

News story: Prisons Minister visits new graduate recruits as prison officer recruitment reaches record high

The Minister has met with some of the participants from [Unlocked Graduates](#), a specialist prison officer recruitment programme, at the University of Suffolk in Ipswich, which is where their prison officer training starts.

His visit follows last week's announcement of a net increase in prison officer numbers of 868 since January, meaning the government is on track to recruit its target of 2,500 by 2018.

Those taking part in the Unlocked Graduate scheme at Suffolk spend time covering technical skills before going to prisons in London or the South East, where they will put their theory into action.

Prisons Minister Sam Gyimah said:

I was hugely impressed by the enthusiasm and dedication of the Unlocked Graduates. These new recruits can help bring fresh ideas to the prison service and together with our experienced staff, can really help to make a difference and turn our prisons into places of safety and reform.

I have always been clear that as well as punishing offenders, our prisons must become places of reform and rehabilitation. We must do all we can to give prisoners the best chance to turn their lives around. The Unlocked Graduates will play a crucial part in helping to deliver that vision.

The Unlocked Graduates programme provides applicants the chance to work alongside some of the most experienced prison officers, developing vital and diverse skills whilst completing a Master's degree. More than 600 top graduates and career changers applied for just 40 places through new independent charity Unlocked Graduates.

Natasha Porter, founder of Unlocked Graduates said:

We were delighted to welcome the Minister to our first ever Summer Institute. We are asking our participants to think from day one on their wings about what could be done differently in prisons.

At the same time, their Master's degree is designed to help them think about system level change so it is critical to have this

high-level support from the Ministry of Justice.

One of the new recruits, Laura, originally from Ipswich, applied to be an Unlocked Graduate after volunteering with an organisation that worked with people in police custody and those that were homeless. She said that this experience encouraged her to go into a career where she could have a great impact on people's lives.

The 21-year-old has just completed the programme and will be joining the front line prison staff along with the other new graduate recruits.

Laura said:

As part of my degree I volunteered at an organisation that involved working with those in police custody, those with housing issues and those who were homeless so this, alongside my studies, encouraged me to pursue a career where I could help people and make an impact in social issues.

It has been an intense first few weeks as I had just a month from handing in my dissertation to starting with Unlocked Grads but I'm really enjoying it.

Since publication of the White Paper:

- we are making a substantial investment in marketing and targeted recruitment to generate even more interest in these valuable roles
- we have increased our Prison Officer Entry Level Training (POELT) training capacity by more than 75% for this year and next
- starting pay for a National based Prison officer ranges from £20,751 to £23,052 for a 37 to 41 hour week and this increases to a maximum range of £23,122 to £25,685 for the same hours

Find out more about [Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Careers](#).

Press release: Restoration of devolution a 'priority', says Secretary of State

Secretary of State, Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP, has said that his priority is to restore devolution in Northern Ireland – but that it is for the political parties to find a way of making it work.

He was speaking in Dublin after a series of high level engagements with the Irish Government where the current political impasse in Northern Ireland and the impact of EU Exit were discussed.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

My priority is to see the restoration of the devolved institutions in Northern Ireland, working on a sustainable basis to deliver good government for everyone. Over the summer I have kept in touch with the political parties and I will be bringing them together over the next week as we enter a new phase of talks.

Urgent progress is required. The lack of an Executive making key decisions on matters including health and education means that public services in Northern Ireland are suffering. We need to find a way forward that will allow an Executive to be formed.

We must ensure that politicians locally are working together to strengthen the economy, to deal with the challenges and opportunities of EU Exit, and build a stronger, shared society based on respect for everyone. Ultimately, it is for Northern Ireland's political parties to find a way to make this work.

The Secretary of State met the Irish Foreign Minister, Simon Coveney TD, to discuss the next steps in the political process. The UK Government and the Irish Government have both pressed party leaders in recent weeks to form an Executive. Mr Brokenshire also met An Tanaiste, Frances Fitzgerald TD, and Justice and Equality Minister, Charlie Flanagan TD, to discuss EU Exit and security matters during his visit.

The Secretary of State took the opportunity to brief the Irish Chamber of Commerce on the recent publication of papers by the UK Government on EU Exit and its proposals to manage the border and customs arrangements between Ireland and Northern Ireland.

[Press release: M25 junction 28 upgrade backed](#)

Under the plans, junction 28 of the M25, where the motorway meets the A12 in Essex, will be reconfigured to improve traffic flow. A new two lane loop road will be created for traffic leaving the M25 for the A12, a short section of

the M25 will be widened with the eastbound A12 interchange at the junction being redesigned to reduce congestion.

Over 90% of people taking part the consultation agreed that improvements were needed at the junction, with nearly half of respondents backing option 5F – more than twice as many as the other two options put together. Highways England Project Manager Piotr Grabowiecki said:

It's great to see that there is clear backing for the improvements, and I would like to thank everyone who took part in our consultation. We can now move on to developing a detailed design for the upgrade. There will be another opportunity for anyone interested in the scheme to have their say early next year, when we put the plans to people for their views.

The scheme will improve journey times through the junction and allow more capacity on the exit slip roads, reduce the incident rate and resulting disruption at the roundabout, and minimise the impact on local air quality and noise by smoothing traffic flow. There will also be less likelihood of traffic queuing back onto the M25 due to the reconfiguration of the junction.

Proposed improvements to the M25 junction 28 roundabout

A public consultation on the options was held from Wednesday 16 November 2016 to Friday 6 January 2017. A total of 228 responses were received during this consultation. A copy of the consultation report can be found on the Highways England website and copies of the announcement flyer are available online, as well as at a variety of locations in the local area.

Anyone interested in the scheme can view an animated visualisation outlining the preferred route and sign up to receive updates on the [scheme page on the Highways England website](#).

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[News story: Help the Charity Commission develop digital services](#)

We are looking for people to help us test our digital services to make them easier to use.

We are developing a number of digital services to make it easier for you to complete tasks online. As part of this development we are testing services with the charity sector, and using the feedback to improve them.

Testing services with real users helps us to understand needs, and create the best possible experience online.

By taking part in user research and testing sessions, you'll also have the opportunity to positively influence our services.

We will be hosting several sessions across the country over the coming months. If you think you can help [complete the online form](#) and submit.

[News story: Public sector can save £35 million on estates through new CCS framework](#)

The Estates Professional Services framework (RM3816) could save public sector bodies like local councils, NHS trusts, schools, the emergency services and housing associations £35 million over the next 4 years.

The new framework enables organisations to buy advice, guidance and associated services to help them to manage their estates and assets, reduce property costs, release unwanted property assets, and identify savings and opportunities to generate income from land and buildings.

It is expected that £430 million will be spent through the framework over the next 4 years. More than a third of the businesses supplying the new agreement are SMEs (35%), with regional expertise maximised through an innovative lotting structure.

Stakeholders from across central government, devolved administrations and the wider public sector have been engaged since the procurement began in order to build a commercial framework that suits diverse customer requirements.

More than 120 suppliers contacted CCS about the agreement and were kept engaged throughout the process.

How it will work

The agreement will complement other CCS property frameworks including Project Management and Full Design Team Services, Facilities Management, and Construction, enabling CCS to provide a comprehensive offering for property management solutions.

The framework will be structured into 4 lots, with regional panels included on lot 2.

- Lot 1 – National
- Lot 2A – East Anglia
- Lot 2B – East & West Midlands
- Lot 2C – London & South East England
- Lot 2D – North East England
- Lot 2E – North West England & North Wales
- Lot 2F – Northern Ireland
- Lot 2G – Scotland
- Lot 2H – South Wales & South West England
- Lot 3 – Vertical Real Estate
- Lot 4 – Facilities Management and Property Services (Procurement Managed Service)

What's different about this framework?

The framework offers a wider range of services and provides access to vertical real estate suppliers for the first time, as well as a managed procurement offering.

More SMEs have won places to supply estates services to the public sector than ever before, with a new focus on regional expertise.

It also offers a more flexible pricing model than before, with various options available to customers such as incentivised, gainshare, hourly/daily rates and lump sum, enabling customers to tailor their contracts to meet their needs.

To find out more, [visit the Estates Professional Services web pages.](#)

Read [how Montagu Evans grew their business](#) thanks to winning a place on Estates Professional Services.