

Statement to Parliament: Prisons and probation

A new executive agency of the Ministry of Justice, called Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, will replace the National Offender Management Service from 1 April 2017.

The Service will be responsible for the roll out of the government's programme to improve the way we reform offenders to protect the public and tackle the unacceptable levels of reoffending. Michael Spurr will become the Chief Executive of the new HM Prison and Probation Service from 1 April 2017.

HM Prison and Probation Service will have full responsibility for all operations across prison and probation. The Ministry of Justice will take charge of commissioning services, future policy development and be accountable for setting standards and scrutinising prison and probation performance.

The creation of HM Prison and Probation Service will build a world-leading, specialist agency, dedicated to professionalising the prison and probation workforce, backed by an additional £100m a year and 2,500 additional prison officers.

The Service will be a place that staff are proud to work, attracting the brightest and best talent to deliver modernised offender reform, strengthened security, counter-terrorism and intelligence capability.

In recognition of the vital work carried out by prison and probation staff, new schemes to improve promotion opportunities have been launched, including; enhanced professional qualifications for probation officers, a new leadership programme, an apprenticeship scheme to launch in April and higher pay and recognition for specialist skilled officers dealing with complex issues such as counter-terrorism, suicide and self-harm support and assessment.

This forms part of our far-reaching organisational reforms to the system, which will make services more accountable to Ministers for delivery and performance. This will be further supported by measures within the Prison and Courts Bill, which will create a new framework and clear system of accountability for prisons. Probation services will also offer improved training and learning opportunities for offenders to ensure they do not return to a life of crime, working hand in glove with prisons to ensure a more integrated approach. We will set out more details later this spring.

A key priority of HM Prison and Probation Service will be to focus on the particular needs of offenders. To meet the needs of women offenders across the whole system, for the first time there will be a Board Director responsible for women across custody and community. Sonia Crozier, Director of Probation, will take on this responsibility (reporting directly to the CEO) from 1 April 2017.

We set out also in December 2016 the government's plans for the youth justice system, putting education and training at the heart of youth custody.

We are working closely with the Youth Justice Board to review existing governance arrangements and will set out changes in due course.