

Jane Hutt MS

Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd
and Chief Whip, Welsh Government

Julie James MS

Counsel General, Welsh Government

Lord Timpson OBE

Minister of State, Ministry of Justice

23 December 2024

Dear Ministers,

Invitation for joint-ministerial general scrutiny session on criminal justice

Prisons and criminal justice have featured in several major pieces of work undertaken by the Equality and Social Justice Committee to date. They include our inquiry into **Women's experiences of the criminal justice system**; our work on **Speech, language, and communications needs (SLCN)** in the youth justice system; and it emerged as an important aspect of the **inquiry into the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan (ArWAP)**.

The recently published Wales Prison Factfile report by Dr Robert Jones at the Wales Governance Centre highlights critical issues and challenges within the prisons and criminal justice system. They include problems with the overall conditions within prisons, disproportionality in rates of incarceration, overcrowding and difficulties accessing services.

In response to concerns about the state of the wider criminal justice system, we would like to propose a joint-ministerial scrutiny session involving both Welsh and UK governments. As such we would like to invite you as the ministers with responsibilities in these areas to appear together to discuss further. We would like to extend an invitation to you as the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip, Jane Hutt MS; the Counsel General, Julie James MS; and the Minister of State at the Ministry of Justice, Lord Timpson OBE. We would be willing to consider the involvement of other ministers if a clear rationale for doing so is forthcoming.

In our view, the seriousness of the situation demands the urgent attention of both governments, and your participation would greatly contribute to a constructive dialogue aimed at improving the criminal justice system in Wales.

Please let us know your availability for a meeting at your earliest convenience. The Committee's meeting slots are on Mondays during term time and currently we are keeping space free for a session on either the **10 February, 17 February, or 19 May 2025**. We are willing to be flexible with start times to accommodate your schedules and would envisage the session lasting an hour and thirty minutes to two hours maximum. We are currently seeking your agreement to take part in principle; however, we would consider providing a more detailed steer of potential areas that we would like the session to cover in due course.

Thank you for considering this invitation. We look forward to your positive response and to working together to address these important issues.

I am copying this letter to the Chairs of the Welsh Parliament's Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee and Health and Social Care Committee and to the Chair of the Welsh Affairs Committee in Westminster. To ensure a joined-up approach we will be inviting all three committees to consider the extent of their involvement in these sessions in the interim.

Yours sincerely,



Jenny Rathbone MS

Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee

Senedd Cymru