



Ministry
of Justice

Jake Richards MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary
of State for Justice

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

MoJ ref: 131358

29 January 2026

Dear Andy,

2025 ANNUAL STATEMENT ON PRISON CAPACITY

I am writing to share with you the 2025 Annual Statement on Prison Capacity, which will be laid before Parliament today and I will be providing an update to the House.

This is the second annual statement published as part of the Government's commitment to improving transparency and accountability across the criminal justice system. It provides updated projections for prison population demand, the latest prison capacity supply forecasts, and key information on staffing levels and probation capacity.

As the Statement sets out, the Government inherited a prison system on the brink of collapse. At one point in 2024, fewer than 100 places remained in the adult male estate. Had prisons overflowed, courts would have been forced to halt trials and the police would have been unable to make arrests, placing public safety at risk.

Since taking office, we have acted decisively. We published the 10-Year Prison Capacity Strategy in December 2024 setting out plans for the largest expansion of the estate since the Victorian era. We committed up to £7 billion between 2024/25 and 2029/30 to deliver 14,000 new prison places by 2031. Over 2,900 places have already been delivered, with around 5,000 more currently under construction, including the new 1,700-place HMP Welland Oaks, due to open in 2029. Reforms introduced through the Sentencing Act 2026, including a presumption to suspend short custodial sentences, an earned progression model, and strengthened community-based alternatives, are expected to reduce the prison population by around 7,500 places by 2028, placing the system on a more sustainable footing.

The Statement also details progress on strengthening prison staffing and rebuilding the Probation Service, both of which are central to the safe and effective operation of the criminal justice system. We are investing up to £700 million in probation and community services by 2028/29 and driving recruitment and digital transformation to free up capacity and improve performance.

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The Sentencing Act 2026 now places a statutory duty on future Governments to publish an annual statement on prison capacity, ensuring decisions remain evidence-based for years to come.

These steps, alongside others, reflect our commitment to building a more resilient, transparent, and forward-looking criminal justice system.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jake Richards', with a stylized flourish at the end.

JAKE RICHARDS MP

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