

# Have you got what it takes?

Working with the Secretary of State for Justice



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### Important facts

The Secretary of State for Justice is the ministerial head of the Ministry of Justice, with responsibility for the administration and reform of core parts of the justice system.

The Ministry of Justice provides services to around 9 million people each year, directly and through a variety of partners. Through its delivery arms – Her Majesty’s Courts and Tribunals Service and the National Offender Management Service – the Ministry runs the courts, tribunals, prisons, part of the probation services and attendance centres.

In the field of criminal justice, the Ministry works in partnership with other government departments to introduce reforms aimed at improving the way the criminal justice system supports the victims of crime, protects the public and reduces reoffending.

Since 2007, the office of Secretary of State for Justice has been held in conjunction with the separate office of Lord Chancellor. The Constitutional Reform Act 2005 removed the Lord Chancellor’s position as a judge and head of the judiciary of England and Wales. The Lord Chancellor’s judicial responsibilities were transferred to the Lord Chief Justice, who is head of the judiciary in England and Wales.

### Context: Reform of the criminal justice system

The Government is continuing a series of wide-ranging reforms across crime and justice to deliver an efficient, fair, timely and effective justice system in which the public has confidence. At the heart of this is the ambition to cut re-offending and so prevent crime and protect individuals from becoming victims of crime.

The Ministry has oversight of Her Majesty’s Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS) and is overseeing an ambitious programme of reform to deliver swift and certain justice – improving the length of time court cases take to progress through the system and ensuring certainty of outcome. As case-mixes change and digital working becomes more embedded, there is a programme to rationalise the court estate and invest significantly in new technology and better facilities.

The investment programme is continuing into prisons, which are also the responsibility of the Ministry through the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), an executive agency of the MOJ which also oversees the delivery of probation. This investment will see a number of old prisons close to be replaced with newer prisons with better facilities more focused on the rehabilitation of offenders.

Although NOMS oversees the delivery of probation, most offenders in the community, except the highest risk, are now managed by regional Community Rehabilitation Companies. These private organisations have had responsibility for this work since 2015 and are rewarded for their performance at reducing reoffending.

Tackling reoffending is a key ambition for the Government who are working to reform the youth justice system to prevent young offenders from being drawn into a life of crime as well as tackling substance misuse and mental health problems among offenders.

The Ministry of Justice also provides funding for victims’ services, although since 2014 the majority of these services are commissioned by Police and Crime Commissioners in their local areas. Services for the families of victims of homicide and witness services continue to be provided nationally.

# Background: The Ministry of Justice

The creation of the Ministry of Justice in 2007 brought together responsibility for criminal justice, prisons and penal policy (previously the Home Secretary's responsibility) and responsibility for the courts and legal aid (previously the Lord Chancellor's responsibility).

Following the creation of the Ministry of Justice in 2007, government and the judiciary drew up an agreement recognising that the judiciary has a distinct responsibility to deliver justice independently.

As well as criminal justice, the Ministry's work spans civil, family and administrative justice (justice relating to the decisions and actions of public bodies). It is also responsible for strengthening democracy and safeguarding human rights.

The Secretary of State for Justice chairs a departmental board which has overall responsibility for the Ministry's strategic direction, including delivery of the above objectives.

Further information on the Ministry of Justice can be found at <http://www.gov.uk/>

