



Public Accounts Committee

Amy Rees
Permanent Secretary,
Ministry of Justice
102 Petty France
Westminster London, SW1H 9AJ
By email

30 June 2025

Follow up on responses to the Committee's reports on Crown Court backlogs and Prison estate capacity

Dear Permanent Secretary,

Thank you for providing evidence to the Committee's inquiry on Monday 23 June in relation to Improving family court services for children. My Committee will consider all the evidence received and produce a report in due course.

Due to pressure of time, the Committee was not able to include questions following up on the responses to our reports on Crown Court backlogs and Prison Estate capacity published earlier this year. As I have said in previous correspondence to all permanent secretaries, the PAC will be taking a thorough approach to assessing the quality of responses from government departments to our recommendations and following up when we feel that more information is needed or responses do not properly address the recommendations made. I would therefore ask that you provide the Committee with a response in writing to the following questions.

Crown Court backlogs

During the session I asked about the progress of Sir Brian Leveson's review of the criminal courts, and the publication schedule. Thank you for confirming that the report will be published in the two to three weeks following the session. Please could you write with further information on the actions you are taking to ensure swift implementation once the review has concluded?

Prison Estate Capacity

You disagreed with the Committee's **recommendation 3a** that MoJ should produce a business case setting out steps to address the prison estate maintenance backlog much more rapidly, including any extra resources that would be required and its progress on re-tendering contracts for maintenance projects held by the construction firm ISG. In your response to the Committee, you said that future investment decisions and corresponding business cases would depend on the outcome of the ongoing Spending Review round. Now that the Spending Review announcement has taken place, please could you write to confirm:



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- Did MoJ submit plans through the Spending Review process to address the maintenance backlog more rapidly?
 - If so, what did you propose?
 - What is the current status of maintenance contracts previously held by ISG?

In response to **recommendation 4** of our report, that MoJ should set out how it will estimate the costs to the Criminal Justice System caused by acute prison capacity pressures, in order to strengthen its strategic case for longer term planning and investment, you said that estimated costs through internal forecasting and modelling processes, including the additional costs as a result of the acute issues in responding to prison capacity. Please provide the Committee with further detail on:

- The main drivers of additional costs caused by prison capacity pressures
- How much these additional costs have been in total.

You disagreed with the Committee's **recommendation 5a** which concerned the safety and security of prisons. The recommendation related to the risk assessments for the prisoner overall and not only health assessments. Please could you therefore provide further information in relation to the following points:

- Why is HMPPS not able to evaluate the impact of prison capacity pressures on the completeness of risk assessments for new prisoners, including working with NHS England and NHS Wales where appropriate?
- What action is HMPPS taking to evaluate the impact of prison capacity pressures on access to prison services and purposeful activity at a system-wide level?

Please could you provide the information requested by **11 July**. The Committee publishes formal correspondence it receives. Please indicate clearly in your response if you are providing any information in confidence, and if you expect the information to be publishable at a later date. I am copying this letter to the Comptroller and Auditor General and to the Treasury Officer of Accounts.

Yours Sincerely

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP
Chair of the Committee of Public Accounts