

Criminal Justice System items to note

Meeting on 2.6.2026

1. Statistics

1.1 Trends in the volume of cases going through the system *Quarterly CJ Statistics ending 31.12.25*

The headline trends are:

- those formally dealt with by the CJS (1.59m) up by 3%
- 11% increase in community resolutions from 163,700 to 181,700
- 9% increase in prosecutions for indictable offences, the highest level seen since 2016
- Defendants remanded in custody at magistrates' courts rose to 67,000, a series high
- 1.36m were proceeded against at magistrates' courts, up 3% & the highest since 2017
- Prosecutions for the more serious indictable offences up by 9%, & summary offences up 1%
- Prosecutions increased across all indictable offence groups, including 18% for sexual offences (up by 2,400) and public order offences (up by 3,500), and 13% increases for drug offences (up by 6,000) and fraud offences (up by 600)
- Total RIC by magistrates' courts up 6%, the highest in the previous decade (67,000)
- Crown Court: RICs fell slightly but proportion stable at 54%, & bail remained 45%
- Average custodial sentence length fell slightly for all offence types and indictable offences
- There were 1.20m sentenced in 2025, up 1% - 77% to a fine
- 88,100 were sentenced to immediate custody – up 9%, highest level since 2017. Highest custody rates were for robbery (60%) & sexual offences (54%)
- Those receiving a custodial sentence of <12 months remained unchanged at 58%, but their volume up by 10% and by 8% for sentences of >12 months

1.2 Safety in Custody *MoJ's quarterly statistical report*

Key findings:

- The highest figure for death of prisoners through murder or manslaughter since records began, up from 6 to 9. In 2019-2024 there were between one and three prison homicides pa.
- Reduction in overall deaths and self-harm, but a rise in serious violence. 352 died in the 12 months to March, including 67 recorded as "self-inflicted"
- 72,753 recorded incidents of self-harm in 2025, (1 every 7 minutes). Rates fell by 8% in men's prisons and by 5% in women's prisons
- Prisons recorded 31,345 assaults – up 2.7% and serious assaults up 2.8%

CEO of the Howard League for Penal Reform said: "The highest ever number of homicides in prison and increases in serious assaults reveals how violent and dangerous our prisons remain. People in the care of the state should be granted safety as a bare minimum, but these figures show that even this low bar is still not being met. Nine homicides in a year is shocking and would be a national scandal in any other public institution. The government must act urgently to improve conditions and safety for people in our prisons, before more lives are lost."

1.3 Restricted patients *A hidden population - MoJ statistical bulletin*

"A restricted patient is a mentally disordered offender subject to a restriction order, due to the risk of serious harm they pose to others, and liable to a hospital order. They cannot be transferred between hospitals, discharged or allowed leave without consent of the Secretary of State for Justice." The number has continued to increase annually since 2013 - currently 7,998 ie 4,674 restricted patients in hospitals and 3,324 conditionally discharged patients. Of the restricted patients, 88% do not have a prison sentence (solely under restriction orders), 6% are serving life sentences, 4% are serving determinate sentences and 3% are IPPs. 88% were males, 48% were aged 40-59 and 33% aged 21-39 (33%). 62% committed offences of violence against the person. More females than males committed Criminal Damage & Arson but more males committed a sexual offence. Of the 4,674 restricted patients in hospital, 29% were admitted from prison establishments, and 88 were to high secure hospitals.

2. Sentencing

2.1 *The Sentencing Act 2026 Guardian article*

The plan to scrap most short prison sentences has come into effect so many who would have faced up to a year in jail are likely to receive a suspended sentence. Under the reform, courts can only give short prison terms in a number of specific or exceptional circumstances. This measure is part of the government's plan to end the population crisis in prisons - with rehabilitation experts saying there is no evidence short jail terms work. Judges will also be able to suspend jail sentences of up to 3 years. Statistics indicate there are over 6,000 people serving sentences of up to a year at any one time and are the most likely to leave prison and commit another crime. The MoJ said the measures would not abolish short sentences and would "make sure prisons never run out of space again, while strengthening the supervision of the most dangerous offenders." The legislation does not define what would count as exceptional circumstances for a court to jail an offender, leaving that for magistrates or a judge to decide. A change to bail rules means that defendants likely to receive a suspended sentence, if later convicted, will be less likely to be held in jail on remand ahead of a trial. Currently over 16,000 are on remand - about a fifth of the total jail population. Another measure allows a court to defer passing a sentence for up to 12 months, double the current permissible delay, to give time to address problems at the heart of their criminality such as drug addiction.

2.2 *Crime & Policing Bill*

2.2.1 *Shoplifting*

This Bill is expected to receive Royal Assent in the coming weeks and will make abuse and assault of retail workers a standalone offence. The Prime Minister recently described shop theft and the abuse of retail staff as a "free-for-all" situation, pledging to toughen punishments and reinforce neighbourhood policing. Revolving Doors CEO said: "We cannot prosecute our way out of addiction, homelessness and trauma. We can protect shop workers and tackle root causes at the same time, in fact, we have to, because one without the other will fail. We need to be clear about what problem we are trying to solve. Some retail crime is organised criminal activity, and that needs a robust policing response. But a significant amount of repeat shop theft is linked to people in deep crisis, addiction, homelessness, poor mental health, trauma and poverty. Those two groups need different responses. The public do not want a choice between being tough on crime and tackling the causes of crime. They want both. If someone is repeatedly stealing to fund an addiction, the answer cannot just be arrest, custody, release, arrest, custody, release. That is not justice. Our concern is that simply creating another offence for assaults against shop workers is not a solution. It will drive more people into an already overcrowded prison system without changing behaviour. Government, police, health services and retailers should invest together in offender-to-recovery schemes that reduce repeat offending, protect staff, and stop the same people coming back through the same doors."

2.2.2 *Jury trials*

Labour MPs are hoping to hijack plans to cut back on jury trials by proposing specialist courts for sexual offences with fixed dates for trial, saying this could still solve much of the backlog problem. Ministers say more people are opting for jury trials in the hope that the prolonged wait for the case to be heard could lead to the charges being dropped as victims and witnesses give up. While sexual offences such as rape will still be tried by juries, ministers have consistently argued that one of the main reasons for the proposed changes is to speed up their progress through crown courts. Some rebels behind the amendments have held talks with the justice secretary and the courts minister, who are understood to have not entirely ruled out some movement from the government. A government official said "It remains the case that we need to make these necessary changes to jury trial thresholds so as to bring down the backlog of cases."

3. CJS agencies

3.1 Courts

3.1.1 *Magistrate recruitment drive MoJ statement*

Thousands of new magistrates will be recruited and trained in under half the time it currently takes. A new national taskforce will oversee local recruitment committees helping select, interview and recruit civil-minded members of the public to deliver justice in communities across the country. And

for the first time, recruitment of magistrates will happen throughout the calendar year with a recruitment drive every quarter standardising a process that varies from region to region. The current process can take more than a year. The move will also turbocharge the number of successful new magistrates to 21,000 by March 2029 – 6,000 more than currently in post. Latest figures show that 57% of magistrates are female and 14% come from an ethnic minority background, with London having the highest proportion of magistrates from an ethnic minority background at 31%. National Chair of the Magistrates' Association said: "Magistrates are central to the Government's ambitious plans for justice. We are pleased that a national taskforce has been set-up to coordinate and improve the process of recruiting new magistrates, building on a pilot scheme that has greatly reduced waiting times and frustration for applicants".

3.1.2 Judicial and Legal Diversity Board

The new board, chaired by David Lammy, the first black Lord Chancellor, and Sue Carr (Lady Chief Justice), has met for the first time to consider how to remove barriers for diverse candidates joining the judiciary. The seven-member panel wants to fast-track solicitors from under-represented backgrounds and strengthen mentoring for new recruits. It aims to build on recent drives that increased the proportion of female judges to 44%, but MoJ figures for 2025 show black judges still account for only 1%. The UK Association of Black Judges, launched last year to address recruitment failings, said it could not send a representative to the inaugural meeting because it was invited only three days beforehand. While welcoming the initiative, it said the key problems lie in the Judicial Appointments Commission's processes and internal biases. A prominent barrister said any reform must also address evidence of institutional racism in the justice system. The JAC said increasing judicial diversity is a collective effort and that its processes are regularly independently tested for fairness and best practice.

3.1.3 Artificial Intelligence (AI) court transcripts MoJ & HMCTS announcement

New research, led by HMCTS will explore how AI can be used to transcribe court hearings and open the door to faster, cheaper access to court records for victims and others who need them. Costly court transcript fees have meant that victims have had to fork out hundreds, sometimes thousands, of pounds to access exactly what was said in court to help provide answers and closure. Currently Crown Court transcripts are produced by contracted providers. It will explore how the MoJ's in-house AI, Justice Transcribe, could meet required accuracy standards while reducing transcription time and costs. The findings will inform nationwide plans to upgrade, modernise and open up the court system and increase access to justice in the digital age. The government recently announced that victims whose cases are going through the Crown Court will have access to free transcripts of judges' sentencing remarks from Spring 2027, to deliver swifter access to justice.

3.2 Police

3.2.1 Stalking offences Guardian article

The number of stalking offences recorded by police has soared over the past decade, driven by increased recognition, and technology making it easier for perpetrators to track their victims. More than 135,000 offences were recorded last year, up from just under 3,000 10 yrs ago. Significant increases were recorded nationally with some of the largest forces recording huge rises. CPS figures show offences leading to charges increased from 2,305 in 2020-21 to 6,790 in 2024-25 – the highest on record. CPS said: "Stalking offences charged by the CPS have more than doubled in the last five years and reached an all-time high last year. We know that as more of our lives are lived online, the way stalkers offend is changing. Even when abuse is digital, the harm it causes for victims is very real. The CPS has launched its first stalking action plan, specifically designed to tackle the evolving nature of the offence in the digital age." Almost half of those contacting a specialist helpline reported being stalked by an ex-partner, & many others knew the perpetrator. The rise is likely to reflect a combination of factors eg improved awareness and changes in how they are identified and recorded.

3.2.2 Facial recognition technology Parliamentary Office of Science & Technology report

Facial recognition technology (FRT) is a biometric technology that estimates the degree of similarity between two faces. FRT identifies people by checking an image of a person against a list of known

individuals to find matches. FRT uses AI and machine learning to train systems to recognise faces. Police use three types of FRT:

- Retrospective Facial Recognition, identifies suspects after an incident, collects images from eg CCTV, mobile phones and social media, & compares with known individuals in the Police National Database, which holds over 16.5 million facial records
- Live Facial Recognition, used by 13 of the 43 police forces with a national rollout planned, uses mounted cameras in public spaces to capture live images of passers-by. Scans are compared with a watchlist from national databases of suspects wanted by the police or courts
- Operator-Initiated FR is a near real-time method currently used by South Wales & Gwent Police forces and is being trialled in London. Comparing their photo with a list of known people using a mobile app., it identifies someone who cannot/will not say who they are

The main concerns about FRT include the risk of misuse, data security, intrusion of privacy and inaccurate technology. Privacy and civil rights campaigners have consistently called for improved oversight of the technology.

3.2.3 Trauma trackers of police officers *Guardian article*

“Trauma tracker” tools are to be mandated by ministers to ensure the psychological toll to police officers caused by exposure to death, abuse and neglect is recorded. A prototype system links an individual collar number to every harrowing incident they attend, and the tracker creates a permanent, digital record of cumulative exposure that cannot be ignored by a changing rotation of supervisors. A 2018 study revealed that more than 90% of UK police officers had been exposed to traumatic incidents with 20% suffering from clinical levels of PTSD. The system has historically relied on “reactive” measures, often waiting for an officer to show signs of distress before offering help. The new tracker seeks to intervene before a psychological breakdown occurs. It functions by scanning the force’s crime recording systems and highlighting “red flag” incidents such as fatal road traffic collisions, child sexual abuse and sudden deaths.

3.2.4 Strip searching of black children *Children’s commissioner report*

The report identifies that black children are almost eight times more likely to be strip-searched by police than their white counterparts, are also overrepresented when officers use force. and were more likely to have their “size, gender or build” cited as justification. The findings point to a worsening of racial disparities and that the “deeply intrusive and potentially traumatic experience” is usually used because of the suspicion of drugs possession, but nearly half of all searches still result in no further action. There were 362 strip-searches of under-18s in 2023/4 - half were white, 31% Black, 11% Asian, 1.7% of mixed ethnicity and 12% other. Some searches were still being carried out in public view and with no appropriate adult present, and 30% involved children who had already been searched at least once before. Force, such as handcuffs, firearms or Tasers, was used in 17% of all stop and searches of children in 2024/25. The commissioner said “It’s been my longstanding concern about the ‘adultification’ of Black children, where they are perceived as older than they are, and somehow less deserving of protection. We cannot accept a system that treats children differently based on how they look. Children must, first and foremost, be treated as children.”

3.3 Prisons

3.3.1 Prison deaths *Prisons and Probation Ombudsman’s Learning Lessons Bulletins*

3.3.1.1 Self-inflicted deaths

This highlights the risks of being in a reception prison as they have one of the highest rates of self-inflicted deaths of all prison functions. Key findings include:

- *The importance of early days in reception prisons* In 11% of cases assessed, self-inflicted deaths occurred within the first 48 hours of entering a reception prison, 30% within the next 3 weeks ie 41% within the first month. 66% were not on an ACCT at the time, and 21% did not have an ACCT started when it should have been. Collaboration between healthcare & prison staff could have been improved to identify & manage risk eg staff basing their decisions on how a prisoner was presenting rather than an objective assessment of their known risk factors
- *Challenges beyond early days* Some remain in reception prisons for months or even years, although these prisons are not designed for long stays. Over time, they are exposed to

instability, high churn and a limited regime. 36% took their life after spending more than 3 mths in a reception prison.

- *ACCT checks often not taking place* Of those who had been on ACCT during their most recent time in prison, 40% said checks were not carried out by staff as frequently as required. Staff were found to have falsified records in several cases. 41% of the deaths occurred near a court hearing and despite the requirement that prisoners must be risk assessed regardless of whether their court appearance was in person or by video link, for 32% this did not happen
- *The importance of key workers* These schemes are an important part of HMPPS' response to self-inflicted deaths and are intended to improve safety by engaging prisoners. However, many had very few or no key work sessions.

The grim reality is that there are far too many prisoners taking their own life. Support for prisoners in reception prisons needs to be prioritised. Senior leaders across the prison service must ensure that their staff understand that early days in reception prisons are critical – many are arriving with multiple risk factors and staff must be trained and prepared on how to identify and manage these.

3.3.1.2 Deaths in segregation

Segregation is highly isolating and carries significant risks. Prisoners usually spend most of the day alone, leaving their cell only for essential tasks. HMPPS policy says it should be used only as a last resort. Between 1.4.24 and 31.12.25 there were 14 deaths in segregation units, 8 of them involving prisoners on an open ACCT. Segregation reduces protective factors against suicide and self-harm, and prolonged use can seriously damage mental health. Policy is clear that prisoners should not be segregated if they are mentally or physically unfit, yet investigations repeatedly found procedural failures, including missed visits, delayed or absent health screenings, and cases where clearly unwell prisoners were still segregated. In one case, a prisoner with epilepsy and sickle cell anaemia was placed in segregation without the required health assessment and died later that night. Governors must ensure policies are followed, reasons for segregation are recorded, and clear support plans are in place to help reintegrate prisoners.

3.3.2 Support for remand prisoners HMIP report on the experiences of remand prisoners

In three-quarters of reception prisons, remand prisoners made up over half of the population. It found that they have poorer outcomes than those serving a sentence. Too few jails have developed a strategy to manage them, increasing their vulnerability and leaving many unable to access vital support. In December 2025 16,520 adult prisoners were on remand ie 19% of the total prison population cf 13% ten years ago. Of this group, 10,835 prisoners were untried and 5,685 were convicted unsentenced. The paper makes for grim reading: "Although remand prisoners report having higher rates of mental health problems and depression, and an increased risk of suicide, they often did not get enough support when they first arrived in jail. They were less likely than sentenced prisoners to know how to contact independent groups who could help them, be able to shower every day, get clean clothes that fit them and to have their own cell, and they were often not engaged in purposeful activity. Prisoners awaiting trial did not always get the additional visits to which they were entitled, or enough help to keep in touch with their families. They received too little support to resolve issues such as sorting out housing, benefits and finance before they were released, and this was particularly concerning for prisoners found not guilty at trial who, while in prison, could have lost their employment or home."

3.3.3 Prison Education A guest post by the CEO of the Prisoners' Education Trust

Last year, it emerged that prison education was facing substantial cuts as a result of the new contracts that came into effect from 1 October. There was no official confirmation of the extent of the reductions or the differences in how individual prisons would be affected. The MoJ has now published prison-by-prison data bringing much-needed clarity to the situation but makes for grim reading. There has been an overall reduction of 21% in the number of education hours planned, and there are more cuts to come (a further reduction of 5%) ie a total cut of 25%. There are broad variations between prisons with 6 prisons having reduced by more than 50%. Evidence is starting to emerge of the impacts that these cuts are having. It remains the case that education should be at the heart of an effective prison system, giving people the knowledge, skills and confidence to thrive

on release. Cutting education is a mistake and should be reversed, but this may not be possible. Budgets are tight, contracts have been signed, and more money is unlikely to be forthcoming from the Treasury any time soon.

3.3.4 Treatment of imprisoned drug dealers *Guardian interview with HMIP Chief Inspector*

A report by the justice select committee found that “endemic” use of drugs in prisons caused violence and fuelled debt. More than 1 in 10 men and nearly 2 in 5 women have developed a drug habit while in prison, with 39% finding it easy to get drugs. Recent inspections of three out of eight of the long-term high security prisons uncovered soaring levels of violence connected to drugs. The Chief Inspector said: “Some serious organised crime gang members are coming into prison and their feet just don’t touch the ground. They’re running operations and making a lot of money almost from the moment they get into the jail. And at the moment, it feels fairly consequence-free. We should be thinking about assertively managing some of these people within prisons – separating them, controlling the regime and saying to them clearly: ‘If you want to be part of the normal regime of a prison, you need to stop commissioning drug sales into the jail.’ I would like to see more searches, more use of dogs.” He pointed to the use of separation centres for Islamist extremists as an example of where isolation units can improve prisons. “We have done that with radicalisers and you could see the effect that had – governors breathed an absolute sigh of relief. I think the Prison Service, and others across government, have been very slow to respond to the drone threat”. Drones are now being used to bring in large volumes of goods, delivered to order: “We came across a jail where an 11kg package had come into the prison. It contained mobile phones, chargers, sim cards, Ozempic [which can be used for weight loss], Minoxidil [used to treat hair loss] and anabolic steroids, and huge amounts of cannabis.” The MoJ did not respond directly to the request for isolation for drug dealers: “As the chief inspector recognises, the prison crisis we inherited has left too many jails breeding crime rather than preventing it, with consequences felt across the estate. We are tackling these challenges head-on and have invested over £40m in new prison security, including £10m on anti-drone measures, to clamp down on the illicit items that fuel violence. We will continue to ensure those caught smuggling contraband into the prison estate face the full force of the law.”

3.3.5 Drone drug deliveries *Guardian article*

Plans to install tougher netting and window grilles to stop drones from entering have been hampered because the walls have been unable to take the extra weight. Recent attempts to fix anti-drone netting at a Victorian prison were stalled after they found that the bricks were too soft. The chief inspector of prisons recently said that the Prison Service had “ceded the airspace above many of our prisons to serious organised crime”, resulting in a “national security threat”. The number of incidents at prisons involving drones has risen by more than 1,000% over four years, with gang members able to fly packages carried by drones direct to cell windows. The packages are then retrieved by inmates with a hook. Inspectors called for an overhaul of security in Victorian prisons in 2024 after it emerged that inmates in HMP Winchester managed to dig through cell walls using plastic cutlery. The government has promised to invest £10m on anti-drone measures. A Prison Service spokesperson denied that some prison walls were too weak to support anti-drone measures such as nets. “All improvements to prison security are tailored to individual jails, following detailed structural assessments to ensure they are safe and effective. We have invested over £40m to fund a range of physical security enhancements. These improved measures will boost safety, combat the influx of drone activity and clamp down on suspected wrongdoing behind bars.”

3.3.6 Prison officer training *Guardian article*

Trainee prison officers will receive new instruction, mentoring and support to help them avoid manipulation into illicit relationships with prisoners. The move reflects a younger, less experienced workforce than a decade ago and follows the prosecution of more than a dozen former officers involved in financial or sexual relationships with inmates. New officers currently receive 10 weeks of initial training on security and the prison environment, followed by 7 weeks of face-to-face training before entering the male estate. The MoJ is also finalising Enable, a 12-month programme to give recruits greater support. There were 22,067 prison officers in FTE employment at the end of 2025. Prison Service sources said the changes are not solely a response to inexperience or inappropriate relationships.

3.3.7 Release errors *Statement by Deputy Prime Minister and the MoJ*

New measures follow Dame Lynne Owens' independent review of releases in error, which said they were "one symptom of a broken system" caused by staffing cuts, a failure to build prison places and long-term underinvestment in digital infrastructure. Recorded errors have fallen by 32% on the same period last year after stronger prison checks and the rollout of AI tools to reduce human error and improve oversight. Ministers have accepted the review's recommendations and pledged to drive release mistakes as close to zero as possible.

- Outdated paper-based prison systems to be digitalised, with up to an £8m package to crack down on mistaken releases
- New ID system to be rolled out to track individuals across the system digitally
- An immediate cash injection of up to £20m to digitise the manual, paper-based processes that underpin sentence calculations, including "smart inboxes" in every reception prison to automatically sort and route misdirected offender information
- Immediately simplifying processes, backed by £8m to bolster manual checks across both Crown and Magistrates' courts by recruiting 165 extra specialist court staff
- Improving support for victims mean they will receive clearer communication and faster updates if a mistake occurs

3.3.8 The Hidden Pain of Human Contact Loss *Article on qualitative research*

Human touch is essential to psychological wellbeing, emotional regulation, identity and social connection. In prison, however, touch is not absent but altered: often controlled, imposed or stripped of meaning. Prisoners may experience frequent contact, but rarely in ways that support wellbeing, making touch a source of tension, power and deprivation. Research shows that meaningful physical contact is a necessity across the life course, and its absence is linked to anxiety, depression and impaired social functioning. In prison, the mix of unwanted touch, limited affectionate touch and lack of control over either has important consequences for mental health, behaviour and relationships. Because touch is closely tied to trauma, identity & emotional regulation, its disruption may contribute to withdrawal, aggression and difficulties in sustaining relationships in custody and after release. If rehabilitation is to be taken seriously, this overlooked form of deprivation cannot be ignored.

3.3.9 Fire safe prison cells *Guardian article*

The government has reneged on a pledge to make all prison cells fire-safe or take them out of use by the end of next year, meaning tens of thousands of prisoners will remain at risk. The MoJ has admitted it has known for almost two decades that about a quarter of prison places are unsafe, putting the people housed in affected cells at risk. Successive governments had pledged to remedy the situation by the end of 2027, but that has now been dropped with no set new date. There have been at least 9 deaths in cell fires since 2011, and the independent fire safety regulator reports that 44% of prisons are awaiting installation of automatic fire detectors. The Howard League has threatened the government with legal action if it does not remedy the situation. HMPPS says it would "not be possible" for the department to fulfil its previous commitment and does not intend to set out a new date due to limited prison capacity.

3.3.10 Age-appropriate support for young adult long term prisoners *Prison Reform Trust report*

There are 10,324 young adults (18–24) in prison, 12% of the total population. While the overall number has halved over 20 years, the number serving long sentences has risen markedly. In 2024, 50 people aged 18–20 started an indeterminate sentence, up from 30 a decade earlier. By December 2025, 6% were serving life sentences, compared with 2% in 2015; another 6% were serving extended determinate sentences and 17% sentences of 2–4 years. The report argues that multiple disadvantage shapes how young adults cope with long-term imprisonment. Many felt overwhelmed and disorientated by sentences equal to or longer than their age, with serious effects on mental health, identity and their ability to imagine a future. Key findings included:

- Most young adults entering long-term custody have experienced prior state intervention, such as care, alternative education or youth justice involvement

- Trauma, exclusion and racism shape relationships with staff, peers & the wider prison environment
- Gaps in purposeful activity, neurodiversity support and trauma-informed practice undermine wellbeing and progression
- Positive relationships, family contact and mentoring can be crucial to adaptation and development over long sentences

The report calls for a clear HMPPS strategy and reforms including age-specific provision, trauma-informed practice, a dedicated policy framework, staff training, staged sentence management, better access to education and training, alternatives to separation-based conflict management, removal of higher education funding restrictions, and more support for family and other meaningful relationships.

3.4 Probation

3.4.1 Approved Premises HMIP Research & Analysis Bulletin

Approved Premises (APs), formerly probation hostels, manage people released from prison who pose a high or very high risk of serious harm and have no safe accommodation. There are 104 APs, mainly for men, including 8 for women; 14 are run by third sector providers and 12 are psychologically informed planned environments co-commissioned with NHS England for people likely to have a personality disorder. Most placements last 12 weeks. APs provide a vital bridge from custody to community for a high-risk, high-need group, but remain misunderstood and undervalued. Their effectiveness depends on integrated, desistance-focused policy, adequate funding and staffing, access to housing and mental health support, and strong relationships and operational practice. Recommendations include:

- Clearer understanding of the purpose of APs across probation, partner organisations and the public
- Better resourcing
- Greater autonomy for AP managers
- Stronger partnerships with local authorities
- Dedicated employment support for residents
- Stronger links between APs and community probation officers

3.4.2 Expansion in electronic monitoring and probation procedural reforms Prisons Minister announcement

The *EM announcement* has five elements, backed by £100m:

- A presumption of electronic monitoring for most people released from prison, to begin with the progression model in the autumn
- Expansion of the Domestic Abuse Perpetrators on Licence scheme to all 12 probation regions, allowing extra monitoring such as curfews, exclusion zones, GPS tagging and alcohol monitoring where probation identifies a risk of domestic abuse on release, regardless of the original offence
- Funding to test proximity monitoring so probation can detect when an offender comes within a set distance of a victim, with victim consent
- Expansion of tagging for people released after burglary, robbery or theft offences
- A new Electronic Monitoring Data Insights Tool giving probation quick access to monitoring and behavioural data

Probation reforms include:

- Greater use of actuarial offending predictors to assess risk and likelihood of reoffending. The new model will have seven tiers, each with a maximum number of contacts
- Supervision will be rebalanced so higher-risk people receive more probation contact, while routine face-to-face appointments are reduced for lower tiers
- No one with current or past domestic abuse concerns will be placed in the lowest three tiers
- Practitioner assessment will sit alongside the actuarial model so Risk of Serious Harm and MAPPA status can place offenders in tiers with supervision levels practitioners judge sufficient

The Government says probation resources will be refocused on face-to-face work and protected for those in the highest-risk tiers.

3.4.3 Reframing masculinity *HMIP's Academic Insight "Reframing masculinity for young men and boys"*

The report argues that probation and youth justice practice must understand current constructions of masculinity. Traditional ideals of dominance, control and emotional stoicism can create identity conflicts for boys and men and, when combined with adolescence, poverty and marginalisation, may contribute to violence, coercive control and sexual offending. The digital age has intensified this through online misogyny, influencer culture and messages that equate dominance with success. Mental health adds a further layer: boys and young men are disproportionately affected by suicide, depression and substance misuse, yet often do not present as vulnerable. Practitioners therefore need to understand how masculinity and mental health interact, as purely punitive responses can deepen shame and reinforce harmful norms. The report calls for safe spaces where young men and boys can explore identity, challenge harmful norms and build empathy, reframing masculinity as a positive, inclusive concept that supports safer communities.

3.5 Youth Justice

3.5.1 Public's views on Youth Justice *St Giles CEO to report on the Co-op Foundation on public attitudes towards imprisonment of children*

Although the number of children in custody across the UK has fallen sharply over the past decade, new research suggests the public wants a more ambitious rethink of youth justice. People tend to view childhood offending compassionately, recognising the role of circumstance rather than fixed character. That view is supported by evidence: brain development continues into the mid-twenties, especially in areas linked to impulse control and decision-making, underlining the importance of early intervention and prevention, particularly for children lacking family stability and material security. Only 15% of the public think the age of criminal responsibility should remain at 10; nearly two-thirds think it should be higher, and one in five say at least 16. Public support for less punitive responses is also clear: 70% favour greater use of community sentences for children, including most victims of crime. There is similar concern about remand, with 52% saying it is wrong and only 18% supporting it. Nearly half of children in custody are awaiting trial, and two-thirds of them are later acquitted or given a non-custodial sentence, meaning many are deprived of liberty unnecessarily, contrary to the principle that detention should be a last resort. The government has acknowledged this and committed to reducing child remand, but that must now lead to lasting change. These views are also pragmatic. Custody is expensive and often ineffective: a place in a YOI costs over £120,000 a year, compared with about £7,000 for community supervision, while reoffending rates are around 60% after custody and 30% in the community. If the public supports rehabilitation and the evidence shows it works better and costs less, policy should move further in that direction.

3.5.2 Reforming the YJS *Blog on Government's White Paper*

The government has published its White Paper and delivery plan for reforming the YJS. It argues that avoiding the criminalisation of children does not mean failing to intervene, and warns that an overly narrow focus on reducing first-time entrants can create perverse incentives. Early intervention is central, particularly for persistent offending, with an emphasis on changing trajectories before behaviour becomes entrenched while avoiding unnecessary contact with the CJS. The White Paper commits to reducing the criminalisation of children in care, improving safeguarding, and tackling child criminal exploitation and county lines. It stresses the need for strong multi-agency working, better identification of risk, and more joined-up information systems so practitioners can build a fuller picture of children's needs and previous interventions. The government prioritises knife crime, violence against women and girls, and terrorism, and proposes to deliver its approach through the Turnaround Programme, Young Futures Panels and Hubs, and stronger Serious Violence Duty partnerships.

3.5.3 The reality of alpha victims *Guest post by University colleagues who share their work on when exploited children exploit others*

Debates about exploitation often rely on a simple divide between victims and offenders, but county lines shows the boundary is often blurred. These drug networks, which extend from cities into smaller towns, depend on the exploitation of children and vulnerable adults to transport drugs and money, store weapons and maintain contact with buyers. Violence, intimidation, debt bondage & cuckooing are common tools of control. While county lines is often framed as a policing issue, it is also a form of child criminal exploitation, and within it some exploited children go on to exploit others. Because it operates hierarchically, some children move quickly from apparently low-level roles into positions where they manage logistics, oversee cuckooed properties & recruit or control other children. These actions may look like clear offending, but many of those involved have themselves been groomed, coerced or threatened. In that context, taking on a more senior role may be less about choice than survival. The idea of the 'alpha victim' captures this overlap: children who are both exploited and enacting harm. Existing CJ & safeguarding frameworks often struggle with this complexity. Research on adultification shows that some children, particularly young Black boys, are more likely to be seen as older, more responsible & less vulnerable than they are, making their own exploitation easier to miss. If safeguarding is to be effective, it must recognise forms of exploitation that do not fit neatly into existing categories and respond to the complex overlap of power, harm & responsibility.

4. Other issues

4.1 Domestic abuse

From research evidence to practical guidance Guest post by Dr Nicole Renehan of Durham Un. Practitioners working in CJ and domestic abuse interventions are increasingly encountering neurodivergent men within perpetrator programmes. Yet many describe feeling under-prepared, uncertain, and at times unsupported when trying to respond appropriately – particularly when behaviour sits at the blurred edges of risk, distress, compliance and Engagement. Crucially, practitioners were clear that neurodivergence does not cause domestic abuse and should not be used to excuse it. But they were also clear that misunderstanding neurodivergence can lead to poorly informed practice decisions, including decisions that ultimately increase risk or disengagement. The research has now been translated into a web-based toolkit which represents an attempt to bridge the gap by grounding practice guidance in research, lived experience and practitioner expertise. Designing from the margins, in this context, is not about lowering expectations or avoiding accountability. It is about developing responses that are more accurate, more ethical and more effective.

4.2 Extremism

Combatting new forms of extremism House of Commons Home Affairs Committee report

The report warns that Prevent is not equipped for modern extremism, which is evolving rapidly. Long-standing threats such as Islamist and right-wing extremism remain, but new patterns are emerging, including the involvement of more children and young adults, hybrid ideologies, and a disproportionate number of neurodiverse people and those with mental health conditions in Prevent referrals. Online spaces are central: social media, gaming platforms, forums, influencers, memes and coded messaging make extremist content highly accessible and engaging, especially for younger audiences, while algorithms and generative AI amplify the risk. The Committee's main recommendation is to embed Prevent within the wider safeguarding system and create a triage structure above it, so cases are directed to the most appropriate support rather than all passing through Prevent first. It also calls for a long-term research and evidence programme, noting that the UK still lacks the data needed to understand where radicalisation is happening, particularly online, and how best to respond.

4.3 IPPS

Six Indefinite Sentences for Public Protection (IPP/ DPPs) Quashed Court of Appeal

The Chair of the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC) welcomed the Court of Appeal's decision to quash the indeterminate sentences of six IPP/DPP prisoners, three after CCRC referrals. Those three were convicted as young men more than 15 years ago and have remained in custody despite tariffs of no more than three and a half years. The CCRC is reviewing more than 150 IPP/DPP cases involving sentences imposed on young people. In these cases, it found a real

possibility that the Court would rule that sentencing judges had given insufficient weight to the offenders' age and maturity.

4.4 Victims Justice Secretary statement

Victims and bereaved families will have six months, rather than 28 days, to challenge "unduly lenient" sentences after campaigning by murder victims' relatives. The change reflects concern that grieving families and traumatised victims should not be expected to engage with the justice system within a month. The government will also add a duty to the Victims' Code to tell survivors about the scheme. The right to refer a sentence remains limited to serious Crown Court offences, including murder, manslaughter, robbery, rape, stalking and most child sexual abuse offences, and still excludes many others, such as some sexual crimes, causing death by careless driving and burglary. Ministers will make the change through amendments to the Victims and Courts Bill. For everyone else, the referral deadline remains 28 days.

4.5 Voluntary sector Clinks annual State of the Sector report

There was cautious optimism about the Government's pledge in the Independent Spending Review to increase funding for the voluntary sector, and a positive response to the creation of the Women's Justice Board. But concerns remained about the impact of early release schemes, uncertainty over policy and commissioning changes, the lack of a long-term justice strategy, and the poor fit of the OneHMPPS model with other public bodies.

- The impact of early release schemes and consequent increasing demand on the sector
- Uncertainty around the coming policy and commissioning changes (particularly the impact of the Sentencing Act) and their impact on the sector
- The apparent lack of a strategic long-term approach to justice policy
- The OneHMPPS model, in particular the large size of areas and their lack of fit with other government bodies

These concerns were compounded by rising costs. Around 60% of organisations were supporting more people, and 75% said needs were becoming more complex. Their work was hindered by gaps in accommodation, resettlement, mental health and neurodiversity support, and by limited engagement from probation. Other pressures included slow vetting and staff burnout, with retention affected by higher statutory sector pay. Many said grants from trusts and foundations were harder to secure. 59% said funding was insufficient to deliver high-quality services & only 25% achieved full cost recovery on contracted work. Looking ahead, organisations were concerned about financial sustainability, rising populism and anti-rehabilitation narratives, & the difficulty of working in prisons.

4.6 Women offenders

4.6.1 Progress on the Female Offender Strategy Delivery Plan Female Offender Strategy Dashboard

The four priority areas of the strategy are: Fewer women entering the CJS; Fewer women serving short custodial sentences; Better outcomes for women in custody; & Protecting the public through better outcomes for women on release

The dashboard indicates that performance is generally poor with key metrics worsening in ten areas and improving in just three. Key areas include:

- a big rise in the number of women being arrested, up by 111,070 since 2023/24. While the number of women prosecuted for not paying their TV licence has fallen by a sixth (down 20,402 or 16.7%) since 2023, the number of women prosecuted for truancy offences remain at double that of men (4,744 in 2024 compared to 2,336)
- In 2024, 4313 women were sentenced to immediate custody of <12 months, most for <6 months ie up 23.5%
- Crown Court remands in custody also increased by 1.2% on last year, up to 33%
- 7% increase in the self harm rate - 8.8 times the equivalent rate for males. Those who self harmed did so an average of 18.7 times, up 17%. Outcomes on release
- there were 2,836 recalls of women to custody, an increase of 44%

4.6.2 Reducing women's imprisonment *Women's Justice Board report*

The report says the 2007 Corston Review's recommendations, remain largely unimplemented. Women in contact with the CJS are often highly vulnerable, with multiple and complex needs linked to domestic abuse and other forms of VAWG. Many are primary carers and have fallen through gaps in statutory support. The government aims to reduce the women's prison population by about 400, enough to close one women's prison. The report argues this will require not only diverting more women from custody, but also better community support and stronger prevention to keep women out of the CJS altogether. Recommendations include:

- Women's community specialist services are fundamental to a whole system approach and require investment for the long term
- A 2-3yr Women's Justice Reform Programme is required to provide oversight for delivery of all the actions proposed
- An anti-racist, intersectional approach to addressing disparities should be adopted
- Reduce remand and recall for all women through legislation
- Improve resettlement prospects by removing barriers to employment
- Legislate to end imprisonment of pregnant women in all but the most exceptional cases; embed & strengthen improvements in care of pregnant women where imprisonment cannot be avoided
- Promote non-custodial sentencing of mothers of children under 18
- Develop and publish a Young Women's Strategy to prevent their entry into the CJS and imprisonment, particularly for care experienced young women and victims of VAWG
- Provide specific health and wellbeing support for young women in contact with the CJS, including those in prison

4.6.3 Use of force in women's prisons *openDemocracy*

Use of force in women's prisons has risen sharply, often in response to mental ill health. An FOI request to HMPPS found incidents more than doubled in three years, from 3,268 in 2021/22 to 6,932 in 2024/25, despite government guidance that force should be a last resort. Physical restraint rose by 70%, handcuffing by 264% (from 502 to 1,826), and use against pregnant women also increased (11 cases in 2024/25). Women in Prison linked the rise to high staff turnover, inexperience and the imprisonment of seriously mentally ill women. Over 80% of women in prison have mental ill health, and self-harm is nine times more common than in the male estate; it was the third most common reason for using force, after non-compliance and preventing harm to others. There was also an increase in pain-inducing techniques such as PAVA. Campaigners said the figures show the need for better de-escalation training and more appropriate support, warning that force can be disproportionate and retraumatising for women, many of whom have experienced abuse. The MoJ said force is used only when lawful and necessary, such as to preserve life or address an imminent serious risk, and that it is expanding safer community-based alternatives to custody.

4.6.4 The restraint of pregnant women during pregnancy-related hospital escorts *The Minister of State for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending announcement*

Lord Timpson has commissioned the Prisons & Probation Ombudsman to carry out an independent investigation into the use of restraints on pregnant women in prison during pregnancy-related hospital escorts. This is in light of allegations that the policy governing its usage was routinely breached at one or more women's prisons. The investigation covers the use of restraints on pregnant women during transport to and from hospital, while in hospital, and where deemed appropriate by the PPO, women who were immediately post-natal or post-pregnancy loss.