

News story: Justice Secretary visits frontline staff in Bristol delivering key prison and court reform work

Justice Secretary Elizabeth Truss today (3 February 2017) paid tribute to the vital work of staff across our justice system as she met with teams at HMP Bristol and the Bristol Civil and Family Justice Centre to hear about their experiences.

The visit comes after the Justice Secretary announced a major package of reforms to improve safety in prisons – including an additional £100 million to bolster frontline staff by 2,500 with almost £460,000 allocated to HMP Bristol. This is in addition to our £1 billion investment to improve access to justice and the experience for all court users, in particular vulnerable victims, witnesses and children.

HMP Bristol is already making improvements to safety and security thanks to over £400,000 funding for the prison. This includes extra money to roll out CCTV across the prison in order to deter violence, as well as introducing a number of interventions for emotional support such as anger management.

Today the Secretary of State sat down with the Governor and prison officers at HMP Bristol to hear first-hand the challenges they face and how the reforms and increased investment is helping.

Speaking after the visit, Elizabeth Truss said:

Our prisons need to be places of safety and reform and our dedicated frontline staff are vital to achieving this ambition.

The impressive work being done day in day out by the HMP Bristol officers I met today is too often unnoticed, but it is crucial to reducing reoffending and improving public safety. I will continue to listen to them and all prison staff as we deliver on our important reforms.

Later at Bristol Civil and Family Justice Centre Ms Truss met with senior judges and frontline staff to see some of the impressive work being delivered to digitise our courts and speed up the delivery of justice. This includes increasing the use of video links – cutting the need for time-pressed people to travel back and forth to court buildings – and developing plans for simple, online systems so civil disputes can be resolved more quickly.

The visit also follows urgent steps taken by Ministers to ban perpetrators of domestic abuse from cross-examining their victims within the family court system.

Elizabeth Truss said:

We have a world leading legal system but I am committed to modernising our courts to make the experience more straightforward for all users.

It is vital that justice is efficient and simple, and the impressive work being done by the dedicated court staff I met today shows how we can make the best use of technology and simplify processes to improve access to justice and the experience for all court users.