



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Andy Slaughter MP
Chair, Justice Select Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

15th November 2024

Dear Andy,

INQUIRY INTO THE PRISON OPERATIONAL WORKFORCE

As the new Minister of State responsible for prisons, probation and reducing reoffending, I am writing to you in response to the previous Committee's report into the prison operational workforce and the correspondence from your predecessor to the Department prior to the General Election.

Although a full report was not published, your predecessor's letter outlined some of the Committee's key findings. I note the work that has been done, and I welcome the Committee's focus on the prison operational workforce.

I am sure you will agree that those working in prisons are amongst our finest public servants and that, despite the efforts of hard-working staff, there have been significant challenges facing the system.

We know that sufficient and skilled frontline staffing is fundamental to delivering safe, secure, and rehabilitative prison regimes. Since the inquiry was launched, the national prison staffing position has changed substantially. HMPPS is currently above its Target Staffing Figure for Band 3-5 prison officers nationally – however, challenges remain in some areas of the country, and we have high numbers of new, inexperienced colleagues. Whilst we can expect to see some natural fluctuations to staffing levels, I am committed to ensuring prisons are sufficiently resourced and that we retain and build levels of experience, which are fundamental to delivering quality outcomes in prisons.

Prior to taking up my ministerial post, I conducted a review into the learning offer and delivery model for foundation training for prison officers and I hope that I can use this knowledge to improve the working experience of our staff. I would be happy to provide my support to the Committee, should the new membership require further information and updates on the operational prison workforce, and my officials are willing to keep the committee updated on upcoming workforce-related publications.

I hope that together we can raise awareness of the vitally important role that colleagues in prisons play in public life. I look forward to updating the Committee on my wider portfolio on 19 November.

Lord Timpson
Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending