

Press release: Dangerous extremists to be separated from mainstream prison population

Dangerous extremists will be separated from the mainstream prison population and placed into specialist centres, under new rules published today (21 April 2017) by Prisons Minister Sam Gyimah.

Three separation centres are being created and will form part of the wider government strategy to tackle extremism in prisons, holding up to 28 of the most subversive offenders, preventing their influence over others.

An amendment to prison rules laid before Parliament today means prisoners can be placed in a separation centre if they are involved in planning terrorism or are considered to pose a risk to national security.

Those who are spreading views that might encourage or influence others to commit terrorism crimes, or anyone whose views are being used in a way which undermines good order and security in prisons, may also be placed in one of the centres.

The first centre will be up and running at HMP Frankland in the coming weeks, with 2 further units to follow at other establishments.

Prisons Minister Sam Gyimah said:

Any form of extremism must be defeated wherever it is found, and it is right that we separate those who pose the greatest risk in order to limit their influence over other prisoners.

These centres are a crucial part of our wider strategy to help tackle extremism in prisons and ensure the safety and security of both our prisons and the wider public.

A prisoner will be considered for one of the centres if their behaviour behind bars meets one of the criteria included in the new prison rule and the level of risk they present can only be managed through separation.

Once in a centre, they will be reviewed by experts every 3 months and will only be returned to the mainstream prison population if it is considered that the risk they present has reduced to a level that can be effectively managed there.

The introduction of the centres was one of the principal recommendations of a government-commissioned independent review into extremism in prisons. The vast majority of the recommendations are being implemented.

The government takes the threat of radicalisation and extremism in prisons extremely seriously and has built on the recommendations in the review to further boost efforts to tackle extremism.

The centres form part of the wider strategy to tackle extremism, which includes:

- The formation of a new directorate for Security, Order and Counter-Terrorism – responsible for monitoring and dealing with the evolving threat of extremism.
- A launch of a new unit that will analyse intelligence and advise prisons in England and Wales on how to deal with specific threats, as well as instruct and train prison and probation staff on how best to deter offenders from being lured into extremism.
- Extremist literature being banned from prisons and the removal of anyone from communal worship who is promoting dangerous views.
- A new training package to identify, report and combat extremism being rolled out to all prison officers and new pre-employment vetting check for chaplains and imams being introduced from February 2017.

Notes to Editors

- The government announced in August its response to a report into extremism in prisons plans 'to create specialist units within the high security estate to allow greater separation and specialised management of extremists who pose the highest risk to other prisoners'.
- In November the Ministry of Justice published the 'Prison Safety and Reform White Paper' setting out the steps it is taking to make prisons a place of safety and reform. The white paper explained that 'extremism is a danger to society and a threat to public safety'.
- For more information, contact the Ministry of Justice Press Office on 0203 334 3536.