

# Prison Governors Association

Representing: The Prison Governors of the United Kingdom since 1987



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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **HMP WOODHILL – URGENT NOTIFICATION**

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The decision by Charlie Taylor, His Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Prisons to issue an Urgent Notification (UN) against HMP Woodhill should be of no surprise to the Government or His Majesty’s Prison & Probation Service (HMPPS). The Prison Governors’ Association (PGA) has been highlighting the myriad of challenges facing our members in Woodhill and other prisons for several years.

We are in a perilous position now, where the levers needed to relieve the stress facing Woodhill and many other prisons are not available.

There is a chronic shortage of staff across the estate. Woodhill is running at nearly a 40% shortfall which is predicted to worsen by the end of the year. Even with detached duty staff support, on any given day there is a 36% deficit. This is common across many prisons.

The biggest lever for reducing a prison population is no longer available as it was when HMP Nottingham and Liverpool received their UN several years ago. Within days, both prisons reduced their population by hundreds, allowing a process of improvement to take place. The prison population has recently topped 87,000 and continues to grow. Prisons, including Woodhill, are having to increase their population, further compounding the issues raised by the Chief Inspector. The staff to prisoner ratios in these prisons are unsafe.

In a nutshell, Government policy of locking up more people for longer, making it more difficult to release them, has paralysed a system to the point it is unable to make a difference for prisons which face the gravest of challenges. It is directly impacting on the safety of prisoners with suicide and self-harm on an upward trajectory. The impact on the health and wellbeing of staff working in such an environment is significant. It is grossly unfair that our members must shoulder the burden of a crisis which is not of their making.

With 3 UN's in approximately 6 months and further inspections of challenging prisons looming, it is only a matter of time before we see more prisons subjected to this process. Have UN's become meaningless in such dire circumstances?

The PGA once again call on Government to reduce the prison population as a matter of urgency.

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Note for editors:

The Prison Governors Association was founded in October 1987 to represent the higher operational managers in the Prison Service in England and Wales. The PGA was placed on the register of Trade Unions on 6 November 1987 (No. 639T). On 28 July 1988 the Certification Officer under the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1974 issued the Prison Governors Association with a Certificate of Independence. The status of the Prison Governors Association is that of an independent registered Trade Union.

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