



HM Prison & Probation Service

Long Term and High Security Prisons Group
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To Whom It May Concern

Date as stated on the email

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for your email regarding Mr Julian Assange (A9379AY), which has been passed to Richard Vince CBE, Executive Director for the Long Term and High Security Estate (LTHSE) for a reply under public correspondence. I am responding in my capacity as his Business Manager.

As you may appreciate we have received a considerable amount of correspondence relating to Mr Assange, however, as a responsible Government Agency, Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) are duty bound to comply with data protection legislation in a way to protect the personal information of all those who live, work in and visit any of our establishments. It would therefore not be appropriate to offer comment on individual prisoners within HMPPS and I am consequently unable to provide you with a full response to the issues you have raised. Your concerns have, however, been noted and shared with the Governor at HMP Belmarsh.

I would like to assure you that HMPPS takes very seriously its duty of care to ensure all prisoners are able to serve or await their sentences in a safe and decent environment. This includes the carrying out of a risk assessment upon each prisoner's reception into custody, and extra measures are put into place to protect prisoners where there are concerns for their welfare. Additionally, all prisoners are entitled to receive the same range and quality of healthcare treatments and services as anyone in the community, and social visits, as well as those from legal advisors, are facilitated in accordance with Prison Service Instruction (PSI) 162011 Providing Visits and Services to Visitors. These rights are not subject to change or limitation according to the profile or details of any prisoner's individual case.

You might be interested to learn that in accordance with the Access to Digital Evidence policy framework, prisoners are able to request digital equipment for their legal preparation where they can demonstrate a real need. This policy exists in part to make clear the expectations of HMPPS surrounding prisoners' access to digital evidence in the light of

obligations under Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The policy framework is available for you to view in full through the Government website using the link I have provided: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-digital-evidence-a2de>. Prisoners are also entitled to possession of their legal documents and letters between prisoners and their legal advisers are treated as privileged and handled in confidence in line with PSI 49-2011 Prisoner Communication Services and PSI 04/2016 The Interception of Communications in Prisons and Security Measures.

I would like to assure you that prisoners are not detained in solitary confinement, nor in contravention of international law. As with all HMPPS facilities, HMP Belmarsh is subject to independent scrutiny from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP), whose role is to report on conditions and treatment of prisoners and other detainees, promoting the concept of "healthy establishments" in which staff work effectively to reduce re-offending and achieve positive outcomes for those detained and the public. HMPPS works to provide a safe environment where offenders are encouraged and supported to engage with the opportunities afforded to them to address their rehabilitation, ranging from educational courses and offending behaviour programmes to employment opportunities, with additional support being provided to address any medical or mental health needs. All establishments must additionally act in accordance with PSI 75-2011 Residential Services, which details the national requirements for all prisoners to be afforded a minimum of 30 minutes in the open air daily and to provide appropriate time out of cell to maintain well-being, support social interaction and avoid risk of disorder, as defined in each establishment's Service Level Agreement (SLA). The way in which residential services are delivered is crucial to running prisons that are safe, legal and decent. This Instruction provides a framework for the delivery of daytime residential services tailored to all types of prison establishments irrespective of age, type, size or role. It allows for flexibility and innovation whilst ensuring that key outcomes are achieved.

On the wider issue of matters of public health, NHS England and the Welsh Government have primary responsibility for the commissioning of healthcare services in public prisons. The commitment to working with health and justice partners is set out in the National Partnership Agreement for Prison Healthcare in England, which was published in April 2018 and is available for the public to view through the Government website: <https://www.gov.uk>. Prisoners do, however, receive the same healthcare and treatment as anyone outside of the prison. NHS practitioners use their professional judgement to ensure that a high level of care and confidentiality is provided to prisoners that is equal to that care given to patients in the wider community. HMPPS is committed through the National Partnership Agreement to safeguarding the public health of those in prison.

I also want to assure you that it is widely recognised that there are many offenders within the prison system who have complex care needs and suffer from mental health issues. Appropriate support and care is offered to them and a number of measures have, or are in the process of being put in place to improve this further. Since 2016, in excess of 4,000 frontline prison officers have been recruited, which has helped with the improvement of prison regimes and access to healthcare. Prison staff have or are receiving training in key areas such as mental health and substance misuse. In addition, a key worker role giving staff dedicated time to provide one to one support to individual prisoners has been implemented.

Additionally, if prisoners are unhappy with any aspect of their custodial care, they are able to raise a complaint in accordance with HMPPS Prisoner Complaints policy framework. This process provides a fair and effective system for dealing with prisoner complaints, designed to promote procedural justice and helps to ensure that the Prison Service meets its obligation of dealing fairly, openly and humanely with prisoners. Using this process will not only ensure that a prisoner will receive a reply within a set timeframe but also offers them an internal avenue of appeal if they are unhappy with the initial response. More importantly, once internal avenues have been exhausted and if they remain unhappy with responses received, it also offers them recourse to write to the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman to seek an independent review of their complaint. You can find a copy of this policy framework by visiting the Government website, using the link I have provided:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prisonercomplaints-policy-framework>

Copies of all of the PSI's mentioned above are available for you through the Justice website: <https://www.justice.gov.uk/offenders/psis>. Further information about life in prison can also be found on the Government website at: <https://www.gov.uk/life-in-prison>.

As I am sure you will understand, it would not be appropriate for me to offer comment on the guilt or sentencing of any prisoner, as it is for the courts to pass judgement, not HMPPS. The same principle applies to the possible extradition of any prisoner to another country, as this decision is not within my control, nor the control of the Secretary of State for Justice: extradition is also ultimately a matter for the courts. However, I can assure you that extradition requests bear no relevance to the conditions in which a prisoner is kept whilst located within HMPPS. All prisoners have the same rights to a decent, safe and healthy regime.

I am sorry that I am unable to comment specifically on Mr Assange, but hope that this offers you a sufficient level of assurance regarding the level of care afforded to prisoners in our custody and find the information provided of use. However, as I have provided the maximum level of detail available to me within the data protection legislation, I do not intend to correspond with you any further on this matter.

Yours faithfully,



D Harding
Business Manager to Executive Director