

News story: Prisons Minister visits new graduate recruits as prison officer recruitment reaches record high

The Minister has met with some of the participants from [Unlocked Graduates](#), a specialist prison officer recruitment programme, at the University of Suffolk in Ipswich, which is where their prison officer training starts.

His visit follows last week's announcement of a net increase in prison officer numbers of 868 since January, meaning the government is on track to recruit its target of 2,500 by 2018.

Those taking part in the Unlocked Graduate scheme at Suffolk spend time covering technical skills before going to prisons in London or the South East, where they will put their theory into action.

Prisons Minister Sam Gyimah said:

I was hugely impressed by the enthusiasm and dedication of the Unlocked Graduates. These new recruits can help bring fresh ideas to the prison service and together with our experienced staff, can really help to make a difference and turn our prisons into places of safety and reform.

I have always been clear that as well as punishing offenders, our prisons must become places of reform and rehabilitation. We must do all we can to give prisoners the best chance to turn their lives around. The Unlocked Graduates will play a crucial part in helping to deliver that vision.

The Unlocked Graduates programme provides applicants the chance to work alongside some of the most experienced prison officers, developing vital and diverse skills whilst completing a Master's degree. More than 600 top graduates and career changers applied for just 40 places through new independent charity Unlocked Graduates.

Natasha Porter, founder of Unlocked Graduates said:

We were delighted to welcome the Minister to our first ever Summer Institute. We are asking our participants to think from day one on their wings about what could be done differently in prisons.

At the same time, their Master's degree is designed to help them think about system level change so it is critical to have this

high-level support from the Ministry of Justice.

One of the new recruits, Laura, originally from Ipswich, applied to be an Unlocked Graduate after volunteering with an organisation that worked with people in police custody and those that were homeless. She said that this experience encouraged her to go into a career where she could have a great impact on people's lives.

The 21-year-old has just completed the programme and will be joining the front line prison staff along with the other new graduate recruits.

Laura said:

As part of my degree I volunteered at an organisation that involved working with those in police custody, those with housing issues and those who were homeless so this, alongside my studies, encouraged me to pursue a career where I could help people and make an impact in social issues.

It has been an intense first few weeks as I had just a month from handing in my dissertation to starting with Unlocked Grads but I'm really enjoying it.

Since publication of the White Paper:

- we are making a substantial investment in marketing and targeted recruitment to generate even more interest in these valuable roles
- we have increased our Prison Officer Entry Level Training (POELT) training capacity by more than 75% for this year and next
- starting pay for a National based Prison officer ranges from £20,751 to £23,052 for a 37 to 41 hour week and this increases to a maximum range of £23,122 to £25,685 for the same hours

Find out more about [Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Careers.](#)