

Press release: Justice Secretary publishes plan to improve HMP Exeter

- immediate action on safety and living conditions
- greater resource from national teams to improve safety and reduce violence and self-harm
- living conditions improved with further refurbishments to take place
- commitment to further long-term measures as part of action plan

The Justice Secretary today (27 June 2018) published a strategy to drive up standards at HMP Exeter following an Urgent Notification by the prisons inspectorate. Ministers set up the Urgent Notification system last year to ensure that immediate action could be taken to rectify serious issues identified by inspectors.

A team of specialists, including former prison Governors and Senior Civil Servants from around the country, is working with the prison to transform its safety strategy and address the drivers of violence and self-harm.

Living conditions were immediately re-assessed and cells that were identified as not fit for purpose have been taken out of use for repairs. Faulty cell bells at the time of the inspection have already been identified and repaired – with new processes put in place to ensure swifter staff responses to them.

The prison is making particular improvements to support vulnerable prisoners in their first night and early days in custody and an updated safety strategy will be put in place by the end of July. This includes creating an additional constant supervision cell to closely monitor those assessed to be at an acute risk of suicide or self-harm.

The national drugs taskforce is also supporting a full analysis to identify what more can be done to tackle drugs entering the prison.

Justice Secretary David Gauke said:

We created the Urgent Notification process for HMIP to flag serious concerns early so that we can grip them quickly and start turning the prison around.

We are delivering swift improvements at Exeter while looking at how we raise and maintain standards in the long-term.

Safe and decent living conditions are basics we need to get right and we are now refreshing the prison's safety strategy, taking action to reduce violence and carrying out repairs. This will ensure that staff at Exeter can focus on getting prisoner's lives back on track.

The action plan published today also outlines:

- Extra money has been provided to the prison to address maintenance concerns, including replacing broken windows, repairing observation panels and repairing leaking toilets, sinks and privacy screens for toilets.
- Prisoner cells will be refurbished and receive new toilet seats, fittings and guard rails for beds.
- Key workers will be assigned to prisoners to help staff manage violent offenders and better understand the causes of violence.
- Improved measures to stem the flow of drugs into the prison.
- Additional managerial support to the prison Governor to deliver progress against recommendations made by inspectors.

The Secretary of State's [full action plan](#) can be found on GOV.UK. It also sets out how Exeter's progress over the coming year will be regularly reviewed.

The final inspection report for HMP Exeter will be published by HM Chief Inspector later this year.