

[News story: Civil news: contacting the exceptional and complex cases team](#)

From:

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Calls to the Exceptional and Complex Cases team will be automatically diverted to the customer services team from 13 February 2017.

Our customer services team will be handling calls made to the Exceptional and Complex Cases (ECC) team from 13 February 2017.

The number for the customer services team is 0300 200 2020.

Calls made to the following teams will be automatically diverted for the next two months to 0300 200 2020:

- National Immigration and Asylum Team – 020 3334 5900
- High Cost Cases Brighton – 01273 878870
- High Cost Cases London – 0203 334 5750
- Exceptional Case Funding Team – 020 3334 6060

After 2 months the individual team numbers will no longer be diverted and you will need to dial 0300 200 2020.

This change will simplify contacting the Legal Aid Agency and free up more resource for casework.

[Press release: Justice Secretary launches new prison and probation service to reform offenders](#)

- Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) to replace National Offender Management Service (NOMS)
- new service will be responsible for rolling out government's reform programme to reduce reoffending and protect the public
- the service will launch new leadership programme and new promotion opportunities for staff
- changes backed by additional £100 million to boost frontline by an extra

2,500 staff

HMPPS will have full responsibility for the operational management of offenders in custody and the community, including strengthening security in prisons, tackling extremism and building intelligence about criminal gangs.

Supported by work to recruit an extra 2,500 officers, the new service will launch leadership and promotion programmes for prison and probation officers to further professionalise and build pride in the service.

The new operationally focused service will be supported by the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) taking on responsibility for overall future policy direction, setting standards, scrutinising prison performance and commissioning services.

Justice Secretary Liz Truss said:

This new and operationally focused frontline service will implement the reforms we have announced to make our prisons safe and cut reoffending.

Our prison and probation officers do a vital job and they deserve to work in a world-class organisation which supports them in reforming offenders and keeping the public safe.

Creating HMPPS will bring clarity to managing our prisons and probation services while further professionalising staff and building pride in their work.

The move follows the Prison Safety and Reform White Paper which outlined an overhaul of the prisons estate with the forthcoming Prison and Courts Bill due to make reforming offenders a key duty of prisons for the first time.

For the first time, there will also be a Board Director with specific responsibility for women across the whole system, reporting into HMPPS Chief Executive, Michael Spurr.

Michael Spurr said:

The launch of HMPPS provides a great opportunity to focus on and improve operational performance in prisons and probation.

There is a great deal to do but I am confident that with the additional resources the government are providing, we can transform the system and deliver the high quality of service the public deserve.

The service will be dedicated to professionalising the prison and probation workforce. New schemes to improve promotion opportunities have been launched, including:

- enhanced qualifications for probation officers
- a new leadership programme
- an apprenticeship scheme (to launch in April 2017)
- higher pay and recognition for specialist skilled officers dealing with complex issues such as counter-terrorism, suicide and self-harm support

This wholesale, organisational reform will be supported by measures within the Prisons and Courts Bill, which will set out a new framework and clear system of accountability for prisons, building on the wide-ranging reforms set out in the Prison Safety and Reform White Paper.

Notes to editors

Progress on recruitment and retention:

- we have made 389 job offers to new recruits wanting to join the Prison Service which puts the government on track to recruit the first 400 of the extra 2,500 frontline officers committed to be in place by the end of March 2017
- boosting pay for hard-working staff by up to £4,000 at some of the most difficult-to-recruit prisons and those with high levels of staff-turnover, including HMP High Down, HMP Downview and HMP Coldingley
- 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
- providing retention payments at sites with the greatest levels of staff turnover. For example at Feltham which is close to Heathrow we provide a £3000 retention payment;
- 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 launched a Troops to Officers scheme that will support people to join the prison service after leaving the military

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.

[News story: Animal medicines prosecution: Mr Murray McGregor](#)

From:

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Details of the prosecution of Mr Murray McGregor. Published in February 2017.

On 18th January 2017 at Perth Sherif Court, Mr Murray McGregor plead guilty to importing an unauthorised veterinary medicinal product, possession of an unauthorised veterinary medicinal product and that he did administer an unauthorised veterinary medicine under the Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2008 and 2009.

These charges related to the product Terramycin 100MR which was administered to Mr McGregor's bee hives.

On 1st February 2017 at Perth Sherif Court, Mr Murray McGregor was fined £2500, reduced by a third from £3750 for an early plea.

[Press release: New Northumberland fish passes open up stream](#)

Two new fish passes on a Northumberland stream are giving salmon and sea trout easier access to 22km of watercourse.

The work by the Environment Agency and Northumberland Rivers Trust at South Low, in north Northumberland near Berwick, is making it easier for fish to migrate and spawn.

Two large weirs were preventing fish movement upstream, but both weirs have been changed to make it easier for sea trout and salmon to make their way to their spawning grounds.

It follows work to make it easier for fish to pass through Environment Agency tidal gates at the coast, where the sea meets the stream.

Since then, work has been taking place to make it easier for fish to move further upstream.

Upstream weir before it was altered to make it easier for fish migration

The new upstream fish pass after alterations were made to the weir to make it into a rock pass

Easier for fish

Robbie Stevenson, Fisheries Technical Officer with the Environment Agency, said:

We've worked closely with partners to carry out a lot of positive work in this area, to look at issues which might be having an impact on fish populations.

The alterations to the weirs will open up 22km of watercourse for fish and make it far easier for them to travel upstream.

We've worked really hard together with our partners over the years to make dramatic improvements to water quality.

But there is always more we can do and this project at South Low is the sort of work which is taking place right across the North East and the country to protect and enhance our rivers and streams.

The £100,000 project has been part funded by the Environment Agency, supplemented by private landowner contributions and the work carried out by volunteers.

Important fish passes

Peter Kerr, Director of Northumberland Rivers Trust, who was also designer and project manager for this project, added:

We are delighted to have been able to add these two important fish passes by working in partnership.

The contractors, WL Straughan and Son, did an excellent job in some challenging weather conditions, including the floods following Storm Angus.

After we completed the lower of the passes we saw some big sea trout trying to get past the upper weir, so we are confident that the lower one works well and that there are many migratory fish trying to return to the South Low.

The recent completion of the upper pass will now let these fish access many miles of spawning gravels.