

News story: Standards Coaching Team making strides in 10 prisons

- positive impact already felt across prisons hosting the teams
- part of wider £10 million strategy to reduce violence and drug use while improving decency at 10 of the most challenging prisons

Prisons Minister Rory Stewart has met specially-trained prison staff to congratulate them on their efforts to support officers in some of the country's most challenging jails.

The Minister spoke to members of the Standards Coaching Team (SCT) and the officers they are supporting about their work in the jails which are the focus of the 10 Prisons Project.

The project was launched last year to bring down violence in some of the most challenging jails, and as part of this SCT was created to provide advice and encouragement to officers in the 10 prisons.

At the event in Parliament he thanked members of SCT and the officers they are supporting for their energy and commitment to the 10 Prisons Project.

Following a two-week training course at the prison service training college at Newbold Revel, the teams have been working on a rotation around the 10 prisons.

Seven weeks in, the first group of prisons to be visited have seen encouraging results. With prison officers feeling more confident, relationships with offenders have improved and staff feel the environment on the wings is calmer and more stable.

There have also been physical improvements, with damaged furniture being replaced and cells equipped to a decent standard.

Prisons Minister Rory Stewart said:

The Standards Coaching Team is a fantastic innovation – putting training of the highest standard at the heart of healthy prisons. I am really impressed by these officers – drawn from across the country – and they are making a rapid visible difference in all the prisons they visit.

Prison Officer Craig said:

The two-week package at Newbold Revel has emphasised the importance of pointing staff in the right direction and being a presence to support them.

It's been a really positive experience with a massive impact, staff now have the confidence to challenge and positively engage with the prisoner population.

Governor Sara Pennington said:

It's been an important step in building the skills and confidence of both our new staff and those who have been in service for some time. They've helped drive up standards across all the wings to increase consistency.

The 10 Prisons Project has seen £10 million investment in some of the most challenging prisons to curb the flow of drugs and phones, while also improving conditions and leadership at those jails. The prisons will serve as models of excellence, with good practice to be spread across the prison estate.

The project is part of a multi-million-pound drive to improve security and safety. This includes £16 million to improve conditions for prisoners and staff and £7 million on new security measures, such as security scanners, improved searching techniques, phone-blocking technology and a financial crime unit to target the criminal kingpins operating in prisons.

This has come against a backdrop of rising prison officer numbers, with more than 4,700 additional officers now recruited since October 2016 and staffing levels at their highest since 2012.