

# Prison Governors Association

Representing: The Prison Governors of the United Kingdom since 1987



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@PGA\_Prisons

The Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP  
Deputy Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice  
HM Government  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

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By Email

24 February 2023

Dear Lord Chancellor,

## **PRISON OVERCROWDING**

We write in order to share the concerns of the Prison Governors' Association about the current overcrowding of prisons, and the dangers of further overcrowding. Our focus is not on the reasons why, or on the Government's medium to long term strategy on how to deal with it. We concentrate on the immediate risks to the health and safety of prisoners and prison staff, on which we are subject matter experts.

Last year every prison within HMPPS reviewed its operational capacity so as to assess what additional capacity could be made available safely. A limited number of additional spaces were identified so as to increase the capacity of individual prisons across the estate. Although freeing up more spaces meant more overcrowding, the Prison Governors' Association supported this increase after receiving assurances that the increased total capacity was a "red line" which would not be crossed. The Association was further reassured that you had agreed to this.

In reaching the new capacity level, the Association and its members were satisfied that the balance between risk and the provision of spaces for court attendance was being managed sensibly. Furthermore, they were pleased that the new overall level had been assessed on the advice of those with the best hands-on operational experience and expertise in prison management.

A few months later, the available capacity is close to exhausted. The Association has been calling for a credible plan to reduce the prison population but has been met with a vacuum of information and dialogue with HMPPS on this matter. The Association and its members fear it may be politically expedient to breach the “red line”, rather than initiate some form of early release scheme, for example. We wish to put you on notice that any increase in capacity is likely to result in overcrowding to unsafe levels, increasing the risks to prisoners and our members alike. In the event of such an increase, we will take legal advice with a view to immediate legal action.

Yours faithfully,



Andrea Albutt  
President



Mitch Albutt  
National Officer



Carl Davies  
National Officer

Cc Amy Rees, Director General Chief Executive Officer, HMPPS  
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