

Press release: Government hits target of 2,500 new prison officers 7 months ahead of schedule

The government has passed its target to recruit an additional 2,500 prison officers by the end of 2018 7 months ahead of schedule, the Justice Secretary revealed today (22 April 2018).

As figures showed a net increase of 3,111 prison officers between October 2016 and March 2018, David Gauke said there would be no let up in the relentless recruitment drive despite the milestone being reached. Nearly 90 per cent of the 3,000 new recruits will be on the landings by the summer.

Continuing to boost staffing numbers is crucial as it will allow prisons to introduce a new model where prison officers spend more time both one-to-one and with small groups of prisoners. This approach is key to creating more constructive relationships between offenders and prison officers, reducing violence, improving stability and intensifying the focus on rehabilitation.

Justice Secretary David Gauke said:

Going beyond this important milestone so early is a real achievement. It means the vast majority of these prison officers will be working on the landings by the summer, and all of them will be in place by the end of the year. This will make a real difference to the safety and security of our prisons, ensuring they can fulfil their purpose – protecting the public, reducing reoffending and crucially, rehabilitating offenders.

But let me be clear – the recruitment drive continues and will continue until we reach required levels across the prison estate, with the same urgency that has secured this remarkable influx of new staff.

[Figures released today](#) show an additional 2,699 prison officers on landings or in Prison Officer Entry Level Training (POELT) since October 2016, while a further 255 are performing operational support roles pending the start of their training.

Dean Gardiner, acting Governor at HMP Pentonville, said:

Hitting this target is an important milestone for the prison service. The new staff here at HMP Pentonville have made a real difference to how the prison runs by building positive relationships with prisoners.

The boost in officer numbers has allowed us to deliver more and improve the rehabilitation offered to the offenders, which prepares them to turn away from crime upon release and prevents future victims of reoffending.

HMP Cardiff's Governor Danny Khan said:

Working in prisons is obviously challenging, but our prison officers are clear their job is about rehabilitating offenders, helping them secure employment upon release and making society safer.

It's essential we recruit positive prison officers who aren't afraid to push this agenda.

Officer Shrubsole, a neuroscience graduate, has just completed his training and started work at HMP Pentonville. The 25-year-old said:

I joined because I wanted a job where I could work with people and try to help rehabilitate them. I was also attracted to the idea that I could progress in this role in the future. I am really proud to work in the prison service – you're working with such an important part of society.

Officer Zefi, aged 27, has completed 6 months as a prison officer at HMP Featherstone. He said:

I joined the service so that I could help rehabilitate people.

In the past 6 months, I feel that I have already made a difference which is really rewarding.

The work is varied – one day I could be escorting people to courts and the next supporting someone who is distressed or needs support.

We are clear about the purposes prison serves: protection, punishment and rehabilitation. Our staffing drive is vital to ensuring prisons will not only be safer, more secure and more decent, but will support prisoners in turning their backs on crime for good.

Increasing staffing levels is part of the wider prison reform programme, with its relentless focus on getting the basics right – ensuring prisons are safe and decent, with a secure perimeter that prevents drugs and other contraband getting in.

And we are also cracking down on the serious and organised criminals operating their networks from behind bars, investing £14 million in tackling

this threat including in new intelligence and serious and organised crime teams.