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Dear Secretary of State

Re: Level of prison discharge grant

At the June meeting of the All Party Penal Affairs Group, which you attended as Justice Minister, you expressed some concern about the level of the prison discharge grant, which, at £46, has remained unaltered for more than 20 years. When it was set, it was aligned to benefits rates and considered to be sufficient for someone to live on until they could access other means of support. This is clearly no longer the case.

Combined with the difficulties of accessing universal credit immediately on release, this anomaly means that some prisoners will be released virtually to destitution, or to place a considerable burden on their families. It is not a recipe for successful resettlement or the avoidance of further offending.

Many of our boards have raised this in their annual reports to you, and the London boards at their recent meeting asked me to raise it with you as an urgent concern.

Since you indicated at the APPG that you would pursue these issues with the Department for Work and Pensions, I would be grateful for an update.

Best wishes

Anne Owers
National Chair, Independent Monitoring Boards