



**The Professional Trade Union for Prison,
Correctional and Public and Private
Mental Health Trust Service Providers**

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TO: ALL POLITICAL EDITORS, HOME AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENTS AND
INDUSTRIAL AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENTS
PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

POA WARN GOVERNMENT OF IMMINENT TRAGEDY IN YOUTH PRISONS

The POA Union which represents Prison Officers working in Youth Custody Prisons in England and Wales has today written to the Government warning them that a tragedy within youth prisons is imminent if they do not provide adequate protections for staff.

A worrying escalation of violence over the last 7 days within Youth Prisons that hold those under the age of 18, has revealed:

- A member of staff receiving slash and stab wounds when intervening to save a young prisoners life from a violent attack.
- 8 staff transported to hospital after being violently assaulted including one with a dislocated shoulder.
- 3 staff suffering from concussion with 1 member of staff having to have a CT scan due to concerns about a bleed on the brain.

From April 2023 until March 2024 there have been a total of 551 assaults on staff with 258 staff requiring hospital treatment, despite there being only 4 prisons holding prisoners under the age of 18, with record low numbers of juvenile prisoners.

The POA are calling for PAVA incapacitant spray to be issued to staff who work in these juvenile establishments. The incapacitant spray has been rolled out within the closed adult male estate.

Commenting, Mark Fairhurst, National Chair said:

“We cannot continue to ignore the excessive levels of violence staff on the frontline face when dealing with young prisoners. Age is no excuse for violent behaviour. We are now witnessing an escalation in life threatening incidents that proves we are dealing with a more violent cohort of prisoners despite record low levels of incarceration for this age group. Doing nothing is not an option. My members deserve to be protected at work and that is why we are calling for the roll out of PAVA incapacitant spray. This will not only act as a deterrent but will afford staff the tactical option to quell violence in order to protect themselves and those in their care. I am putting this Government on notice that if they fail to heed our warnings the next headline will include a tragedy within our youth custody prisons.”

Ends

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