



Ministry of JUSTICE

National Offender
Management Service

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High Security Prisons Group

Room 635, Cleland House
Page Street
London, SW1P 4LN

Telephone: 020 7217 6404

Fax: 020 7217 6839

Andrew Hinchliffe
31 Coward Drive
Oughtibridge
Sheffield
S35 0JP

12 February 2009

Dear Mr Hinchliffe,

Thank you for your letter of 9 February regarding Mr Wilkinson.

The Category A Team accepts that accurate risk assessments are difficult for those prisoners who deny their guilt of their offences: particularly as this denial of guilt may result in them refusing or being ineligible for available offence-related programmes.

Where no offence-related programmes have been completed those responsible for assessing risk will look very closely at other aspects of the prisoner's conduct. This may include the prisoner's behaviour towards others, achievements in prison, and any other observed evidence that sheds light on the prisoner's insight into or attitudes towards offending as a whole.

The Category A Team recognises that Mr Wilkinson has improved his compliance with the regime in recent years and has achieved a great deal through education. It also notes that Mr Wilkinson shows himself to be a calming influence in prison, and your own comments that he has learnt to control his anger.

The Category A Team considers however that these are insufficient to show convincingly that Mr _Wilkinson has achieved a significant reduction in his potential risk of reoffending in a similar way should he be unlawfully at large.

The Category A Team notes that all those in prison custody are expected to comply with the regime and to control their anger. It considers these factors alone can not be offered as evidence of significant risk reduction for any category A prisoner, especially as they are held in highly secure conditions.

In Mr Wilkinson's case the Category A Team also considers that there continues to be an absence of crucial evidence that he has either achieved significant insight or change in attitude relating to his history of violence, or has shown insight into violent offending in general terms.

The participation in offence-related programmes can be very helpful, as it allows prisoners to face up to and be challenged on their actions, and specialist staff can closely assess their insight and progress. Participation in itself will allow the prisoner to express their views and may show the prisoner is serious about progressing and reducing their future risk.

The Category A Team does not state that Mr Wilkinson must take part in such programmes to show he has significantly reduced his risk. But it may reasonably conclude that his stated unwillingness to take part in identified programmes provides further confirmation that there is no evidence of his insight into violent offending.

In completing Mr Wilkinson's security category reviews the responsibility of the Director of High Security or Category A Team is to determine the level of security in which Mr Wilkinson should be held, based on his potential risk if he were unlawfully at large. Unlike Parole Board reviews, security category reviews are not concerned with resettlement or suitability for supervised release.

The Category A Team is satisfied the recent decisions that Mr Wilkinson should remain category A are rational for the reasons provided at the time. It also considers these decisions are compatible with the findings of the recent Parole Board review, which also stated that Mr Wilkinson had yet to achieve significant risk reduction relating to such risk factors as violence, weapons and criminality.

The Category A Team can not comment on issues in your letter that are outside its responsibility, such as future recommendations of the Parole Board or the number of prisoners held beyond the expiry of their tariffs. It can however confirm that in completing Mr Wilkinson's reviews both the Director of High Security and Category A Team have acted and will continue to act with scrupulous fairness.

In completing all security reviews the Director and Category A Team will carefully consider the individual case on its own merits, but they will need to be sure that the prisoner has significantly reduced their potential risk before they can approve downgrading. Their greater responsibility will remain the protection of the general public, and not the future rehabilitation of the prisoner concerned.

Yours faithfully,

Steve Easton
Category A Team
High Security Prisons Group