



Ministry of JUSTICE

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Dear Lord Elystan-Morgan,

During oral questions on Wednesday 16 December 2009, you requested the number of convictions for persons seeking to smuggle drugs into prison, and whether that represented a rising or a falling trend. I promised to write to you regarding this along with the comprehensive range of security measures used to reduce drug supply in prisons.

Whilst the number of convictions for drugs supply offences is held, those involving supply into prisons cannot be disaggregated. To do so would require an investigation into each offence, which would be at disproportionate cost. Data from the random mandatory drug testing programme - the best measure of drug misuse in prisons - does however demonstrate a downward trend in drug misuse in prisons, which has decreased by 68% since 1996/7.

Prisons deploy a robust and comprehensive range of security measures to reduce drug supply, including:

- passive search dogs, which are available in all prisons, to detect visitors carrying drugs. And active search dogs, used to search goods and vehicles. There are 440 search dogs in total;
- local searching strategies which comply with the National Security Framework;
- strict measures to tackle visitors who smuggle or attempt to smuggle drugs, including
 - on suspicion of smuggling - 'closed' visits (i.e. through a glass screen) or visit bans, and arrest and prosecution where there is sufficient evidence;

- the criminal process is invoked against visitors and prisoners alike wherever sufficient evidence exists of an attempt to supply. A range of internal sanctions exists for prisoners caught using drugs;
- visitor biometric systems in 34 prisons;
- CCTV surveillance in most social visits areas and low-level furniture in social visits areas in all Category C prisons and above, to make it more difficult to pass drugs;
- intelligence systems, including targeted monitoring of telephone traffic through the PIN-phone system;
- close working with the police to target serious criminals outside prison who are increasingly involved in supply. Each prison has access to a police liaison officer;
- 'Supply Reduction Good Practice Guide' used by all prisons to improve performance;
- Regular review of the poorer performing prisons by the Director of Operations;
- a Corruption Prevention Unit, with other measures, to address the issue of corrupt staff; and
- disciplinary sanctions for positive mandatory drug tests.

Illicit mobile phones in prison threaten security, order and control, and the safety of staff and the public. They are used for both benign and criminal activities, including arranging drug smuggling. The National Offender Management Service (NOMS) is implementing a mobile phones strategy, which aims to minimise the number of mobile phones entering prisons; find mobile phones that are smuggled in; and disrupt those phones that cannot be found. NOMS has rolled-out mobile phone signal detectors, high sensitivity metal detecting wands and BOSS chairs that detect internally concealed metallic items such as mobile phones. NOMS is also working closely with government partners to evaluate and trial technology to block mobile phone signals in prisons. Blocking of mobile phone signals in prisons is however technically challenging, given the nature of the fabric and layouts of some prisons and the need to identify blockers that are both effective and meet health and safety and regulatory requirements.

In his report, *Disrupting the Supply of Illicit Drugs into Prison*, commissioned at the Justice Secretary's request by the Director General of NOMS, and published on 7 July 2008, David Blakey made ten recommendations to improve efforts to tackle the supply of drugs into prisons. The Government accepted all ten of his recommendations and NOMS has made significant progress in implementing them:

- Governors have been instructed to appoint senior governors in all prisons;
- NOMS has published a new good practice guide to assist prisons in tackling drug supply routes, including advice on working with others, and have produced a mobile phones good practice guide to focus on minimising, finding and disrupting mobile phones that are smuggled into prisons;

- in addition, work continues to strengthen prison intelligence gathering, in line with David Blakey's recommendations;
- NOMS has strengthened its relationship with the Home Office Scientific Development Branch; and
- NOMS is working more closely with law enforcement agencies.

In respect of recommendation 3, due to changes to NOMS infrastructure NOMS no longer intends to implement peer reviews as David Blakey envisaged. Instead it will introduce to existing auditing processes robust reviews of individual prisons' drug supply reduction and mandatory drug testing strategies.

Going forward NOMS will:

- continue to implement David Blakey's recommendations, particularly looking to roll out mobile phone blocking technology as funding becomes available;
- seek to make law a Bill introduced to, amongst other things, make an offence the possession of a mobile phone in prison;
- forge closer links with law enforcement agencies, particularly in relation to tackling serious organised crime in prisons; and
- continue to encourage prosecutions under the Offender Management Act.

I am placing a copy of this letter in the library of the House.

*Yours truly,
Willy Bach*

WILLY BACH