We are writing jointly, as ministers with responsibility for the health and wellbeing of those in contact with the criminal justice system (CJS), to highlight some important developments underway to improve health and justice outcomes for offenders.

As you will be aware, many of those in contact with the criminal justice system have complex health and social care needs. Our respective departments are clear that we need to work together to address these health inequalities, not only because we have a responsibility to the often vulnerable people in our care, but also in the wider interests of society – addressing health needs can support rehabilitation and reduce reoffending, which brings benefits to us all in terms of reduced costs to the public purse and fewer victims of crime.

We therefore wanted to draw your attention to a number of recent developments in the health and justice space, as a key stakeholder with an interest in this area:

Health and Justice Plan

Given the complex health and social care needs mentioned above, the Health Secretary and Justice Secretary have committed to jointly developing a Health and Justice Plan, to be published in Autumn 2019. The Plan will set out a person-centred approach to how we will specifically address the needs of offenders, breaking down silos and working in partnership to drive improvements right along the criminal justice pathway. The Plan will build on the commitments in NHS England & NHS Improvement’s (NHSE/I) Long Term Plan to look at key areas which we know to be challenging in terms of addressing health and social care needs.
We will be working with partners from across the health and criminal justice system in order to develop this Plan including NHSE/I, HM Prison and Probation Service, the Home Office, and the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government. We will also be engaging with key external stakeholders to ensure we learn from their expertise and experience.

The Plan will explore a range of ways in which we can improve the health and justice pathway, for example via the use of technology. In that spirit, we are also unveiling various health technology pilots and expanding our programme of work around community sentence treatment requirements (CSTRs), where five existing testbed sites have so far had positive results.

**Health Technology Pilots**
Where custody is necessary, we want to ensure that prisoners have access to effective and equivalent healthcare to that which they may expect within the community. Technological innovations are being used to benefit patients in the community in many ways, and we need to take advantage of these developments in the prison setting too, where appropriate and feasible.

For example, we know that there are many demands on both prison staff and healthcare teams in prisons, and we are therefore looking at how we might be able to alleviate some of this pressure – one exciting development is a new robotic medication dispensing unit being trialled at HMP Isle of Wight, which provides greater flexibility for staff to escort prisoners to collect medication at a convenient time.

Technology can also help improve health and safety outcomes, and allow for increased access to services – as demonstrated by two models of virtual healthcare (video consultations) being trialled by prison healthcare providers in West Yorkshire and the West Midlands.

**CSTR Programme Expansion**
It is essential that those coming into contact with the CJS get the right help, in the right setting, at the right time – both in terms of efficacy and efficiency. A key aspect of this is ensuring a range of sentencing options are available to sentencers, including effective community sentence options to divert vulnerable people away from custody as appropriate (thereby also reducing the use of short term custodial sentences, which generally do not allow sufficient time for someone to engage with rehabilitative interventions).

We are therefore pleased to inform you that following the commitment by NHSE/I in their Long Term Plan, we are expanding our programme of work to support the increased use of community treatment requirements as part of a Community or Suspended Sentence Order.

CSTRs are comprised of Mental Health Treatment Requirements (MHTRs), Drug Rehabilitation Requirement (DRRs) and Alcohol Treatment Requirement (ATRs). The programme focuses on reducing reoffending by addressing the health and social care needs of offenders which may be driving offending behaviour.

The CSTR process evaluation findings are now available (www.gov.uk/guidance/healthcare-for-offenders). This has shown encouraging progress in the five existing testbed sites (Milton Keynes, Northamptonshire, Plymouth, Birmingham & Solihull, and Sefton), with over 440 CSTRs ordered during the testing period and strong partnerships identified as a key aspect of the programme’s success. We are therefore looking to extend this programme further to include Bolton, Salford and Trafford in Greater Manchester, and six boroughs in South East London.
We hope you will agree that the above initiatives are important steps in ensuring an effective and smart justice system that addresses the health needs of offenders in order to reduce reoffending and protect the public. We look forward to updating you further as these initiatives progress.

EDWARD ARGAR MP

JACKIE DOYLE-PRICE MP