

# Parole Board publishes Annual Report & Accounts 2019/2020

The Parole Board today publishes its Annual Report and Accounts for 2019/2020.

The Board is an independent body that works with other criminal justice agencies to protect the public by risk assessing prisoners to decide whether they can be safely released into the community.

Statistics contained in [the annual report](#) show The Board conducted more parole hearings than ever before in 2019/2020 with a total of 29,327 hearings. This included a record high 8,264 face to face oral hearings as well as 21, 063 paper hearings.

While The Board's caseload increases, it continues to deliver independent, impartial and quality decisions by ensuring they are fair, respect the rights of the prisoner but always put public safety first. The Parole Board operates like a court by making difficult, impartial decisions by considering evidence without fear or favour.

## **In 2019-20 the Board:**

- Directed the release of 3,157 prisoners;
- Recommended 689 prisoners were suitable for open conditions;
- Decided that 10,066 prisoners needed to remain in custody for the protection of the public;
- More than doubled the proportion of Parole Board members from a BAME background from 5% to 12%;
- Processed 145 applications for reconsideration following the introduction of the new mechanism in July 2019.

Transparency remains a high priority in which the Parole Board has made strides in the last year, in 2019-20 the Board issued 1,739 summaries outlining the reasons for its decisions for victims, the public and members of the media.

The Board was prevented from disclosing why its panels had decided an offender should be released or kept in prison until 2018. But since May 2018, victims and members of the public have been able to request summaries of the reasons for a decision. Over 3,000 summaries have now been issued.

Parole Board Chief Executive Martin Jones said: "I am delighted to introduce my fifth review as Chief Executive of the Parole Board. 2019/20 has seen continued progress in the openness and transparency of Parole Board decisions with more than 3,000 decision summaries published for victims, the public and members of the media.

"The Board also fully incorporated the new reconsideration mechanism, which

allows the Secretary of State or prisoner to ask for a parole decision to be reviewed if they felt it was irrational or procedurally unfair.

“Our decisions are of critical importance to victims, prisoners, families and public safety. We therefore welcome this crucial safeguard in the system which allows an avenue for people to scrutinise these decisions.

“The Board’s caseload also continues to grow, and I am confident we are in a strong position to handle the increase in work, with more hearings conducted than ever before.

“The coronavirus pandemic threw up unprecedented restrictions and challenges for The Board at the end of 2019/20, however I am proud to say The Parole Board acted promptly and decisively to change its way of working and ensure the parole system continued to operate efficiently and effectively. We have learned important lessons and will continue to strive to improve and adapt to the most effective way of working.”