

## £3m bill for cricket lessons in Jamaica jails

Almost £3million of British taxpayers' money is being used to teach Jamaican prisoners cricket and help them reintegrate into society.

Critics said it was 'astonishing' public cash was being spent on helping offenders in the Caribbean while Britain faces a record postwar public spending deficit.

The Jamaican project is funded by a government campaign to encourage other countries to take back their nationals from British jails as well as failed asylum seekers.

But the Jamaican parliament has so far failed to agree plans to take back prisoners.

More than a thousand Jamaicans are held in jails in England and Wales, at a cost of around £43million a year.

The Second Chance cricket scheme, run by former West Indies captain Courtney Walsh, claims to teach under-18s in young offender prisons teamwork, responsibility and self-reliance through sport.

Part of the £3million is also spent on improving the skills of Jamaican probation staff at a time when ministers have slashed the UK's probation budget by £24million next year – equivalent to the loss of 650 officers.

Tory justice spokesman Dominic Grieve said: 'It is astonishing that at a time of austerity, with spending on probation in this country being slashed, ministers have been caught out paying £3million for cricket lessons for prisoners overseas.'

The Foreign Office said schemes such as Second Chance, funded by the Returns and Reintegration Fund, were devised with developing countries.

'As a result, some projects produce wider benefits for poverty reduction as well as helping increase the numbers we can return,' a spokesman added. - [dailymail.co.uk](http://dailymail.co.uk)