

# Prison Governors Association

Representing: The Prison Governors of the United Kingdom since 1987



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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **OUR PRISONS: THINGS MUST CHANGE**

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With the announcement of the 6<sup>th</sup> Justice Secretary since May 2010, a feeling of despair runs through the veins of the Prison Governors Association (PGA). We have watched constant interference from Ministers this decade who have little or no knowledge of the complexities of prisons leave our Service in a disastrously worst state than they found it. We have had the highest statistics on self-harm, suicide and violence ever seen. We remain of the view that a split of policy and operations is not a sound response to the crisis. It disempowers HMPPS at a time when the Agency needs to be allowed to respond appropriately to the chaos created by Government over the last 8 years.

The financial cuts have crippled the Service to such an extent, that it is naïve to think 2500 new prisons officers, whilst helpful, is the answer to all our woes, it is not. We lost 7000 operationally experienced prison officers due to the austerity measures and to regain that knowledge and confidence will not happen overnight. We lost 300 governor grades from senior management teams during this same period which impacted on our ability to manage risk. The culture we have in many of our prisons will take years to recover and this will be through the dedication of operationally competent, resilient, stable and adequately resourced senior management teams who are left alone to lead. Governors need to be equipped with policy that is operationally sound, deliverable and which makes a difference.

Governors have had to run prisons with not fit for purpose contracts which fail to deliver the promised service. This has impacted on our ability to deliver both a decent, safe and rehabilitative environment for the men and women in our care. The debacle that is the contracting out of facility management to Amey and Carillion has come back to haunt the Government in all its glory this week. These contracts have failed in their entirety to meet the needs of prisons, leaving accommodation and maintenance in a far worse state than when Governors owned their own Works Departments. Too much of senior management time has been spent trying to deal with these contracts instead of strategically managing prisons at probably the most challenging time in recent history.

Once again the Prison Governors Association repeats its call for a Public Inquiry into Government Policy this decade which has led our Service into this appalling state.

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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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