# Fatal attack at HMP Fosse Way raises questions over innovative rehab model



A tragic incident within the confines of HMP Fosse Way has raised serious concerns about the effectiveness of modern rehabilitation-focused prison systems. Ashirie Smith, a 19-year-old inmate, inflicted fatal injuries on Mahir Abdulrahman, 31, as the two were housed in a cell at what has been described as the UK’s most progressive correctional facility. The assault, which occurred on August 20 last year, involved Smith brutally stamping on Abdulrahman’s head and neck.

HMP Fosse Way, which opened in June 2023, prides itself on a unique approach to prison life, featuring state-of-the-art amenities such as personal computers that function both as TVs and workstations, a music classroom designed for industry training, and even a construction vehicle simulator reminiscent of video gaming. This innovative establishment, with a capacity for 1,715 inmates, was intended to be a resettlement prison aimed at rehabilitation and reducing recidivism through education and vocational training.

However, the prison's conditions have been the subject of scorn and derision on social media, with comparisons drawn to luxurious student accommodation. Critics argue that the rehabilitative ethos may have inadvertently fostered a culture that downplays the seriousness of criminal behaviour. In this context, Smith's violent actions are perceived as a direct contradiction to the prison's rehabilitative goals. Following his attack on Abdulrahman, Smith was sentenced to life in prison with a minimum of 17.5 years, having previously been incarcerated for possessing a firearm.

The murky circumstances surrounding Abdulrahman’s death have sparked additional scrutiny into the prison’s management and the safety protocols in place for those incarcerated. After enduring provocation from Smith and an accomplice, Thierry Robinson, Abdulrahman reportedly retaliated by throwing a kettle, setting the stage for the subsequent fatal altercation. Surveillance footage captured the moments leading up to his death, with Smith and Robinson nonchalantly exiting Abdulrahman’s cell shortly after the assault. Abdulrahman was found unresponsive and was pronounced dead soon after.

Serco, the private company overseeing HMP Fosse Way, expressed deep regret over the incident. Wyn Jones, the prison director, conveyed his condolences to Abdulrahman’s family, emphasising the need for justice for all affected by the tragedy. In line with its vision, HMP Fosse Way has sought to implement robust security measures, including ultra-secure bar-less windows to minimise contraband smuggling.

Despite its ambitious design and supposed focus on rehabilitation, the prison's ability to retain control and maintain a safe environment has been called into question. Critics note the importance of balancing rehabilitation with deterrence, suggesting that an overly lenient atmosphere could undermine the goals of justice and safety within correctional institutions.

In an era where the balance between punishment and rehabilitation is hotly debated, the brutal murder of Mahir Abdulrahman serves as a stark reminder of the potential pitfalls in the current correctional philosophy. The murder has not only overshadowed the prison’s grand opening but has also ignited a wider conversation about the efficacy of modern prisons in curbing violent behaviour among inmates.

Many are left questioning whether facilities like HMP Fosse Way, despite their innovative approaches, are truly equipped to handle the complexities of inmate behaviour and the realities of reoffending. As this incident continues to unfold, it may challenge existing paradigms and prompt a reevaluation of what constitutes true rehabilitation in the penal system.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14764389/teenage-petty-criminal-vicious-killer-wokest-prison.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.serco.com/uk/media-and-news/2023/serco-run-hmp-fosse-way-officially-opens)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14764389/teenage-petty-criminal-vicious-killer-wokest-prison.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.serco.com/uk/sector-expertise/justice/hmp-fosse-way/regime-information), [[5]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-jail-boosts-capacity-and-the-economy-in-drive-to-cut-crime)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14764389/teenage-petty-criminal-vicious-killer-wokest-prison.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[6]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leicestershire-66056833), [[7]](https://www.itv.com/news/central/2023-06-30/hmp-fosse-way-opens-as-resettlement-prison-in-leicester)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14764389/teenage-petty-criminal-vicious-killer-wokest-prison.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.serco.com/uk/media-and-news/2023/serco-run-hmp-fosse-way-officially-opens), [[4]](https://www.serco.com/uk/sector-expertise/justice/hmp-fosse-way)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14764389/teenage-petty-criminal-vicious-killer-wokest-prison.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.serco.com/uk/media-and-news/2023/serco-run-hmp-fosse-way-officially-opens), [[3]](https://www.serco.com/uk/sector-expertise/justice/hmp-fosse-way/regime-information)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14764389/teenage-petty-criminal-vicious-killer-wokest-prison.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.serco.com/uk/media-and-news/2023/serco-run-hmp-fosse-way-officially-opens)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14764389/teenage-petty-criminal-vicious-killer-wokest-prison.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.serco.com/uk/media-and-news/2023/serco-run-hmp-fosse-way-officially-opens> - Serco, the international provider of services to governments, announced the official opening of HMP Fosse Way, Britain's latest 'smart' prison, on 30 June 2023. The prison, located near Leicester, is a Category C resettlement facility designed to house up to 1,715 prisoners. It focuses on rehabilitation with an emphasis on safety, security, and decency, offering a range of integrated services aimed at reducing re-offending and preparing prisoners for release and reintegration into the community. The facility features smart design elements, including ultra-secure, bar-less windows to prevent the smuggling of illegal items into the prison.
3. <https://www.serco.com/uk/sector-expertise/justice/hmp-fosse-way/regime-information> - HMP Fosse Way offers a comprehensive regime designed to equip prisoners with skills and qualifications to aid their reintegration into society. The facility includes 24 light and heavy workshops and eight classrooms, providing activities such as barbering, woodwork, construction, lighting, waste management, bike repair, painting and decorating, digital and business skills, Barista Academy, music production, and a Resettlement Hub. The prison collaborates with various partners, including commercial, voluntary, community, and social enterprise organisations, as well as Milton Keynes College, to deliver these programmes.
4. <https://www.serco.com/uk/sector-expertise/justice/hmp-fosse-way> - HMP Fosse Way, a Category C resettlement prison in Leicester, opened in mid-2023, housing around 1,700 prisoners. Operated by Serco, the prison focuses on rehabilitation through education, training, and employment opportunities. It offers over 600 permanent job roles across various sectors, including prisoner officer positions, healthcare, education, psychology, and administration. The facility is designed to reduce re-offending rates through innovative programmes and initiatives, providing a secure and conducive environment for inmates to prepare for reintegration into society.
5. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-jail-boosts-capacity-and-the-economy-in-drive-to-cut-crime> - The UK government officially opened HMP Fosse Way on 30 June 2023, marking a significant milestone in its £4 billion prison-building programme aimed at creating 20,000 new jail places. The Category C resettlement prison, located in Leicester, is designed to house 1,715 inmates and focuses on rehabilitation by offering industry training to address labour shortages upon release. The facility features 24 workshops and numerous classrooms, providing skills such as construction vehicle operation, glass manufacturing, and concrete component production. The design includes smart technology to enhance security and prevent contraband smuggling.
6. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leicestershire-66056833> - The BBC reported on the opening of HMP Fosse Way, a new Category C prison in Leicestershire, as part of the UK government's pledge to create 20,000 new jail places. The £286 million facility replaces the former HMP Glen Parva and houses 1,715 inmates. The prison offers industry training to help inmates find work upon release, featuring 24 workshops and numerous classrooms. The design includes X-shaped blocks with wider, shorter corridors and ultra-secure, bar-less windows to enhance security and prevent contraband smuggling.
7. <https://www.itv.com/news/central/2023-06-30/hmp-fosse-way-opens-as-resettlement-prison-in-leicester> - ITV News Central covered the opening of HMP Fosse Way, Britain's newest male prison in Leicester, on 30 June 2023. The resettlement prison aims to encourage prisoners to learn new skills and gain qualifications before returning to the community. It houses nearly 2,000 prisoners who participate in daily workshops and classes, with a focus on reducing reoffending. The Ministry of Justice highlighted the prison as the greenest ever constructed in the UK, utilising greener fuels, renewable energy, and electric construction machinery.