

Ruth Jones MP
Chair of the Welsh Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

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7 January 2025

Dear Ruth,

WELSH AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Thank you for your letter of 16 December 2024 regarding the recent Welsh Affairs Committee evidence session.

In regards to data, I absolutely recognise the importance of data availability and making sure data is of a high quality. The Ministry of Justice collects the data that is needed to support evidence-based policy making and the effective operation of prisons and the wider criminal justice system in Wales. The Ministry of Justice also publishes disaggregated data, as far as is possible, to ensure a transparent justice system, as this is in the public interest.

Ian Barrow, the Executive Director for HMPPS in Wales, and his team are in contact with Dr Robert Jones and the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and Social Justice, Jane Hutt on this topic given that there is a wealth of data already published on the justice system and is available at individual prison level and by probation region in both England and Wales. Most prosecution, conviction and sentencing data is also collected and published by police force area to allow breakdowns for Wales. In addition, for prisons and probation, all headline data on prison population, first receptions, releases, prison assaults, probation, employment, accommodation and safety in custody is available by prison or probation region.

I and my ministerial colleagues continue to engage with ministers in the Welsh Government to help ensure we deliver justice in a way that best serves the people of Wales and my officials are engaging with Welsh Government officials on justice delivery, including seeking clarity on any priority gaps in Welsh data which we can explore addressing, if feasible.



Lord Timpson
Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending



Welsh Affairs Committee

Monday, 16 December 2024

Lord Timpson OBE DL
Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Re-offending
Ministry of Justice

Dear Lord Timpson,

Thank you for appearing before the Welsh Affairs Committee in relation to the Committee's scrutiny of the management, governance and culture of HMP Parc.

It was reassuring to hear how seriously you and your colleagues are taking this issue, and I am grateful for the updates you provided around plans to expand Parc's capacity as part of the ten-year prison capacity strategy, and to run a pilot across certain prisons in England and Wales of new vape models that are better protected against drug use.

On the first point, I would ask that you continue to monitor progress at Parc before committing to increasing capacity at the prison. On the second, I would appreciate if you could inform my Committee of any findings from the vape pilot scheme.

Finally, during the evidence session I noted my disappointment with your Department's recent decision to refuse the Freedom of Information (FOI) requests regarding Wales-only (disaggregated) justice data submitted by Dr Rob Jones of the Wales Governance Centre.

As I explained in the session, this data has been incredibly valuable in informing the work of my Committee, as well as its previous iterations, as much of the data in question is not routinely published publicly, hence Dr Jones' FOI requests.

I recognise that responding to such a high volume of requests will require significant resource from your Department, however, I would refer you to the comments of HMPPS Wales' Executive Director, Ian Barrow, who noted the importance of this data for the work of HMPPS.

Given that a previous iteration of this Committee explicitly called on your Department in 2019 to work with Dr Jones to produce a schedule for the publication of Wales-specific justice data, I am disappointed by both the outcome of your decision, and the lack of clarity regarding the reasons behind it.



Welsh Affairs Committee

Please could you outline the reasons behind this decision, and, if you do not intend to change this decision, could you outline an alternative means of my Committee being provided with this important data.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth Jones MP
Chair of the Welsh Affairs Committee