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£100m for prison security measures: announcement on 13 August

I am writing to ask for some clarification on the announcement made by the Prime Minister on 13 August. As far as I am aware, the only detail so far made public is what appears on the Ministry of Justice website.

Whilst we welcome any measures that are effective in making prisons safer, it would be helpful to know:

- Whether the £100m is in addition to the £70m extra funding already announced. The press release is ambiguous on this crucial point.
- If the new funding is indeed £100m, what it is to be spent on and over what period.
- What the evidence is for those investment decisions, given that the areas suggested in the press release – x-ray scanners and metal detectors, phone detection and blocking technology, and anti-corruption staffing – have all been the subject of investment already. Our presumption is that this will have allowed for a cost benefit analysis before a decision was taken to invest further, and we would welcome sight of that analysis.
- Whether the list of measures to be funded in the press release is exhaustive. Specifically, given the department's own evidence that the majority of illicit mobile phone traffic in prisons appears to be related to family contact rather than crime, whether the already announced roll-out of in-cell telephony to roughly half of the prison estate is to be extended or accelerated. Doing so would allow the new resources for detecting illegal mobiles to be concentrated on the smaller proportion of use which is crime-related.
- How the efficacy of the measures funded by the £100m is to be assessed, and against what baselines.

Separately, we have written to the Justice Secretary Robert Buckland regarding the Prime Minister's commitment to build an additional 10,000 prison places, and to Richard Heaton about the proposed review of sentencing. For information, copies of these letters are enclosed.

Because of the public interest created by the Prime Minister's various announcements regarding prisons, and the scope for confusion left by the fact that they were made during a parliamentary recess without the opportunity for debate, we are publishing our letters on our website and will do the same with the responses we look forward to receiving.

With best wishes.



Peter Dawson
Director