

# 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: 020 3193 5770

Email: [james.bryant01@hmps.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:james.bryant01@hmps.gsi.gov.uk)

Website: [www.prison-governors-association.org.uk](http://www.prison-governors-association.org.uk)

Twitter: @PGA\_Prisons

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## PRESS RELEASE – Prisons Bill

The Prison Governors' Association continues to welcome the investment the Justice Secretary is making in prisons and her commitment to prison reform. However, with the worst recorded figures on violence and deaths in prisons in modern times, security and safety must be this government's paramount focus. Unless prisons are stabilised, these ambitious goals will be unobtainable.

The volume and rate of the changes being introduced are a cause of serious concern to prison governors. Governors are being asked to sign up to agreements, which will become effective in just five weeks, with insufficient detail on what they will be held to account for. The risk is that the prison reform bill will become the prison blame bill – a mechanism by which Governors are criticised or removed from post for matters beyond their control. Assurances have been provided by the Justice Secretary that this will not happen but these assurances lack satisfactory detail. Prisons have had 500 prison governors and 7,000 officers stripped out in the last five years whilst the population has remained stubbornly high. A commitment to recruit 2,500 officers is welcomed but they are not in place now, and this is still significantly less than the number already lost. Also, there are no plans to replace the governors which have been lost during the same period. Consequently, the previous advice the PGA gave to our members not to sign the agreements until further discussions can take place still stands.

The government's inflexibility with regards to introducing league tables is also a concern. Despite warnings that they will not achieve anything other than to risk demoralising staff and of unfairly judging the senior management team the government is still going ahead.

Making the rehabilitation of prisoners a mandatory requirement is not new. The prison service has for many years had as a core aim the rehabilitation of prisoners by helping them lead law abiding lives in custody and on release and metrics on which this is judged. Giving new powers to the chief inspector of prisons is welcomed provided it also holds the Ministry of Justice to account which controls the budgets governors are provided with, which have been reduced year on year. Governors cannot rehabilitate prisoners who are living and working in squalid conditions with insufficient staff and resources.

The principles set out in the Prison Safety and Reform White Paper, which introduced more autonomy for governors remain, by and large, welcomed. However, unless the core issues of safety and violence are tackled first, these are unlikely to be achieved.

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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.

For more information contact John Attard, PGA National Officer, on 07772 659945 (Email: [john.attard@hmps.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:john.attard@hmps.gsi.gov.uk))