

Press release: Justice minister praises staff at Foston Hall near Sudbury

- Justice Minister Dr Phillip Lee thanks staff at Foston Hall prison for their 'vital work' in helping to deliver major prison reforms
- Part of the commitment to make prisons places of self-discipline, hard work and reform to reduce reoffending and keep the public safe
- Foston Hall has recently recruited 4 new officers, with 4 more currently in training
- The visit follows £100m investment in 2,500 extra officers across the prison estate

Justice Minister Dr Phillip Lee today visited Foston Hall women's prison in Derbyshire, where he met frontline staff to hear first-hand about the support they provide to vulnerable women in their care.

The minister sat down with governor Andrea Black and spoke to staff from various roles, to hear about the daily challenges they face supporting prisoners and how the wholesale reforms to the prison system will help to reduce reoffending and improve outcomes for women in custody.

Foston Hall has recently recruited 4 new officers with 4 more currently in training and due to begin work in the coming months. The prison continues to look for ambitious applicants from all backgrounds.

The visit comes as part of a tour of prisons, with the minister hearing from dedicated healthcare staff, who provide specialist support for some of the most vulnerable women, many of whom have suffered abuse and have mental health problems.

As a local resettlement prison, Foston Hall offers vocational training for prisoners in areas such as textiles, retail and horticultural studies – helping prepare them to lead a life without crime by providing the relevant skills for a career on release. Many of the staff at the prison are from the local area and have close links to the community and work hard to reintegrate released prisoners into the area by working closely with local support services.

Foston Hall also has a dedicated unit for vulnerable women, and staff at the prison have benefited from specialist trauma-informed training. This helps them develop a greater understanding of the behaviours that lead to offending – enhancing safety and security across the estate. Staff are also committed to maintaining family engagement and improving family ties for prisoners.

The government has been clear in its commitment to building on the essential reforms to the prison system which are already under way, including providing specialist training for prison officers and supporting both offenders and ex-

offenders in finding sustained employment and housing on release.

Justice Minister Dr Phillip Lee said:

Prison officers at Foston Hall do a challenging job and work with a range of vulnerable women who need intensive help and support.

I came here today to express my gratitude to the governor and her team for the vital work they are doing to support prisoners, which will help reduce reoffending, cut crime and lead to fewer victims.

We will continue to listen to them and all prison staff as we develop our strategy on female offenders and deliver on our important reforms to make prisons safe and cut reoffending.

The positive work from staff at Foston Hall represents the wholesale changes that are taking place across the prison system, following on from the launch of Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) earlier this year, which will give governors more control and flexibility in reforming offenders and supporting them on release.

The launch of HMPPS follows last year's White Paper on safety and reform, which announced 2,500 new prison officers and an additional £100 million investment across the estate, with new measures to get offenders off drugs and provide them with the education and skills they need to turn their backs on crime.

In addition to these wide-ranging reforms, we will be announcing our strategy for the way we manage female offenders later this year.

Notes to editors:

- This last year saw the highest level of new joiners (band 3-5 officers) since March 2010 and prison officer numbers have increased for the first time since March 2016.

The Ministry of Justice has:

- started targeted local recruitment initiatives at 30 sites so that governors can more easily recruit the people they need
- developed a new graduate scheme 'Unlocked' that will encourage people from a broader range of backgrounds to join the Service
- launched an armed forces to officers scheme that will support people to join the Prison Service after leaving the military
- introduced a pay increase for Band 3 Officers on Fair and Sustainable (F&S) terms at 31 difficult-to-recruit prisons
- prison officers have the opportunity to earn over £30,000 depending on location of prison and hours contract. Plus public sector pension and other benefits
- substantial investment in marketing and targeted recruitment to generate even more interest in these valuable roles

Visit <https://www.prisonandprobationjobs.gov.uk/> to find out more.