

# A PLATFORM FOR **CHANGE**

Switchback's 3-year plan  
2022-25





“

Without a plan it's easy to go off course. But when you've got someone there who's helping you, someone to rely on who actually cares, it's life changing.

”

**James.** Bar manager and former Switchback Trainee.

# About Switchback



**Switchback is an award-winning charity supporting young Londoners to find their way out of the justice system and build stable, rewarding lives.**

Switchback's model is centred on a meaningful relationship between a Switchback Mentor and a Switchback Trainee, beginning in prison and lasting as long as it takes after release.

This is new territory for most Trainees: a frank, non-judgemental relationship with someone who is there for them on a daily basis, helping to navigate the turbulent transition from prison to community.

Building on over 14 years of impact, we work with others to share what we've learned and inspire change across the criminal justice system and beyond.

**Our pioneering and award-winning approach works. In stark contrast to the national average – which sees around half of those leaving prison every year back inside within 12 months – just 9% of Switchback Trainees reoffend. In fact, over 50% go into long-term employment, while 65% reach Switchback's unique benchmark of Real, Lasting Change\*.**

\* this requires Trainees to achieve stability in at least 5 out of 10 Switchback Pathways alongside a range of other criteria.

## Our Ambition

**Switchback's ambition is that everyone has the opportunity to live a stable and rewarding life as an active member of society.**

## Our Purpose

**Switchback's purpose is to enable young men to find a way out of the justice system and build a stable, rewarding life they can be proud of.**



“

I'd been to jail before and come out and no one was there for me. This time around, I had Switchback. When you feel like you've got the support, you feel like you can do better.

”

**Martin.** Artist and former Switchback Trainee

# Our plan: a summary



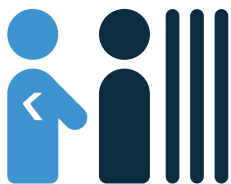
**In the past three years, Switchback not only supported more young adults than ever to navigate release from prison during the toughest of circumstances. We also significantly expanded our work with Trainees to drive change in government policy and practice, a new direction for Switchback set out in 2019 and built on by this 3-year plan.**

In the wake of the pandemic, our challenge to ourselves, and our invitation to our partners and supporters, is to amplify Switchback's role as a platform for change:

- For even more **young Londoners** to build lives they can be proud of, and
- For transformation across the **justice system**.

We'll do this by growing our delivery to **support more young men** than ever before, by supporting our Trainees to take an even bigger role in **championing change** across the system, and by working in **creative collaboration** with a wider range of organisations – all while ensuring we operate from an ever **stronger foundation** as we grow.

# The Switchback programme



## IN PRISON

An eligible prisoner meets regularly with his Switchback Mentor during his last three months inside to prepare practically and emotionally for release.



## IN TRAINING

The same Switchback Mentor meets him on the day of release. Up to 12 weeks of real-work training begins alongside therapeutic mentoring to build stability across all areas of life.



## IN WORK

The Trainee moves into sustainable work or further training at the right time for him, with a period of in-work support to ensure change is sustained long term. The door is always open for the Trainees to return.

## IN NUMBERS

# 5

**months** average intensive support either side of the prison gate

# 13

**months** average total contact with Switchback for each Trainee

# 10

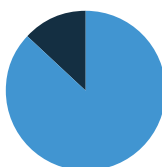
**Switchback Pathways** from housing to health, which we use to measure & build stability across all areas of a Trainee's life

## WHO WE WORK WITH

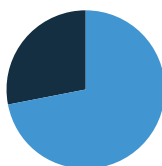
# 18-30

 year-olds

Returning to London



**85%** from ethnic minority backgrounds, including 60% who are Black and 16% Asian



**72%** convicted of a violent and/or drug offence

# Our impact



## Since 2008:

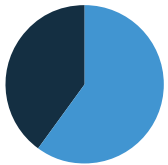
# 448

young men received intensive, long-term 1-to-1 support as a Switchback Trainee

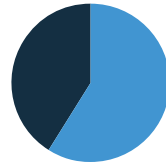
# 2,300

young adult prison leavers supported by Switchback in total

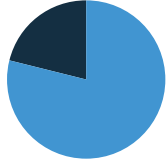
## Among Switchback Trainees supported through-the-gate:



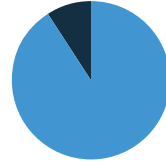
**60%** achieve our benchmark of Real, Lasting Change: a fundamental shift in mindset and lifestyle



**59%** move into long-term employment, education or training



**79%** progress from unstable to stable in at least two areas of their life



**91%** of Trainees don't reoffend within a year of release

## Through our recent influencing work we've helped to secure:

# £20m

for a new government Prisons Leavers Project, testing new ways to improve support nationally

# 65%

increase in the discharge grant given to prison leavers (from £46 to £76), the first rise in 25 years

# 100

prison and probation staff trained in Switchback's approach



“

I'm trying to do for others what Switchback has done for me. With friends coming out of prison, I'm the one saying: don't go back to what's quick and easy, think about what can last you forever.

”

**Brian.** Chef and former Switchback Trainee.

# Why we need to do more



Thousands of young men still leave prison each year with minimal support and facing huge barriers to change – from homelessness to debt and mental ill-health – driving reoffending and costing society over £18bn annually. Racial disparities remain worse in the UK's justice system than even the US. Only 11% of prison leavers enter work within a year.

The prison population is set to reach a record 100,000 by 2026, with prisons overcrowded, probation services overstretched and the reoffending rate, at around 50%, barely shifted in a century. The pandemic has exacerbated many of these longstanding problems. None of us should be satisfied with these figures and the squandering of money and human potential they represent.

The overriding message from Switchback's staff, Trainees, Trustees and advisers who helped create this plan was clear: now is the time for Switchback to raise our ambitions. To reach more young men through our delivery while doing more to confront the social and racial injustices affecting our Trainees and driving crime and reoffending.

## £18bn

estimated annual cost to society of reoffending

## 100,000

forecast prison population by 2026, the highest per capita in Western Europe

## 45%

of prison leavers are reconvicted within a year

## 80%

of all offences are reoffences

# A new platform for change



**“The insight of Switchback Trainees, backed up by our frontline expertise, is a rich combination that sets Switchback apart. It gives us huge potential for even greater impact.”**

In 2019-21 Switchback made real strides in boosting our impact. We grew our specialist team and supported a record number of young Londoners by rapidly adapting our programme in response to Covid-19. By rooting our first campaign, Reshape Release, in Trainees’ first-hand insight we helped score a landmark advocacy win, raising the prisoner discharge grant for the first time in 25 years (from £46 to £76). We consistently shifted the perceptions of prison leavers in national media and policymaking – increasing our Trainees’ visibility and representation at every opportunity.

**Building transformational relationships with young men in prison, and continuing that support after release, remains our key and core work. In light of the pandemic’s damaging impact on prisons and rising need among prison leavers, in 2022-25 we will expand our operations to increase the number of men we support with this hugely successful ‘through-the-gate’ approach.**

At the same time, thanks to its positive impact during the pandemic, we will retain our new post-release option developed in rapid response to Covid-19, while also testing our approach at a new potential ‘exit point’ from the system (such as arrest), broadening our reach and flexibility in uncertain times.

This plan also affirms that our new direction set out in 2019, to inspire change across the system, was the right call, as Switchback punched above our weight to shift government policy and public perceptions with Trainee voice at the heart.

Now, we’re deepening our commitment to this work; to further amplify Trainee voices and more boldly challenge the social and racial injustices which plague the system. In 2022-25, we’ll focus primarily on reshaping resettlement from prison; Switchback’s core expertise and an area of urgent need.

# A new platform for change



This plan outlines four areas of activity where we will leverage Switchback's unique expertise to have an even greater impact as a **platform for change**:

1. As a platform for **more young Londoners** to make lasting change after prison, establishing our programme as a beacon of best practice.
2. As a platform for **changing the system**, supporting Trainees to amplify their voice and influence to confront social and racial injustice.
3. As a platform for **creative collaboration**, building new alliances with a wider range of organisations to achieve our shared aims.
4. A platform on **strong foundations**, ensuring a diverse, thriving team and evolving our operations and fundraising to new levels.

Crucially, our work will remain grounded in the voice and experience of our Trainees, backed up by 14 years of frontline expertise: a rich combination that truly sets Switchback apart and offers huge potential for even greater impact.

We begin this new chapter with the confidence of a great platform for success: a new larger team of 20 fantastic people, a strong and more diverse board, a fast-growing influence in the sector, a new leadership team and operational structure, a thriving Experts by Experience Board and the backing of an incredible network of donors, partners and supporters. Above all, we'll remain inspired to succeed by the commitment and determination shown by Switchback Trainees against all the odds.

We hope you will come with us on this exciting new part of Switchback's journey.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alice Dawnay'.

**Alice Dawnay, Founder and CEO**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Duncan Shrubsole'.

**Duncan Shrubsole, Chair**



“

Switchback helped me build my relationships back with family, stay grounded and keep a steady pace. The biggest thing I've learned is patience. My plan is to become a managing director, and make my mum proud by starting a family.

”

**Ken.** Structural engineer and former Switchback Trainee.

# Grounded in experience



One of Switchback's greatest strengths is the depth and diversity of our community's first-hand experience: from our team of expert Switchback Mentors to our network of Trustees, prison governors, employers, advisers and, crucially, the hundreds of young men Switchback has supported to build stable lives after prison.

The invaluable experience and perspectives of Switchback Trainees have guided all our work from day one: from the design of our programme to making sure our campaigns are completely rooted in on-the-ground realities. Over the past three years we have not only supported Trainees to amplify their voice in media and policymaking, but to assume ever-greater influence in shaping Switchback's work as a charity.

This has included the growth of Switchback's Experts by Experience Board, a new Board Adviser position widening access to Trustee positions, a Policy Internship offering a route into policy work, and a Junior Switchback Mentor role enabling former Trainees (and others with limited experience) to become full-time Switchback Mentors.

But we know we need to go further. Overrepresented in our prisons, young men from poor and ethnic minority backgrounds (making up 89% of Switchback Trainees) are hugely underrepresented in every sphere of British professional life. Racial injustice in the UK creates inequalities at every stage, from education to prison to employment.

Most Switchback Trainees grew up facing multiple, complex barriers to a stable, fulfilling life – from school exclusion to violence, poverty and trauma. A quarter were in care, a third have no qualifications and nearly half have never worked before. Many have been caught in the justice system since childhood and experienced multiple prison sentences.

Yet as our Trainees prove every day, young men leaving prison have huge strengths, talents and potential to thrive as part of society with the right support.

# Grounded in experience



Time and again, we have also seen what authentic and powerful advocates Switchback Trainees can make: from raising awareness about the complex causes of crime on national TV to helping push the government to boost access to housing, finance and tech for prison leavers.

As a major part of this new plan, Switchback will therefore do more to shift the narrative surrounding young prison leavers, particularly from ethnic minority backgrounds, and build better understanding about the roots of crime and the positive solutions needed. We will support our Trainees to grow their confidence, skills and influence within and outside Switchback, and to press for change where it's sorely needed. Given the scale of this challenge, we'll seek out creative collaborations wherever possible to amplify our message and impact.

While this work will be grounded in Switchback's Trainees' rich experience and insight, it will also be further backed up by our 14 years of data and evidence from supporting hundreds of young men to thrive after prison.

**This powerful combination of Trainee voice and frontline expertise is what truly sets Switchback apart.**

By foregrounding the voice of Trainees too often excluded from debate, by communicating our evidence of what works, by collaborating with others and by being a beacon of best practice, we will inspire real, lasting change across the system.

A close-up portrait of a young Black woman with her hair in braids. She has a thoughtful expression, looking slightly to the side. Her hand is resting near her chin, and several tattoos are visible on her fingers. The background is a plain, light color.

“

Before coming out of prison, I didn't really like chatting to strangers. But now I feel like I could have a conversation with anybody. I'm still trying to learn not to rush all the time. It's not a race, you'll get there in the end.

”

**Elton.** Fashion student and former Switchback Trainee.



“

When I came out of prison I didn't have a lot of experiences. With my mentor I've learned more about the skills I already had, leadership, teamwork and stuff like that. I've implemented them more in my life.

”

**Imthiaz.** Telecoms engineer and former Switchback Trainee.

# Our plan 2022-25



1. A platform for **more young Londoners**
2. A platform for **changing the system**
3. A platform for **collaboration**
4. A platform on **strong foundations**



## 1. A platform for more young Londoners

We'll expand our team of Switchback Mentors to double the number of young Londoners we can support, establishing Switchback as a beacon of best practice inspiring change across the system.

### Objectives

- **Double the number of Switchback Trainees** provided with intensive, long-term support to 140 per year by 2025, by building a bigger, stronger and stable team of expert Switchback Mentors.
- Grow our **original through-the-gate model** while maintaining our new post-release option and testing our approach at a new 'exit point' from the system to broaden our reach and impact.
- Further boost our **evidence of impact** as a beacon of best practice inspiring change across the system.
- Maintain sector-leading outcomes while driving **programme improvement** in priority areas.



## 2. A platform for changing the system

We'll support more Trainees to take an ever-greater role in championing change across the justice system and tackling social and racial injustice – foregrounding their experience, and shifting perceptions by amplifying Trainee voice and influence at every opportunity.

### Objectives

- Support Switchback Trainees to build their **voice and capacity** to influence systemic change through further development of our Experts by Experience Board.
- Create and communicate a compelling agenda for **transforming resettlement for prison leavers** nationally, rooted in Trainees' experience and Switchback's frontline insight.
- Inspire meaningful changes in **policy and practice** needed to reshape resettlement for people leaving prison.
- Shift **perceptions** of prison leavers and deepen understanding among key audiences about the causes of crime and solutions needed through high-quality, creative content.



## 3. A platform for **collaboration**

We'll work creatively with others to enable growth of our delivery and drive change across the system.

### Objectives

- Deepen our network of **delivery partners** to ensure quality training, support and employment options for every Trainee.
- Strengthen our **statutory and corporate partnerships** to ensure robust referral routes and explore **public sector funding** that fits our values.
- Work with others to share Switchback's model and **influence practice** in the justice system.
- Collaborate in creative ways with others to further our aims of **racial and social justice**.



## 4. A platform on **strong foundations**

We'll make the operational step-change needed to become a thriving mid-size charity while closely guarding our values and agility, building a team representative of modern London.

### Objectives

- Improve the quality and effectiveness of our **operational systems and processes**.
- Ensure Switchback's team and Board is more **representative of modern London** with new opportunities for Trainees.
- Ensure Switchback is a **fulfilling place to work**, with a real sense of belonging in the team.
- Significantly increase our income through **new and larger funding opportunities** to enable Switchback's growth.





Switchback's values cut through everything we do, from our work with Trainees to our fundraising and partnerships.

## 1. Human

**Keeping Trainees at the heart of everything we do**

We build trust, confidence, independence and resilience in all areas of a Trainee's life. In all decisions we use the lens: "does this help us improve the prospects of young prison-leavers?"

## 2. Authentic

**Rolling with the ups and downs of real life**

We prize integrity and honesty. We don't sell a dream: we are realistic about what it means to genuinely start over and the huge courage needed to change. We recognise that change is not linear and we provide a space to learn from mistakes.

## 3. Committed

**Taking the long way around**

Our commitment to Trainees is consistent and continuous, lasting

for as long as it takes. We reject quick fixes, shortcuts and tick boxes. We do what we say we are going to do and coach our Trainees to do the same.

## 4. Ambitious

**Having high expectations**

We assume strengths, resources and abilities in Trainees. We don't do things for people: we challenge and encourage our Trainees to take control. We are distinctive in our high expectations of Trainees, our own conduct, the quality of our partnerships and the impact of our work.

## 5. Pioneering

**Pushing into our stretch zone**

We challenge Trainees to move outside their comfort zone and we encourage adventure to learn and grow. As a charity we strive to do the same, constantly seeking to reflect and improve. We pioneer an alternative approach and share our evidence with others.



**Join us for the next phase of Switchback's journey.**

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