# Record Spike in Mental Health-Related Sick Leave Among HMPPS Staff Raises Concerns



In the year ending March 2024, prison and probation staff within the HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) took a record total of 282,457 working days off due to mental health issues. This represents an increase of 148% since 2018, equating to approximately 774 years of sick leave. The Labour Party's analysis highlighted that more than 40% of all sick days were attributed to mental ill health, with overall sick days reducing from around 753,000 in the previous year to 712,000, but mental health-related absences have continued to rise.

Some of the highest average sick leave days were reported in Young Offender Institutions (YOIs), with YOI Werrington averaging 18 days and YOI Feltham averaging 17.6 days per staff member. Other prisons with high average sick leave include HMP Liverpool (19 days), HMP Wandsworth (16.6 days), and HMP Wymott (16.1 days).

The National Tactical Response Group, tasked with managing prison riots, has seen increased deployment. Concurrently, the chief inspector of prisons noted instances where dangerous criminals were released early due to overcrowding, a situation which the prison officers' union (POA) has warned might lead to legal actions if conditions worsen.

Shadow Justice Secretary Shabana Mahmood criticized the current state of the prison system, highlighting substantial declines in staff morale and conditions within the facilities. The Ministry of Justice responded by emphasizing available mental health support for staff, including fast-track referrals and mentorship programs.