

Press release: Ministry of Justice takes over running of HMP Birmingham

- “Step-in” process will stabilise prison, inject fresh leadership and bolster existing staff
- There will be no additional cost to the taxpayer and conditions at the prison are expected to quickly improve
- Forceful action follows intensive period of Ministry of Justice measures to compel improvements

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has today (20 August) taken over the running of HMP Birmingham for an initial six-month period at no additional cost to the taxpayer.

This follows an extended period during which HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) has worked with the operator, G4S, in an attempt to drive up standards at the prison amid serious concerns over safety, security and decency.

It is clear, however, that without additional support the prison will not be able to make sufficient progress on these pressing issues which have again been highlighted following the recent HMIP inspection. G4S accept that this is the case.

From today, the running of the establishment will be taken over by HMPPS in accordance with the Criminal Justice Act 1991 and as part of the contract with G4S. However, HMPPS will work closely with G4S to ensure minimal disruption and to reassure staff of our mutual commitment to stabilising the prison and putting it on a sustainable footing.

The immediate steps that will be taken include:

- putting in place one of the prison service’s best governors to lead the prison, as well as a strong senior management team
- allocating experienced HMPPS officers to bolster existing staffing at the prison; an initial 30 extra officers will be deployed
- reducing the prison’s capacity by 300 places while improvement action is underway

While HMPPS will run Birmingham for an initial six-month period, this may be extended and the prison will not be handed back until ministers are satisfied that sufficient progress has been made.

Justice Secretary David Gauke and the Prisons Minister have recently visited the prison and concluded that ‘stepping in’ is the best way to make immediate impact and begin the necessary improvements.

Prisons Minister Rory Stewart said:

What we have seen at Birmingham is unacceptable and it has become clear that drastic action is required to bring about the improvements we require.

This 'step in' means that we can provide additional resources to the prison while insulating the taxpayer from the inevitable cost this entails.

We have good, privately-run prisons across the country and while Birmingham faces its own particular set of challenges, I am absolutely clear that it must start to live up to the standards seen elsewhere.