

Have you got what it takes?

Working in partnership with prisons



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Important facts

Prisons have a key role in protecting the public, reducing reoffending, helping offenders to reform their lives and delivering court sentences.

The Secretary of State for Justice is responsible for providing prison places in England and Wales under the Prisons Act 1952 (amended). The National Offender Management Service (NOMS), an executive agency of the Ministry of Justice, carries out this responsibility on his behalf. NOMS commissions (contracts) and delivers adult custodial services in England and Wales and services for offenders in the community.

There are a range of services provided in prisons such as health care, learning and skills, substance-misuse services and employment services which are commissioned by other organisations, including the Youth Justice Board and Immigration Enforcement.

Prisons also play a key role in the work of a range of local, regional and national partnership work such as Multi-Agency Protection Panels (MAPPA), local safeguarding boards, local criminal justice boards and community safety partnerships. Prisons work closely with police forces to gather and share intelligence (information) and investigate crimes. Intelligence received from prisons contributes to national, regional and local priorities including national security, serious and organised crime and integrated offender management (IOM).

Background

There are currently 107 public sector and 14 'contracted out' prisons in England and Wales, holding a population of 85,847 (of whom 3,919 are female)[correct as of 11 December 2015]. Prisons are classed depending on the gender, age and type of offenders they hold. The National Offender Management Service also runs two Immigration Removal Centres.

The type of prison offenders are sent to depends on their crime and their sentence. The risk of harm to the public and how likely offenders are to try to escape are also important considerations.

A 'Prison finder' tool is available which allows you to search for information about any prison in England and Wales.

Types of Prisons

Closed prisons have a secure perimeter to stop prisoners from escaping. Prisoners' movement within the prison is controlled by prison staff.

Open prisons do not have a secure perimeter and give prisoners more freedom to move around. Prisoners may have their own cell and keys or may live in dormitories.

Some prisoners may be able to leave prison for a certain amount of time during the day – for example, to go to work.

Local Prisons hold people remanded into custody by the courts pending sentence and those recently sentenced awaiting classification or serving short sentences.

High security prisons are for prisoners who have been given a category A or B security classification.

Resettlement prisons

As part of the changes introduced by the Transforming Rehabilitation agenda, 89 prisons have been designated as resettlement prisons each having dedicated resettlement services delivered by Community Rehabilitation Companies embedded in their regime.

Generally, offenders sentenced to under 12 months, and those in their last 12 weeks in custody will be located in a resettlement prison close to their home area. This means offenders can benefit from community support and the probation services delivered by Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs). CRCs have been contracted to provide a global service to support all offenders with their resettlement plan prior to release and will work with all low and medium risk offenders post-release.

More information

Prison Reform

The Secretary of State for Justice has set out his vision for prison reform which will transform both the way prisons are run and the prison estate itself.

Ageing and inefficient prisons will be closed and replaced with new, modern prisons with better facilities for education and other rehabilitative services to contribute to reduce reoffending. Plans to build nine new prisons by 2020 were announced during the November 2015 Spending Review.

The way prisons are run will be changed with an emphasis on rehabilitation and redemption, enabled by more autonomy for governors to innovate in the way which they manage their prisons in order to reduce reoffending.

How are prisoners allocated?

Prisoners are given a security category, based on:

- how likely they are to try to escape
- their risk of causing harm to other prisoners and prison staff
- their risk of causing harm to the public if they did escape

What is a 'Private' or 'Contracted Out Prison'

NOMS commissions custodial services from a diverse market of providers. In addition to prisons run by HM Prison Service, there are a number of prisons managed by private-sector companies (known as 'contracted out' prisons).

What are the core services delivered in Prisons?

NOMS has set out mandatory minimum core services expected of all prison providers. These set out what service outcomes are expected. The directory of Services and service specifications can be found at www.gov.uk/government/publications/noms-directory-of-services

What other partners have key roles?

The Parole Board is an independent body that works with its criminal justice partners to protect the public by risk assessing prisoners to decide whether they can be safely released into the community. Established in 1968, the Parole Board's role is to make risk assessments about prisoners to decide who may safely be released into the community. For more information see www.gov.uk/government/organisations/parole-board

All prisons have an Independent Monitoring Board (IMB). IMB members are independent, unpaid and work an average of two-three days per month. Their role is to monitor the day-to-day life in their local prison and ensure that proper standards of care and decency are maintained. For more information see www.imb.org.uk

The Prisons and Probation Ombudsman is appointed by the Secretary of State for Justice and is completely independent of NOMS, HM Prison Service, the Probation Service and Immigration Enforcement. The Ombudsman may investigate:

- complaints from prisoners, people on probation and immigration detainees held at immigration removal centres
- deaths of prisoners, residents of probation service Approved Premises, and those held in immigration removal centres.

For more information see www.ppo.gov.uk

What is the role of a prison?

Her Majesty's Prison Service (HMPS) is the public sector prisons provider in England and Wales. HMPS also has a number of contracted out prisons managed and run by private companies that are commissioned by NOMS. They are managed by contract or Service Level Agreement (SLA) to serve the public by keeping in custody those committed by the courts, as well as reducing reoffending by helping offenders to reform their lives.

They are commissioned to protect the public and provide what commissioners want to purchase by holding prisoners securely, reducing the risk of prisoners re-offending and providing safe and well-ordered establishments in which we treat prisoners humanely, decently and lawfully. They do this by working in close partnership with all commissioners, local stakeholders and others in the Criminal Justice System to achieve common objectives based on evidence based practice and the needs of the community.

More information about NOMS on gov.uk: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-offender-management-service>

More general information about prisons is available on gov.uk at <https://www.gov.uk/life-in-prison/arriving-at-prison>