

'Four New Prisons Programme'

Chorley 'Super Prison': The Case Against

November 2022

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Executive Summary

This report sets out a response to the Ministry of Justice's *Proof of Evidence* submitted in June 2022. The findings presented here are based on independent research and scrutiny of official data collected as part of an ongoing research project that will offer the first in-depth analysis of the UK Government's 'prison modernisation' agenda in England and Wales. Some of the key findings are outlined below:

Modern Prisons 'Boost Rehabilitation and Reduce Reoffending'?

- There are no official recorded data or prison performance metrics based on the age of penal establishments in England and Wales. (para 1.2)
- The Ministry of Justice has never produced research or analysis which show that 'modern' prisons result in significant improvements in prisoner safety or rehabilitation. (para 1.3)
- The available evidence strongly suggests that 'modern' prisons in England and Wales have consistently failed to deliver upon the promises made as part of the UK Government's prison modernisation agenda. (para 1.4)

The Validity of Prison Population Projections

- There are good reasons to be sceptical about the validity and use of the prison population projections included in the Ministry of Justice's *Proof of Evidence*. (para 2.2)

- Studies have shown that it is 'technically impossible' to accurately predict future prison populations and there are numerous examples where government projections have inaccurately predicted rises in prison populations in England and Wales. (para 2.2)
- The Ministry of Justice acknowledges that there is 'a degree of uncertainty' in its prison population projections and that the uncertainty surrounding the latest forecast underpinning its case for a new 'super prison' in Chorley is 'large'. (para 2.2)

A Regional 'Demand' for Prison Places

- Over the last decade the Ministry of Justice has actively pursued policies that have resulted in prisoners from the North West of England being held outside of the region. (para 3.2)
- In December 2021, 15 per cent of the prisoners (1,195) held in the North West's designated male resettlement prisons were from outside of the region. More can be done in the existing prison estate to ensure that resettlement prison places in the North West are used to house prisoners in their home region. (para 3.4)
- The forecast increasing 'demand' for prison places in the North West should be seized upon by the UK Government as an opportunity to better understand and overcome the factors that are contributing to high prisoner levels across the region. Official data show that the North West has the highest imprisonment rate per 100,000 people of any region in

England and Wales.

- The harmful relationship between socio-economic inequalities and imprisonment should give the UK government serious concern about opening additional prisons in the North West. In 2021, the imprisonment rate for the ten most deprived local authorities in England (of which six are located in the North West) was ten times greater (307 prisoners per 100,000) than that of the ten least deprived local authorities in England (30 per 100,000). (para 3.7)
- Alternative strategies could be adopted to help support communities across the North West and combat the projected 'demand' for places. Rather than throwing good money after bad by continuing with a prison expansion policy that will 'level down' rather than 'level up', the UK government should seek to direct resources into tackling chronic socio-economic inequalities in communities across the North West. (para 3.11)

Introduction

In June 2021, the UK Ministry of Justice announced proposals for a new 1,715 place Category C prison in the North West of England (Ministry of Justice, 2021a). Unveiled as part of the government's 'Four New Prisons Programme', the Ministry of Justice submitted a planning application in August 2021 for the prison to be sited on land next to HMP Garth and HMP Wymott in Chorley. In December 2021, however, Chorley Council's Planning Committee rejected the application citing concerns over road safety, the impact of increased traffic on those living nearby, and damage to the greenbelt (Chorley Council, 2021).

In March 2022, the UK Government announced it was to appeal Chorley Council's decision to reject its outline planning application. The following month, the Planning Inspectorate opened its inquiry into the appeal. Having received multiple evidence submissions over the summer, the Inspectorate submitted to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in October. A decision on whether the prison will receive planning permission will now be made by the UK Secretary of State for Levelling Up, with a decision likely to be issued on or before 19th January 2023.

In this report we set out a response to the Ministry of Justice's *Proof of Evidence* submitted in June 2022.¹ We draw on the existing and current research being carried out by each of the authors, including ongoing work which sheds light on the Government's 'prison modernisation' agenda in England and Wales for the

¹ Although the Proof of Evidence report was prepared and submitted by HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), it will be referred to throughout as the *Ministry of Justice's Proof of Evidence*. HMPPS is an executive agency which is sponsored by the Ministry of Justice and its officials, including the Senior Responsible Owner of the 'Four New Prisons Programme', are accountable to the Ministry of Justice.

first time. The report also makes use of policy documents and official data that have been obtained from the Ministry of Justice using the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

We focus particularly on three specific issues raised by the Ministry of Justice's *Proof of Evidence*, namely:

- i. the evidence-base underpinning the claims central to the 'modern' prison agenda;
- ii. concerns surrounding the validity of prison population projections; and
- iii. the regional 'demand' for prison places.

It is claimed by Mr Robin Seaton, the Senior Responsible Owner for the 'Four New Prisons Programme', that the information presented by the Ministry of Justice is based on 'rigorous analysis of the evidence' (Ministry of Justice, 2022a:2). The arguments included in our report call this claim into question and, in doing so, serve to undermine the case that has been put forward by the Ministry of Justice in support of a new prison in Chorley. The data, analysis and conclusions of this report should also give rise to a much wider set of questions over the future of imprisonment and penal policy in England and Wales.

1. Modern prisons to 'boost rehabilitation and reduce reoffending'?

- 1.1 One of the central claims behind the Ministry of Justice's prison modernisation agenda is that it will deliver significant improvements in the outcomes for prisoners, both during their sentence and upon their release into the community. The *Proof of Evidence* includes the claims that a new prison in the Chorley area will 'boost rehabilitation and reduce reoffending' (Ministry of Justice, 2022a: 9-14), and that the alignment of new prison design elements will 'significantly improve levels of safety' while offering prisoners 'the best chance to be rehabilitated and turn their lives around'. However, we argue that there are two fundamental problems that undermine these claims.
- 1.2 First, the Ministry of Justice's determination to provide 'rigorous analysis of the evidence' is fatally hampered by the fact that it does not itself produce any evidence on the comparative performance of 'modern' prisons. Despite its many publications and quarterly data releases, the Ministry of Justice offer no breakdown of prison performance based on the age of the establishment. The Ministry's quarterly *Safety in Custody Statistics*, for example, categorise self-harm data by sex, age, time in custody, sentence status, ethnicity, nationality, and location within the prison, but provide no analysis of the trends *between prisons* based on their age or the regime in place (e.g. open, training, local, high security). Likewise, data on deaths in prison custody include a breakdown by sex, method, time in custody, sentence status, and offence type, but offer no analysis or comparison based on the relative age of the prison

establishments. The same applies to the Ministry of Justice's quarterly *Proven Reoffending Statistics* which offer no disaggregation based on the age of prison establishments or the regime in place. Most significantly of all however is that HMPPS' own *Annual Prison Performance Ratings* once again offer no analysis or breakdown of prison performance based on age. Here, comparisons are made simply based on prison function (e.g. open, local, Category C) and the region in which prisons are located.

- 1.3 The obvious discrepancy between the unequivocal claims made by the Ministry of Justice with respect to 'modern' prisons on the one hand, and the complete lack of evidence presented on the other, prompted one of the current authors to write to the Ministry in July 2022 to publish 'the results of any research or analysis that the Ministry of Justice/HMPPS has carried out to compare the performance of older versus newer/'modern' prison establishments'. In response, the Ministry of Justice (2022b) confirmed that '*no such research or analysis into the performance metrics of prison establishments which account for the age of those establishments has been undertaken*'. Given the sums of public money at stake, it is unclear why the Ministry of Justice continue to pursue such a large scale prison building campaign based on unevidenced assertions with respect to 'modern' prison performance.
- 1.4 Indeed, the Ministry of Justice's unsubstantiated claims face a second problem: namely, widespread, and growing evidence that existing 'modern' prisons have failed to deliver upon the promises made by the UK Government (O'Connor and O'Murchu, 2019). In February 2017, HMP Berwyn in north Wales became the newest and largest prison in England and Wales. The first to be constructed as part of a 'modernisation' scheme announced in 2013 (Ministry of Justice, 2013a), Berwyn was built to hold

2,100 prisoners and promised a regime centred upon rehabilitation and purposeful activity (BBC News, 2016). Or as heralded by the then head of prisons and probation in Wales, Sarah Payne, in 2015, Berwyn was to be 'the flagship for the rest of the country [and] England to emulate' (O'Connor and O'Murchu, 2019).

- 1.5 The Ministry of Justice's *own* data, however, show that the performance of HMP Berwyn since 2017 has been anything other than 'flagship'. In 2019, the number of self-harm incidents at the prison rose by 86 per cent – over a period in which its population had increased by just 18 per cent (Jones, 2020). Increases were also recorded that same year in the number of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults (143 per cent) and assaults on staff (25 per cent). Official data also reveal a pattern of other concerning trends. In 2018-2019, for example, there were more hostage incidents (11) recorded at Berwyn than at any other prison in England and Wales. And in 2019-2020, 7 (active) incidents of concerted indiscipline (i.e. prison disturbances) were recorded at the prison alongside an increase in the number of drug finds (92 per cent), weapon discoveries (141 per cent), and alcohol finds (225 per cent) (Jones, 2020).
- 1.6 The many problems surrounding HMP Berwyn have also been identified by HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP). In its most recent inspection carried out in May 2022, HMIP (2022a: 5) discovered that rates of self-harm remained 'too high' and found that 'key work was not used to support prisoners at risk of self-harm and debriefs following acts of self-harm were not always carried out'. When asked by inspectors whether they had ever felt unsafe at the prison, 43 per cent of prisoners at Berwyn answered in the affirmative.

- 1.7 Despite being promoted as a 'modern' prison with a rehabilitative ethos and culture, HMIP (2022a: 5) also found that HMP Berwyn were 'not sufficiently good' in the areas of 'purposeful activity' and 'rehabilitation and release planning'. During its most recent visit, 70 per cent of prisoners told inspectors that they had not been encouraged by staff to attend education sessions, while almost six in ten (59 per cent) prisoners responded negatively when asked if they had received help from staff to prepare for their release into the community (HMIP, 2022b). A fifth (19 per cent) of prisoners said that they had not been helped with a drug problem since arriving at the prison, while almost a third (31 per cent) admitted that drugs were either 'very easy' or 'quite easy' to get hold of. Over half (57 per cent) of prisoners included in the survey who require physical or mental health support reported they had not received any, and over a third (39 per cent) in need of accommodation and employment support had not received such help since arriving at the prison. Perhaps most damning of all, one in ten (9%) said that their experiences at Berwyn had made them 'more likely' to offend in the future (HMIP, 2022b).
- 1.8 Unveiled as a 'flagship' prison and heralded as a model for the rest of the prison estate, HMP Berwyn has become synonymous with the UK Government's failings on justice policy over the last decade. It is negligent, therefore, that the Ministry of Justice chose not to reflect on Berwyn when setting out its *Proof of Evidence* case to the Council's planning committee.
- 1.9 Note that we are *not* arguing that the design, condition, or age of a prison is somehow an irrelevant or insignificant matter. Indeed, there is a wealth of evidence demonstrating that older Victorian prisons present many serious problems to prisoners and those working inside them (e.g. Scraton et al. 1991), problems which have given compelling arguments for their

closure. What appears irrefutable, however, is that 'modern' does not equate to 'significant improvement'. The logic employed within the Ministry of Justice's modernisation agenda – that 'new' or 'modern' prison places will considerably enhance safety levels while offering prisoners 'the best chance to be rehabilitated and turn their lives around' – is simply a matter of unevidenced blind faith.

- 1.10 To develop an approach reliant on a solid evidence base would require the Ministry of Justice to confront a rather uncomfortable truth: the performance of its existing 'modern' prisons undermines the many upbeat and assured claims that it is making to councils across England as part of its latest 'Four New Prisons Programme'. Given the lack of evidence and the poor performance of the Ministry of Justice's modernisation programme to date, any serious assessment of the Ministry's claims in its *Proof of Evidence* should be viewed with considerable scepticism.

2. The validity of prison population projections

- 2.1 The Ministry of Justice maintains that its 'Four New Prisons Programme' is a pre-emptive response to a growing demand for prison places in England and Wales. This 'need' for additional capacity has been calculated using a 'suite of modelling tools' which provide the Ministry of Justice with a series of forecasted prison populations. The Ministry's first prison population projection was published in 2008, and its most recent forecast in 2021 estimated that the number of prisoners in England and Wales will rise to 98,500 by March 2026.
- 2.2 There are good reasons, however, to be sceptical about the validity and use of prison population projections. Firstly, existing research is highly sceptical as to their accuracy. Having examined and analysed the forecasts and prison population projections used by the UK Government, Armstrong (2012: 15) described the process of projecting future prisoner numbers as a 'technically impossible' task, and that projections in England and Wales had been characterised by 'inherent instability, volatility and chronic inaccuracy' (Armstrong, 2012:1). Although the Ministry of Justice's (2022a: 12) *Proof of Evidence* acknowledges that there is a 'degree of uncertainty' in the projections underpinning the 'demand' for further prison places, this formulation actually underplays the stronger caveat contained in its *Prison Population Projections 2021 to 2026* statistical bulletin, in which it noted that the uncertainty surrounding the projections (subsequently repeated in the *Proof of Evidence*) is 'large' (Ministry of Justice, 2021b: 3) [emphasis added].

- 2.3 A major contributing factor to this 'large' uncertainty is that the Ministry of Justice's (2021b) latest projection is based on just one 'central' scenario. In previous years the Ministry calculated its projections using three scenarios to estimate the lower, medium, and higher population.² In 2008, for example, the Ministry of Justice (2008) estimated that the demand for prison spaces would be between 83,400 and 95,800 at the end of June 2015, a range of 12,400 places. But in reporting just one 'central' projection, the Ministry's most recent estimate, which places prison population growth at the higher end (estimating a 23 per cent rise in population) means that it is not only more susceptible to uncertainty but should be treated with scepticism. Of the 38 different annual projections included in seven reports published between 2008 and 2014, actual population growth was closer to the Ministry's 'higher' estimate on just four occasions (see Appendix 1).³
- 2.4 Beyond questions of their validity, concerns have also been raised about the way in which prison population projections are used by government ministers and officials. Armstrong (2012: 1) concluded that the accuracy of prison population projections are often 'less important than their power to

² The Ministry of Justice offer the following explanation: The COVID-19 pandemic, planned recruitment of an additional 20,000 police officers and the impact of an additional 3,400 officers recruited through precept funding has all resulted in considerable uncertainty in these projections. As with last year's publication, it is therefore not possible to use historic deviations between projections and out-turn to estimate likely ranges of the future prison population relative to the central estimate (as was presented in publications prior to 2020). In 2015, the Ministry of Justice moved away from publishing projections for different scenarios. The projections from 2015 included a breakdown forecast for Determinate, Indeterminate, Remand, Recall, Non-Criminal, Fine, and the total prison population.

³ These four occasions all appeared in the Prison Population Projections 2013-2019 (Ministry of Justice, 2013b).

The 'actual' prison population levels used in Appendix 1 are taken from the Ministry of Justice's *Prison Population Statistics* [multiple years].

See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/prison-population-statistics>

create a sense of control and legitimacy to penal policy makers'. Here, Armstrong (2012: 15) explores the way in which 'prison projections have served to create 'a normative case for action' by government ministers and officials. This is clearly evident within the Ministry of Justice's (2022a: 12) *Proof of Evidence* which explicitly underlines the need for 'action': 'the projections show demand for prison places will soon outstrip supply, unless *action* is taken to increase supply' [emphasis added].

- 2.5 There is another important point to make here. As Armstrong (2012: 15) explains, prison population projections are not just about 'any population but a dangerous one'. A failure to put in place the necessary steps to deal with this population (i.e. provide sufficient prison places), according to Armstrong, 'amounts to a dereliction of duty, and failing to take account of official forecasts equates to a moral lapse'. Having rejected its planning application, the Ministry of Justice's *Proof of Evidence* can arguably be viewed as an attempt to displace any accusations of 'moral lapse' or 'dereliction of duty' firmly upon Chorley Council, this despite the 'large' uncertainty around its own projections (Ministry of Justice, 2021b: 8).
- 2.6 Although the Ministry of Justice maintains that their case for the 'Four New Prison Programme' is based on a 'rigorous analysis' of the evidence, even a rudimentary search through the available evidence surrounding prison population projections is enough to raise serious and significant questions concerning their accuracy, validity, and use. Yet upon these discredited 'forecasts' the Ministry of Justice is seeking to justify a multi-billion pound prison building programme. The arguments presented here underline the need to treat the Ministry of Justice's claims about the 'need' for additional capacity with extreme caution. They are, after all, claims that contain a 'large' degree of uncertainty.

3. A regional 'demand' for prison places

- 3.1 The Ministry of Justice's (2022a: 12) unconvincing contention that there is a 'national' need for prison places also involves a parallel claim that there is 'significant additional regional demand for prison places' in the North West of England and Greater Manchester. This argument is based on data which show that many prisoners from the North West are currently held outside of the region, with the Ministry of Justice projecting that by March 2026 there will not be enough prison places in the North West to accommodate prisoners with a home address in the region. The *Proof of Evidence* focuses specifically on the need to meet the projected growth in the demand for prison places for Category C male prisoners from the North West with fewer than 24 months of their sentence remaining. According to the Ministry (2022a:13), 'the Government seeks to hold these prisoners in or close to their home region... The existence of a large group of prisoners being in prisons outside their home region is a clear indication of an existing unmet demand for Category C places in the North West.'
- 3.2 Despite the suggestion that the dispersal of many prisoners from the North West outside the region is a 'clear indication' of an 'existing unmet demand' (Ministry of Justice, 2022a: 13), there are several other factors that can potentially help us to explain this problem. Firstly, over the last decade the Ministry of Justice has *actively* pursued policies that have resulted in prisoners from the North West being held outside of the region. In 2013, when searching for a suitable location for its new 2,100-place 'super' prison, the Ministry chose a site in north Wales despite its own official report explicitly identifying Liverpool and Manchester as the 'key

population' areas for the prison (Ministry of Justice, 2013c). The result of this decision is that since becoming operational in February 2017, the majority of prisoners held at HMP Berwyn – a Category C prison with a resettlement function – originate from outside of Wales (Jones, 2020). In December 2021, for example, official data show there were 966 prisoners with a home address in the North West of England being held at HMP Berwyn, including 415 from Greater Manchester, (see Appendix 2).⁴

- 3.3 The Ministry of Justice's case for additional capacity is also based upon the need for more 'resettlement prison' places in the North West region. This policy was first introduced as part of the Ministry of Justice's (2013d) *Transforming Rehabilitation* agenda in 2013 with the aim to create designated resettlement prisons to ensure that prisoners were held locally and released from prisons closer to their local communities and probation areas. Despite this commitment, official data show that in 2019 some 3,859 prisoners were released from prisons in England and Wales that were not designated as resettlement prisons, the equivalent of fourteen prison releases a day (Jones and Wyn Jones, 2022).
- 3.4 The emphasis placed on resettlement prisons underlines the need to think more closely about how spaces within the existing North West prison estate are being utilised. Even though designated resettlement prisons are to be used to hold prisoners close to their local community or probation

⁴ All data relating to the 'home address' of prisoners is based on a prisoner's origin address (home address on reception into custody). The Ministry of Justice state that around 97% of prisoners have an origin location; i.e. addresses that are recorded on its central IT system. If no address is given, an offender's committal court address is used as a proxy for the area in which they are resident. Those with no recorded origin are typically foreign nationals or those recently received into custody. No address has been recorded and no court information is available for around 3% of all offenders; these figures are excluded from the data included in this report.

area, analysis of the Ministry of Justice's (2022c) own data show that 15 per cent of the 1,195 prisoners held in the North West's designated male resettlement⁵ prisons were from outside of the North West region in December 2021 (see Appendix 3). These data clearly show that more can be done to ensure that prisoners from the North West are held in the resettlement prison places already located in their home area. One way to achieve this might be to offer clearer guidance to prison service officials across the North West. For example, the Ministry of Justice's (2022d) *National Offender Flows for Adult Male* prisoners, which provides instructions on where to allocate adult male and young offenders (male) across England and Wales, offers guidance to officials in Wales that 'where practical, priority should be given to keeping Welsh men in Wales'. This same guidance is *not* provided in the *National Allocation Protocol* to officials working in any region of England. Although distances remain a feature of imprisonment in Wales, this omission perhaps represents an example of the Ministry of Justice not doing all that it can with the current prison estate to address the problems that a new prison will purportedly seek to address.

- 3.5 Lastly, alongside the argument that the region *currently* suffers from a shortfall in prison places, the Ministry of Justice's case for a new prison also rests upon the prediction that there will be a 'significant' future demand for prison places emanating from the North West and Greater Manchester. In short, the Ministry of Justice anticipate that the North West will make a

⁵ These were (male only): Haverigg, Kirkham – Open, Lancaster Farms, Preston (Cumbria and Lancashire); Altcourse, Forest Bank, Hindley YOI, Manchester, Risley, Thorn Cross – Open; Liverpool (Merseyside). HMP Kennet was included for Merseyside before the prison closed in December 2016 (Ministry of Justice, 2014a).

sizeable contribution to the national prison population by March 2026. The question overlooked in its *Proof of Evidence*, however, is why?

- 3.6 The Ministry of Justice's (2022a) *Proof of Evidence* represents a glaring missed opportunity to inform council members, local residents, and the wider public about what might be causing high and (according to its own estimates) rising prisoner numbers in the North West region. The *current* number of prisoners drawn from the North West alone demands some form of explanation. For example, an analysis of prison population data broken down by region show that the North West (170 per 100,000) has an imprisonment rate that is considerably higher than the England and Wales average (131 per 100,000). Indeed, the North West has the highest imprisonment rate per 100,000 people of any region of England and Wales (Ministry of Justice, 2022e) (see Appendix 4).
- 3.7 While efforts to explain prison population increases in England and Wales have tended to focus on sentencing decisions and court outcomes (Dunbar and Langdon, 1998; Hough et al. 2003), studies have shown that the explanation for high rates of imprisonment often lie beyond criminal justice factors. Wider research on the social and political forces underpinning criminal justice policy, for example, has shown that there exists a 'clear positive relationship' between inequality, poverty, deprivation, and higher rates of imprisonment (e.g. Caddle and Crisp, 1997; Newburn, 2016: 329; Reiman and Leighton, 2010; Wacquant, 2009; Williams et al, 2013). By analysing prisoner data broken down by local authority level alongside the most recent *English Indices of Deprivation*, a striking correlation exists between deprivation and imprisonment in England. These data show that the imprisonment rate for the ten most deprived local authorities in England (by rank of average score) was ten

times greater (307 prisoners per 100,000) than the rate recorded in the ten least deprived local authorities in England in 2021 (30 per 100,000) (Ministry of Justice, 2022c) (see Appendix 5 and 6).⁶

- 3.8 The relationship between imprisonment and deprivation might help us to explain why the North West imprisonment rate exceeds the England and Wales average. Of the ten most deprived local authority areas in England in 2019 (by rank of average score), six were located in the North West (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2019). Ministry of Justice data show that the combined imprisonment rate of these six local authorities was eleven times greater (341 per 100,000) than the rate recorded in the ten least deprived local authorities in England in 2021 (30 per 100,000) (Ministry of Justice, 2022c) (see Appendix 7).
- 3.9 The relationship between imprisonment and socio-economic inequality can also work both ways. Studies have shown that those who experience imprisonment can struggle to gain employment (Looney and Turner, 2018; Pager, 2007), housing (Maguire and Nolan, 2007), and educational places upon their release and return to the community (Niven and Stewart, 2005). Research by Western and Petit (2010) found that a custodial sentence can lead to a 40 per cent reduction in earnings as well as reduced job tenure. Custodial sentences can also impose several financial constraints on prisoners' families, with the costs facing prison visitors often adding to the 'extensive' financial difficulties that such families already face. This includes the financial strains placed upon families by the potential loss of income

⁶ See Appendix 7 for a breakdown of the imprisonment rates for the six local authorities in the North West included in the top ten most deprived communities in England (by rank of average score).

as well the costs incurred by supporting a prisoner throughout the course of their sentence (Condry, 2007; Fishman, 1988).⁷

- 3.10 These arguments point towards something of a vicious cycle when it comes to imprisonment and deprivation in the North West. High levels of poverty and social exclusion in the area can be seen as a major contributing factor in higher levels of imprisonment across the region. These high rates of imprisonment then further exacerbate and entrench socio-economic inequalities, which then increase the likelihood that individuals across the region will come into contact with the criminal justice system.
- 3.12 Despite the Ministry of Justice's (2022a: 18) suggestion that a new prison in Chorley will deliver a 'wider economic boost' to the area as part of its 'Levelling Up' agenda, multiple research studies have disputed these claims (e.g. Besser and Hanson, 2004; Gilmore, 2007; Hooks et al. 2004; 2010; King et al, 2003; Madoc-Jones, 2009). Alternative strategies could, however, be adopted to help support communities across the North West and combat the supposed 'demand' for prison places. For example, a much more effective way to 'level up' communities is to redistribute resources away from prison building towards services aimed at tackling poverty and social inequality (Allen and Stern, 2007; Brown et al. 2015). By supporting more people out of poverty, and given the 'clear positive relationship' that exists

⁷ The Ministry of Justice's (2021c: 6) *Prisons Strategy* White Paper claims that 'getting resettlement right' in prisons across England and Wales can help to reduce reoffending and 'level up' communities. There remain serious concerns, however, over the extent to which this can be achieved. For example, a recent inspection of the Offender Management in Custody model, introduced in 2018 to reduce reoffending and 'put rehabilitation at the centre of custodial and post-release work', HMI Probation and HMI Prisons (2022: 4) concluded that the model was 'not working in practice and that delivery is falling well short of expectations'.

between deprivation and imprisonment (Newburn, 2016: 329), this approach would be expected to help significantly reduce prisoner numbers and therefore alleviate the 'demand' for additional prison places across the North West.

- 3.12 The Ministry of Justice's decision to simply accept rising prisoner numbers rather than take active steps to reduce them will undoubtedly have significant economic (as well as human) consequences for the North West region. Not surprisingly, these adverse societal consequences, are absent from the Ministry of Justice's *Proof of Evidence*. We argue that more prison places will 'level down' rather than 'level up'. Rather than throwing good money after bad, a UK government interested in 'levelling-up' should seek to direct resources to tackle the chronic inequalities stemming from deprivation and poverty in communities across the North West.

Conclusion

The arguments laid out in this report bring the many issues surrounding imprisonment in the North West of England into sharp relief. Our own analysis of the available evidence, informed by independent research, puts a very different gloss on the arguments that have been presented in support of a new prison in Chorley.⁸ The Ministry of Justice's case for a new prison rests on unevidenced claims around the benefits of 'modern' prisons, assumptions that a 'demand' exists for prison places that is based on projection measures beset by inaccuracy and 'large' uncertainty, and a 'regional' need for prison places that raises more questions over the Ministry of Justice's stewardship of the prison system than it does to provide answers.

The information, data, and analysis presented in this report also raise a much wider set of questions over the trajectory and future of penal policy in England and Wales. This includes questions over the UK Government's decision to nail its colours once again to the mast of the prison modernisation agenda. This despite overwhelming evidence that newer prisons in England and Wales, including its previous 'flagship' prison in north Wales, are stymied by many of the challenges facing older prisons. Perhaps most importantly, however, the arguments in this report underline the need for government officials, policy makers and practitioners to think more seriously about the relationship between imprisonment and deprivation in England and Wales. Against the backdrop of a spiralling cost of living crisis, rising poverty levels, and impending cuts to vital

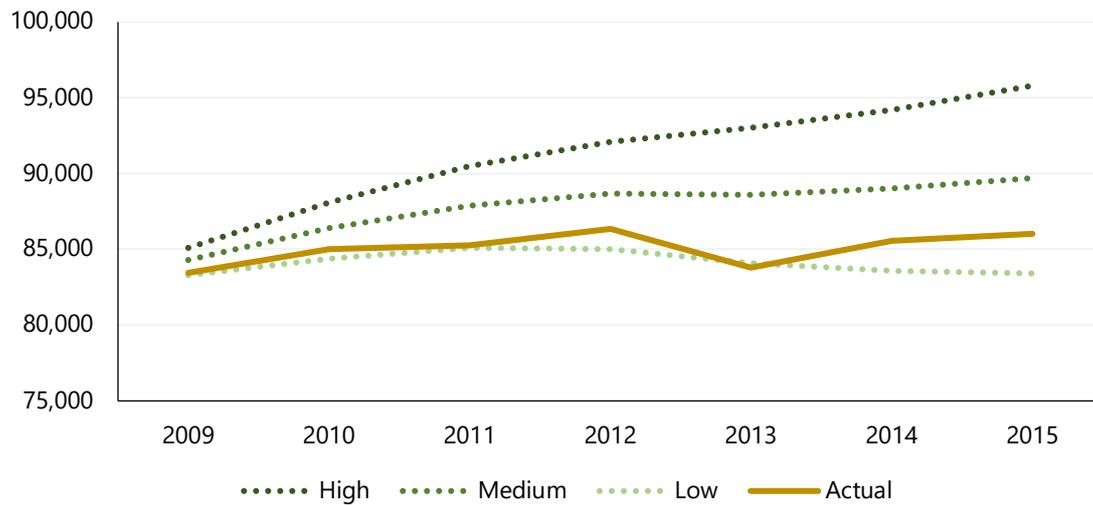
⁸ These same concerns may well extend to other parts of the North West should the Ministry of Justice's appeal be rejected and an alternative site is found in the region (see Cushman and Wakefield (2022) for a full list of shortlisted alternative sites).

public services, there has arguably never been a more urgent or pressing need for this discussion.

Appendix 1

Figure 1.1

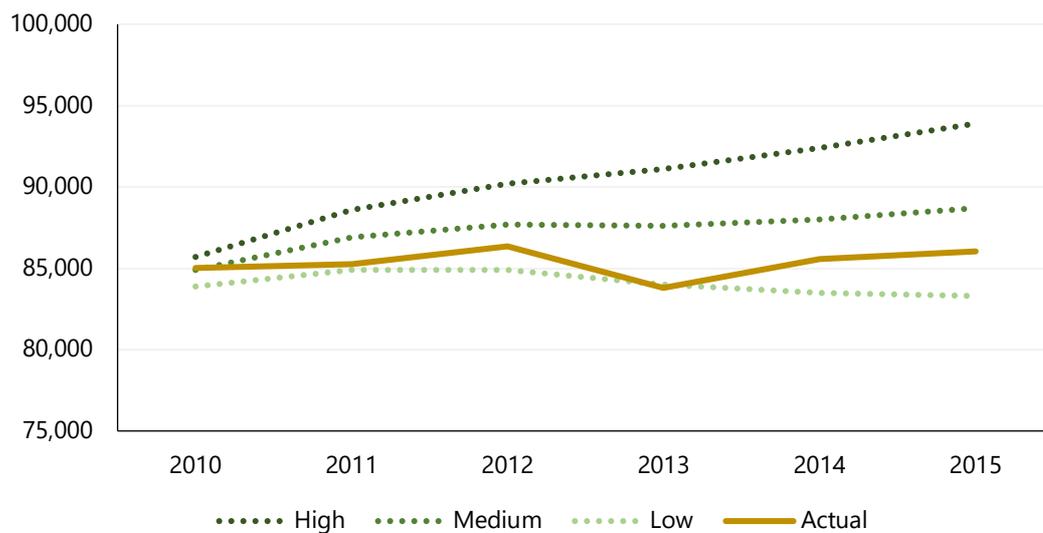
Prison Population Projections, 2009–2015



Source: Ministry of Justice (2008)

Figure 1.2

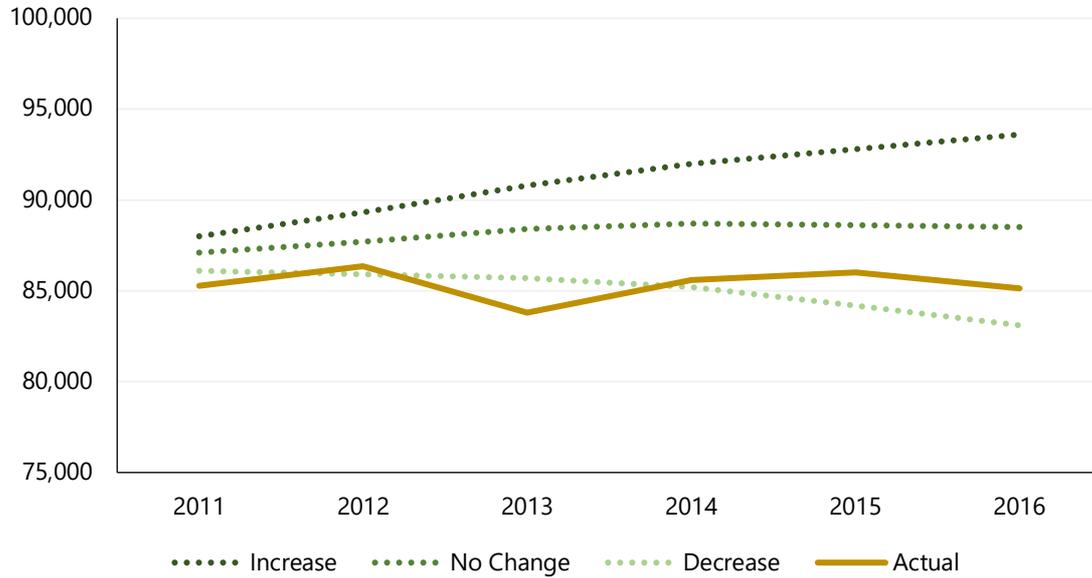
Prison Population Projections, 2010–2015



Source: Ministry of Justice (2009)

Figure 1.3

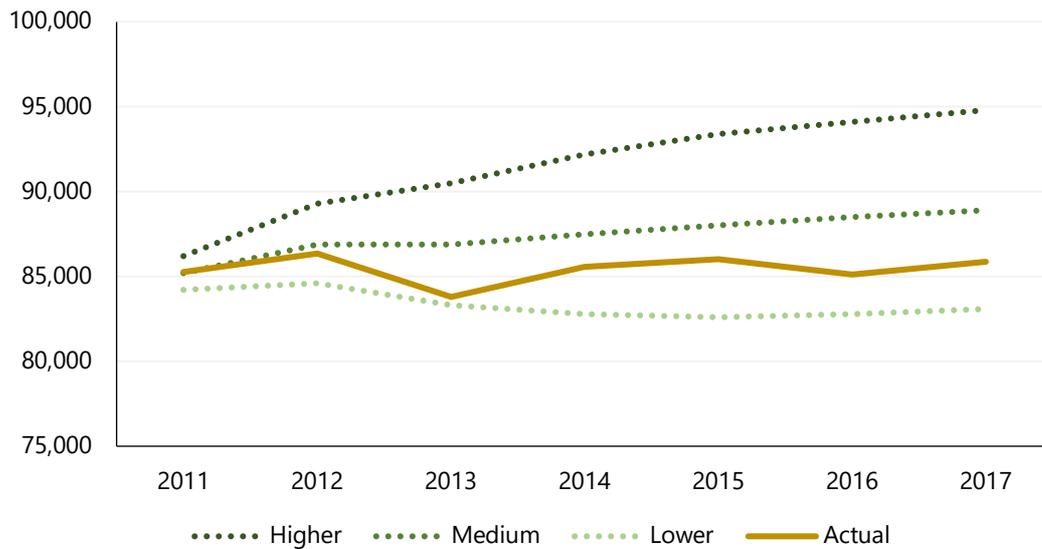
Prison Population Projections, 2011–2016



Source: Ministry of Justice (2010)

Figure 1.4

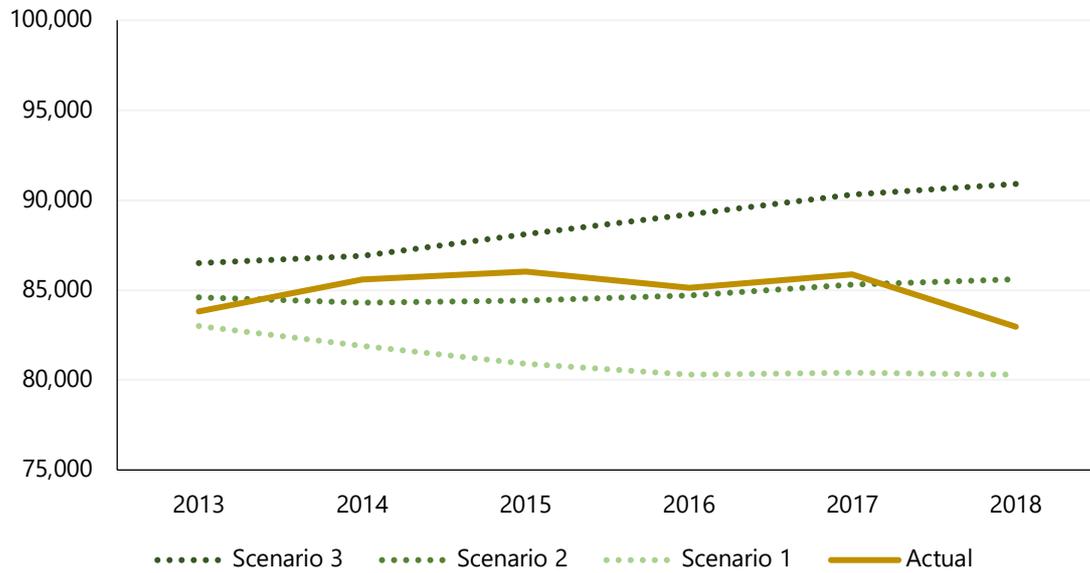
Prison Population Projections, 2011–2017



Source: Ministry of Justice (2011)

Figure 1.5

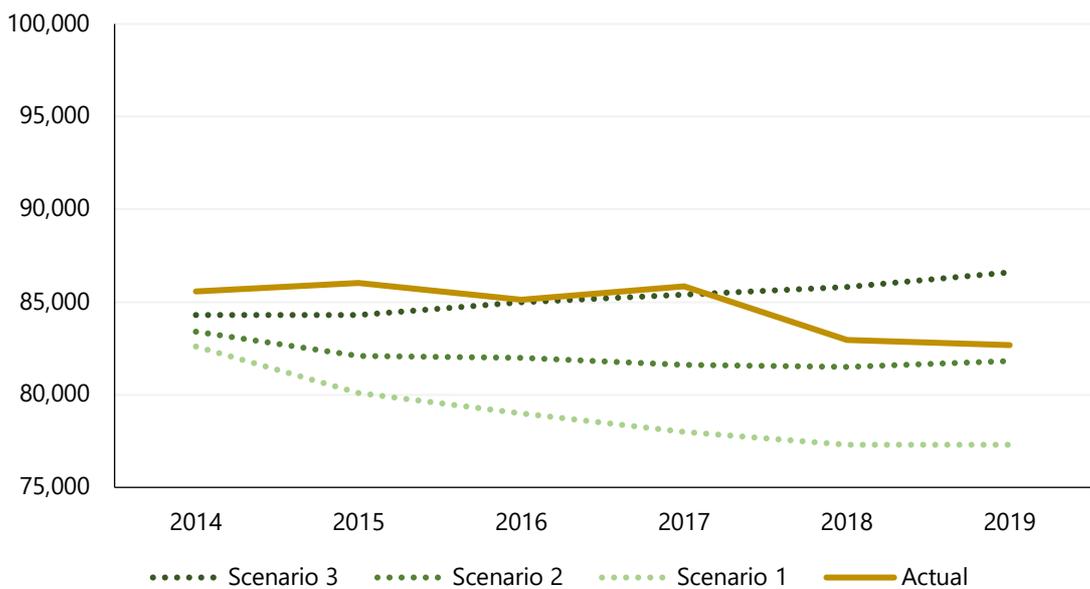
Prison Population Projections, 2013–2018



Source: Ministry of Justice (2012)

Figure 1.6

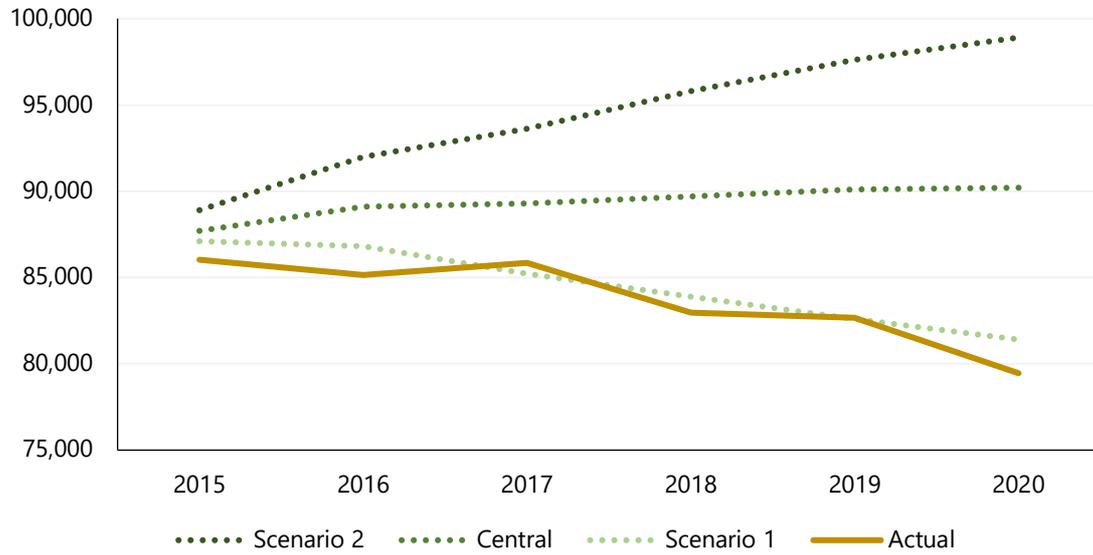
Prison Population Projections, 2014–2019



Source: Ministry of Justice (2013b)

Figure 1.7

Prison Population Projections, 2015–2020



Source: Ministry of Justice (2014b)

Appendix 2

Figure 2.1

The number of English prisoners at HMP Berwyn by local authority of origin, December 2021

Local authority	Total	Local authority	Total
Allerdale	1	Ashfield	1
Barnet	2	Barnsley	1
Barrow-in-Furness	2	Basildon	1
Bassetlaw	1	Birmingham	12
Blackburn with Darwen	8	Blackpool	12
Bolton	35	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole	3
Bracknell Forest	1	Bradford	7
Brent	3	Bristol	3
Broadland	1	Burnley	11
Bury	17	Calderdale	1
Camden	1	Cannock Chase	2
Carlisle	3	Chelmsford	1
Cherwell	2	Cheshire East	23
Cheshire West and Chester	69	Chorley	2
City of London	1	Copeland	1
Cornwall	3	County Durham	1
Coventry	4	Crawley	1
Croydon	1	Daventry	1
Derby	2	Dudley	1
Ealing	1	Enfield	1
Fylde	1	Gateshead	3
Gloucester	1	Great Yarmouth	1
Halton	34	Harborough	1
Herefordshire	1	High Peak	2
Hounslow	1	Hyndburn	7
Isle of Wight	1	Kensington and Chelsea	1
Kingston upon Hull	4	Kingston upon Thames	1
Kirklees	4	Knowsley	39
Lambeth	2	Lancaster	3
Leeds	10	Leicester	2
Lewes	1	Lewisham	1
Liverpool	188	Luton	4

Maidstone	1	Manchester	179
Mid Suffolk	2	Middlesbrough	1
Milton Keynes	1	Newark and Sherwood	2
Newcastle-under-Lyme	1	North East Derbyshire	1
North Somerset	2	North Warwickshire	1
Northampton	4	Northumberland	1
Norwich	1	Nottingham	6
Nuneaton and Bedworth	1	Oldham	36
Pendle	1	Peterborough	1
Preston	23	Redcar and Cleveland	1
Redditch	1	Rochdale	30
Rochford	1	Rossendale	3
Rotherham	2	Salford	25
Sandwell	5	Scarborough	2
Sefton	39	Sheffield	6
Shropshire	9	Slough	1
Solihull	1	South Cambridgeshire	3
South Holland	1	South Kesteven	1
South Ribble	2	Southwark	2
St Helens	15	Stafford	5
Staffordshire Moorlands	2	Stevenage	1
Stockport	29	Stoke-on-Trent	8
Swindon	2	Tameside	25
Telford and Wrekin	4	Trafford	14
Walsall	1	Wandsworth	1
Warrington	20	Warwick	1
West Lancashire	10	West Lindsey	1
West Suffolk	1	Westminster	4
Wigan	25	Wiltshire	1
Wirral	31	Wolverhampton	3
Worcester	1		
Total			1,165

Source: Ministry of Justice (2022c)

Appendix 3

Figure 3.1

The number of male prisoners from the North West held in designated resettlement prisons across the North West region, December 2021

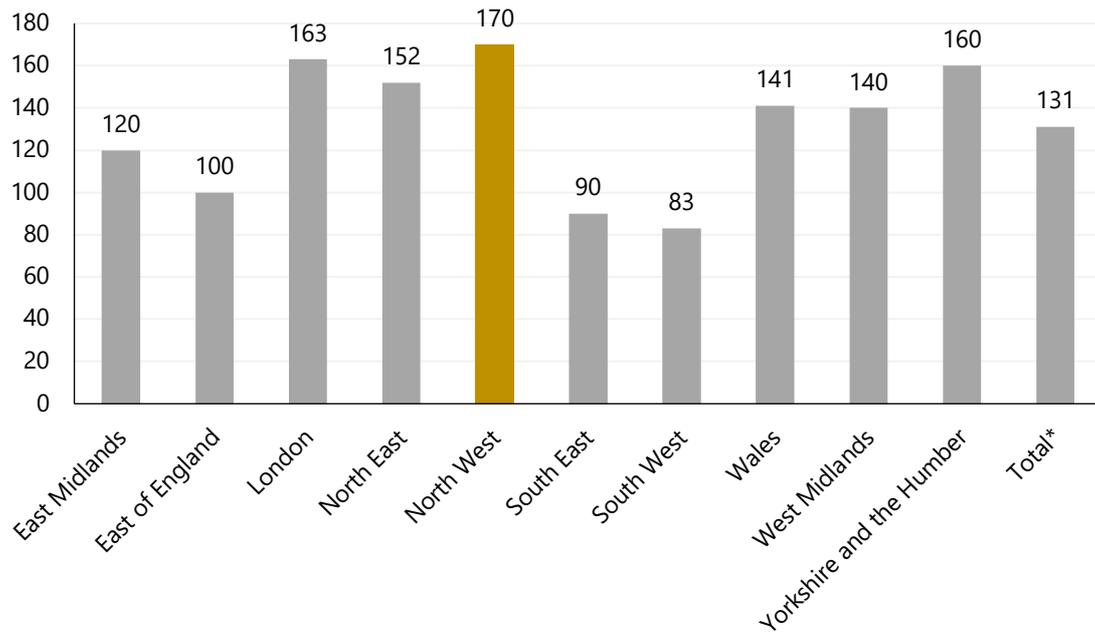
Prison	Prison Population	From North West	% from North West
Altcourse	1,127	1,044	93
Forest Bank	1,238	1,156	93
Haverigg	303	94	31
Hindley	574	531	93
Kirkham	471	349	74
Lancaster Farms	551	515	94
Liverpool	793	714	90
Manchester	667	389	58
Preston	647	607	94
Risley	990	814	82
Thorn Cross	368	321	87
Total	7,729	6,534	85

Source: Ministry of Justice (2022c; 2022f)

Appendix 4

Figure 4.1

Imprisonment rates per 100,000 people by region in England and Wales, 2021



Source: Office for National Statistics (2021) and Ministry of Justice (2022e)

Appendix 5

Figure 5.1

Prison population rates per 100,000 people for the ten most deprived (by rank of average score) local authorities in the English Indices of Deprivation 2019

Most Deprived	Population	Prison Population	Rate
Blackpool	138,381	370	267
Knowsley	152,452	318	209
Liverpool	500,474	1,957	391
Kingston upon Hull, City of	259,126	798	308
Middlesbrough	141,285	720	510
Manchester	555,741	2,229	401
Birmingham	1,140,525	2,791	245
Burnley	89,344	230	257
Blackburn with Darwen	150,030	306	204
Hartlepool	93,836	177	189
Total	3,221,194	9,896	307

Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2019), Ministry of Justice (2022c) and Office for National Statistics (2021)

Appendix 6

Figure 6.1

Prison population rates per 100,000 people for the ten least deprived (by rank of average score) local authorities in the English Indices of Deprivation 2019⁹

Least Deprived	Population	Prison Population	Rate
Hart	97,608	23	24
Wokingham	173,945	53	30
Rushcliffe	121,416	32	26
Waverley	126,556	34	27
South Northamptonshire	94,490	14	15
Mid Sussex	152,142	59	39
Elmbridge	137,215	32	23
Harborough	95,537	54	57
Surrey Heath	89,204	27	30
East Hertfordshire	151,786	44	29
Total	1,239,899	372	30

Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2019), Ministry of Justice (2022c) and Office for National Statistics (2021)

⁹ Chiltern was included in the ten local authorities with the lowest level of deprivation (by rank of average score) in the English Indices of Deprivation 2019. Chiltern district was abolished in March 2020 and replaced by Buckinghamshire Council. East Hertfordshire was ranked eleventh and has therefore been included here in place of Chiltern.

Appendix 7

Figure 7.1

Prison population rates per 100,000 people for the six local authorities in North West England included in the ten most deprived local authorities (by rank of average score) in the English Indices of Deprivation 2019

	Population	Prison Population	Rate
Blackpool	138,381	370	267
Knowsley	152,452	318	209
Liverpool	500,474	1,957	391
Manchester	555,741	2,229	401
Burnley	89,344	230	257
Blackburn with Darwen	150,030	306	204
Total	1,586,422	5,410	341

Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2019), Ministry of Justice (2022c) and Office for National Statistics (2021)

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