



Justice Committee

House of Commons London SW1A 0AA
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Rt Hon David Gauke MP
Secretary of State for Justice
Ministry of Justice
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26 June 2019

Prison Population 2022: planning for the future

The current crisis in our prison system requires a clear plan of action to deal with the many challenges our prisons are currently facing. The Government's Response to our Report 'Prison Population 2022' does not give the Committee confidence that such a plan exists.

As you reflected in your letter dated 24 May 2019, our Report draws out some of the critical challenges the Government needs to overcome to deliver an effective prison service, but the Government's Response repeats a number of initiatives that have already been announced or implemented with little detail on the Government's future plans for the prison system.

The Committee very much welcomes the Government's agreement with the issues raised in our report, in particular that there is a strong case to implement a presumption against sentences of six months or less. However, the Response simply says that the Government is exploring options and we would welcome more detail than this.

You will be aware that today marks the one year anniversary of the publication of the Ministry's Female Offender Strategy. The Committee would be grateful for an update on progress implementing the strategy.

I attach as an appendix to this letter a number of questions relating to the Government's Response that I would be grateful if you could respond to.

Bob Neill MP
Chair
Justice Committee



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Appendix

1. The Government's Response makes reference to a series of pilots of new initiatives. Recommendation 4 asks the Ministry to set out how it intends to replicate those pilots that prove effective. The Government's Response notes that the outcome of pilots will be taken into consideration during allocation decisions. The Committee would welcome more detail on how pilots are evaluated and would be grateful if a list of all pilots being undertaken across the prison estate could be provided.
2. Recommendation 8 suggested that the Reducing Reoffending Group should commission a systematic review of cross-departmental activity to reduce crime, or that an independent commission should be set up to consult on a sustainable approach to prison and crime reduction up until 2030. The Committee would welcome a clear response to this recommendation, as well as further information on what consultation the Ministry is undertaking in relation to its Justice 2030 project.
3. Recommendation 14 of the Committee's Report recommended increased resources for the Sentencing Council to conduct research. The Government's Response notes the recent Tailored Review of the Council, but does not deal specifically with the case for extra resources for additional research. The Committee would be grateful if the Government's position in relation to this point could be clarified, as well as further information as to how exactly the Ministry will work with the Sentencing Council to review opportunities for improving the evidence base on sentencing practice and trends.
4. Recommendation 21 talked about high turnover of staff and how prison officers are trained to deal with the challenge of managing complex prisoners. The Committee welcomes the Government's Response, but would like further information on who sits on the HMPPS Retention Board and what action it is taking. The Government Response also talks about improving the diversity of prison officers and that the Ministry is implementing action plans in relation to this. More information on what actions are being implemented as part of those action plans would be helpful.
5. Recommendation 24 requested the Ministry update the Committee on which prisons are able to operate their stated regime six months after the Committee's Report was published. The Government's Response states that further data on regimes will be published as part of HMPPS's performance framework from 2020-21. The Committee would like further details on which prisons are not currently able to operate their stated regime and information on what steps are being taken to make improvements at prisons where the stated regime is not operating as expected. If the Ministry does not currently hold this information the Committee would like to understand why that is the case.



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6. Recommendation 25 recommended that prisons are monitored on their capacity to meet the needs of prisoners. The Response says the Ministry is developing plans to deliver against identified needs for all prisons, but does not provide information on how prisons are monitored on their capacity to meet the identified needs of prisoners. The Committee would like further information on how rehabilitative strategies are developed in individual prisons, what information these are based on and how they are monitored.
7. Recommendation 29 suggested that the Ministry consult on legislative solutions to both release and recall of IPP prisoners. The Response noted the Committee's support for legislating in this area. Could the Government clarify its position in relation to looking at legislative solutions for the release and recall of IPP prisoners?
8. In response to recommendation 31 asking the Ministry to clarify how the new Kaizen programme is being evaluated, the Ministry stated that an internal assessment was due to be completed by the end of 2019 to aid the design of future evaluations. The Committee would welcome a commitment from the Government to provide an update on this, as well as any evaluation of Horizon by the end of 2019. The Committee would also like further information on what role trainee psychologists play in running treatment programmes.
9. Recommendations 34 asks the Ministry to develop a property costed long-term estates strategy. The Committee would welcome clarification as to when such a strategy will be published.
10. The Government's Response to recommendation 41 agrees there is a strong case for abolishing short prison sentences and says the Government is current 'exploring options'. The Committee would like to see more detail on what those options are and a timeframe under which the Government will be taking this forward.