

Press release: Secretary of State visits HMP Onley to meet staff and see reform in action

The Warwickshire-based establishment this week launched the Ricoh training centre at the prison, which will give offenders the opportunity to gain digital media qualifications and get a job with the firm on release.

This follows the successes of the prison's Halfords bicycle academy, which provides trainees with repair and maintenance skills. More than 30 offenders from the prison have gone to achieve employment with the company.

Rehabilitation is a crucial part of the Justice Secretary's Prisons and Courts Bill, which outlines that a key purpose of prisons is to reform offenders so they stop committing crime.

Justice Secretary Elizabeth Truss said:

I have always been clear that as well as punishing offenders, our prisons must become places of safety and reform. We must do all we can to give prisoners the best chance to turn their lives around.

There is some fantastic work going on across the prison estate and I am delighted that the innovative schemes formed by the hardworking and dedicated staff at HMP Onley are having a positive impact on lives.

Tackling the risks of reoffending will help reduce the £15 billion annual cost it has to society and reduce the turmoil faced by people who become victims of crime, therefore creating safer communities.

Since taking up post, the Justice Secretary has taken immediate action to boost safety, announcing £100m a year to recruit 2,500 prison officers to bolster the frontline and increase staff numbers.

A further £10m has been invested for increased security measures in a number of prisons. HMP Onley received £160,000 and has used the money to increase CCTV and on the wings and bringing in staff with specialist security and safety training.

Staff at HMP Onley have built relationships with local businesses, such as Halfords and the Ricoh, to explore opportunities for prisoners to gain training and employment.

This is an example of governors being empowered to take control over how they run their establishments – a key commitment in the Prison Safety and Reform

White Paper.

Notes to editors:

Progress made on key reforms so far includes:

Recruitment and retention

- boosting pay for hard-working staff by up to £5,000 at some of the most difficult-to-recruit prisons and those with high levels of staff-turnover
- appointing 75 mentors for new starter prison officers to help them in their first few months in the job which we know can be a difficult time;
- starting targeted local recruitment initiatives at 30 sites so that governors can more easily recruit the people they need;
- launching a new Prison Officer apprenticeship scheme next year for over 1000 new officers that will help increase diversity and make it easier to join the prison service.
- developing a new graduate scheme that will encourage people from a broader range of backgrounds to join the service;
- we have set up a Troops to Officers scheme that will support people to join the prison service after leaving the military.