I am writing to expand on and clarify three points I made during the debate on the management and treatment of offenders on 3 October 2019. These are recorded in Hansard, Volume 799, Columns 1843 to 1846.

I said during the debate that the Prime Minister has announced an urgent review to break the reoffending cycle. I thought it would be helpful to place some additional information on the record. One of this Prime Minister’s first acts was to order an urgent review of sentences for the most serious violent and sexual offenders. As part of this review, we have also looked at changes to sentencing for the most prolific offenders which could help break the cycle of reoffending. Based on the review’s findings, we will be bringing forward proposals shortly for a comprehensive package of legislative reform.

The important issue of housing and homelessness for women offenders was raised during the debate by several noble lords. I responded that this is subject to evaluation, but our homelessness pilot will be rolled out and can be delivered for any offender, including women. For clarity, through the Government’s Rough Sleeping Strategy we are investing up to £6.4m in a pilot scheme to support individuals released from three prisons in the men’s estate: Bristol, Leeds and Pentonville. Subject to evaluation, we will use the lessons from the pilot to inform future provision of accommodation for ex-offenders across the entire estate. We also recognise that women face specific challenges in securing suitable accommodation. In April 2019 HMPPS made improvements to Through The Gate (TTG) services. Specific activities are now mandated and published as part of a defined minimum TTG service, including accommodation. Evidence about what works to resettle women, including victims of domestic abuse and sex workers, is included in the guidance that accompanies this new specification. Full national implementation of the Enhanced TTG Specification took place on 1st April 2019. Only one women’s prison has yet to go live and we expect the service to begin in this prison soon.
Lastly, on our efforts to increase the security of our prisons, I made two references to a £100 million investment in prison security. For the avoidance of doubt, this is a single investment announced by the Prime Minister in August. It will be used to target all types of crime in prison; from drug smugglers fuelling a rise in violence and self-harm, to gangs continuing to run their operations from jail, to offenders seeking to contact their victims in the outside world. Tough airport-style security, including X-ray scanners and metal detectors, will be put into prisons across the estate to clamp down on the drugs, weapons and mobile phones that increase the risk to our officers and hinder rehabilitation.

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