

Press release: Increased security measures to give prison officers right tools for the job

- Investment of £2 million for 5,600 body-worn cameras.
- A further £1 million for the introduction of new 'police-style' handcuffs and restraints.
- Four prisons to trial the use of PAVA incapacitant spray to boost officer safety.
- Every prison officer in England and Wales now has access to body-worn cameras after 5,600 were rolled out as part of a security boost announced today by Prisons Minister Sam Gyimah.

With an investment of over £2million, the cameras will act as a visible deterrent against violence and will assist in prosecutions against those who commit crimes in jails.

A further £1million is being invested in new 'police-style' handcuffs and restraints, whilst four prisons will also trial the use of PAVA incapacitant spray, giving prison officers an additional tool when dealing with violent offenders.

The package forms part of a commitment by the Government to ensure prison officers have the right resources for the job and that strong evidence is available for use against those who are violent towards them.

Prisons Minister Sam Gyimah said:

I am absolutely determined to tackle head-on the issues that undermine the safety and security of our prisons and to ensure our dedicated officers have the tools they need to do the job.

That is why we have introduced a range of measures to boost security – bringing 300 sniffer dogs trained in detecting psychoactive substances and putting in place technology to block mobile phones.

This latest investment underlines our commitment to transform our prisons into places of safety and reform and should send a clear message to those intent on thwarting our efforts to make progress that we will do everything in our power to stop them.

Following successful trials in 22 establishments, officers at every prison across England & Wales now has access to a body-worn cameras. These devices are being used to record incidents, acting both as a deterrent and evidence

to aid prosecutions.

It follows the start of a rollout of body-worn cameras by the Metropolitan Police Service, which announced it would be issuing cameras to 22,000 frontline officers in October last year.

Together with the rollout of rigid bar handcuffs and restraints, these will provide prison officers the confidence they need to act swiftly and safely. The new restraints will reduce the need for staff to use physical holds to control aggressive prisoners, improving safety for both staff and prisoners.

In addition, four prisons are to trial the use of PAVA incapacitant spray. It will mean that regular, establishment-based officers will for the first time have the power to deploy PAVA when a prisoner is armed with a weapon and it is deemed the most appropriate way to subdue the offender without putting themselves at risk of serious injury.

Governors at priority prisons have already been given an additional £10 million to help promote safety and tackle the influx of violence. This funding has ramped up security measures by providing additional 24-hour patrol dogs, CCTV cameras, mobile phone detection technology, and metal detectors.

This is in addition to boosting staff numbers on the front line, and we have already brought in 1,290 extra officers – passing the halfway point of our target of 2,500. The Government is also backing a bill to increase sentences for those who attack emergency workers, including prison officers.

Notes to editors

- The four prisons that will trial PAVA are HMP Wealstun, HMP Risley, HMP Preston and HMP Hull
- Staff are currently being trained in how to deploy the spray
- Specialist National Tactical Response Group officers already have access to PAVA.