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To: All Chairs of IMBs in Prison and IRC Establishments

DC08/03

8th February 2008

Dear Chair

On 27th February 2008 the new President of the National Council for Independent Monitoring Boards, Dr Peter Selby, will be holding a Press Conference at Holloway Prison in London. This will be his first major exposure to the UK press and it is being used to highlight the work of IMBs at all prisons and IRCs.

His aim is to try and build on the past good work and to help bring public awareness to the role of Boards in monitoring the humane and decent treatment of those held in custody.

He will highlight, amongst other things, concerns regarding mental health issues, young offenders, Titan prisons, overcrowding, women in prison, and foreign nationals as well as the high regard we have for many officers and staff in their dedication to helping prisoners/detainees. He will, at the same time, be commenting on the obstacles the present policies of The Ministry of Justice/Borders & Immigration Agency create in helping achieve these aims.

His experience whilst working at the large St Quentin Prison in California will help him in his observations that large does not work. He will be using some quotations from Boards' annual reports to highlight both our concerns and also areas where we praise the work undertaken.

In future months he would like to attend Area meetings and visit some establishments. The Communications Working Group propose to use these visits and this press launch to help raise public awareness of the work all IMBs are undertaking, and the importance of independent and effective monitoring and reporting. This publicity should in turn help with both recruitment and diversity.

Yours sincerely

JANE KING