

Response to the publication of House of Commons Welsh Affairs Committee report *Jagged Justice: Prisons, Probation and Rehabilitation in Wales*

11.06.2026

The Wales Probation Development Group welcome the publication this week of the House of Commons Welsh Affairs Committee report [*Jagged Justice: Prisons, Probation and Rehabilitation in Wales*](#), which highlights critical challenges around the relatively high imprisonment and recall rate in Wales, and adds to calls for the UK Government to consider benefits of devolved and localised probation delivery.

In our [written contribution to the Committee's inquiry](#), we emphasised our support for preparations for the full devolution of probation to Wales, as we consider that probation will work more effectively where it can integrate with devolved services and the voluntary sector within evidence-based commissioning and delivery arrangements. Indeed, we have recently written to the Welsh Government's new Cabinet Minister for Social Justice and Equality suggesting there should be a more ambitious plan for a future Welsh probation service.

Whilst we recognise that any changes to the system will be challenging, we believe that reform of probation, an emphasis on community rehabilitation and alternatives to custody - delivered in partnership and grounded in an evidence-based approach - is essential to addressing the significant disparities in criminal justice outcomes across Wales.

The report concentrates on prisons, making important recommendations on safety, healthcare and rehabilitation within prison, however probation and community sentences delivered effectively (including to women) can lead to less imprisonment and reduce associated costs, reductions in offending, and safer communities with fewer victims of crime. Therefore, we consider recommendations to improve joint working around housing, education and employment, and health should also be extended beyond prison to the community.

We welcome the opportunity for academic contribution to reviewing the reasons for the high imprisonment rate and improved access to Welsh justice data. However, we also need to understand qualitative experiences of being on probation and barriers to rehabilitation. For example, data sets can miss people on probation who tend to wait until crisis point to access healthcare. We also need to close the implementation gap by applying evidence-based practice, such as increasing skills training for probation practitioners, and learning from the benefits of working in community hubs.

Finally, whilst we recognise the strengths of the current probation staff in Wales, we would be cautious about characterising the service as being at the 'vanguard of change' in technological development. Internal pilots of Justice Transcribe, for example, indicate administrative time savings; however, there is a risk that its use could undermine the professional practice of already stretched staff, and it therefore requires further research. AI is not a solution to underlying resourcing challenges or workforce pressures - there must also be sustained investment in staffing, ongoing training, professional development, and supportive leadership.

Ella Rabaiotti, Convenor, and on behalf of Wales Probation Development Group

Notes

WPDG is a subgroup of the Wales Centre for Crime and Social Justice (WCCSJ), which brings together academics from Welsh universities to encourage inter-institutional collaboration to generate high quality, theoretically informed, policy-relevant research on crime and social justice in Wales and beyond. WPDG, which also includes former probation professionals, supports thinking on devolved probation services by identifying best evidence-based practice and gaps in current probation policy and practice.

For more information visit www.wccsj.ac.uk