

Prison Governors Association

Representing: The Prison Governors of the United Kingdom since 1987



PGA Office: Room 3.10
Clive House
70 Petty France,
London, SW1H 9EX

PGA Officers: President
Vice President
Finance Officer
National Officers

Andrea Albutt
Nick Pascoe
Shaun Williamson
John Attard
Dave Hoskins
Duncan Scales

Telephone: 0300 047 5781

Fax: 0300 047 6858

Email: james.bryant01@hmpr.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.prison-governors-association.org.uk

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15 November 2016

PRESS RELEASE

POA Protest

The Prison Governors' Association (PGA) recognises the extremely tough conditions many of our colleagues and staff are working in. The decline in safety and increase in violence is a serious concern and our association has gone to some lengths to highlight them, including the recent call for an independent Public Inquiry. However, the PGA will not condone the withdrawal of labour and the significant additional risk this places all staff and prisoners under. The controlled unlocks in place today will have to be relaxed at some point in the future as prison routines are normalised.

The Justice Secretary, Liz Truss MP, has committed to increasing funding and the recruitment of an additional 2,500 officers. In our meetings with Mrs Truss, we were convinced that safety and decency was at the top of her agenda and without that rehabilitation could not be delivered. It is, therefore, disappointing that this action is taken place at this point without, in the PGA's view, exhausting all other options.

The pledge of additional officers is obviously welcomed but the Prison Service is losing staff faster than it can recruit them. The challenge of getting new officers into prisons is, consequently, a gargantuan task made more difficult with the current pay restraints. It is crucial, therefore, that decisions are taken now to address the immediate concerns we have raised. In the last few weeks, the PGA has held constructive talks with the Justice Secretary and the Minister for Prisons, Sam Gyimah MP, in which our recommendations for stemming the violence and improving safety were sought. We have canvassed prison governors up and down the country for solutions beyond improved staffing levels. The response was exceptional and we believe that steps can be taken to reduce the immediate risks. This is likely to be to the detriment of rehabilitation but without calm and stable environments rehabilitation cannot be delivered anyway.

It is our sincere hope that this action is brought to a speedy conclusion before another serious incident occurs so that Governors can get on with running their prisons with the freedoms necessary to make that happen safely.

Note for editors:

The Prison Governors Association was founded in October 1987 to represent the higher operational managers in the Prison Service in England and Wales. The PGA was placed on the register of Trade Unions on 6 November 1987 (No. 639T). On 28 July 1988 the Certification Officer under the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1974 issued the Prison Governors Association with a Certificate of Independence. The status of the Prison Governors Association is that of an independent registered Trade Union.

For more information contact John Attard (john.attard@hmps.gsi.gov.uk), National Officer, or via James Bryant, PGA office (Tel: 0300 047 5781 or 07884 434814).