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Annwyl Angharad,

I write in response to your email on 17 December 2025 seeking further information following my appearance before the Equality and Social Justice Committee on 15 December. The information provided here relate specifically to equality data and the relationship between deprivation and imprisonment.

### **Equality data**

HM Prison and Probation Service's [Offender Equalities Annual Report](#) present a range of statistics on prisoners in England and Wales and their protected characteristics. These include data on sexual orientation, gender identity, age, ethnicity, religion, mother and baby units and pregnant prisoners. The annual report does not, however, include *any* information on disability for prisoners on the basis that these data remain 'limited'. Although HMPPS's annual report (and accompanying data tables) include a range of data sources, the release offers *no* breakdown for Welsh prisons (i.e. the characteristics of prisoners held in the Welsh prison estate) or Welsh prisoners held across England and Wales (i.e. based on home address prior to entering custody).

The Ministry of Justice's quarterly [Offender Management Statistics](#) also provide information on prisoners broken down by sex, age, ethnicity, religion, and nationality ('British' or 'Foreign') in

England and Wales. The *Prison Population Data Tool* also provides access to information on the age and ethnicity of prisoners held in each prison in Wales, although there is no breakdown for Welsh prisoners (based on home address prior to entering custody). The inaugural *Welsh Justice Data: Annual Release* includes information on the number of Welsh prisoners (based on home address) by age, sex, ethnicity, and religion.

### **The link between poverty and deprivation**

During the evidence session on 15 December, I alluded to the fact that levels of poverty and deprivation in Wales may offer the most plausible explanation for its table topping imprisonment rate. Wider research on the social and political forces underpinning criminal justice policy show that factors such as poverty and deprivation are likely to result in more people coming into contact with the criminal justice system ([Houchin, 2005](#); [Reiman and Leighton, 2010](#); [Wacquant, 2009](#)). A report co-authored by colleagues and I in 2022 [found](#) that the imprisonment rate for the ten most deprived local authorities in England was ten times greater (307 prisoners per 100,000) than that of the ten least deprived local authorities in England (30 per 100,000). The fact that poverty remains a prevalent and persistent issue in Wales ([Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2025](#)), alongside evidence pointing towards a correlation between imprisonment rates and deprivation levels in Wales ([Jones and Davies, 2019](#)), underlines the need for this issue to be explored further.

Due to the lack of capacity and funding for research on criminal justice in Wales, there is currently limited scope to carry out this vital work. The Wales Governance Centre has [repeatedly](#) called for the establishment of a Welsh Criminal Justice Observatory to be based in Cardiff University's School of Law and Politics. The Observatory would seek to inform public and political debate by carrying out in-depth research on the operation of the criminal justice system in Wales, including Wales' table topping imprisonment rate. Following on from my appearance before the committee on 15 December, I would like to reiterate the need for the Welsh Government to provide funding to support the establishment a Welsh Criminal Justice Observatory based at the Wales Governance Centre.

I hope that the supplementary information provided above is of use to the Equality and Social Justice Committee's ongoing work on *The Criminal Justice System in Wales*. If you wish to discuss anything included further or require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Rob Jones