



Ministry  
of Justice

# Position Specification

**Ministry of Justice**  
HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

## Ministerial Foreword

Thank you for your interest in the role of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons (HMCIP). The Chief Inspector leads His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons, an independent inspectorate sponsored by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ).

This is a challenging and pivotal time to take on the role. Independent, evidence-based scrutiny of our prisons is vital as we work to repair the system and rebuild public confidence – protecting the public while reducing reoffending. HMCIP plays a crucial role in identifying and promoting understanding of both long-term, systemic challenges, such as population pressures and an ageing estate, and emerging risks to which the system must respond.

With the publication of the Independent Sentencing Review and the related Sentencing Act 2026, we are implementing reforms to make the system more sustainable and reduce future pressure on the prison population, while continuing to focus on reducing crime. HMCIP will play a key role in holding government, and those responsible for places of detention – including prisons, young offender institutions, secure training centres, immigration detention, court custody and military detention – to account for their operation. It will ensure that evidence of improvement in outcomes for those in custody remains at the heart of the system, while also shining a light on where further change is needed.

I am seeking to appoint a leader who can independently scrutinise the conditions and treatment of prisoners and other detainees, ensuring that detention is humane, safe, and supports effective rehabilitation and reintegration into the community.

We are looking for an outstanding organisational leader with strong communication skills, who can work collaboratively with senior leaders and engage effectively with a wide range of stakeholders, including prisoners and detainees. The role requires independence of judgement, credibility, and the confidence to operate in a highly visible and often challenging public environment.

We encourage applications from individuals with diverse backgrounds and perspectives, who can bring fresh thinking to the role. A genuine commitment to improving outcomes for prisoners, other detainees, and the public is essential.

**The Rt. Hon. David Lammy MP**  
**Deputy Prime Minister**  
**Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice**

## The Role

The Chief Inspector is the independent head of His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) and its public voice. This is a high-profile national leadership role, combining organisational leadership with external scrutiny, influence, and accountability.

The Chief Inspector leads an organisation whose findings can have immediate and significant impact on public debate, policy direction, and operational practice across the custodial system. The role requires operating at the interface between government, the justice system, and the public, often in high-profile and sensitive contexts.

Reporting to Ministers, the Chief Inspector must act with clear independence from government and from the services under inspection. The role demands the confidence and judgement to provide robust, evidence-based challenge, including where this may be publicly visible or politically sensitive.

The Chief Inspector is responsible not only for setting the strategic direction and performance of the Inspectorate, but also for ensuring that its work maintains credibility, authority, and impact. This includes acting as a trusted and authoritative voice in the media and in Parliament and engaging with a wide range of stakeholders across the system.

The role requires a leader who can combine independence with influence: able to hold the system to account while maintaining constructive and effective working relationships with ministers, senior officials, and operational leaders.

## Key Responsibilities

### Inspection and Scrutiny

- Deliver an independent inspection programme across prisons, young offender institutions, immigration detention, court custody, and other places of detention.
- Assess outcomes for detainees against HMIP's expectations, grounded in international human rights standards.
- Oversee thematic inspections and Independent Reviews of Progress (follow-up visits to check on progress).
- Fulfil the UK's obligations under Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture (OPCAT) within the Inspectorate's remit.

### Public Accountability and Influence

- Publish authoritative, evidence-based inspection reports.
- Act as the public voice of the Inspectorate, including regular engagement with national media and Parliament.
- Provide evidence to Parliamentary Select Committees and contribute to policy discussions.
- Hold government and system leaders to account, while maintaining constructive and credible relationships.
- Work collaboratively with other criminal justice inspectorates through the Criminal Justice Joint Inspection programme.

### Organisational Leadership

- Provide effective leadership of HMIP, including strategy, performance, culture, and capability.
- Ensure the Inspectorate continues to evolve, maintaining credibility and relevance in a changing environment.
- Lead through change where required to strengthen governance, efficiency, and impact.
- Ensure effective stewardship of public resources.

## Candidate Profile

We are seeking an individual with the credibility, judgement, and resilience to operate effectively in a high-profile, high-accountability role.

### **Essential Criteria**

#### **Knowledge and insight**

- A clear understanding of the work, priorities and challenges of HMIP and the context within which it operates, or the ability to develop this rapidly.
- An understanding of the prison system, custodial environments, or closely related sectors, including key operational and systemic challenges, or the ability to develop this understanding rapidly in a complex public service environment.

#### **Leadership**

- Proven track record of leading complex organisations, functions, or systems at a senior level, managing resources appropriately.
- Ability to set strategic direction, drive performance, and lead teams in demanding environments.
- Ability to make sound, evidence-based decisions in complex and high-profile settings.

#### **Experience and delivery**

- Experience operating in complex, high-profile environments with accountability for delivery, people, and resources.

#### **Communication and public credibility**

- Exceptional communication skills, including the ability to operate credibly in the media and public domain.
- Ability to present complex and sensitive findings with clarity, authority, and impact.

#### **Stakeholder engagement**

- Ability to build and maintain effective relationships with a wide range of stakeholders, including ministers, senior officials, practitioners, and those with lived experience.
- Ability to engage stakeholders collaboratively and with constructive challenge.

### **Desirable Criteria**

- Experience within or alongside the criminal justice system (e.g., prisons, policing, probation, youth justice).
- Experience engaging with political and media stakeholders in high-profile contexts.

## Additional Information

- **Salary:** £144,000 per annum.
- **Pension:** The post is pensionable under the Civil Service Pension Scheme.
- **Annual leave:** 31.5 days' annual leave, plus one privilege day and eight public holidays
- **Location:** London (Canary Wharf), with regular travel across England and Wales. Alternative UK base locations may be considered for exceptional candidates.
- **Tenure:** The appointment is for a fixed term of three years, with the possibility of reappointment at the discretion of Ministers, subject to satisfactory performance. There is no automatic presumption of reappointment. Each case will be considered on its own merits, taking into account a range of factors, including the diversity and balance of skills and experience across the board. In most cases, individuals will not serve more than two terms or ten years in any one post.
- **Time commitment:** Full-time

The role involves regular travel to custodial establishments and other locations, alongside a significant degree of external engagement, including media and parliamentary activity.

## Equality and diversity

We encourage applications from talented individuals from all backgrounds and across the whole of the United Kingdom. Public bodies are most effective when they reflect the diversity of views of the society they serve and this is an important part of the Government's levelling up agenda.

We collect data about applicants' characteristics and backgrounds, including information about people's educational and professional backgrounds, so that we can make sure we are attracting a broad range of people to these roles and that our selection processes are fair for everyone. Without this information, it makes it difficult to see if our outreach is working, if the application process is having an unfair impact on certain groups and whether changes are making a positive difference.

When you submit your application, your responses are collected by the Cabinet Office and the government department(s) managing your application. The data is used to produce management information about the diversity of applicants. You can select "prefer not to say" to any question you do not wish to answer. The information you provide will not be seen by the Advisory Assessment Panel who review applications against the advertised criteria and conduct interviews.

## Disability confident

We are a member of the Government's Disability Confident scheme. We use the Disability Confident scheme symbol, along with other like-minded employers, to show our commitment to good practice in employing people with a disability. The scheme helps recruit and retain disabled people. As part of implementing the scheme, we guarantee an interview for anyone with a disability whose application meets the essential criteria for the role, set out in the advert, and who has asked that their application is considered under the scheme. Indicating that you wish your application to be considered under the scheme will in no way prejudice your application. By 'essential criteria', we mean that you must provide evidence which demonstrates that you meet the level of competence required under each of the essential criteria, as set out in person specification. When you apply you will have the opportunity to select if you would like your application considered under this scheme.

## Reasonable adjustments

We are committed to making reasonable adjustments to make sure applicants with disabilities, physical or mental health conditions, or other needs are not substantially disadvantaged when applying for public appointments. This can include changing the recruitment process to enable people who wish to apply to do so.

Some examples of common changes are:

- ensuring that application forms are available in different or accessible formats
- making adaptations to interview locations
- allowing candidates to present their skills and experience in a different way

- giving additional detailed information on the selection/interview process in advance to allow candidates time to prepare themselves
- allowing support workers, for example sign language interpreters
- making provision for support animals to attend.

When you apply you will have the opportunity to request reasonable adjustments to the application process.

## Overview of the application process

Public appointments are made on merit following a fair and open competition process which is conducted in accordance with the Governance Code for Public Appointments. We will deal with your application as quickly as possible and will keep you informed at key stages. We aim to conclude the appointment process within three months of the deadline for applications – this is in accordance with the Governance Code.

The assessment process will comprise the following stages:

- 1. Ministerial oversight**  
Ministers are responsible and accountable to Parliament for public appointments made within their department. Ministers must therefore be consulted at key stages of the appointment process.
- 2. Advisory Assessment Panel (AAP)**  
An Advisory Assessment Panel (“the Panel”) is appointed by Ministers to assist in their decision-making. The role of the Panel is to assess candidates objectively against the published criteria and to advise Ministers on which candidates are appointable.
- 3. Application review and longlisting**  
Following the closing date, Russell Reynolds Associates will review all applications for eligibility and alignment with the published criteria. RRA will provide the Panel with a structured assessment of applicants, including candidates identified through proactive search and those who have applied directly. The Panel will consider this assessment and agree a longlist of candidates to progress. Ministers will be consulted on the outcome of the longlisting stage.
- 4. Longlist interviews and assessment**  
Russell Reynolds Associates will conduct in-depth competency-based interviews with longlisted candidates to explore their experience, motivation and suitability for the role against the published criteria. The output of these interviews will be shared with the Panel to support its consideration of which candidates should be shortlisted.
- 5. Shortlisting**  
The Panel will assess longlisted candidates and determine which candidates best meet the criteria and should be shortlisted for final interview. Ministers will be consulted on the Panel’s recommended shortlist. Candidates who have applied under the Disability Confident Scheme and who meet all the essential criteria will be guaranteed an interview.
- 6. Due diligence and referencing**  
Russell Reynolds Associates will support the process by undertaking appropriate due diligence and referencing on shortlisted candidates. This will include checks relating to probity, conflicts of interest and publicly available information, alongside references. Any issues identified will be shared with the Panel and the sponsoring department for consideration.
- 7. Final interviews**  
The Panel will interview shortlisted candidates and determine which candidates it judges to be appointable. Interviews may include a presentation and will explore candidates’ skills, experience, judgement and independence, as well as any potential conflicts of interest.
- 8. Ministerial decision**  
Details of the Panel’s assessment will be provided to Ministers, including which candidates have been judged appointable. It is for Ministers to determine merit and decide who should be appointed. Ministers may choose to meet candidates before making a final decision.
- 9. Outcome and appointment**

All interviewed candidates will be informed of the outcome of the process. The successful candidate will be issued with formal Terms and Conditions and a letter of appointment, subject to completion of all necessary checks and processes. The successful candidate will be the subject of a Justice Select Committee Pre-Appointment Scrutiny Hearing.

10. This appointment is a Crown Appointment and so will be subject to Crown Approval.

Further information about public appointments, including guidance on applying, can be found on our [guidance pages](#) on gov.uk.

## Advisory Assessment Panel

- Emma Churchill, Director General Policy, Ministry of Justice
- Wendy Williams CBE
- Paula McDonald CBE

Advisory Assessment Panels (AAPs) are chosen by ministers to assist them in their decision-making. These include a departmental official and an independent member.

AAPs perform a number of functions, including agreeing an assessment strategy with ministers, undertaking sifting, carrying out interviews in line with the advertised criteria and deciding objectively who meets the published selection criteria for the role before recommending to ministers which candidates they find appointable. It is then for the minister to decide who to appoint to the role.

## Security clearance

The successful candidate will be required to undertake Baseline Personnel Security Standard checks in line with the Civil Service guidelines. Additional Security Clearance may also be required for certain roles. However, where this applies, candidates will be notified during the appointment process. Further information on National Security Vetting can be found on the Gov.uk website [here](#).

## How to Apply

The recruitment process is being undertaken by Russell Reynolds Associates on behalf of the Ministry of Justice. Please submit your application to [responses@russellreynolds.com](mailto:responses@russellreynolds.com) quoting reference number **P2604-063L**. All applications will be acknowledged. The closing date for applications is **23:55 BST on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2026**.

Your submission should include:

- **Your CV** setting out your career history, with key responsibilities and achievements. Please ensure you have provided reasons for any gaps within the last two years.
- A **Statement of Suitability** (no longer than two pages) explaining how you consider your personal skills, qualities and experience provide evidence of your suitability for the role.
- A completed **Diversity Monitoring Form** [available here](#). Please note the information you provide will help support monitoring the Public Appointment recruitment processes to ensure they are fair to all and allow us to attract diverse and talented candidates. The diversity data in this section is collated in aggregate and will not be disclosed to anyone involved in assessing your application.
- A completed **Declaration of Interest Form** [available here](#).

## Indicative Timeline

Please note this may be subject to change.

Milestone	Date
Closing date for applications	10 <sup>th</sup> June
AAP meets to review all applications and agree longlist	w/c 15 <sup>th</sup> June
AAP meets to agree shortlist	29 <sup>th</sup> June
Final interviews with AAP	30 <sup>th</sup> July and 6 <sup>th</sup> August
Ministerial decision (including potential meeting with Ministers)	w/c 7 <sup>th</sup> September
Justice Select Committee Pre-Appointment Scrutiny Hearing	Date tbc

Should you wish to speak with someone before submitting an application, please contact [responses@russellreynolds.com](mailto:responses@russellreynolds.com) in the first instance, quoting reference number **P2604-063L**.

## Appendix I

### Principles of public life

The [Seven Principles of Public Life](#) (also known as the Nolan Principles) apply to anyone who works as a public office-holder.

**1. Selflessness**

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

**2. Integrity**

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

**3. Objectivity**

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

**4. Accountability**

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

**5. Openness**

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

**6. Honesty**

Holders of public office should be truthful.

**7. Leadership**

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and treat others with respect. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.