

community
For a better working world

**SAFER
JUSTICE
SECTOR**
CHARTER

Foreword

Community represents more people employed in privatised justice and custodial sectors than any other UK trade union. Thousands of our members are employed in the prison sector, secure immigration centres, young offender institutions, secure training centres, courts and prisoner escorting and electronic monitoring services.

Our members' work is vital to the UK justice system. They are uniformed in the same way as the police, fire, and armed services and they work in a situation of considerable risk, almost continually in a dangerous situation. Accordingly, promoting and protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of our members is of the utmost importance.

Figures published by the Ministry of Justice last year revealed that assaults on prison staff are at the highest level since 2006. When at least one prison officer is seriously assaulted every day it's time for the government to wake up and take action. These figures merely illustrate the consequences of increasing the prison population when there are fluctuating levels of prison officers. Our members have serious and legitimate concerns for their safety.

The loss of experienced staff and pressures to drive down costs across the entire prison estate are having a direct effect on the ability of our members to keep prisoners and fellow officers safe. Serious assaults on staff have trebled since 2013, and figures from 2017 show assaults on staff have increased by 32% from the previous year. These issues must be addressed. We want to work with the government and employers in the sector to find solutions to these problems - and that starts with improving the safety of our members.

So we've developed a national Charter for a Safer Justice Sector, along with Community's Justice and Custodial Services National Committee, which aims to establish common standards that can be adopted by both the government and companies competing for justice services contracts. Adopting the Charter would ensure protected and safe-guarded environments for staff.

It is important to introduce our Charter into companies for the long term interest of our members and their employers alike to enhance the wellbeing of employees, promote equality within companies and advocate improved policies with a view to work in partnership with employers to reduce reoffending. We hope these values and the recommendations of this charter will play a significant part in future contracting of prisons, and that Community is at the forefront of that process.

We hope you'll support the charter, and the introduction of these principles to the justice and custodial services sector to secure a safe place to work for everyone.

Roy Rickhuss
General Secretary, Community



What we are calling for

Community wants all providers of justice and custodial services awarded through the government's procurement process to adhere to these standards:

1.

REDUCTION OF VIOLENCE

Policies that significantly reduce violence against staff and provide proper support and aftercare.

2.

BETTER PAY AND RECOGNITION

Securing better pay for staff with recognition for long service.

3.

TRAINING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Establishing a proper framework for consistent and effective training for all employees.

4.

MINIMUM STANDARDS IN CONTRACTS

Reversing the 'race to the bottom' for minimum standards in contracts, including staffing levels.

Community calls on the government to enact these principles by ensuring that all new contracts adhere to the charter and by reviewing all current contracts to ensure that they meet these minimum standards.

1. REDUCTION OF VIOLENCE

The number of assaults on staff has increased by 32% from March 2016 to March 2017, of these the number of serious assaults on staff is up 25% from March 2016, trebling since 2012. The number of serious assaults on staff rose to a huge 33% in the period of 2014-15 and represents the highest figure under current recorded practises which began in 2003.

The Ministry of Justice's Safety in Custody report also included data showing an overall increase in the numbers of violent and sexual assaults in prisons.

Assaults reached a record high of 28,165 incidents in the 12 months to September 2017, up 12% from the previous year. Of these, 3,726 (13%) were serious assaults, up 10% from the previous year. In the most recent quarter up to January 2018, assault incidents increased by 10% to a new record high of 7,810.

Since 2012, the use of New Psychoactive Substances in prisons has risen dramatically, which presents prison staff with real challenges as local prisons with higher rates of drugs have higher rates of violence. Substance misuse is a serious threat to the security of individual prisons, and the health and safety of prisoners and staff. We have seen progress in securing Personal Protective Equipment for our members, along with the introduction of numerous measures to tackle NPS in prisons; however more action is needed to protect and assist prison staff.

A recent report by the House of Commons Justice Select Committee stated that the fall in staffing levels stemming from redundancies and increased turnover have affected safety for both prisoners and officers. Evidence given provided a picture of deteriorating standards in terms of staffing levels, resulting in fewer prisoners to staff contact and less surveillance.

-  **Community wants a commitment from companies to introduce robust policies that significantly reduce acts of violence against staff. These policies should include a structured approach to aftercare.**
-  **Community wants a proactive commitment from companies in assisting the union during the prosecution of its members' interests following any such incident.**
-  **Community calls on the government for urgent action on NPS to protect prison staff.**
-  **Recent changes to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme make it more difficult for workers in the justice sector to get the money they deserve when they are victims of a criminal assault in work. Community is campaigning for government to do the right thing and bring forward new laws to ensure workers are properly compensated.**

2. BETTER PAY AND RECOGNITION

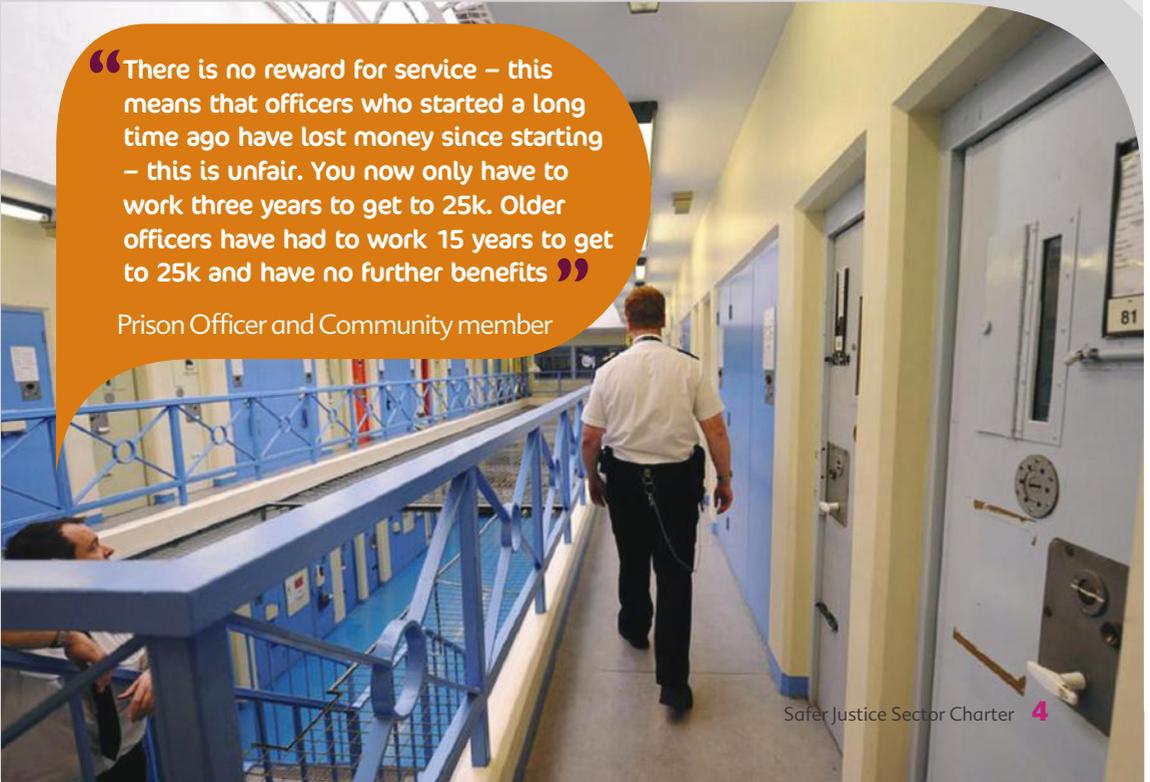
Research carried out with our members showed that pay and development opportunities were closely linked. A major source of frustration within the research was static pay, as experienced officers were frustrated that their length of service and the skills they had acquired were not reflected in their pay packet.

Frustration with regards to pay and recognition have been exacerbated by recent improvements to starting salaries and increments for new staff, but without any corresponding changes to more experienced officers pay or benefits. A survey conducted by the National Offender Management Service found that only 21% of staff feel that their pay adequately reflects their performance.

- Community wants a commitment from companies to ensure parity of pay with the public sector, which involves new roles for experienced officers, additional specialist training and salaries of up to £30,000.
- Community wants proactive solutions from companies to introduce better career paths and pay for officers in order to address some of the retention problems.

“There is no reward for service – this means that officers who started a long time ago have lost money since starting – this is unfair. You now only have to work three years to get to 25k. Older officers have had to work 15 years to get to 25k and have no further benefits”

Prison Officer and Community member



3. TRAINING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Working in the Justice and Custodial Sector can be dangerous, but it shouldn't be. These jobs, like many other uniformed jobs such as police officers or firefighters, require investment in high quality training to ensure that lives are not put at risk.

Private prison contractors are required to provide training for both prisoners and staff in line with Prison Service Instructions and Prison Service Orders as part of their contracts. However, members report that the standard of training delivered by private contractors is inconsistent and varied in quality particularly compared to the public sector.

Research from our members suggest there was a lack of additional training for long-serving officers, and officers reported that they couldn't access refresher training, mainly due to staff shortages.

- ② Companies should deliver an up to date, top class and consistent training model, culminating in accredited qualifications that are valid across the sector working closely with Community learning reps.
- ② There should be investment in continuous training and staff should be given individual training plans tailored to individual needs and ambitions.
- ② Specific in-depth training on issues such as mental health, working with sex offenders, identifying and preventing self-harm should be provided in order for officers to be more effective in their jobs.
- ② Probation periods should be meaningful processes that properly prepare staff for the realities of working in the justice sector. A review of probation periods would help tackle the high staff turnover within the sector.



“ The prisoners are treated better than we are. They are an asset for the contractor because they get money for them. We are seen as a cost ”

Prison Officer and Community member

4. MINIMUM STANDARDS IN CONTRACTS

Resources, overcrowding, drugs and other problems all play a part in the very challenging conditions that prison officers face.

The prison system as a whole has been overcrowded in every year since 1994. Further cuts to public services have worsened the situation. At the end of March 2014, 77 out of 119 prisons in England and Wales were overcrowded, and in 2017 statistics published by the Ministry of Justice show 68% of prisons were housing more inmates than their usable "certified normal accommodation" (CNA). The rise in the number of prisoners coincides with fluctuating staff levels, as well as low staff retention among prison officers, leading to an overall less experienced workforce.

Attrition continues to be a problem with reports of many staff leaving their jobs due to increased assaults on staff, long working hours or inadequate working conditions. Action is needed to reduce attrition with a full audit of the training and development opportunities available to officers, in both the public and private sector.

Private sector prisons are able to develop their own plans for recruitment and retention and this flexibility should be utilised to deliver safe staffing levels and sustainable working practices which ensure the safety of both prisoners and staff.

Community’s members on the frontline in prisons are in a daily struggle to ensure the safety and welfare of prisoners as well as their fellow prison officers. There should be agreed staffing levels in place during the bid process, the eradication of lone working, agreed policies relating to the shortfall of staffing levels and a consistent approach from all Justice Sector companies locally or nationally.

Community wants a commitment from companies to deliver an effective risk assessment for health and safety of employees, and a consistent approach to agreed policies which establish a duty of care to the health and safety of employees.

Community wants companies to recommit to engaging and consulting with Community health and safety reps when carrying out risk assessments.

“We’ve had high increases of workloads in all areas, an increase in general responses as prisoners know when we are short staffed (which is putting officers at risk and the welfare of other inmates), increases of self-harmers and assaults and also staff fatigue and stress related illness, which has serious knock on effects when staffing levels are already low.”

Prison Officer and Community member

Want action on safety? Get Involved!

Visit our website for the latest campaign information at www.community-tu.org/saferjusticesector or talk to your local Community reps about supporting the campaign.

Not a Community member?

Join today online at www.community-tu.org or chat to one of our team on **0800 389 6332**. Alternatively speak to your local Community rep.

We are Community.
The modern union for a changing world.

Tel: 0800 389 6332 • Email: servicecentre@community-tu.org
community-tu.org • Twitter: [@CommunityUnion](https://twitter.com/CommunityUnion) • Facebook: [CommunityUnion](https://www.facebook.com/CommunityUnion)