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Annwyl Mr George,

The Wales Governance Centre at Cardiff University has been carrying out research into the topic of criminal justice in Wales for several years. During this period, I have engaged with the Health and Social Care Committee on several occasions as part of its work around the topic of prisoner healthcare. The purpose of this letter is to share some of our latest data with the Committee around the topic of prison healthcare funding in Wales. At a time when prisoner numbers are rising and concerns over prisoner safety and wellbeing are mounting, the data included here underline the need for urgent action to ensure that prison healthcare services are both properly and fairly funded.

### **Insufficient Funding**

Research first carried out by the Wales Governance Centre [in 2014](#) revealed that the total cost of primary healthcare at the three public sector prisons in Wales exceeded the amount transferred to the Welsh NHS via the recurrent transfer into the Welsh Block Grant. While primary healthcare in public sector prisons (HMP Cardiff; HMP Swansea; and HMP Usk/Precoed) cost £3.9 million, the Welsh Block transfer for healthcare in public sector prisons was £2.544m. A follow up study in 2018 revealed that this underfund had continued. In 2017/18, the UK Government transferred £2.544 million to the Welsh Government for prison healthcare. The total cost of providing healthcare at HMP Cardiff, HMP Swansea and HMP Usk/Prescoed, however, totalled £3,879,794.

During the fifth Senedd, members of the Committee's *Health and social care provision in the adult prison estate in Wales* inquiry were told that the baseline funding level for prisoner healthcare is 'insufficient to meet the demands of an increasing and ageing prison population'. As noted above, since 2004/05 the Welsh Block has included a recurrent annual transfer of

£2.544m to support healthcare in public sector prisons. At the time of the Committee’s inquiry, this figure had not been updated and had failed to take account of inflation or increases in the prison population since 2004/05.

### Latest Data

Information requests sent to each of the responsible health boards earlier this year have uncovered that the [underfund](#) for prisoner healthcare had deepened since the Committee concluded its inquiry in 2021. While the total cost of primary healthcare services had increased to £5,544,852 in 2022/23 (see Table 1), the Welsh Government confirmed that the Welsh Block transfer for healthcare in public sector prisons remained at the *same level* in 2022/23 as it was in 2004/05 (£2.544m). This despite the fact that the Welsh Government was entering into discussions with the UK Government about revising the future funding arrangements for prison healthcare when the Committee published its report in March 2021 (see para 191).

Figures recently obtained for 2023/24 paint an even bleaker picture. In the last 12 months alone, the cost of prisoner healthcare services in Wales increased by 29 per cent to £7,163,188 (see Table 2). The funding provided through the Block transfer, however, remained the same as it was when it was set two decades ago.

**Table 1: The cost of primary healthcare services in public sector prisons in Wales, 2022/23**

Health Board	Prison	Cost (£)
Cardiff and Vale	HMP Cardiff	2,730,467
Swansea Bay	HMP Swansea	1,933,427
Aneurin Bevan	HMP Usk/Prescoed	880,958
<b>Total</b>		<b>5,544,852</b>

**Table 2: The cost of primary healthcare services in public sector prisons in Wales, 2023/24**

Health Board	Prison	Cost (£)
Cardiff and Vale	HMP Cardiff	3,504,162
Swansea Bay	HMP Swansea	2,679,647
Aneurin Bevan	HMP Usk/Prescoed	979,379
<b>Total</b>		<b>7,163,188</b>

The Committee’s report in 2021 recommended that an agreement be reached between the UK and Welsh Government to ensure the ‘establishment of a fair, sufficient and sustainable baseline for funding via the Welsh Block’ for healthcare provision in public sector prisons in

Wales. This recommendation, however, has clearly yet to be implemented. For these reasons, I believe it is vital that the Committee revisits this issue to seek clarity over what steps, if any, have been taken to find a fair, suitable and stable solution. Against the backdrop of these latest data and clear evidence of a deepening underfund for prison healthcare services, the UK and Welsh Government's failure to remedy this problem will undoubtedly place further future budgetary pressures on a system which already finds itself drastically underfunded and over-stretched.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your time in considering this letter. If you wish to discuss this subject further or require any additional information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert Jones". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and legible.

Dr Robert Jones