

## Policy proposal: National Resettlement Framework

### Summary

Most crime (80%) is reoffending. Giving everyone leaving prison a real chance to thrive as contributing members of society, therefore, offers a unique opportunity to significantly reduce crime, creating fewer victims and safer, more inclusive communities. This paper outlines the case for a National Prison-Leaver Resettlement Framework to achieve these vital aims.

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### 1. The problem: lack of resettlement support is driving reoffending

#### a. Background

80% of convictions and cautions are caused by reoffending.<sup>1</sup> **Almost half** of the nearly 50,000 people leaving prison every year are reconvicted within 12 months (the true figure is likely higher but depressed by ongoing court backlogs).<sup>2</sup> Around 1 in 3 are recalled, often for breaking license conditions such as curfews, caused by issues such as homelessness and substance misuse.<sup>3</sup> As well as the obvious harm to individuals and their families and communities, reoffending costs the UK £18bn annually.<sup>4</sup>

People leaving prison often want to live life differently but are being denied the opportunity for change in basic ways. Many young men supported by Switchback in London (Switchback Trainees) tell us they didn't have a single conversation about their future in the weeks leading up to release. They are often released without the basic things they need to build a stable life away from crime. Last year (2022) among young men supported by Switchback in London:

- **7 in 10** were released from prison **homeless**
- **1 in 4** were released with **no ID**
- **1 in 6** were released with **no bank account**.

Releasing people into chaos without a plan is driving high rates of reoffending. While mental health needs have risen, mental health throughcare is limited, leading to a high level of recall due to spiralling mental ill-health. A highly centralised prison and probation model is inhibiting local multi-agency working, and shutting out the learning from small charities like Switchback.<sup>5</sup> A more local approach is needed, guided by a proper national plan for reshaping resettlement.

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<sup>1</sup> [Home Office](#), 2022

<sup>2</sup> Average annual rate of 44.2% since 2016/17. Source: MoJ, [Proven reoffending statistics: January to March 2021](#), Table C1a.

<sup>3</sup> [Justice Inspectorates](#), Thematic inspection of Offender Management in Custody, 2023

<sup>4</sup> [MoJ](#) (2022)

<sup>5</sup> [Clinks](#), Tracking the voluntary sector's experience of the probation reform programme, 2021

The success of Switchback's Trainees, underpinned by wider research, demonstrates the importance of this moment of transition, which is currently being missed. Switchback's evidence shows that proper through-the-gate support leads to significant reductions in reoffending. In stark contrast to the national average – which sees nearly half of prison leavers back inside within a year – only 9% of Switchback Trainees reoffend, while over 50% move into long-term employment (see Part 3 for more information on the opportunity and benefits of this policy proposal).

## b. Current government policy

The Government has begun to recognise the importance of resettlement in recent years and has taken some welcome steps to increase investment, albeit at relatively small scale. In 2018 it established the New Futures Network, a specialist part of the prison service that connects prison leavers with employers. In the Prisons Strategy White Paper<sup>6</sup> published in December 2021, it committed to delivering a package of reforms to improve resettlement, including transitional accommodation for all prison-leavers, new 'resettlement passports' to provide basic essentials, and hiring more specialists in prisons to try and address issues around housing, banking and ID. The Government expects to increase investment in resettlement services by £200 Million by 2024/25. In addition to this in 2020, the National Probation Services tendered £100M worth of contracts for services like accommodation and education on release and invested £20M in a Shared Outcomes Fund called the Prison Leavers Project<sup>7</sup> that aimed to find innovative approaches to addressing the issue of reoffending.

Although these initiatives are welcome, there are significant delays with implementation, and initiatives are being delivered in a patchwork, disconnected way which is limiting their impact. A clear example of this is the limited progress which has been made in improving employment outcomes for people leaving prison. Despite numerous employment strategies, **96% of prisons are failing to meet the government's own target**<sup>8</sup>. Through our participation in the government's Employment Advisory Boards, we have seen the challenges of creating employment opportunities without wider wraparound support. Facing challenges like homelessness and the high levels of anxiety that often accompany prison release, people aren't always able to hold down regular work immediately, ultimately leading to disappointment for both prison leavers and employers. HMIP recently highlighted that the Government's model for pre-release resettlement planning is 'not working' and this is leading to rehabilitative services being underutilised.<sup>9</sup> One Probation Officer interviewed by the BBC described the situation in very stark terms:

*"All round, inter-agency communication is vital and it's not happening, and people die."<sup>10</sup>*

Ultimately, we welcome the Government's increasing focus on resettlement, but the picture over the last five years is that lack of coordination and system dysfunction are undermining the benefits of new investment in this area. Future governments should continue to focus on this area, but they must create a strategic, cross-departmental plan that is coordinated at every level to fully realise the potential benefits in terms of reduced reoffending and improved public safety.

## 2. Solution: A National Resettlement Framework with 1-to-1 support at the heart

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<sup>6</sup> [Prisons White Paper](#) Ministry of Justice, 2021

<sup>7</sup> [Prisons Leavers Project](#), Ministry of Justice, 2021

<sup>8</sup> [Life After Prison](#), Justice Data Labs, 2022,

<sup>9</sup> [A thematic inspection of Offender Management in Custody – post release](#), HMIP, 2023

<sup>10</sup> [Probation in Peril](#), BBC Radio 4, 2023

We need a cross-government resettlement framework coordinated by central government and bringing key departments, local authorities and the voluntary sector to work together locally. Intensive 1-to-1 support for every prison-leaver should be at the heart of the national resettlement framework. **Crucially, a national framework should be the gateway to the more local, multi-agency approach sorely needed.**

Central Government should set ambitious standards of support for every prison leaver, and work collaboratively to give local delivery bodies and agencies the resources they need to deliver those standards. Local delivery partnerships should bring key statutory, charity and private sector organisations together so that support can be coordinated and delivered in a way that is responsive to the needs of the person leaving prison.

#### a. National Resettlement Framework: key features

Based on Switchback's evidence and our engagement with young prison-leavers and partners, to give everyone leaving prison a real chance to change, and to achieve its aims of reducing reoffending, a cross-departmental National Resettlement Framework should include the following:<sup>11</sup>

- **Skilled 1-to-1 support**, including a single point of contact, for every prison-leaver
- **Minimum standards** of support for every prison leaver
- **A localised approach**, whereby delivery partners are incentivised to work collaboratively around the needs and goals of the person leaving prison and the local environment to which they are returning.
- A **'basic essentials' commitment** to offer a phone, photo ID and a bank account to every prison leaver who needs one.
- A plan to be able to pay **benefits** from Day 1 on leaving prison.
- A commitment to ensure every prison-leaver has a pathway to **long-term housing**, building on recent transitional accommodation initiatives.
- A plan to support prison-leavers to thrive at work with a focus on **employability** and stability to sustain work long-term.
- A plan to ensure consistent **mental health** support is available through-the-gate.
- A plan to improve the involvement of **voluntary sector providers** in service delivery, including expansion of grant-funding, building on the new Probation Grants model

A workable National Resettlement Framework will be dependent upon, and must be connected to, concurrent action to address wider policy challenges affecting resettlement, in particular:

- The staffing crisis in prison and probation<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Please note this is an indicative list constructed through consultation with Switchback Mentors and Trainees – a final national resettlement framework should be co-created with a wider range of voluntary sector organisations, local agencies and people with lived experience.

<sup>12</sup> ['Chronic' staff shortages 'severely hampering' Probation Service \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/chronic-staff-shortages-severely-hampering-probation-service/)

- Prison conditions and overcrowding<sup>13</sup>
- The housing crisis and particularly it's impact on people on low incomes.

*“Seeing my Switchback Mentor in prison meant I already knew her once I got out. She understands me and understands the journey I’m taking. If I was doing it by myself I reckon things would have gone off track by now.” – Daniel, Switchback Trainee.*

## b. National Resettlement Framework – policy implementation

### Learning from best practice

Getting the right framework and delivery structures will take time and should be approached with care. We recommend that the Government work closely with people with lived experience, practitioners, local agencies and charities to develop and implement the right framework. Successful examples of this way of working from other sectors and pilots can provide a starting point to get a sense of what it could cost to deliver this and what the delivery mechanisms would be.

For example, in sectors like healthcare and social care – multi-disciplinary teams working around the needs of the individual is standard best practice. NHS England has recently moved to devolving healthcare commissioning to integrated care systems<sup>14</sup>, bringing together a “broad alliance of partners concerned with improving the care, health and wellbeing of the population in the ICS area”. The Making Every Adult Matter<sup>15</sup> approach has similarly been pioneered at a local authority level to bring together various delivery organisations in the public and third sector to better meet the needs of people facing multiple disadvantages. Evaluation has shown that this approach is associated with positive outcomes for people who services have otherwise struggled to help.<sup>16</sup>

There are positive examples of this more multi-disciplinary, person-centred approach in the justice sector. For example, the Transition to Adulthood Hub<sup>17</sup> co-developed between the Ministry of Justice and the Mayor for London’s Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) bring services for young adults into a single co-located at the Newham Probation Office. The Welsh Government and HMPPS have also pioneered this approach with the Grand Avenues<sup>18</sup> pilot. Work to design a national resettlement framework must build on the momentum and learnings of these approaches, and look to embed them on a national scale. A wider set of examples are included as an annex to this report.

### Key principles for implementation

Based on Switchback’s experience and the growing evidence base in this area, a successful National Resettlement Framework should incorporate the following principles in its structure and implementation:

- The Framework should be **cross-departmental**, led by a central department (e.g. No.10, Cabinet office, MoJ) but closely involving other key departments vital for resettlement including the Department for Work and Pensions, Department for Housing, Levelling Up and Communities, Department for Health and Social Care, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. A ministerial committee could bring together relevant ministers from these

<sup>13</sup> [Prisoners set to be held in police cells due to overcrowding - BBC News](#)

<sup>14</sup> [Integrated care systems. NHS England, 2023](#)

<sup>15</sup> [The MEAM Approach](#), Making Every Adult Matter, 2023

<sup>16</sup> [MEAM Approach evaluation: final report](#), Cordis Bright, 2022

<sup>17</sup> [Transition to Adulthood Hub](#), Mayor of London, 2022

<sup>18</sup> [Grand Avenues](#), Telescope, 2022

departments to hold relevant departments accountable for delivering their parts of the plan.

- People with **lived experience** and expert practitioners, including from the third sector, should be involved in every stage of the design and delivery of a national resettlement plan.
- Central Government must provide leadership by setting **minimum standards** of support for prison leavers. These standards should draw on the existing evidence about what works (see evidence base) and be written in clear and understandable language.
- Central Government should aim to provide **local delivery partnerships** with freedom to deliver services in the way that works best in that area. These partnerships may be based in existing regional probation regions, or PCC areas, and should be empowered to draw on the knowledge of people with lived experience and organisations with delivery experience to coordinate services in a way that best meets their needs.
- Individual Departments should be **accountable at a national level** for ensuring that local services are able to deliver on national standards. For example, DWP must create national policy to enable people to start receiving benefits on the day they are released from prison.
- **One-to-one support should be provided by local grassroots organisations** wherever possible, organisations should be encouraged to grow provision sustainably. Where such organisations do not exist, the Government should provide support to local areas to develop this provision.
- Commissioning responsibilities should account for who is most appropriately placed to provide local leadership, Existing institutions, like mayoralities in urban areas can be well placed to play this role. The Greater Manchester Combined Authority has had some early success in commissioning wrap-around support for people in transitional accommodation in this way. <sup>19</sup>Co-commissioning should be explored to pool funds and enhance coordination.
- Local Delivery Boards/teams could be organised in a number of different ways to foster better collaboration and coordination. Structures should facilitate timely information-sharing and collaborative problem solving of issues impacting prison leavers. Services should be organised in a way that minimises the number of appointments and meetings that people leaving prison need to hold. There are a number of different ways to achieve this drawing on existing practice for example co-location or creation of virtual delivery teams.
- Plans to further develop and implement individual areas of the framework such as housing and mental health throughcare, will require further consultation with sector experts, agencies and people with lived experience.

### 3. Evidence base: the opportunity of release

Switchback's evidence shows that the moment of release is a key opportunity where investment could significantly reduce reoffending. **In stark contrast to the national average – which sees nearly half of prison leavers back inside within a year – only 9% of Switchback Trainees reoffend, while over 50% move into long-term employment.** Demonstrating the huge impact that meaningful 1-to-1 support can have, even when people leaving prison are coping with a system that does not support them to build stability.

<sup>19</sup>, [Community Accommodation Scheme \(Tier 3\)](#), Greater Manchester Combined Authority, 2021

Work by the thinktank New Philanthropy Capital (NPC) has similarly shown that the **moment of prison release is a crucial ‘intervention point’** where investment can be most effective in supporting people to stop reoffending<sup>20</sup>, but where there is currently a lack of effective provision. The Justice Data Lab have evaluated a through the gate programme called Key4Life which provides similar support to Switchback for people leaving prison, finding one of the largest statistically significant decreases in reoffending measured by the Justice Data [Lab](#)<sup>21</sup>. Reoffending was nearly halved compared to the national average for the same cohort. Other countries with significantly lower reoffending rates than the United Kingdom like Norway (reoffending rate is 20%) and Singapore (reoffending rate is 27%) have national programmes to ensure that people leaving prison are effectively reintegrated. Norway provides a reintegration guarantee that “*Anyone who leaves prison or probation should be able to stand on their own and be helped to obtain housing, work, school, healthcare and things such as counselling*”. Singapore has a well-managed post-release programme where people leaving prison are assigned case-managers who support them to manage the challenges of post-release support.<sup>22</sup>

There is also strong evidence aligned with the principles practiced in charities like Switchback, about what works to help people to stop reoffending on prison release. Dr. Matt Cracknell has recently summarised what Effective Practice in Resettlement should look like in a briefing for the Probation Inspectorate.<sup>23</sup> His report highlights the importance of starting work in prison, co-producing plans, strength based approaches and the importance of the relational aspect of supervision. Similarly Dr. Neil Hazel has carried out decades of research into the principles of effective resettlement in a youth justice context. Dr Hazel’s work on constructive resettlement sets out 5 key principles for effective practice (Constructive, Co-created, Customised, Consistent, Coordinated)<sup>24</sup> which are once again aligned with the key learnings from Switchback’s work and the premise of this proposal.

### 3. Cost/Benefit analysis

- a) The estimated cost of holding someone in prison per person is around **£49,000 per year**.<sup>25</sup>
- b) The estimated cost of supervising someone on probation is **£4600 per person per year**.<sup>26</sup>
- c) The estimated cost of each reoffender is around **£80,000 per year**.<sup>27</sup>
- d) The Switchback programme of intensive 1-to-1 support through-the-gate costs £9,000\* per individual. Last year 47,000 people were released from prison in England and Wales. Therefore an estimated an additional **£423 million**(47000 x 9000) Million (47000 \* 9000) is required to extend this support to every person leaving prison.

*\* This figure is inclusive of additional support provided by Switchback like regular vouchers and spending on trips and experiences for Trainees. If this provision was significantly expanded we could potentially*

<sup>20</sup> [Breaking reoffending cycles in the criminal justice system](#), New Philanthropy Capital, 2021

<sup>21</sup> [Justice Data Lab Analysis: reoffending behaviour after receiving treatment from Key4Life](#), Ministry of Justice, 2018

<sup>22</sup> An international perspective of how other countries prepare their prisoners for release, Penal Reform International, 2013

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2023/01/DESIGNED-Academic-Insights-Cracknell-Jan-23.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> <https://constructive-resettlement.co.uk>

<sup>25</sup> [Costs per place and costs per person by individual prison](#), HM Prison and Probation Service, 2022

<sup>26</sup> 250326 people on [Probation Caseload](#), Justice Data 2023 1.16 Billion spend on Probation, [HMPPS Annual Accounts 2021-22](#)

<sup>27</sup> 17,740 prison-leaver reoffenders in 2020-21 (MoJ, [proven reconviction tables, Jan 23](#), table C1a)

*benefit from significant economies of scale. £9,000 is a reasonable baseline but it is likely that lower costs could be achieved.*

- e) Existing enhancement to probation services targeted at prison-leavers announced by the Government cost approximately £250 million<sup>28</sup> This is a cost of around £5100 (£250m/47,000) per person per release per annum. This does not include additional costs of schemes delivered by other departments (for example NHS Reconnect a £20m NHS programme)
- f) This suggests a difference of **£177 Million or £3700 per person** per annum between the current patchwork of initiatives and the level of support provided by Switchback.
- g) This difference would enable every person leaving prison access to consistent, personal one-to-one support throughout the prison release process as compared to existing enhancements that are struggling to make the necessary impact. Switchback achieves a reduction of reoffending of **35 percentage points** compared to the national average (9% reoffend vs 44% nationally) and boost employment outcomes by **33 percentage points** (50% in work after one year vs 17% nationally)
- h) If these proposals were to achieve even a 10% reduction in reoffending, then the overall saving to the Government would be £376 million per year<sup>29</sup>. One to one support for every person leaving prison would cost an additional £176 million per year<sup>30</sup> This is a cost benefit ratio of 2:1. It is important to note that not all of these savings would be directly cashable to the Treasury.
- i) Additional investment is likely to be required in key services to achieve all of the elements of a national resettlement framework. For example in addressing wider issues in the housing sector. These have not been additionally costed.
- j) Several key steps would not require significant further investment. For example paying benefits on day one would likely result in savings if it helped people to stop receiving benefits sooner. Similarly providing ID and Bank accounts for prison-leavers would likely not require substantial investment, but better coordination and problem-solving between Government departments.
- k) Beyond financial benefits the wider benefits to society would include significant reduction in crime and improvement of public safety. If Switchback's impact (35% reduction in reoffending rates) could be replicated nationally we could prevent up to one million crimes.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, it would release thousands of able workers into the labour market at a time of significant labour shortages. It would also ease the pressure on adult prison places at a time when the government is taking extreme steps (early release of prisoners, placement in youth provision and use of policy custody cells) to accommodate the growing prison population.

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<sup>28</sup> See section on government policy - £200M per year on new resettlement initiatives announced in the Prisons White Paper. £100 million on dynamic framework contracts, £50M of which is likely to be spent on prison-leavers based on pre and post release supervision making up roughly half of [probation caseloads](#))

<sup>29</sup> 17,740 prison-leaver reoffenders in 2020-21 (MoJ, [proven reconviction tables, Jan 23](#), table C1a). 18 Bn cost of reoffending /17740 = 80,000 per reoffender. 47,000 prison releases in 2021 ([Offender Management Quarterly](#)) 10% reduction = 4700 fewer reoffenders.  
4700\*80000 = 376M

<sup>30</sup> Cost of working with 10% of reoffenders

<sup>31</sup> Reoffending causes approximately 3 million crimes each year (Home Office)

## 4. The Switchback model: further information and evidence

### About Switchback and our programme:

**Switchback** is an award-winning charity supporting young Londoners to find a way out of the justice system and build a stable, rewarding life they can be proud of. **Switchback's pioneering approach works: in stark contrast to the national average – which sees nearly half of prison leavers back inside within a year – only 9% of Switchback Trainees reoffend, while over 50% move into long-term employment.**

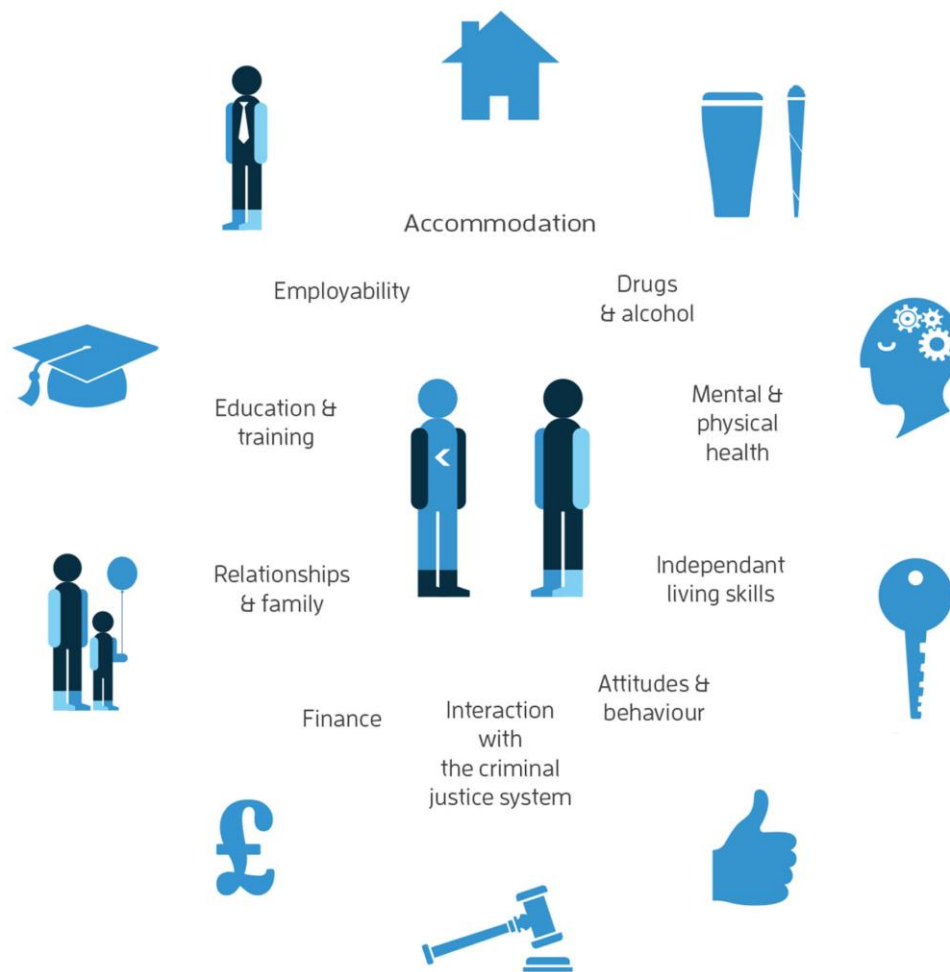
We support 18–30-year-old male prison-leavers (Trainees) to make real, lasting change through intensive one-to-one support and real work training. We also share our 15 years of data and evidence, amplifying the voice of young men leaving prison to inspire change across the justice system and beyond.

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

Switchback provides stability and consistency in prison at the critical moment of release, supporting young men to navigate services and plan their future. Whilst our support varies for each Trainee's needs and goals, there are three core stages, averaging five months intensive support through-the-gate and 13 months total contact:

- 1. In Prison - An eligible prisoner chooses to take part, meeting regularly in prison with a Switchback Mentor to prepare for release. That same Switchback Mentor meets him on the day of release and works with him in the community.**
- 2. In Training – Immediately after release he starts training with one of our training partners, while working with his Switchback Mentor to learn how to make the right choices for him, practice trying new things, and get the help he needs from specialist services.**
- 3. In Work – Switchback Mentors support Trainees into jobs and continue to build stability across all areas of his life so that employment is rewarding and sustained.**

Through the programme, Switchback Mentors encourage and challenge Trainees across all areas of life (described in the 10 Switchback Pathways – see below) Switchback Mentors take a personalised approach with each Trainee and his needs, challenges and aspirations – looking to the long-term and avoiding quick-fix solutions.



Mentors work to build knowledge and confidence to navigate systems, resolve issues and access support in prison and after release. As well as building capacity for prison leavers to help themselves, we also advocate to professionals on the Trainee's behalf, making referrals to specialist services (e.g. housing), facilitating better and more timely access to support.

This whole-person approach means that when Trainees move away from crime and enter work or housing, they've built the stability to stay there long-term through the ups and downs.

Our Switchback Mentors visit prisons weekly, speaking one-to-one with young men and working with them to see whether the Switchback programme is right for them. For up to three months prior to release, Switchback Mentors build a vital, trusting relationship with each Trainee, preparing him for life on the outside and creating realistic expectations of release. Switchback Mentors are trained in therapeutic techniques such as motivational interviewing and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) for this work.

Post-release we continue to provide mentoring, as well as real work experience in workplaces across London, supporting Trainees throughout this time. Switchback also arranges employer visits, trips, mock interviews, work trials and 'Switchback New Experiences', designed to broaden horizons and push Trainees to open themselves up to more opportunities. This is a vital part of growing a

Trainee's confidence and provides the tools and experience to shift their expectations towards positive outcomes and decisions.

### **About Switchback and working with other orgs:**

We have a partnership approach to prison and probation, likeminded charities and a large community of businesses, who want to welcome young men back into society. We also use our evidence to seek policy change.

Switchback's independence from contracts means we never compromise our number one value - to keep Trainees at the heart of everything we do. We ensure that Trainees help lead the way, which is why we have an Experts by Experience board and clear routes for Trainees to become staff and trustees.

Switchback was established on the premise that whilst there are many agencies that do excellent work in their specialist areas, prison-leavers often lack the skills and social capital that will enable them to receive the best support, especially in a disjointed system. Switchback Mentors join the dots, acting both as an anchor and a signpost amongst all the statutory and charitable services a Trainee will come into contact with.

We offer long-term relational support that other justice services cannot. Our through-the-gate model means the same Switchback Mentor who meets the Trainee in prison sticks by him in the community until he is ready to move on. We also receive referrals from probation directly as they know Switchback's support helps Trainees flourish and engage better with their services, helping to reduce reoffending rates.

### **Cost and Location**

Switchback's programme costs an average of £9000 per year, per person leaving prison. We currently have 8 delivery mentors, each working with a small caseload. Switchback currently only works with young men in the London area. We have no other offices at this stage.

### **Benefits and outcomes**

Switchback has 14 years of front-line expertise and impact of working intensively with young men through the gate. Our pioneering and award-winning approach works. In stark contrast to the national average which sees around half of those leaving prison back inside within a year, just **9%** of Switchback Trainees reoffend. In fact, over **50%** go into long-term employment, while **60%** reach Switchback's unique benchmark of Real, Lasting Change. Real Lasting Change is the benchmark that we focus on and it is linked to the way that we measure progress week by week. In order to achieve this target Trainees must

- Complete the programme
- Become stable in 5/10 pathways
- Make a good ending with Switchback
- Achieve a practical EET outcome
- Move into long term work and a shift in person narrative/identity

Measuring holistic progress in this way is what enables Switchback to achieve these outcomes by focusing holistically on supporting people to make progress as a whole person.

For more information or to discuss further, please don't hesitate to contact [daniel@switchback.org.uk](mailto:daniel@switchback.org.uk).

*"People only do what they know, and that depends where you grow up. To me, I knew how to sell drugs. In my community it's just normal to do crime. Switchback taught me and pushed me so much. I've learned to forget about crime. I've been shown a different route."* – **Ahmed, Switchback Trainee**