

Speech: Prison reform: open letter from the Justice Secretary

The work to make our prisons true places of reform and rehabilitation is already under way – and it will continue unabated.

When someone is convicted of a serious crime, they are rightly handed down a custodial sentence by our courts. They are punished by being sent to prison and losing what we cherish most as citizens – liberty and freedom.

Most will, at some point, be released back into society. So, as well as depriving people of liberty, our prisons must also be places of reform and rehabilitation to support offenders to turn their lives around.

Prisons have been going through a particularly turbulent time and we need to create calm and ordered environments for that effective rehabilitation. That means giving offenders the help they need to get off drugs, and the education, training and support to help them find employment when they leave prison.

In doing this, prisons don't work in isolation. They work within their local communities and with other services – with Probation, Jobcentres, housing, health and drug services, local businesses and charities to provide innovative schemes and initiatives to prepare prisoners for a life after release. We now have more private sector companies employing ex-offenders than ever before. Timpson, Halfords and The Clink Charity are just 3 examples of organisations which do great work with prisons and offenders.

Only by building on this work to reform offenders and support ex-offenders will we stop the vicious and costly cycle of reoffending.

This is my priority and as the new Secretary of State, I am committed to building on the essential reforms that are already under way to make prisons places of safety and reform.

That has to start with the numbers of prison officers available to support offenders. More staff will provide the capacity for them to give more time to directly supervising offenders, through one-to-one support from a key worker. This engagement will be a key measure in reducing the currently unacceptable levels of assaults, self-harm and suicides.

My predecessor has already secured a £100 million a year investment for an extra 2,500 prison officers. The most recent figures show the number of prison officers in post has increased by 515 compared with the previous quarter and we are on track to deliver all 2,500 prison officers by December 2018. They will join thousands of dedicated and hard-working prison officers who undertake such important work, day in day out, to keep our prisons and the public safe.

We are also tackling key issues to improve security and create the

opportunity for reform and rehabilitation.

On drugs, we have introduced testing for psychoactive substances across the estate, the first jurisdiction in the world to do so. We have also trained more than 300 dogs to detect these substances, and have introduced tough new laws to deal with people smuggling the substances into prison.

On drones, we are working with the police to catch and convict criminals using drones to smuggle contraband into prisons. We have also established a new team of prison and police officers to directly tackle the threat posed by drones.

On mobile phones, we are working with mobile network operators to tackle illicit use of phones. We have now fitted out every single prison across the estate with hand-held mobile phone detectors and detection poles to step up the detection of illegal phones on the landings. More than 150 mobile phones have been cut off since the introduction of new powers through the Serious Crime Act.

We are continuing to transform our prison estate to close old and dilapidated prisons and create up to 10,000 new places through a £1.3 billion investment.

We know where the problems lie in our prisons, and we know what is needed to fix them. We are continuing with, and building on, these reforms to ensure prisons are safe and secure and are able to transform the lives of those sent to custody by our courts.

[News story: Flexible working for Armed Forces](#)

The changes will deliver a career which is as flexible as possible by allowing service personnel to work part time for short periods, as long as the operational effectiveness of the military is maintained.

The measures, which are due to come into effect in 2019, are part of the Armed Forces (Flexible Working) Bill. They will also limit the amount of time that personnel will need to spend away from their home-base and their families.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

To compete for the best people in society our Armed Forces must offer a career that better reflects the realities of modern life. Allowing greater flexibility over how long and where people work will help attract and keep the talent we need to keep Britain safe.

The Bill will amend parts of the Armed Forces Act 2006, and the new arrangements were developed after a consultation with the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force. Personnel said they wanted more choice over the way they serve for when their circumstances change; such as starting a family, or undertaking caring commitments.

Applications for part time working will be assessed against the needs of the individual and the need of the Armed Forces to maintain operational effectiveness. Personnel would still be required to deploy on operations, at any time, should the need arise.

This will lead to more balanced lifestyles with opportunities for Service personnel to serve in a way that better suits their personal aspirations and family circumstances. Reserve personnel will benefit from these changes, as we continue to seek to increase opportunities for them to serve in a greater range of roles alongside Regular personnel.

These reforms are part of the modern offer to personnel and the government's commitment to strengthen the Armed Forces Covenant, which was enshrined in law in 2011 to ensure Service personnel are not disadvantaged through their work.

The government also reaffirmed its NATO commitment to spend at least 2% of GDP on defence in the Queen's speech.

News story: Magnox Ltd complete FED treatment programme at Bradwell in Essex

This is an important step towards the site's planned closure, as part of the NDA's mission to clean up and decommission the UK's earliest nuclear sites.

Magnox Ltd and its supply chain used innovative techniques and unique solutions to manage the waste, which mainly consists of pieces of the magnesium alloy cladding that surrounds Magnox nuclear fuel. They dissolved the material in acid and explored new options for disposing of the waste. The result is a reduction in the hazards on the site and shortening the FED treatment project by more than a year.

Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) Chief Executive, David Peattie, said:

This is another really important milestone and a huge step forward in cleaning up and decommissioning the UK's earliest nuclear sites.

Finding new solutions and techniques to deal with radioactive waste is helping us to do things more quickly and efficiently, making our sites safer sooner and providing best value for the taxpayer. I would like to thank everyone involved in delivering this successful programme.

65 tonnes of FED were treated in an on-site 'dissolution plant', which dissolved the waste in an acid, separated the radioactive materials and reduced the volume of the solid waste by more than 90 per cent.

Over half of the FED at Bradwell was re-classified as suitable for disposal as Low Level Waste (LLW) in a first-of-a-kind collaboration between Magnox Ltd, the Low Level Waste Repository Ltd (LLWR) and specialist contractor Tradebe-Inutec.

More than 140 tonnes of FED have now been sent to Tradebe-Inutec as LLW for treatment and eventual disposal at the Low Level Waste Repository in west Cumbria – saving around 2 years of dissolution operations.

Fuel Element Debris (FED)

Bob Nichols, Magnox Ltd's Bradwell Site Closure Director, said:

I want to pay tribute to the Bradwell and wider Magnox workforce who have worked tirelessly to manage Bradwell's FED inventory, which has proved to be one of the most challenging work programmes undertaken by Magnox.

We have shown we are able to work collaboratively, both with our supply chain and other parts of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority estate, to accelerate progress without compromising our high safety standards, which stands us in good stead as the site approaches Care and Maintenance.

A second major achievement at the site is the demolition of the used fuel ponds complex – which was used to cool and store spent nuclear fuel under water after it was taken out of the reactors when the site was generating electricity.

The redundant buildings were decontaminated over a 4 year period, which meant they could be taken down using conventional demolition methods. The remaining buildings on the site will now be enclosed in weatherproof cladding in preparation for Care and Maintenance.

[Find out more about Bradwell nuclear site](#)

Speech: Statement from Rory Stewart: United Kingdom Minister for Africa

UK's Minister for Africa, Rory Stewart stated his excitement regarding his new appointment

Following his recent appointment, the United Kingdom's Minister for Africa Rory Stewart said: "I am so excited to have the role of Minister for Africa in both the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development.

"Africa is an extraordinary continent with so much potential: An incredible number of young people, some of the most stunning landscapes in the world and extraordinary new businesses. There is also a great historical relationship between Africa, Europe and the world, which needs to be developed and deepened.

"I am really looking forward to learning from Africans, to listening to the experiences of people on the ground and building relationships, that, if we can get them right, should flourish over 30, 40, 50 years with mutual respect and learning between Africa and the United Kingdom."

News story: Angelina Jolie visits British military team in Kenya

This specialist instructional course hosted by the IPSTC is funded by the UK's Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) and delivered with the support of the British Peace Support Team (East Africa). Ms Jolie's visit to the region has two distinct but complementary purposes: to highlight the continued plight of Africa's refugees, marked yesterday by World Refugee Day; and, to maintain momentum behind the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative, with the day before (19 June) being the UN's International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Ms Jolie participated in training delivered to military and police personnel involved in African Peacekeeping Missions who are often first responders following acts of sexual violence in conflict. She spoke to peacekeepers, police and civil society experts about their experience in preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based violence in conflict settings and in their communities. She participated in discussions about how personnel on the course can lead the way in changing attitudes and improving understanding of sexual and gender based violence in their organisations. The Special Envoy

also took part in a roundtable discussion on PSVI chaired by the British High Commissioner, Nic Hailey, before addressing students on the course.

Ms Jolie said:

It meant a lot to hear military gender advisors and officers say what they believe and what they want others to understand, that this is not simply about law and human decency. It is about military effectiveness. If civilians do not have confidence in you as peacekeepers your mission will not succeed. And while this training is clearly only a beginning, it is the only way that we will begin to address the problems: working nation by nation to raise standards and increase effectiveness.

Angelina Jolie visited the International Peace Support Training Centre. Crown Copyright.

During the visit the Special Envoy spoke to two of the UK military's gender experts, Major Cleo Bigwood and Captain Kezia Jukes, who are attending the SGBV training at the IPSTC. Captain Jukes is currently deployed to South Sudan as part of the UK's support to the UN Peacekeeping mission in country, and Maj Bigwood will deploy to the Democratic Republic of Congo in October as the UN Mission's Gender Adviser. Both are an example of MOD efforts to increase military Gender Advisers, gender focal points, and female peacekeepers, as part of international Women, Peace and Security (WPS) commitments.

Maj Bigwood said:

This is a fantastic opportunity to share experiences and develop our knowledge on this vitally important topic that affects all levels of society. The British Army is investing personnel and its global experience into this effort.

In September last year Ms Jolie spoke at the UK-hosted UN Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial about the need to stamp out acts of sexual abuse by peacekeepers and of the imperative for more female peacekeepers to enhance operational effectiveness and to ensure the needs of the most vulnerable, including women, are met by Peacekeeping Missions. The UK military's Gender Champion and lead for the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Initiative, Vice Chief of the Defence Staff General Sir Gordon Messenger, welcomed the Special Envoy to London for the event and continues to work with her in the UK's efforts on WPS, PSVI and Gender.

Vice Chief of the Defence Staff General Sir Gordon Messenger said:

I am delighted that Ms Jolie has been able to visit this excellent training for African Peacekeepers and I am proud of the UK's

supporting role. I commend the work of all those committed to International Peacekeeping efforts and thank them for their compassion, dedication and bravery in seeking to prevent violence and restore peace in some of the most challenging parts of the world.

The UK continues to lead internationally on ending sexual violence in conflict and Defence is working hard in support of its partners, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department for International Development, to refine and strengthen the UK's contribution to this most valuable work.

Angelina Jolie visited the International Peace Support Training Centre. Crown Copyright.

2017 marks five years since Ms Jolie and Lord William Hague founded the PSVI. Since 2012, over 17,000 Military and Police personnel have been trained on sexual violence issues, the PSVI Team of Experts has been deployed more than eight times. £40m in UK funding has been committed so far and we have supported over 70 projects across the world to help end sexual violence in conflict.

The UK's PSVI priorities for 2017/18 include challenging the stigma survivors of sexual violence experience; delivering justice for survivors, ensuring better access to healthcare, psychosocial support and livelihood programmes; and improving how security forces around the world prevent and respond to these crimes.

British High Commissioner to Kenya Nic Hailey said:

The UK is committed to ending the use of rape as a weapon of war. I was delighted that Ms Jolie was able to experience some of the training we provide through our team in Kenya.

We have trained 17,000 military and police personnel in preventing sexual violence around the world since 2012. But there is more to do. The UK looks forward to working with Kenya and other international partners to put an end to sexual violence in conflict.

In addition to supporting PSVI work, the BPST(EA)'s mission is to coordinate UK military assistance to Armed Forces in Eastern Africa, supporting security and stability in the region.

So far this year the team has already trained more than 500 Armed Forces personnel from African partner nations, and this number is expected to double by the end of 2017. BPST(EA)'s Training and Defence Engagement takes place throughout the region at various locations, primarily at the International Peace Support Training Centre in Kenya.

Commander BPST(EA), Colonel Richard Leahey said:

Today's event is a clear example of the UK's commitment to the PSVI, and the BPST(EA) is proud to play a part in that.

My team will continue to work shoulder-to-shoulder with our African and international partners to support security and stability in the region. Our training and Defence Engagement activity help make communities here safer.