



Ministry
of Justice

Andrew Selous MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary
of State for Justice

Philip Davies MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

MoJ ref: 9432/9553

19th November 2015

Dear Philip,

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS - PRISONERS ON TEMPORARY RELEASE

In reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions (9432 and 9553):

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners currently in open prisons previously breached the conditions of their temporary licence.

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 30 July 2015 to Question 6617, which offences each of the prisoners currently in open prisons who have previously absconded and were in open conditions in May 2014 had committed; and what length of sentence each person was serving.

I undertook to write to you when this information was available.

The Coalition Government completely overhauled the processes for allowing prisoners out on temporary licence, leading to a 39% drop in the number of temporary release failures in 2014. This is the lowest failure rate going back to 2002. The absconding rate also reached record lows under the Coalition government.

Since May 2014, prisoners with a history of escape, absconding or serious temporary release failure during the current sentence have been prevented from transfer to open conditions, other than in the most exceptional circumstances. Only one prisoner has satisfied that test since this change was made. When the new policy was implemented, it was not applied retrospectively. Prisoners already in open conditions were assessed by NOMS and any who were assessed to present an unacceptable risk in such conditions in light of their previous non-compliance were returned to closed prisons, with the remainder allowed to remain in open conditions because of their current compliance with the regime and favourable risk assessment.

On 31 March 2015 there were 4,023 prisoners recorded as being in open prisons. Of these, 65 were recorded as having breached the conditions of their temporary release licence (including failing to return) between 1 April 2004 and 31 March 2015. Of the 17 prisoners described in the reply to Question 6617

who were in open conditions as at 31st March 2015 and who had previously absconded: six were serving sentences for violence against the person offences; one was serving a sentence for a sexual offence; two were serving sentences for robbery offences; five were serving sentences for burglary offences; one was serving a sentence for drug offences; and two were serving sentences for other offences. Of these 17 prisoners: one was serving more than 12 months to 4 years; seven were serving more than 4 years to less than life; five were serving indeterminate sentences of imprisonment for public protection (IPP); and four were serving life sentences.

Reliable electronic records for absconds and temporary release failures prior to 2004 are not available, therefore only incidents since 2004 could be considered. In addition, the data set used here includes only those prisons classified as having their predominant function to be open. Finally, these figures have been drawn from administrative IT systems which, as with any large scale recording system, are subject to possible errors with data entry and processing.

I hope you find this information helpful. I am placing a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

*Yours ever,
Andrew*

ANDREW SELOUS