

Press release: Birmingham prison action plan published as work continues at pace after 'step-in'

- 200 prisoners already moved out following unprecedented 'step-in'
- 32 extra experienced prison officers and additional senior staff already in post
- Cell refurbishment is ongoing and experienced estate managers continue to support urgent improvement to living conditions
- Dedicated Prison Service safety team training staff to better manage vulnerable offenders
- The 'step-in' at Birmingham will result in no additional cost to the taxpayer

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has [published detailed plans to improve standards](#) at HMP Birmingham which follow the unprecedented decision to take over running of the prison from G4S on 20 August, for at least the next six months.

The Prison Service placed a new experienced Governor, Paul Newton, in charge immediately and has also brought in 32 skilled prison officers and five new custodial managers (who oversee teams of officers) to provide support to colleagues and offenders and improve safety.

The 300-person reduction in HMP Birmingham's population which the MoJ committed to after 'step-in' is two-thirds complete and is expected to be finished by the end of September, with four local courts now diverting some of those convicted or on remand to other prisons. This reduction will allow the prison to empty and improve three wings in the Victorian section of the prison which are most in need of refurbishment.

Safety teams brought in by the Prison Service are working with all staff at HMP Birmingham to reduce self-harm and violence. They have developed a tailored safety plan which will be implemented by the end of September, and training is already underway with all staff to immediately improve the way vulnerable offenders are managed.

Two senior and experienced facilities management staff are working with the prison to drive urgent improvement in living conditions. They will support ongoing work to refurbish wings and cells, replace damaged furniture and improve cleanliness throughout the establishment.

The action plan published today is the formal response to HMIP's Urgent Notification – a system set up by this Government to allow the inspectorate to immediately flag serious concerns during an inspection.

Justice Secretary David Gauke said:

We acted decisively at HMP Birmingham by taking it over from G4S, just as we are addressing issues in the wider estate by investing heavily in more staff and measures to improve safety and security.

The Prison Service had been working with G4S for many months to drive up standards at Birmingham, but it became clear that they would not be able to make the necessary improvements alone.

That's why we took over the running of the prison, appointed a strong governor to turn it around, brought in extra staff and began improvements to the building itself.

This plan sets out in more detail exactly what we are doing to establish an effective regime, restore safety and decent living conditions, and allow staff to focus on rehabilitating offenders.

Other actions included in this initial plan include:

- The work that Governor Paul Newton has done with G4S to consider short-term workforce issues, effective management of workforce plans and training requirements. Together they have developed and introduced recruitment, training and mentoring strategies for all staff, including senior managers.
- The national drugs taskforce undertaking an assessment of what further action is required to tackle drug supply and reduce demand, and improve the treatment and recovery of those with misuse problems.
- A review of the Samaritans' Listener scheme to ensure vulnerable prisoners have swift access to support.
- New processes to ensure maintenance of cell call bells systems is undertaken on a regular basis and to improve cell bell response times.
- Improvements to training and work-related activities and to support prisoners on release.
- Two new physical education instructors brought in to improve the wellbeing of prisoners, with another due imminently.
- Read the [full action plan](#).
- The final inspection report for HMP Birmingham will be published by HM Chief Inspector later this year.