

Press release: Justice Secretary publishes plans to stabilise Bedford prison

- reduction in the prison's population
- greater resource from safety experts to prevent violence
- additional security measures to stop the drugs fuelling assaults entering the prison

The Justice Secretary today (9 October 2018) published an action plan to stabilise HMP Bedford 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.

Senior experienced prison officers will be deployed to the landings from other establishments to reintroduce a stricter regime and mentor new members of staff. Extra training will reinforce these efforts, ensuring newer officers know the best way of resolving conflict, commanding the respect of prisoners and motivating them to attend work and education classes.

The Prison Service has transferred a further 56 offenders out of the prison, on top of the 20 moved out since May, to ease pressure on staff and allow the full refurbishment of one wing.

Experts from the national safety team, including experienced prison staff, are already in place to increase understanding of the root causes of violence and take action to prevent it.

More perimeter patrols, new windows with grilles and increased searches on staff will stem the flow of drugs entering the establishment, and staff will be working much closer with the police to disrupt the drugs trade into the prison. A programme of treatment and recovery for inmates with an existing drug dependency will also be developed.

Justice Secretary David Gauke said:

We placed Bedford into special measures in May before the inspection because we knew it was facing problems. Since then we've made efforts to alleviate these and today I'm outlining further work to improve conditions.

Additional experienced officers will be brought in, we've reduced the number of prisoners and are providing special training for newer members of staff – all of which will ensure order is restored

and maintained in the long-term.

I am confident that greater security will stem the flow of drugs, which is fuelling violence, and allow staff to properly focus on creating a culture of work and learning that will help turn prisoners' lives around.

The action plan published today also outlines:

- Extra managers for the Care and Separation Unit to improve processes and staff leadership so that the unit operates safely and properly.
- Extra training for officers on better supporting vulnerable prisoners and a review of early days support – a time when we know that prisoners can be particularly susceptible to self-harm and suicide.
- The prison will become a national pilot site for the Clean and Decent Project, which will see experts come in to the establishment to teach prisoners the best way of keeping their cells clean and tidy, reducing the prevalence of vermin and improving conditions.

The Secretary of State's full [action plan](#) also sets out how Bedford's progress will be regularly reviewed over the coming year.

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