

Press release: Parole Board Chief Executive's Blog – 1st Edition – August 2018

The last few months have been an exceptionally busy and challenging period for the Board and for me as Chief Executive. Heightened scrutiny and significant change bring their own challenges, but they also bring opportunities to better explain the work we do and focus on lasting changes that are going to improve the experience of prisoners and victims.

Two weeks ago, [I presented at the University of Cambridge](#) to academics and practitioners who are interested in parole. I talked about where we are now and how we can ensure we are effective and efficient in our independent decision making. It was particularly interesting to hear their thoughts and ideas about where things are working well, but also how the Board can improve its practice whilst focused on our primary duty; making independent and fair decisions which ensure the protection of the public.

We have also published our [2017-18 Annual Report and Accounts this month](#). Last year we held a record number of hearings and have made good progress on IPPs. One of the Parole Board's biggest achievements over the last year has been the steady elimination of the backlog. This means prisoners are not waiting unnecessarily for their case to come before a Parole Board. However, some cases are still being delayed through unnecessary deferrals and adjournments. This is a priority and we are working hard to look at how we can progress cases more effectively and there are a number of initiatives ongoing within the Board to tackle this problem – trying to bring cases to a fair and early resolution.

The Government is considering potential options for an internal review mechanism and possibly changing the rules that we are governed by. These will take some time to work through, I am keen to ensure that any changes improve the way we do things and are properly thought through and resourced. The Board [has submitted its formal response](#) to the Ministry of Justice but in essence, we think it is important to have a simple and process, that doesn't create unnecessary delays for victims or prisoners.

This month has also seen our annual staff and members strategy day, outlining where we are focusing our efforts for the year ahead. 2018-19 will see us being a more transparent organisation, so the public can really understand our work and the decisions from our members. I would also like to pay special tribute to Sir Brian Leveson who round off our 50th anniversary celebrations [with a fantastic speech dedicated to the work of the Board](#).

Whilst Sir Brian's speech makes for excellent reading one of the things he said resonated with me:

At a fundamental level, however, Parole Board decisions should be treated with the same respect for integrity and independence as any other judicial decision.

Independence is the bedrock of all that you do and should be the bedrock of the Parole Board.

There should be no improper influence or interference, whether from the media, the public, or politics, in your decision-making process.

Decisions should be, as I said earlier, made without fear or favour.