



H.M Prison Service – 2022-2023 Performance Summary

During the 2022-2023 performance year, HM Prison Service on Saint Helena Island has faced significant challenges attributed to rising imprisonment rates and the operation of the outdated HMP Jamestown prison facility. Reports from the Human Rights Commission and overseas territories prison advisors have emphasised the prison's unsuitability for modern purposes.

Efforts have been made to improve conditions within the prison, with various enhancements to the building to enhance the conditions of detention. While HMP Jamestown has commendably served the small island community, it is evident that a new, fit-for-purpose prison is urgently required to meet contemporary standards.

Promising progress has been made in the new prison build project, with improvements to the prison concept designs and a successful testing of the market expression of interest (EOI) exercise. This marks a significant step forward in addressing the issues plaguing the current facility.

Despite the challenges faced, the prison service has managed to reasonably meet key performance targets, including zero prisoner escapes and fewer than five assaults per year. However, increasing prisoner purposeful activity hours has proven difficult due to limited activity space and a high number of prisoners, resulting in the highest-ever prison population of 24, including two female prisoners for the first time. Efforts to improve conditions within the female section were funded through the UK Government Conflict, Stability, and Security Fund (CSSF) Overseas Territories Justice Programme.

Staff development has been emphasized, with 249 hours of training delivered using various methods to build staff capability. To ensure safety and security amidst rising imprisonment rates, the Prison Officer Group size was increased from 14 to 16. However, recruitment for a Prison Catering Officer remains a challenge due to limited public interest.

The Prison Visiting Committee (PVC) has maintained effective relationships with the Superintendent and prisoners, providing an independent overview of prisoner treatment and welfare with no significant issues being reported.

To address population pressures, a project has commenced to evaluate expanding the current prison footprint. Additionally, exploring early release on electronic monitoring (tagging) and rigorously risk-assessing prisoner early release applications are being considered.

In a significant organisational change, the Prison Service gained independence from the Police command structure, allowing the appointment of a Superintendent of Prisons from a prison leadership background to drive forward the new Prison Service 5-year development plan. As the Prison Service evolves to operate in a bigger, bespoke prison with approximately 60 spaces, changes in the staffing/rank structure and a new uniform project have been completed, increasing resilience, professionalism and community image. The Superintendent's regular communication with the local community via local media updates has fostered transparency and engagement. Prisoners' involvement in community payback activities has strengthened ties with the community.

Although the Prisons Ordinance and Regulations are in need of revisions, this work-stream has been deprioritised due to the pressing operational needs of the prison. The focus has been on addressing the challenges posed by rising imprisonment rates, prison conditions, and the new prison build project.

In conclusion, despite the significant pressure faced during the 2022-2023 performance year, the HM Prison Service has shown resilience and dedication in achieving key targets. Progress in the new prison build project and the shift toward independence within the Prison Service indicate positive developments for the future. However, the urgent need for a new, fit-for-purpose prison on Saint Helena Island remains crucial. Continued efforts and community support are essential as the Prison Service strives to ensure safety, security, and rehabilitation for staff and prisoners.

Jay Kendall, Superintendent of Prisons, July 2023