

First prisons get tough new security measures

- Seven prisons get strengthened gate security
- Innovative technology will help find more illicit items than ever before
- Part of government's £100 million prison security package

Seven jails are set to receive innovative new equipment to tackle the smuggling of drugs, phones and weapons behind bars, as efforts to make our prisons safer gather pace.

Berwyn, Bristol, Hewell, Lancaster Farms, Leeds, Liverpool and Norwich jails are the first to benefit from the Government's recently announced £100 million investment in prison security – with the measures set to be introduced in other prisons across the estate.

Tough airport-style security, including X-ray baggage and metal detection equipment, will step-up searching of visitors and staff on entry to jails, enforced by specially-trained officers. This is part of a wider package of measures including X-ray body scanners for offenders and drug-detection kits to identify and deter attempts to smuggle narcotics, such as Spice, through prisoner mail.

Alongside strengthening security at the prison gate and reception, the £100 million investment includes a new digital forensics facility, expanded digital investigations team and phone-blocking technology to clampdown on the organised crime behind bars that drives violence and self-harm.

Prisons Minister, Lucy Frazer QC MP said:

The gate and reception are key areas of vulnerability to smuggling and more robust searching of staff, visitors and prisoners will help reduce the flow of drugs, phones and weapons.

This game-changing package of equipment is part of the Government's new £2.75bn investment to modernise and maintain our prisons, create 10,000 additional places, and crack down on crime behind bars.

All of these elements are crucial as we create a system that can rehabilitate, cut reoffending and ultimately make our communities safer.

The chosen prisons have been prioritised as they face significant security challenges and the new measures – set to be in place by spring 2020 – will make a significant difference to the stability of each jail.

The specialist gate security is being funded from the government's previously

announced £2.75 billion package to transform the prison estate. This includes:

- £100 million to bolster prison security – with the new enhanced gate security and digital forensics facility, alongside tough airport-style security and phone-blocking technology to clamp down on violence, self-harm and crime behind bars.
- £2.5 billion to provide 10,000 additional prison places and create modern, efficient jails that rehabilitate offenders, reduce reoffending and keep the public safe.
- £156 million for pressing maintenance to create safe and decent conditions for offender rehabilitation.