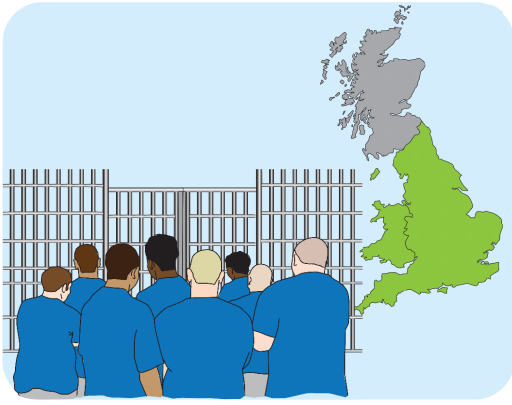




Why the prisons in England and Wales are so full and what we need to do about it

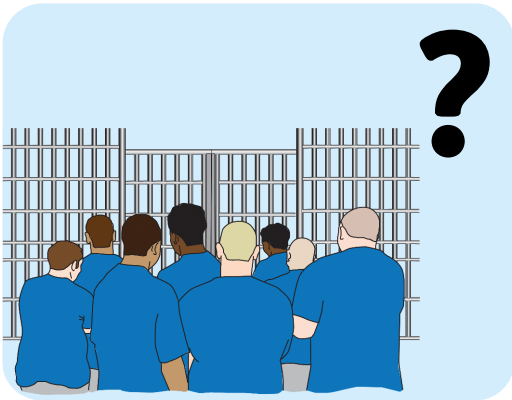


Easy Read



This paper is a summary of a bigger report about:

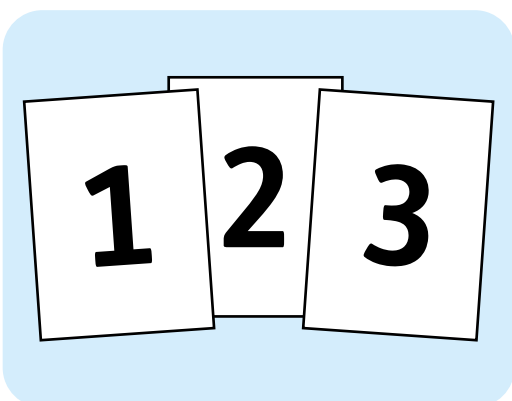
- The high number of people in prisons in England and Wales.



- The reasons why the number of prisoners is so high.

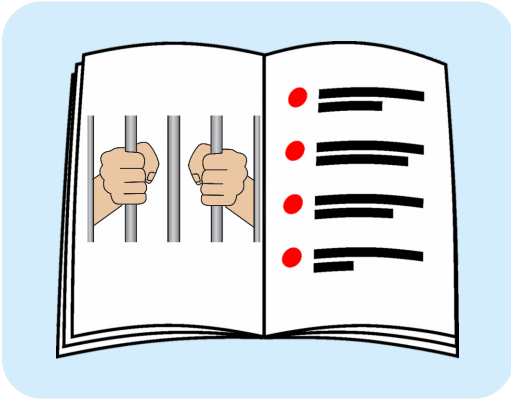


- What we can do to be sure we never again have more prisoners than places to put them.

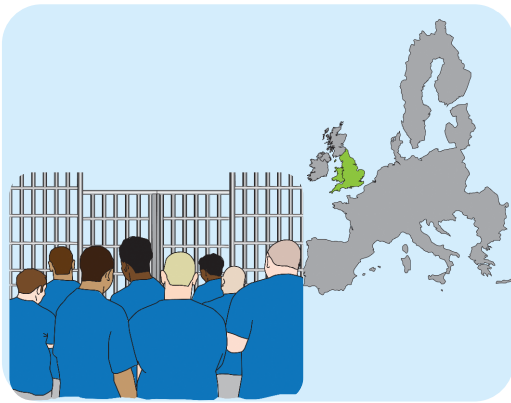


The report has 3 chapters.

Chapter 1

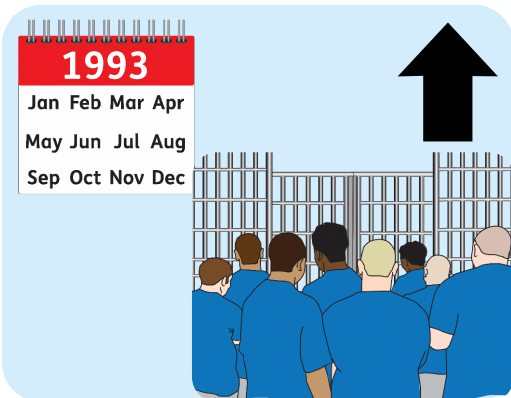


Chapter 1 has some facts about the prisons and probation service in England and Wales.



The prison service

England and Wales have one of the highest prison population rates in Western Europe.



The number of people in prisons in England and Wales has grown by over 40,000 since 1993.



At the end of 2024, there were more than 85,000 prisoners.

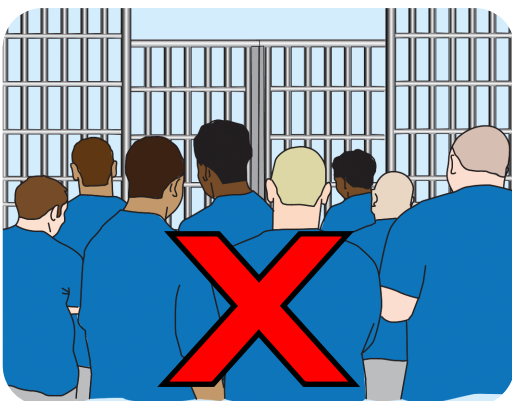


Prisoners are serving longer **sentences**.

A **sentence** is the punishment given by a judge in court to a person after they have been found guilty of doing something wrong.



Longer sentences mean people must stay in prison for more time.



Our prisons are not meant to hold this many people.

The probation service

Probation is when you serve your sentence but you are not in prison.

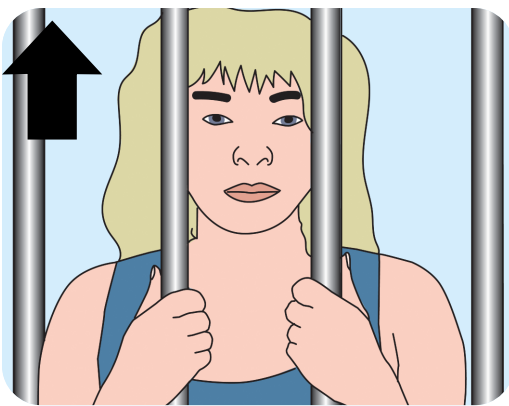
You could be put on probation because you are serving a sentence in the community which can include unpaid work, or because you are being supervised after coming out of prison.





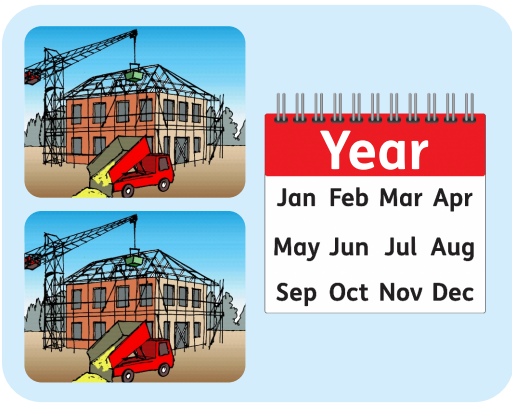
In 1993 about 125,000 people were under probation supervision.

In September 2024, the number had grown to more than 240,000.

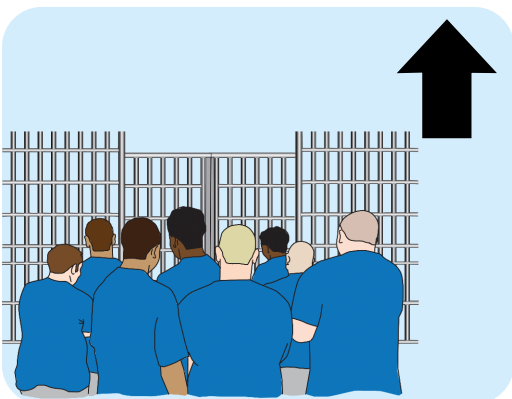


Looking at the future

In the future we expect about 3,000 people a year will be going to prison.

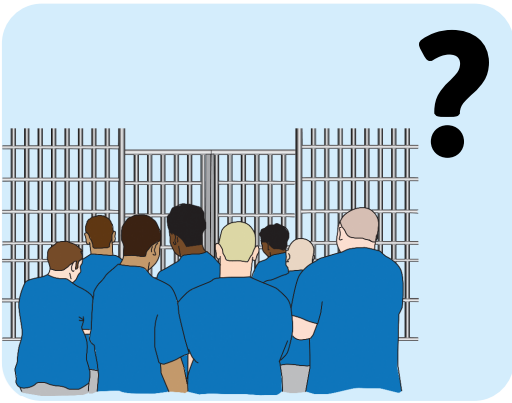


This means we would need to build 2 large prisons a year to hold this many new prisoners.



If we do not make changes, the number of people in prison could grow to over 112,000 by the end of 2032.

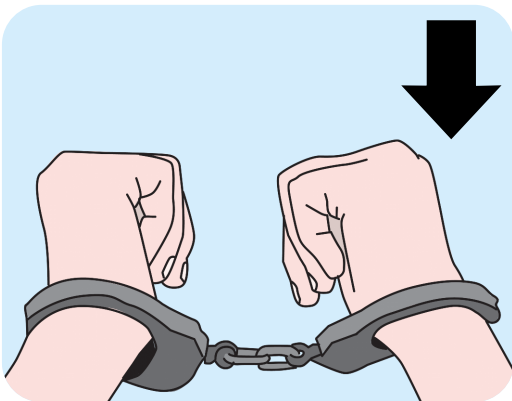
Chapter 2



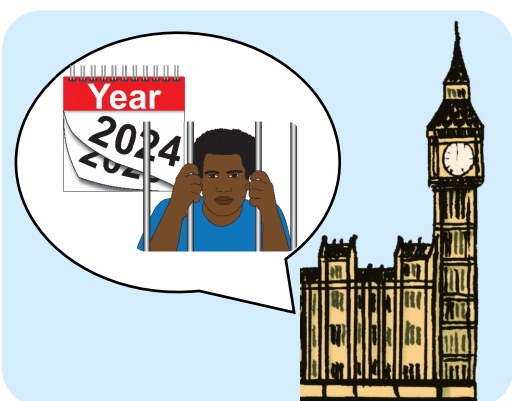
Chapter 2 looks at reasons why prisoner numbers are growing and prison sentences are getting longer.



It is not because prisons are the best way to reduce crime.

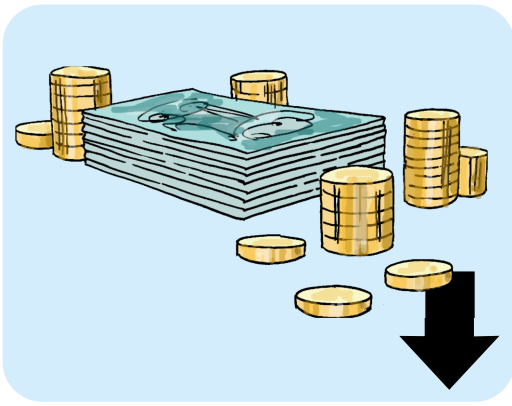


It is not because of rising levels of crime. Crime has come down.



We think it is because of:

- Decisions the government has made about putting people into prison for longer.



- The government spending too little money on probation and other ways to help stop people breaking the law.

Chapter 3



Chapter 3 explains that things need to change.

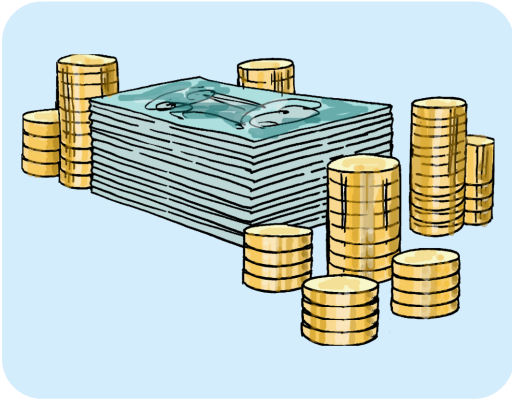
Holding people in prison for longer has put strain on the system.



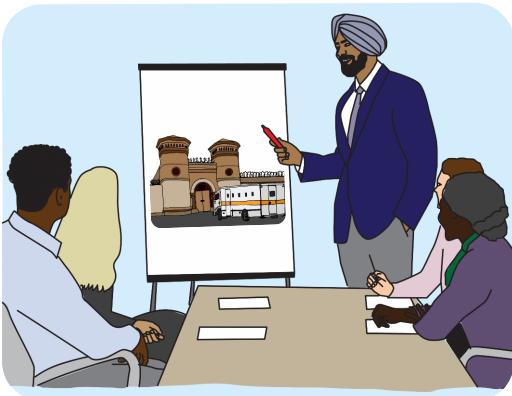
The government had to quickly make more space in prisons, which was costly and risky.



They also let some prisoners go early to reduce the pressure on prison numbers.



New prison programmes could cost more than £9 billion.



We need a new approach.



We agree we must follow all the current rules of sentencing which are:

- Punishing people who break the law.



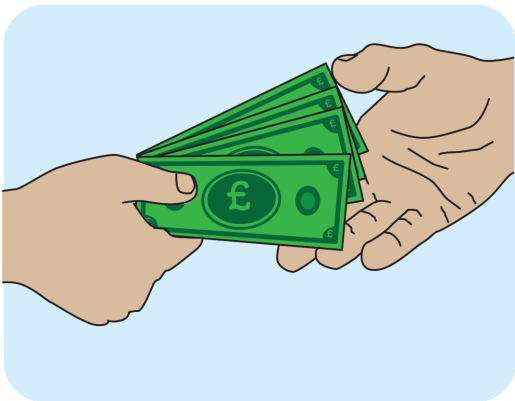
- Reducing crime.



- Helping people to change their ways and stay out of trouble.



- Protecting the public.



- Payment for harm or damage caused.



Sentencing and punishment

Prison can be one way to punish a person.



Governments have used longer sentences as a way to show they are acting on a problem.



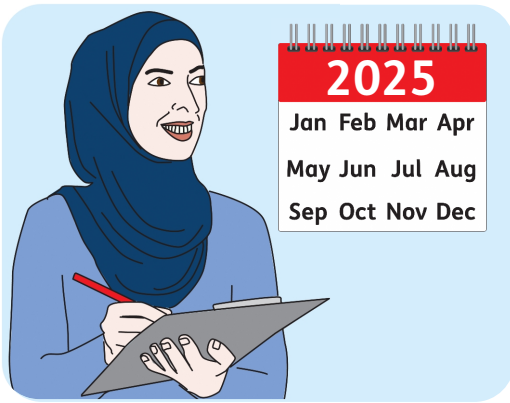
This has left England and Wales with a very high prison population.



But we think there are other ways to help people to stop breaking the law.



The system can be changed so money could be spent on reducing crime and the number of victims of crime.



What happens next

The next part of our review is in spring 2025.

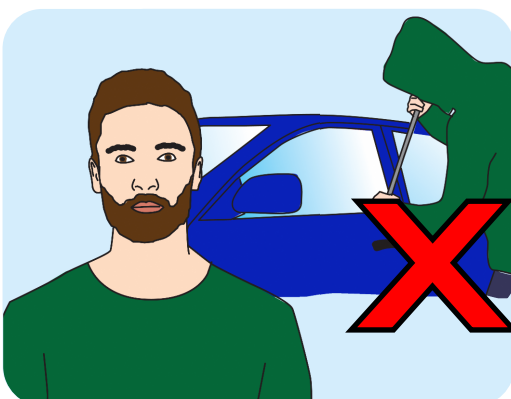


We will share our ideas about how to manage the number of people in prisons now and in the future.



We will follow the rules of this review which say sentencing should:

- Punish offenders and protect the public.
- Help people turn their backs on a life of crime.





- Make greater use of punishment outside of prison.



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