

## Statistical Note and Consultation - Changes to Prison Population Projections: Prison Reform Trust Response

The Prison Reform Trust (PRT) is an independent UK charity working to create a just, humane and effective prison system. We do this by inquiring into the workings of the system; informing prisoners, staff and the wider public; and by influencing Parliament, government and officials towards reform. The Prison Reform Trust provides the secretariat to the All Party Parliamentary Penal Affairs Group and has an advice and information service for prisoners and their families.

The Prison Reform Trust's main objectives are reducing unnecessary imprisonment and promoting community solutions to crime; and improving treatment and conditions for prisoners and their families.

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We are grateful for the opportunity to comment on the proposed changes.

We agree with the proposal to move to 4 rather than 6 year projections for total population, but recommend that a table is retained that shows the long term (i.e. well beyond 4 years) impact of long and indeterminate sentences (including the differential impact of releases on or beyond tariff, and different recall rates). This is necessary to show the built in inflation resulting from sentencing drift over the last decade. It serves as a critical reminder that, whatever changes might be made in sentencing for new offences, there is an irreducible minimum population unless existing sentences were to be commuted in some way.

We agree with the proposed move to August publication

We agree with the proposal not to have an upper and lower projection but to show the range of potential outcomes in different ways. In particular, tracking actual against previous predictions is a good idea.

On segmentation, we should suggest a new segment of 21-24 year old males, and suggest the same breakdown on females as males (i.e. under 18, 18-20, 21-24, over 50s, over 60s and the remainder. The 21-24 segment is necessary given the focus on this age group already adopted in the allocation criteria to certain prisons, and because of Lord Harris' report on deaths in custody of young people, which includes this broader group.

We would strongly recommend the adoption of geographical projections. This would inform the debate about where the use of custody – and its hidden impact on other services – is greatest. We would suggest an analysis by the 21 contract package areas for the TR competition (reflecting the 21 new Community Rehabilitation Companies). If the commissioning and management of criminal justice services is to be devolved, the availability of this data by region will be crucial. In the same vein, we believe there is a need to develop a tool which will allow the analysis of a broader range of measures likely to have an impact on the future prison population, including those that precede the court process.