# Former prison officer claims his dismissal was unjust amidst mounting safety concerns



Former HMP Liverpool officer Lewis Millar has launched a legal battle against the Prison Service following his dismissal over gross misconduct, stating his concerns regarding personal safety were largely disregarded during his tenure in an increasingly perilous prison environment. The 33-year-old, who resides in St Helens, claims to have faced harassment and threats from inmates as well as significant pressures related to his mental health.

Mr Millar, who previously served five years in the British Army as a communications systems operator before pursuing a career in the Prison Service, found himself back at HMP Liverpool in June 2024 after approximately 18 months away from his role. He contends he had understood upon his return there would be a tailored support plan in place—comprising reduced contact with prisoners, limited working hours, and regular occupational health visits. Instead, he alleges he was assigned to G Wing, the prison’s most crowded area, at a time when he was already grappling with mental health challenges exacerbated by workplace pressures.

In a statement to the Liverpool Echo, Mr Millar recounted that he faced threats from a serving prisoner who harassed him following a personal relationship breakdown. He detailed that the threats intensified, which, according to a heavily redacted Ministry of Justice report, included menacing comments about kidnapping and bodily harm. At one point, he requested a transfer due to safety concerns and was initially moved to HMP Styal, a women’s prison, after receiving a promotion.

While at HMP Styal, Mr Millar was tasked with assessing vulnerable prisoners at risk of self-harm or suicide amidst a backdrop of increased fatalities at the facility. The stress of managing these responsibilities alongside his own deteriorating mental health led him to develop issues with alcohol, ultimately resulting in a drink driving conviction.

Following his appeal and return to work, Mr Millar claims the promised support never materialised. He contended that staffing shortages were exacerbating tensions within the prison. “Staff straight out of university who had been with the Prison Service for less than six months were supervising prisoners who in some cases had been in custody longer than they had been alive,” he told the Echo. According to Mr Millar, assignments to challenging wings with insufficient experienced staff led to increased mistakes and oversights, consequently affecting the safety and wellbeing of both officers and inmates.

He also highlighted the inadequacies of staffing within HMP Liverpool, stating that officers often worked under circumstances where they were responsible for several hundred inmates without adequate backup due to ongoing staff shortages. These issues, he argued, left inmates and staff in precarious positions and contributed to a higher frequency of assaults and incidents within the prison.

An Instagram account was created to target and intimidate prison officers, including Mr Millar, requesting personal details about their homes and families. Confronted by the mounting harassment, he eventually engaged in a private conversation with the account administrator, which he described as a moment of desperation. This conversation was later cited as grounds for his dismissal by prison management. Mr Millar claimed his sacking followed a meeting with the governor, who described the incident as embarrassing.

In the wake of his dismissal, Mr Millar expressed feelings of worthlessness as he struggled to find employment for six months before securing a position with a homeless charity, where he reports feeling much more fulfilled. His employment tribunal against the Prison Service has been postponed until August.

In response to Mr Millar’s claims, a spokesperson for the Prison Service stated that HMP Liverpool complies with procedures regarding staff misconduct and acknowledged the issues of overcrowding and staff shortages affecting prisons across the country. The spokesperson emphasised that efforts are underway, including plans to create 14,000 new prison places by 2031 and investing in enhancements for staff welfare and operational conditions. The ongoing situation at HMP Liverpool reflects larger systemic challenges faced by the UK prison system, which have been brought to the forefront by Mr Millar’s allegations.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/former-hmp-liverpool-prison-officer-79571639> - Supports the claim that former HMP Liverpool officer Lewis Millar is taking the Prison Service to an employment tribunal over his dismissal and concerns about personal safety and harassment from inmates.
* <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/staff-support-and-wellbeing-in-prisons> - Corroborates the idea that staffing shortages and mental health pressures are significant issues within the UK prison system, which affects both inmates and officers.
* <https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/commons-debates/parliament-2024/february-21/justice-questions> - Provides context on the systemic challenges faced by the UK prison system, including overcrowding and staff shortages mentioned in the article.
* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-merseyside-79551465> - Highlights issues related to prison officer safety and the struggles faced by those working in the UK prison system, aligning with Mr. Millar's claims.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/major-prison-reform-to-create-14000-new-prison-places> - Supports the Prison Service's response about creating new prison places and investing in staff welfare, addressing the broader systemic issues within prisons.