

Press release: “Significant progress” made at 10 of most challenging prisons

- Minister applauds progress of the ‘10 prisons project’ – six months after vowing to resign if violence did not start to fall within a year
- In latest innovation, teams of experienced officers will help build confidence of new recruits and ensure all staff get the basics right
- £10m project aims to reduce violence and drug use while improving decency at 10 of the most challenging prisons

Today (Friday, 15 February), the Prisons Minister announced the latest initiative to drive improvement – Standards Coaching Teams who will support new recruits and ensure good practice is delivered consistently across the jails.

Working on rotation around the 10 prisons, and comprising some of the brightest and best officers from across the estate, the team will provide advice and encouragement to inexperienced officers to build their confidence, particularly in their relationships with prisoners.

The team is also supporting all staff to get the basics right and meet consistently high standards in routine tasks such as cell checks.

Around 60 experienced officers were selected to take up the coaching roles, and recently completed their two-week training course at the Prison Service (HMPPS) training college at Newbold Revel.

It is the latest measure in a £10m initiative to reduce violence and raise standards, which has already seen:

- X-ray body scanners installed – allowing staff to search for drugs and other contraband concealed in people’s bodies
- Scanners installed which can detect invisible traces of drugs, including psychoactive substances, soaked into clothing and paper
- The introduction of Incentivised Substance Free Living units – where offenders willing to lead drug-free lives can access enhanced conditions
- Specialist staff and teams put in place at all 10 prisons, including additional entry searching staff and dog handlers
- Drugs strategy managers established to lead counter-drugs efforts and improve recovery for users
- Refurbished cells and shared areas, and enhanced sanitation, to raise standards of decency
- A ‘drug diagnostic’ visit for each prison to help them understand their drug issues and how to tackle them

Prisons Minister Rory Stewart said:

In six months these prisons have made significant progress, from

tougher security to improved standards of decency, thanks to the tireless work of governors and staff. I am hugely grateful for their efforts.

I have no doubt the Standards Coaching Teams – who I had the privilege to recently see graduate – will make a significant contribution. Their knowledge and experience will be invaluable in driving further improvement.

I promised that I would resign if violence did not start to fall within a year. There is still much to do, and I do not underestimate the scale of the challenge, but the first six months have given us a solid platform from which we can set a more positive direction for all our prisons.

The 10 prisons project was announced in August 2018 to tackle the serious problems facing some of the most challenging prisons in the country.

It has seen the introduction of significant additional security measures to tackle the influx of drugs which fuels violence, as well as investment in leadership and building refurbishment.

The ten prisons will serve as models of excellence for the rest, with good practice to be spread across the prison estate.

Notes to editors:

- Geographical clusters of prisons in Yorkshire, the north Midlands and London were selected for the project, to ensure a targeted approach to tackling the supply of drugs from organised crime in those areas.
- The ten prisons making up the project are: HMP Hull, Humber, Leeds, Lindholme, Moorland, Wealstun, Nottingham, Ranby, Isis and Wormwood Scrubs.