

News story: Industrial action

September 2018: Rory Stewart statement



Prisons Minister Rory Stewart said:

Prison officers do vital and important work and we urge them to return to their duty stations, in line with their obligations to the law and the prison service.

It's irresponsible for the POA to encourage their members to take this unlawful action. We are deploying our contingency plans but, by not turning up for work, these prison officers are putting their fellow staff and inmates at risk.

Yesterday we doubled the prison sentence for anyone who assaults prison officers. We've also increased pay, provided tools such as body-worn cameras to increase security on the landings, and are investing £40 million to improve the estate and tackle the drugs problem which is fuelling much of the violence. And we've now got 3,500 new officers to help ease the burden.

We are taking the action that needs to be taken.

- [The Assaults on Emergency Workers Bill](#) received Royal Assent this week which will increase the maximum sentence for assaults against prison officers to double from six to 12 months in prison.
- We are rolling out body worn cameras, 'police-style' handcuffs and restraints, and trialling PAVA incapacitant spray to ensure prison officers have the tools they need to do the job safely.
- In July we announced a £30 million investment including £16 million to improve conditions for prisoners and staff and £7 million on new security measures, including airport-security style scanners, improved searching techniques and phone-blocking technology. This also includes £1 million on a digital tool which assesses information from various law enforcement databases to create a central 'risk rating' for each prisoner.
- Also in July we announced a £9 million investment to clamp down on drugs

supply and consumption at HMP Holme House, with a major emphasis on tackling addiction.

- In August we announced another [£10 million would be invested in 10 difficult prisons](#) to curb the flow of drugs and phones, while also improving conditions as those jails and improving leadership. This will tackle drug supply by enhancing physical security at the jails; with investment in drug-detection dogs, body scanners, and improved perimeter defences.
- We will seek an injunction to bring this action to an end.
- We absolutely refute the allegation that we did not follow all the normal procedures for informing the POA about the urgent Notification at HMP Bedford.

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