



**Issued on behalf of the National Preventive Mechanism**

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**VISIT FROM UN TORTURE PREVENTION BODY HIGHLIGHTS UK'S  
'SIGNIFICANT FAILINGS' SAYS CUSTODY WATCHDOG**

***At least 8,000 people in prisons or care facilities with poor safety record***

Torture prevention experts from the United Nations are set to find 'significant failings' in the UK's treatment of children and adults, when they visit places of detention over the next two weeks.

That's the view of the country's national custody and detention watchdog John Wadham, who is Chair of the UK National Preventive Mechanism, a network made up of 21 independent statutory monitoring bodies in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The experts' visit comes at a time when independent inspectors, regulators and monitors across the four nations have repeatedly raised the alarm about:

- children being locked up for 22 hours a day
- rising suicide and self-harm in prisons
- abuse of people with learning disabilities and autism in assessment units or other secure care settings, and
- vulnerable adults in immigration detention not knowing when they are going to be released.

Statistics gathered by the NPM show that at least 8,000 people in state custody or detention (including under mental health laws) in the UK are in places rated as poor or inadequate for safety.

The UK's state detention arrangements and the work of its independent monitoring bodies are under the spotlight from the UN Sub Committee for the Prevention of Torture (SPT) for the first time in a decade, following the creation of the NPM in 2009.

John Wadham, NPM Chair, said:

"There are significant failings in parts of the UK's detention and custody estate including secure mental health units, where some serious allegations of neglect and abuse are coming to light.

"And with 5000 self-harm incidents in prisons every month in England and Wales alone, and similar issues in Scotland and Northern Ireland, I am sure the SPT will be

raising significant concern about the nature of the problems – and the need for the government to step up its response.

“Ministers are under a global spotlight on the way we treat people in detention and they need to act now to meet their obligations under international law. We will be watching closely to ensure the government implements the changes recommended in the reports made by our members and by the SPT.”

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### **Notes to editors**

1. The 21 bodies who make up the NPM are:

#### **England and Wales**

Care Inspectorate Wales; Care Quality Commission; The Children’s Commissioner for England; Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons; Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services; Healthcare Inspectorate Wales; Independent Monitoring Boards; Independent Custody Visiting Association; Lay Observers; Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Service and Skills)

#### **Northern Ireland**

Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland; Independent Monitoring Boards (Northern Ireland); Northern Ireland Policing Board Independent Custody Visiting Scheme; The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority

#### **Scotland**

Care Inspectorate; Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland; Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland; Independent Custody Visiting Scotland; Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland; Scottish Human Rights Commission; United Kingdom; Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation

2. The SPT is a committee set up under the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT), an international human rights treaty designed to strengthen the protection of people deprived of their liberty. OPCAT is mandated to carry out preventive visits to places of detention, and to advise and assist the establishment of NPMs in accordance with Articles 11, 12 and 13 of OPCAT. All members of the SPT serve in their individual capacity and are expected to act with independence and impartiality. The members come from all over the world and some work with NPMs in their own countries.

3. During their visit, the SPT will meet with government ministers and officials, members of the NPM, NGOs, academics and parliamentarians. They will make unannounced visits to places of detention and conduct some visits with NPM members.

4. Last year, CQC rated 5% of mental health organisations that can detain patients under the Mental Health Act inadequate in relation to safety. There are in excess of 40,000 such detentions a year, so CQC estimate that perhaps 2,000 such detentions could be to hospitals rated to be unsafe. In 2018/19 there were a further 2,131 notifications to CQC of a Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards application outcome at locations that are currently (as of

22/08/2019) rated inadequate for safety. In HMIP figures show that in reports published in 2018/19 6,003 out of 29,361 prisoners in prisons that were inspected were living in establishments judged to be poor in safety. CQC and HMIP use different methodologies and assessment standards in their inspection reports. While CQC's lowest rating is 'inadequate', HMIP rate establishments from 1 – 4, 1 being a 'poor' in outcomes of their four healthy prison tests.

5. The NPM mapped detention population data from 2016-17 to identify how many people are detained across different settings in the United Kingdom. While a range of population data is published for specific detention settings, there was no collated data that provides an overview of detention across every setting in the four jurisdictions of the UK until the NPM conducted this work, which can be found at: [https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/npm-prod-storage-19n0nag2nk8xk/uploads/2018/01/20180123\\_NPM-Data-mapping-2016\\_17\\_FINAL.pdf](https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/npm-prod-storage-19n0nag2nk8xk/uploads/2018/01/20180123_NPM-Data-mapping-2016_17_FINAL.pdf)