

Executive release?

Top Point:

Leaving to one side the consequential impact on community services, a one-off executive release can be expected to have an immediate and sizeable reduction of the number in prison; but this will be short lived.

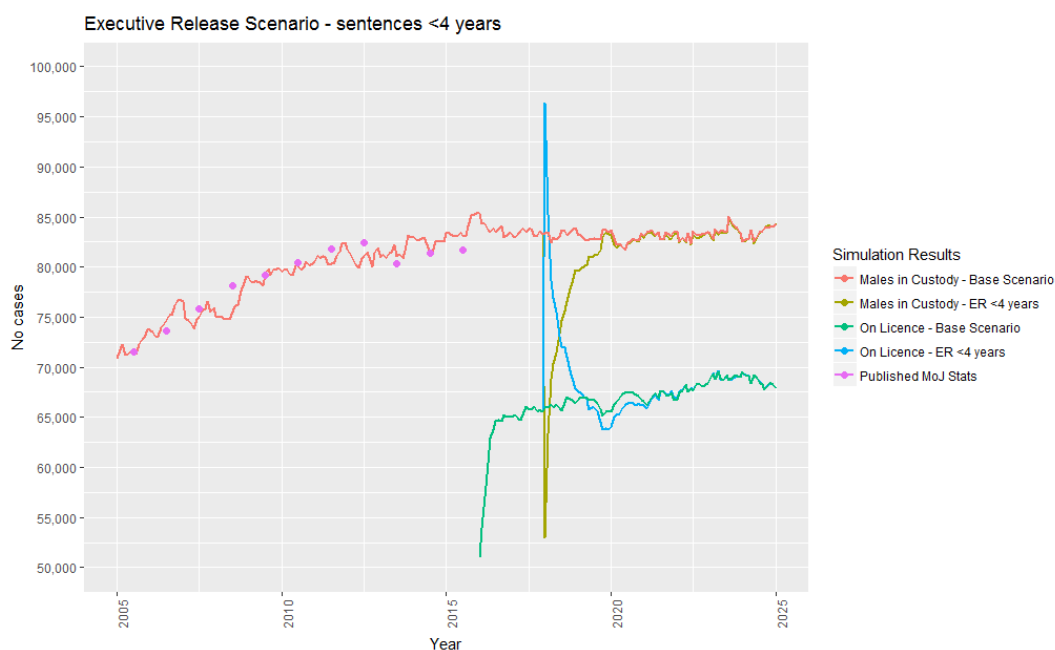
From time to time the notion of executive release, i.e. all offenders meeting certain criteria are released from prison to the community as a one-off measure to provide relief to stretched prison capacity. This would of course represent an extreme measure and would not be contemplated lightly, given the arguments set out for the scenarios of [diversion from short custody](#) particularly the reputational damage undermining confidence in the justice system.

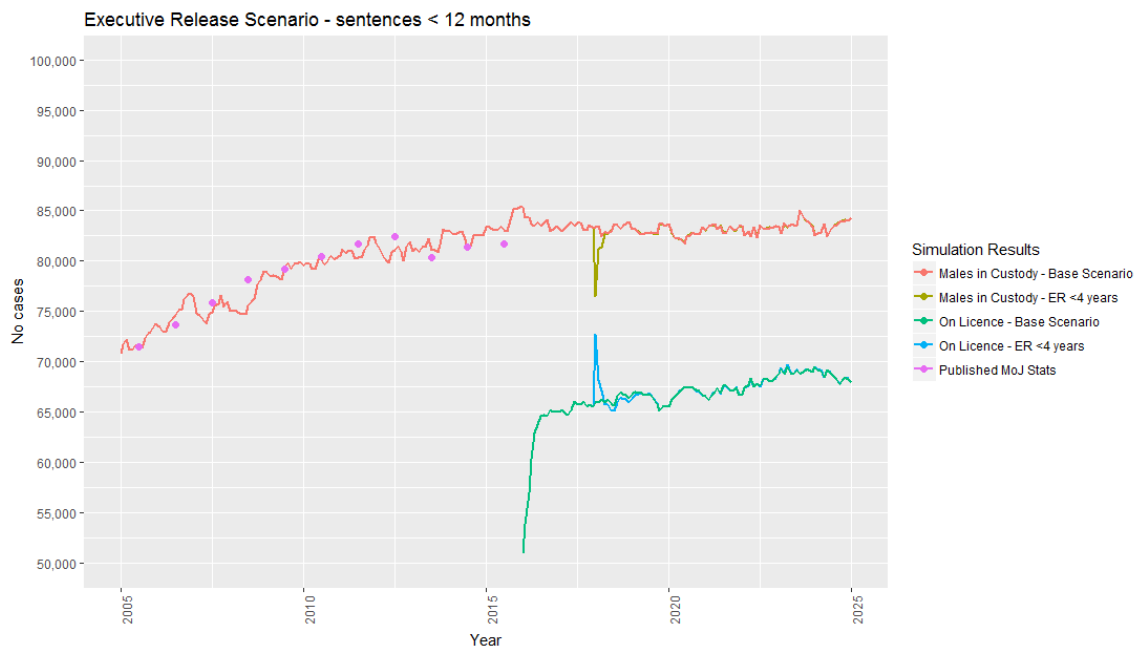
Nonetheless, the simulation engine affords the opportunity to explore this, as an academic exercise, to understand better the dynamics of the prison population. No claim is made as to the realism of such a scenario, other than to explore how the system would 'respond' if it were perturbed in such way.

The Scenario

Two cases are considered.

- all short custody prisoners are released, i.e. serving custodial sentences of less than 12 months
- all short custody and medium custody prisoners are released, i.e. serving custodial sentences of less than 4 years.
- the change is introduced from Jan 2018





Comments & Conclusions

These scenarios demonstrate how time limited the impact of such policies is likely to be. Restricting the changes to short custodial sentences has a modest impact, ~6000 places but that soon returns to the pre-change value within a few months. A broader approach targeting all sentences up to 4 years will have a bigger immediate impact, ~30,000 places, but that only lasts for a couple of years!

These results need to be seen against the background of the very considerable annual inflow of prison sentences.