

Justice Matters:

Monitoring Report

October 2026



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Welsh Parliament
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1SN

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Authors:

Adam Cooke

This monitoring report is intended to provide Members of the Senedd and interested stakeholders with an update on key policy developments related to justice. It prioritises Wales-specific material and England-and-Wales developments with clear implications for Welsh services.

The report covers the period from **7 May 2026** to **13 October 2026**. As this is the first report of the Seventh Senedd, pre-election developments likely to remain relevant have also been included.

Senedd Research has also published a [series of articles](#) on criminal justice in Wales.





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1. Justice in Wales

Pre-election

On 27 January 2026, the previous Welsh Government responded to the UK Government's police reform white paper.

It welcomed the “constructive approach” of the Home Office in “engaging with the unique Welsh landscape” in the paper. It also stated that, when decisions are made regarding the reduction in the number of police forces, “no single regional police force should operate across both sides of the Anglo-Welsh border”.

In March 2026, the previous Welsh Government noted agreements with the UK Government, including:

- a joint statement with the UK Government, including commitments to devolve responsibilities for funding local youth justice services, and expand the Welsh Government's oversight role in these services;
- along with the Police and Crime Commissioners in Wales, to produce a Memorandum of Understanding on probation by the end of 2026.

The previous Welsh Government published principles and guidelines for diversion and out of court resolutions for children on 9 March 2026.

The document provides advice to help keep children under 18 out of the justice system and prevent further offending in Wales.

Post-election

In July 2026, a series of official statistics relating to justice in Wales were published, including:

- **23 July** — Office for National Statistics, “Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2026”. Includes police-force-area tables that allow analysis of the four Welsh forces, although many survey estimates remain England-and-Wales level.
 - **23 July** — Home Office, “Crime outcomes in England and Wales 2025 to 2026”. Official statistics on outcomes assigned to recorded offences, with relevance to Welsh police-force performance.
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- **30 July** — Ministry of Justice, “[Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly: March 2026](#)”. Covers prosecutions, convictions, remand, sentencing and out-of-court resolutions across England and Wales.
- **30 July** — Ministry of Justice/ HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), “[Safety in Custody Statistics](#)”. Reports deaths to June 2026 and assaults and self-harm to March 2026 across prisons in England and Wales.
- **6 August** — HMPPS, “[Welsh Justice Data: Annual Release 2026](#)”. A key Wales-specific dataset, breaking down prisoners by Welsh local authority origin, prison, sentence status, offence, age, ethnicity and religion. Senedd Research’s article [explores this data](#).

In July 2026, the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Minister for Social Justice and Equality, Sioned Williams MS, [wrote to the new Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, Alex Norris MP, calling for partnership working between the governments on justice.](#)

The Deputy First Minister called for an “early commitment from him to the devolution of justice and policing, as a demonstration of the UK Government’s revised approach to devolution”.

She also wrote to the Minister of State at the Ministry of Justice, Catherine McKinnell MP, emphasising the “commitment to reduce the disproportionate impact of the justice system on women in Wales”.

In August 2026, in [response to a Freedom of Information request](#), the Welsh Government confirmed that it had not calculated the cost of devolving policing and criminal justice to Wales.

It noted that this “work is under development”, and that initial costs of devolution “would depend on the extent of devolution, the timescales, and the approach to implementation”.

In October 2026, the Cabinet Minister for Government Effectiveness and the Constitution, Dafydd Iwan Davies MS, [said the](#) Welsh Government’s proposed standing National Commission for Wales could consider the costs involved in devolving “the entire justice system”.

In its [Programme for Government](#), the Welsh Government reiterated its intention to “pursue the full devolution of justice and policing to Wales with the urgency this deserves”.

In August 2026, the Prime Minister, Andy Burnham MP, **was reported as saying** that he is “open to the conversation” on **devolving control of policing to Wales**. He reportedly said that with “wider policing reform” going on it was a “good time to look at those issues”.

On 17 September 2026, the Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending, Catherine McKinnell MP, wrote to the Chair of the Constitution, Justice and External Affairs Committee, Carrie Harper MS, with an update on the proposed Swansea Residential Women’s Centre.

The Minister said that the Centre had not received funding from the last Spending Review, and the UK Government is “considering how the Residential Women’s Centre model best aligns with current priorities and the evolving profile of the custodial cohort”.

On 23 September 2026, the Equality, Human Rights and Social Justice Committee held an evidence session with the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Minister for Equality and Social Justice, Sioned Williams MS.

The session covered areas including crime prevention and the Welsh Government’s proposed human rights Bill.

On 24 September 2026, the seventh annual report of the President of Welsh Tribunals was published.

The President, Sir Gary Hickinbottom, said that he had an initial meeting with the new Counsel General, Elfyn Llwyd, who “confirmed the new government’s – and his personal – commitment to the Tribunal Reform Programme and the Bill to implement it”.

The Welsh Government **reiterated its commitment** to bring forward the tribunals Bill “early in the Senedd term” in its Programme for Government.

Cardiff University’s Dr Robert Jones gave a briefing to the Constitution, Justice and External Affairs Committee on the Thomas Commission in September 2026.

Dr Jones **provided research** examining the progress made in implementing the Commission on Justice in Wales’ recommendations, as well as an **implementation plan** for the recommendations.

In October 2026, HMPPS published:

- **Criminal Justice Board for Wales annual report 2025 to 26.** The Board brings together criminal justice partners including: HMPPS, His Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service, the Youth Justice Board, Police services in Wales, Wales, the Welsh Government and others.
- **Criminal Justice Anti-racism Action Plan for Wales annual report 2025 to 26.** The report "outlines progress on the anti-racism plan in the Welsh criminal justice system, highlighting actions, challenges, and commitment to change by 2030".

2. UK Government and UK Parliament scrutiny

Pre-election

In March 2026, the Welsh Affairs Committee published a report on the future of HMP Parc.

Recommendations included that the UK Government should pause the planned expansion of the prison due to the “scale of the failings that were exposed in 2024”.

In response, the UK Government said it “would not activate any additional capacity unless assured that the stability and safety of the prison would not be affected”.

The Crime and Policing Act 2026 received Royal Assent on 29 April 2026, despite the Senedd voting to withhold its legislative consent.

The Act makes provisions relating to antisocial behaviour, terrorism, serious violence, and violence against women and girls.

On 10 March 2026, the Senedd voted not to provide legislative consent for the provisions, with 25 voting for and 27 voting against. Senedd Research’s article provides more information on legislative consent.

On 29 April 2026, the Victims and Courts Act 2026 received Royal Assent.

The Act makes provision about victims’ experience of the criminal justice system, the Victims’ Commissioner, and criminal procedure and court administration in England and Wales.

On 1 May 2026, the Victims Commissioner for England and Wales published its response to the Ministry of Justice consultation on a revised Victims’ Code.

In the response, the Commissioner concludes that “without systemic reform, robust accountability, and genuine cultural change, the revised Code risks remaining aspirational rather than transformative”.

Post-election

In May 2026, the former UK Government published the youth justice system reform and delivery plan.

The plan notes that the UK and Welsh governments “share a commitment to establishing a clearer and bigger role for the Welsh Government in the delivery of the youth justice system”.

On 2 July 2026, Dame Vera Baird DBE KC was appointed as the Interim Chair of the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC) for 12 months from 9 December 2026.

The CCRC investigates miscarriages of justice in Wales, England and Northern Ireland. Dame Baird previously served as an Independent Expert Advisor on justice devolution for the Welsh Government.

In June 2026, the Welsh Affairs Committee published its 2nd report on its inquiry Jagged Justice: Prisons, Probation and Rehabilitation in Wales.

The report made a series of recommendations, including that the UK Government should “include in its response...a checklist of measures and steps that need to be taken...in order for a final decision to be reached as to whether to devolve” probation and youth justice.

The UK Government’s response stated that it aims for the Welsh Government to have an expanded and clearly defined role relating to youth justice “at the beginning of 2027”.

The Welsh Affairs Committee is also undertaking an inquiry into the future of policing in Wales. So far, it has heard from Wales’ Police and Crime Commissioners.

On 30 June 2026, the Victims Commissioner published its annual report for 2024 to 2025.

The report focuses on efforts to strengthen victims’ rights, violence against women and girls, anti-social behaviour and the Crown Court backlog.

In July 2026, the UK Government announced an independent review of the prison system.

The terms of reference for the review are [set out here](#). It is due to report by December 2026. The Ministry of Justice held a [call for evidence](#) for the review over the summer.

On 7 July 2026, HM Inspectorate of Prisons [published its annual report for 2025-26](#).

The report states that “widespread ingress of illicit drugs remains a grave threat to stability in prisons”.

The House of Commons Justice Committee has continued with its inquiry into [Access to Justice](#).

On 17 July 2026, it published a [report on legal aid](#), noting that “access to justice in England and Wales has been severely eroded by the declining availability of legal aid”.

On 20 July 2026, HM Inspectorate of Probation published its [annual report for 2026](#).

The report states “inspections have chronicled an organisation grappling with serious systemic challenges, an increasingly large and complex caseload, and continuous change”.

The Inspectorate also published a [Dynamic Inspection of Public Protection in Wales](#) in August 2026, which “found a region with clear ambition, strong leadership, and a coherent vision for improvement”.

On 8 September 2026, His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services [published its annual assessment of policing in England and Wales for 2025-26](#).

The Chief Inspector states that upcoming policing reform offers a “a once-in-a-generation opportunity to achieve lasting reform and make much-needed improvements to the service provided to the public”.

The House of Commons Justice Committee has continued with its inquiry into [Children and Young Adults in the Secure Estate](#).

On 8 September 2026, it [received oral evidence](#) from Laura Cooper, Director of the Youth Justice Legal Centre and Steph Roberts-Bibby, Chief Executive, Youth Justice Board for England and Wales.

On 8 September 2026, the UK Government announced that Martin Jones had been reappointed as His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Probation.

The reappointment will be for a second term of 3 years from 1 March 2027 to 30 April 2030.

On 10 September 2026, the UK Government published guidance in relation to changes to prison release arrangements.

The release point for most prisoners serving the most common type of prison sentence “will move from 40% or half of their custodial term to one third for some prisoners and from two thirds to half for others”.

The changes are being introduced through the Sentencing Act 2026.

On 28 September 2026, the UK Government published a guide for victims about the changes to prison release arrangements.

On 10 September, the Chief Coroner of England and Wales' Annual Report 2025 was published.

The report covers work to promote consistency in the in the coronial jurisdiction across England and Wales, and the reconstitution of the Chief Coroner's national cadres.

On 21 September 2026, the UK Government announced that courtrooms for specialist rape and serious sex offences would be rolled out across every Crown Court in England and Wales.

This follows an earlier UK Government announcement, that by the end of 2027, all police forces in England and Wales will have dedicated rape and sexual offence investigation teams, helping to make sure more criminal cases are prosecuted.

On 28 September 2026, the UK Government announced measures to tackle prison drones and drug use, and help offenders into work and stable accommodation.

As part of these measures, technology firms are being invited to bid for a share of up to £900,000 to “test new solutions that help protect staff and clamp down on the smuggling of contraband behind bars”.

At time of writing, the Courts and Tribunals Bill is at report stage in the House of Commons.

On 4 October 2026, the **UK Government announced** changes to provisions in the Bill, including, scrapping plans for some criminal trials to be heard by a judge alone. “Technical and lengthy fraud and financial offences” will still be subject to judge-only trials.

The House of Lords Justice and Home Affairs Committee is undertaking an inquiry into fire safety in prisons.

The inquiry follows the UK Government’s “decision not to fulfil its commitment to install automatic fire detection in all prison cells by 2027, as well as the fire incident at HMP Highpoint earlier this year”.

The House of Lords Justice and Home Affairs Committee is also undertaking an inquiry into support for jurors.

The Committee “is looking to see what the current levels of support for jurors are, how the experience of being a juror affects people, and what might be done in the future to better support them”.