



## HM INSPECTORATE OF PRISONS

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**HM Chief Inspector of Prisons**  
**CHARLIE TAYLOR**

Date: 10 June 2025

Ruth Jones MP  
Chair, Welsh Affairs Committee  
House of Commons  
Palace of Westminster  
London  
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Dear Ms. Jones,

### **Prisons, probation and rehabilitation in Wales inquiry**

Thank you for your letter, dated 28 May 2025. It was good to speak with the Committee last month and I look forward to reading the Committee's findings in due course. In the meantime, I hope the below information is useful to you and your colleagues.

#### **1. How satisfied are you with the ability for prisoners to access services using the Welsh language, whether serving sentences in England or Wales?**

In terms of prisoners accessing services using the Welsh language, it is a mixed picture. We found excellent Welsh language provision at HMP Parc, where a full-time Welsh language support worker championed the language through online radio tutorials and one-to-one engagement with other Welsh-speaking staff and prisoners. Most documents (such as notices, religious texts and adjudications) were available in Welsh, there was a Welsh language section in the library, induction activity was available in Welsh and Novus Gower were developing the use of Welsh in the classrooms. Inspectors also noted good promotion of the Welsh language at HMP

Swansea, with prisoners able to access key services in Welsh. Signs were printed in Welsh and English and many of the key compacts prisoners were asked to read and sign on arrival were provided in Welsh. However, at HMP Berwyn we found that insufficient attention had been given to Welsh speaking prisoners, for example none of the POMS were able to work with Welsh-speakers. At HMP Styal despite there being approximately 30 Welsh prisoners at the time of inspection, little information was found in the Welsh language. These establishments would benefit from more focused attention in this area.

**2. My committee has been told that there is little consistency in the way HMIP reports on Welsh language provision in prisons in Wales. Would you be willing to work with the Welsh Language Commissioner to design a uniform and consistent survey for Welsh speaking prisoners, including questions specifically designed to gather information about the quality and availability of Welsh language services at the prison?**

HMI Prisons expects prisons to make every effort to ensure they can communicate effectively with all prisoners, including those who do not speak English. This is something that we look at in all our inspections.

HMI Prisons is committed to the Welsh language, with further information set out on our website [Our Welsh language commitment – HM Inspectorate of Prisons](#).

In terms of our survey, our prisoner survey, instruction slip, and posters are all available in Welsh. The staff survey and explanatory e-mail are also produced and available in Welsh. Whilst our questionnaire does not include specific questions about Welsh language provision, inspectors will still examine this area drawing on a range of other evidence sources, including but not limited to observation and documentation. Inspectors may also use responses to other survey questions to explore whether positive or negative responses may be down to Welsh language provision, for example if prisoners report either particularly favourably or negatively to our questions about reading and writing and library provision.

I am supportive of efforts to increase the focus on Welsh language within prisons. However, an additional bespoke survey to gather information about Welsh language services at establishments and help to drive improvement is something I suggest the Welsh Language Commissioner works directly with the prison service to develop. We would welcome a discussion with the Welsh Language Commissioner about the results. During inspection, we would then report on the outcomes that we find for Welsh speaking prisoners, as is the case currently.

**3. What are the main physical infrastructure challenges facing the Welsh prison estate, and how do these compare with the estate in England?**

Many of the issues affecting the Welsh prison estate are similar to those impacting the English estate, with reception prisons in particular grappling with high levels of overcrowding. By way of an overview:

- **HMP Parc:** inspectors did not highlight specific concerns about living conditions, though issues with litter around the jail were noted. There were however issues with the windows at Parc which had contributed to illicit drugs becoming widely available. Installation of new windows that would restrict trafficking via drones had started only recently and facilities for enhanced gate security were still not in place.
- **HMP Berwyn:** living conditions were generally good and it was positive that cells had internal showers, though some showed evidence of wear and tear with heavily stained toilets and damage to windows. Weaknesses in physical security had been addressed, including the replacement of recently damaged security netting and prompt replacement of windows that had been intentionally damaged, which reduced the risk of drone ingress.
- **HMP Cardiff:** nearly two-thirds of the population lived in overcrowded conditions and many cells had inadequate screening around toilets. However, leaders had generally done well to maintain a clean and decent environment.
- **HMP Swansea:** most prisoners lived in overcrowded cells, but again leaders had prioritised them being clean and well equipped.
- **HMP Usk & Prescoed:** in our last published inspection (we have since re-visited, but the report is not yet in the public domain) prisoners were very positive about conditions and the external areas were impressive. Some cells however were overcrowded.

#### 4. Aside from vital fire safety improvement works, what maintenance works should prison governors in Wales prioritise?

It is important that governors prioritise vital fire safety improvement works. How other work is prioritised is primarily for HMPPS to determine, though repairs that are left unaddressed and which directly impact safety and security ought to be of particular concern. For example, at HMP Parc, until the replacement of cell windows is complete the ingress of drones is unlikely to be sufficiently restricted. It was clear just how much of a destabilising effect this was having on the prison - the proportion of randomly selected prisoners testing positive for drug use at Parc was high, at 31% at our last inspection. In our survey, 57% of respondents said that it was easy to get illicit drugs in the prison.



**CHARLIE TAYLOR**