

End to Friday releases to cut crime and make streets safer

- new move to significantly reduce Friday releases from jail
- plans to cut crime by ending race against clock to secure housing and job support before weekend
- part of sweeping reforms to reduce reoffending and protect the public, including new £25 million prison security boost

As part of a package of prison reforms announced today (14 June 2022), which also includes a £25million investment in security measures, selected offenders' release will be brought forward by up to 48 hours to stop them lapsing immediately back towards a life of crime.

Figures show that around 1 in 3 offenders currently leave prison on a Friday – giving them just a few short hours to arrange a bed for the night, register with a GP and sign-up for job support to keep them on the straight and narrow before services shut down for the weekend.

This race against the clock can end up with ex-offenders spending their first days on the streets with little in the way of support – increasing the likelihood they will commit further crimes.

Under plans announced today by Prisons Minister Victoria Atkins, offenders with severe mental health needs or addiction problems, or who have mobility problems, likely to end up homeless or who have far to travel home, will be released on the Wednesday or Thursday before their Friday release date, with strict security screenings in place.

The move is expected to result in significantly fewer crimes each year – meaning fewer victims, less crime and safer streets.

Prisons Minister Victoria Atkins, said:

Changing the rules so that well-behaved offenders can be released a day or two ahead of the end of their sentence will ultimately result in fewer victims and less crime.

Making sure ex-offenders can get suitable housing and support ahead of the weekend means they are far more likely to stay on the straight and narrow – reducing reoffending and making our streets safer.

Campbell Robb, Nacro chief executive said:

For too long Friday releases have been setting people up to fail. Our campaign to end Friday releases was driven by the experience of

our staff and service users and we are pleased to see this change. It is vital this is there for everyone who needs it.

Now people will have vital extra time during the working week to secure housing, register with probation and access health services. This will help people have the best chance at their second chance.

The announcement is part of a package of sweeping reforms outlined in the government's response to the public consultation on its Prisons Strategy White Paper, published in December last year.

Ministers have also detailed a new £25 million investment in prison security that will step up the war against mobile phones behind bars by equipping front-line staff with upgraded, cutting-edge phone detectors.

The cash will also be used to significantly increase the number of special machines that can detect microscopic smears of illegal substances such as spice on prisoners' mail, stopping dangerous drugs from getting onto wings and wreaking havoc.

The latest figures show the government's previous £100 million investment in jail security has thwarted over 20,000 plots to smuggle drugs, phones and weapons into prisons over the past 2 years.

Notes to editors

- Early release would also apply to prisoners due to be released before a bank holiday
- The ultimate decision will be down to Governors, who will have the discretion to agree to an earlier release date.
- This requires legislation when Parliamentary time allows.