

# Prison Governors Association

Representing: The Prison Governors of the United Kingdom since 1987



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## PRESS RELEASE – NOMS Restructure

The demise of NOMS has come as no surprise given the relentless pressure many prisons have endured over the last five years. The volume of changes prison governors have been subject to without time to stabilise and consolidate has been staggering and follows a NOMS budget reduction of nearly one billion pounds over the same period.

In that time we have seen staffing stripped out of prisons while the prison population has remained stubbornly high, the use of community sentences has declined, violence has increased and morale is now at an all-time low. This has been exacerbated with prison closures, the use of drones, an increase in trafficked mobile phones and an increase in the use and availability of psychoactive drugs. The recent publishing of the figures on deaths in custody, assaults on staff and assaults on prisoners are the worst since records began.

The expectation and hope is that the reinstatement of 'Her Majesty's Prison Service' in the organisation's title will signify a reduction in bureaucratic and public sector managerialism processes that restricted governors' ability to run their prisons efficiently. The PGA believes this change will commence with the introduction of a more independent commissioning process through service level agreements between the Justice Secretary and prison governors. These agreements were sent to governors last week but have not been consulted on with the Prison Governors' Association and, consequently, we have advised governors not to sign them. The performance measures, which form part of the agreement, lack detail and measures of success or failure will need to be agreed. Prison governors will applaud the independence and the opportunity to demonstrate how prisons can be run successfully if they are given the necessary freedoms to do so. However, the PGA is concerned that its members risk becoming scapegoated and held to account if their authority is limited and if there are insufficient resources to do the job given the drastic cuts since 2012. The changes, by and large, are welcomed but feel rushed given that governors are being asked to sign up to agreements in a very short period of time without meaningful consultation on how measures are agreed or how targets and budgets are being set. This will either slow down the transition or result in targets that are meaningless in terms of reducing reoffending.

We look forward to meeting with the Secretary of State and prison officials to discuss in more detail and agree a way forward.

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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.

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