisoners on release, or the lack of meaningful employment for prisoners on release. It could be that these meetings focus on the challenges our members face recruiting and retaining prison officers due to the lack of investment from government.

We have been clear with HMPPS that we will support these proposals if they are genuinely intended to help Governors unlock issues which are out of their control, but we have been equally clear that if these meetings become more about challenge than support then we would reconsider how much support we give. As intended, this could be an excellent vehicle for our Governors to share issues which are holding them back. At worst, this will be a wasted opportunity, where our members will be held accountable for things outside of their control.

We have also explored with HMPPS what 'powers' Governors could be given, should they prove worthy of earned empowerment. We gave some suggestions to HMPPS, but sadly extra lives and the power of invisibility should you be selected for a meeting with the DPM were frowned upon.

We are aware though, that a small project is underway, headed up by an experienced Governor that is going out to colleagues seeking views of what empowerment could look like. If you are asked to take part, we'd really encourage you to think creatively – whilst accepting some constraints of government policy will prevent budgets from being carried over, and that there is always going to be a national element to pay and job evaluation – some things can be looked at: Does an empowered governor need the same level of internal audit? Does an empowered governor need so many PPT targets?

If you have ideas what empowerment looks like and are not selected to speak to the team, let us have your ideas.

COVID Recovery

We remain clear in our position, that as the significant threat which was posed initially by COVID is demonstrably reducing, that the restrictions which had rightly been applied centrally should also be reduced, or even removed. As an example, we find it difficult to understand why, that after 24 months of managing, and now living with COVID, that the same definitions are being used to determine if a prison is in outbreak. Why, if society is now living without legal restrictions, are our prisons still being instructed to isolate prisoners due to the threat of COVID? We have recently raised concerns about how little notice was given to prisons regarding the way they should manage the process of isolating prisoners for COVID related issues now that COVID legislation has ceased. We shared our disappointment that it appeared additional burdens were being placed on prison governors at a time when it was least needed. We do not underestimate the importance of ensuring any form of segregation is given the right level of oversight, but we had hoped for something less cumbersome.

We do however remain positively engaged with HMPPS in all matters relating to COVID and continue to see positive outcomes from the support being given to prisons by colleagues in HQ, who remain in their COVID support roles and are committed to ensuring our members' views, challenges and opinions are heard.

Recruitment and Retention

We remain committed to working with HMPPS and MoJ to improve the staffing position across HMPPS. Recruitment and retention are possibly the greatest risk our organisation is currently facing and is likely to hamper, if not stall, some establishments' ability to deliver non-COVID regimes. We remain clear that to attract and retain sufficient people to work in our prisons, pay must improve. Currently HMPPS are working hard just to ensure that it can recruit more people than leave each month – it is not achieving this.

Whilst accepting that the current economic landscape may have been skewed by COVID, we have known for a number of years that the F&S pay and reward structure does not encourage people to see HMPPS as a long-term employer. Indeed, HMPPS expected people not to see HMPPS as being an employer who offered long term career options for recruits, and we can now see the consequence of a transient workforce. We are still being told of establishments where, 30 to 50% or even above of their prison officer workforce has less than 24 months service, and as more people leave the Service each month, this percentage will only increase in many establishments.

Pay will be the deciding factor for many, but we do remain impressed with the efforts our members and others are making to help improve the workplace. It would be easy for us to sit back and say it's all about 'pay' but we know that this is not the case.

For our members, some of the 'new' initiatives will have a feeling of déjà vu, or the look of a reinvented wheel. Things which were the norm pre-benchmark, pre-F&S, appear to be making a return. We are hearing of 'supervision' 'buddying' and 'induction' being launched in an attempt to improve the experiences of new colleagues. It seems a strange concept that F&S and benchmarking thought it acceptable for first line managers to have spans of control upward of 25 people. Exactly where did things start going wrong again?

We do understand, that for colleagues in an ever-increasing number of our prisons, just being able to get through one week to the next staffing wise is a challenge. We don't know how much impact the revised market supplements will have on individual prisons, and whilst these changes may give some much-needed resources, we do hold the view that a longer-term solution is needed. We will continue to press HMPPS, MoJ and Government that a significant uplift in pay is needed, but we also remain committed to working with HMPPS on all initiatives which may help retain more of our people.

Head of Function Assessments

We held a brief call last week to discuss the current and future Head of Function (HoF) Assessments – Specifically seeking our view about Incident Command. As you will know, to gain accreditation, both the HoF assessment and the Incident Command course need to be passed for a candidate to be accredited for an operational HoF post. We were asked our view if this should remain the case, as it was delaying some candidates from applying for posts. Whilst we accepted this could be the case, our view was that it was essential that both assessments

needed to be passed. We shared a view that it would be far better if the incident command course was taken as a prerequisite to being signed up for the HoF assessment.

Further work is being undertaken, but currently the position remains the same – both IMSC and HoF must be passed prior to applying for posts.

Travel Expenses

We were recently asked to approach HMPPS / MoJ to ask that in light of the significant increases to petrol and diesel costs, that an increase is made in the Excess Fares Allowance of 26p per mile. We also were asked that a extension to EFA be given to those staff who were required to work from home during COVID– Both the increase and extension requests were rejected – the response is copied below:

“The Excess Fares Allowance (EFA) is there to support staff where they carry out additional travel for work. If staff were getting an EFA the whole time then they would have had cost savings from working from home as no T&S costs would have been incurred. Therefore we cannot under this scenario consider an extension.

I appreciate that costs for travel have increased, but as you’ve stated the increased costs are universal and impact everyone so any changes to this are unlikely. The policy does outline the following:

13.5.2 General conditions in which your EFA will be reassessed are outlined below:

- The amount of EFA is re-assessed as part of a general policy revision;*
- There is a change in the rate of Public Transport rate of mileage;*
- There is a change to an individual element of the journey including the cost or distance travelled, such as car parking, mileage or rail fare;*
- If you move home for domestic reasons it will be re-assessed but will not be increased; e.g. if you move closer to your place of work your entitlement will reduce.*
- If you move your home as a result of a further public interest transfer the allowance stops and is reassessed;*
- If you experience an exceptionally large increase in public transport fares (excl. car parking and mileage) compared to the average annual increase as defined by ATOC, you may apply to the Shared Services PIT Team for your EFA to be reviewed. Any increase will be based on the additional cost above the average ATOC rate based on the previous year’s prices and not the ticket price used to calculate your original EFA. (please refer to [My Services](#) for information on how to apply)”*

Annex A’s and Consultation

We would like to remind our members in HMPPS, of the requirements to consult in line with Notice to Staff 02/2021 Trade Union Consultation and Disclosure of Information. Consultation described in this NTS, for grades represented by the PGA takes place at a national level. Whilst we have seen exceptional levels of engagement nationally and locally during COVID, the concept of national engagement is occasionally lost on some establishments.

Although we do have a strong network of members in most establishments, their role does not extend to local consultation or negotiation over matters impacting our grades. Clearly where

there is a strong and healthy relationship between our local rep and the Governor, it would be expected that local discussions will take place. However, we do ask that any change proposed, which requires TU Consultation, is communicated nationally to the PGA, as described in the NTS.

We always look sympathetically to proposed changes, and our normal starting position is to support where we can – However, we will insist that any changes that seek to reduce the numbers of operational managers, or increases risk or workload is fully consulted on prior to changes taking place.

Other updates

PGA Annual Conference 2022

We are waiting for confirmation from HMPPS that time will be granted for delegates to attend this year's PGA Annual Conference in October, 2022.

As soon as this is provided, we will send out a separate 'conference' bulletin. However, for planning purposes, this year's event provisionally will take place between 10 and 12 October 2022 at our regular venue, Radisson Blu East Midlands Airport Hotel, Herald Way, Pegasus Business Park, Castle Donington, nr Derby, DE74 2TZ.

IT and Membership Updates

Albeit slower than anticipated, our IT move is still taking place, one of the delays was to ensure our most recent Direct Debit collection went through with our current bank, we held off doing any changes until this took place as there was a slight risk of disruption to subscriptions being collected.

PerkJam

PerkJam continues to be of interest to members – If you have not joined, please consider doing so. Access is open to your family and friends of both current and retired members. As previously stated, the PGA get a small amount of commission from certain sales. It is our intention to contribute this each year to our conference charity – we currently have 340 'PerkJam' Members, with £80 commission.

The link to join PerkJam is <https://pga.perkjam.com/home>

If you have any feedback or questions, please send them to PGA@Justice.gov.uk

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