

**2024**

# ANNUAL REPORT

Switchback's annual report for  
the year ended 31 December 2024







The Trustees (who are also the directors) are pleased to present their annual report for the year ended 31 December 2024.

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# 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.

We also make sure that Trainees’ practical needs are met in the crucial days and weeks after release, providing essentials such as mobile phones and data, travel cards and shopping vouchers, as well as supporting Trainees to access housing, training and meaningful work.

Building on over 16 years of impact, we work with others to share what we’ve learned and inspire change across the criminal justice system and beyond.

**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.



# Our values

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.





# 2024 in numbers



721

Young prison-leavers supported in total by Switchback Mentors

67

Young men committed to our full programme and became Switchback Trainees

68%

Of 2024's new Trainees reached our benchmark of Real Lasting Change

The prison overcrowding crisis led to more people being released with unmet essential support needs:

51%

Of 2024's new Trainees needed housing action on release, cf. 33% or 2023's Trainees

7%

Of 2024's new Trainees were care-leavers without family support

1,663

Outcomes achieved by 95 Trainees across the 10 Switchback Pathways

18

Prisons from which Switchback Trainees were released

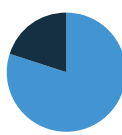
12%

Had no formal qualifications

# 2024 in numbers continued

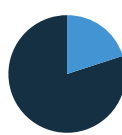


Trainees continued to achieve significant progress despite the challenging external environment:



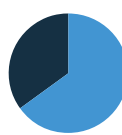
81%

Achieved at least one practical education, employment or training outcome



28%

Had started a job, apprenticeship or further/higher education course at the time this report was published



64%

Were supported to access appropriate housing

Since Switchback began:

We have supported

3,131

prison-leavers

Switchback Trainees have achieved

16,595

outcomes across the 10 Switchback Pathways

648

Committed to our full programme and became Switchback Trainees

273

Started a permanent job, apprenticeship or further/higher education course

# Introduction



## In the midst of every crisis lies great opportunity

2024 was a year of both crisis and change for the justice system. As prison capacity breached all safety limits, the change in government created space for a more open conversation about the underlying causes of the crisis. Ineffective approaches to sentencing, an overreliance on recall as a risk management tool for stretched probation officers, and the failure of both the prison and probation services to offer meaningful rehabilitation support were all now on the public agenda. For an organisation like Switchback, operating in a complex environment beyond our control where the odds are too often stacked against the men we support, we saw and seized a rare opportunity to advocate for lasting change.

On the positive side, in March 2024 we were delighted to welcome the Mayor of London to meet Switchback Trainees, Trustees and our team to celebrate our participation in the Propel Youth Mentoring programme. And we are cautiously optimistic that Lord Timpson's practical commercial experience of making resettlement work means we have a Minister of State for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending with whom we can effectively collaborate. Our hope is that, by the end of this parliament, national policy reflects the real value of investing in rehabilitation and resettlement that truly reduces reoffending and recall through supporting people leaving prison to live life differently.

## Homelessness is a key driver of the rising prison population

The worsening prison capacity crisis put further pressure on both statutory and third sector resettlement services throughout 2024. Despite the welcome intention behind the new Standard

Determinate Sentence 40 policy to give more predictable release dates than under the previous Early Release Scheme, a lack of capacity in the system meant that people nonetheless continued to be released at short notice and without sufficient support. Half of the men we worked with in 2024 left prison without safe, stable housing (compared to a third in 2023). Having no fixed address makes effective resettlement significantly harder and hugely increases the risk of being recalled. For Londoners leaving prison, accessing housing is made even harder by the severe shortage of affordable housing and the double discrimination from landlords against prison-leavers and benefit claimants. You can read more about our vital work on tackling homelessness in these pages.

## Achieving potential through partnership

In 2024, we supported 721 young men across the year. Of those, 67 Londoners committed to Switchback's intensive Mentoring programme, Real Lasting Change. As part of this journey, each Switchback Trainee identifies their future life goals, including their aims to find work where they can thrive, and their Mentor supports them to put those ideas into action. Being able to offer diverse training and employment opportunities significantly increases the likelihood that someone will want to engage with our programme. We are therefore delighted at our growing collaboration with our incredible Real Work Training partners, the Dusty Knuckle Bakery and XO Bikes, as well as an increasing number of employers and corporate supporters who offer permanent jobs, work experiences, apprenticeships and other CV-enhancing opportunities. Our investment in building partnerships in the form of a dedicated Partnerships Manager is delivering more diverse opportunities for Trainees to meet a wider range of needs, and we aim to strengthen our offer even further in 2025.

# Introduction continued



We are also hugely grateful for the opportunity to be part of the Probation Service's grant programme, which is transforming our relationship with probation officers across London into a more positive, collaborative experience. We received 83 referrals from probation officers in 2024, compared to only 10 in 2023. This closer relationship is invaluable when we need to reach out to a Trainee's probation officer to access greater support, or to advocate for flexibility over licence conditions to enable the Trainee to accept a job or manage a mental health or other personal issue.

## The shift to a medium-sized charity

With an income over £1.5m and a headcount over 25, Switchback is now officially a medium-sized charity. This growth brings both opportunities and pressures; we are becoming too large for some of our traditional funding routes and yet our larger team needs more resources to support more Trainees. On the plus side, we are still small enough to be agile and react quickly to emerging opportunities. Our challenge now is to capitalise on the opportunity to influence national resettlement policy and practice whilst ensuring that every Londoner who needs our support can access it, all the while maintaining our financial resilience.

## Where next? – growing our impact, sharing our learning

In 2024 we saw the need for even greater collaboration across the justice sector. In partnership with our Experts by Experience Board (EbE), we have already developed a set of high-level solutions for effective resettlement. But we know that convening a national collective of relational support resettlement organisations and a broad spectrum of the third sector will help to strengthen our evidence and amplify our voice. To that end, we have set about building greater

collaboration with other resettlement agencies and research organisations to develop our key asks around housing, mental health, access to basic amenities and financial stability and routes into sustainable employment. In partnership with EbE and other lived experience experts, we are taking those asks directly to decision-makers, as well as seeking to change public attitudes towards prison leavers. And, as always, we will continue to grow our frontline capacity so that, with our support, even more young Londoners can live life differently.

At the time of writing, we are in the final stage of recruitment for our next Chair, who will help lead Switchback into its next chapter. Later this year we will publish our new strategy aimed at growing our impact even further and we look forward to communicating our exciting plans with you. If you share our belief that we can and should reshape young Londoners' experience of release, including through creating a more inclusive public narrative, please get in touch. We'd love to explore how we can collaborate to grow our capacity to reach both young Londoners caught up in the justice system and the decision-makers who shape their experience.

We are hugely grateful to all of you for each and every gift, letter, social media comment, share or like, and for each time you tell someone about us and encourage them to become a supporter too. We know that the achievements you will read about in these pages are only possible with your generous and constant support, and we look forward to entering our next chapter with you at our side. Thank you from everyone here at Switchback!

Duncan Shrubsole, Chair

Sian Williams, CEO

# Jason's story

"I grew up with a single parent – it was just my mum. I've got two brothers and a sister, but they're quite a bit older than me, so by the time I was eight years old, everybody had moved out. I was a bit of a misbehaving kid in school, but I wasn't trying to be bad. Looking back, it's probably because I had a lot of things going on at home. My brother has autism, so that was a lot for my mum to handle and social services were involved. Then when I turned 12 I had my first, stint in the Youth Offending Service. Since then, I was in and out of the system.

I was very chatty in school. I don't think my learning style was pen-to-paper and I used to get bullied. But I actually did enjoy learning and I did enjoy the lessons. I was predicted B grades.

All my teachers said that I was good in school, I just wasn't there enough. Sometimes we didn't have money, and I used to bunk off when I didn't have enough. I'd commit crimes the day before to have the £4.50 to get to school the next day.

In prison, there are things like Open University courses, but they're so hard to get on. It's near impossible. There's so much that can be improved for rehabilitation, but it seems like it's not a priority. They focus on punishing you and almost breaking you as a person – it's like they want to break you so you can fit into society and conform. Prison does it by force rather than willing somebody into the community through rehabilitation, which is so much more transformative and effective.

# Jason's story continued

Support in prison is lacking the human element. It's one solution fits all, and the solution is bang up. So any kind of discrepancies, problems, attitude, or underlying issues, it all leads to bang up. It's so much better to have a Mentor and be able to reasonably talk to them.

I absolutely did not feel prepared to leave prison. It all happens within the space of about two days from finding out you're being released. I didn't have anywhere to go and was only told where I'd be staying when I was at the desk being escorted to the front gate. They told me I had a few hours to get there. Then I'm worrying about it and how I'm going to get there and the amount of money they give you.

It's like a magnet pulling you back to your old behaviours and patterns. It's so hard to avoid that – even with support. But, without the support, it's like it's staring you in the face. It feels like you've got no other options. You haven't got a suitable place to live. You haven't got enough money. You don't feel very confident in yourself.

“

**You think, 'If I had money, I'd have somewhere to live. I'd have clothes and food. People would like me because I'd be out and sociable and I'd feel a lot more confident within myself.' Trying to find that outside of criminality seems near impossible unless you're shown the way, because you don't know what you don't know.**

”

“

**I didn't have a laptop or a computer, and Switchback facilitated that for me so I could have a professional background on a laptop rather than being on my phone in my bedroom for job interviews. That kind of thing goes a long way. I ended up having an interview with Malcolm Walker, the Executive Chairman of Iceland, and then getting the job.**

”

I first met Switchback in 2022. It was so amazing and refreshing. They already understood, so there was so much I didn't have to explain. My Mentor said: 'Where are you at now? What can we do for you now?' They knew there were nuggets of wisdom within me and were just trying to pull them out and show me there's transferable skills.

Switchback did a lot of intensive work with me. Even after I was recalled, I received a letter from them saying how I've got so much to contribute and I'm so valuable – all of these nice things that really meant a lot to me. When I was released I wasn't shamed for messing up again. I was actually told how Switchback represents a path that goes up a mountain. It looks like you're going backwards, but you're actually ascending. And that was really inspiring. It stayed with me because I took a fall to climb even higher.





# Jason's story continued

Getting an internship on Switchback's Influencing team was a big achievement in my life. After interviewing and getting the position I had lots of opportunities. I was on BBC News, I did some film consultancy work for Lionsgate, I've written blogs, and I've done some work with Comic Relief – all of these positive things in such a short space of time. It was quite overwhelming because I'd just come out of prison, and there was a blip where I stopped contacting the team. I was going through my own stuff and isolating myself. When I did eventually come back, it wasn't like any other employer who wouldn't have understood. The conversation with Switchback was more like, 'It's always okay to come and talk to us. We know that it must be hard for you.' I could see your brains working to try and imagine how hard it is for me, and I really appreciated that."

“

**I carried on, finished the internship, and since then I've gone on to do amazing things. Switchback gave me a platform, and that helped me shape my life up. I want to become a facilitator and trainer, and design bespoke workshops for businesses tailored for their specific needs. I also want to work with charities and do preventative work at youth clubs and schools.**

**Also, consultancy work because I like coming and telling people what to do! I found my passion, especially with all of the agency I was given at Switchback during my internship. It built my confidence along with all the positive feedback I'm getting from professionals. I'm always referring back to things that I've learned at Switchback – I feel like I'm fully media trained! The future is taking over the world.**

”





# Spotlight on Switchback's response to the prison capacity crisis

The early release of prisoners across the country was widely reported in the media over 2024 and was a huge topic of concern for many of our supporters, funders and the public.

In Autumn 2023, the prison population reached 87,453, exceeding 99% of safe capacity, marking an unprecedented level of overcrowding – to the point where people had to stay in police stations and court cells because prisons were too full. In response to this, the former Conservative Government introduced an Early Release Scheme, allowing some people in prison to be released early to relieve overcrowding. In July, the new Labour Government addressed the same urgent concern, replacing the Early Release Scheme with SDS40 (Standard Determinate Sentence 40), an expanded version of the Early Release Scheme which aimed to solve the short-term capacity crisis.

Switchback's main concern throughout was whether the level of support these prison-leavers would receive on their release date would enable them to thrive in the community. Without a clear plan for the future, no accommodation or the right support in place, we worried people would be set up to fail and either reoffend or be recalled for non-compliance of their licence conditions. Housing remains a particularly significant challenge. The lack of access to approved premises, overreliance on temporary solutions such as Community Accommodation Service Tier 3 (CAS3), and multiple barriers to accessing the private rental market, all demonstrate the impact that the nationwide housing crisis is having on the young men we support.

Throughout the year we noticed:

- Higher demand on Switchback Mentors due to greater need.
- Risk of homelessness at an all-time high – whilst temporary housing is often offered, this only lasts 84 days.
- Overstretched services – Probation and housing services working with much larger numbers.
- The decision made by the Probation Service to limit their supervision of lower risk offenders.

We decided to meet these challenges by:

- Working closely with Probation to take referrals and support as many people as possible.
- Increasing our presence in the prisons we work in to reach more young men on the wings and provide 1:1 support and advocacy.
- Working with our prison partners, including strengthening our relationship with each Prison Governor, to ensure young men leaving prison heard about our work and had access to our information in resettlement packs so they could self-refer.

Switchback used the significant media attention on the crisis to share our Reshape Release campaign and spread a positive message about the opportunities for release. Sharing our expertise with a wider public in turn created more media opportunities. We appeared on BBC News Live (twice), CityAM, The Times and Sunday Times, BBC Radio 4, BBC News Politics Live, Channel 5, LBC and even Greatest Hits Radio to talk to different audiences, championing effective resettlement as a key national policy issue and raising awareness. However, as we print this, the official figures reveal that the prison population is rising so quickly that there are now more people behind bars than there were when the Government came to power.





# Spotlight on progress – our Experts by Experience Board

“When you get out of prison it can feel like nobody gets you, but it’s nice to be in a room where even if questions are asked, we all have similar answers. Maybe someone has been through something similar to you. It’s nice to be in a room where you can relate, so you’re building friendships and a network, as well as skills.”

Switchback’s most important value is keeping Trainees at the heart of everything we do, so our Experts by Experience Board (EbE) were a central voice driving our work this year. With so much opportunity for EbE members to influence on the national stage, we stepped up our support, growing our community of former and current Trainees and ensuring they remained active participants in our work. We were keen to invest in EbE, making sure it continued to offer a rewarding opportunity and resource for Switchback Trainees and staff.



In 2024 we said a warm goodbye to our first Participation Coordinator and we used this as an opportunity to reflect on how far we have come in our participation journey. During our London Mayoral election campaign, our EbE Board were pivotal in shaping and designing our Mayoral manifesto, providing us with the text to the accompanying video, as well as providing direction and development. They also played a lead role in our General Election campaign, co-creating digital content to raise public awareness on resettlement policies and even attending hustings in their constituencies, asking a cross-party selection of London candidates the following question: “80% of all crime is reoffending. Prisons are full. What are you going to do to address this?”



# Spotlight on progress – our Experts by Experience Board cont.



‘PROGRESS: A night of words, music and culture’ was also held in partnership with BeauBeau’s, an independent café near our Switchback office in London. This music and culture event, in November 2024, brought a fantastic year of work to close and welcomed over 100 guests to watch EbE members perform and deliver powerful mission statements on what progress means to them, and the journeys they had each been on. The entire event was ideated, produced, hosted and organised by EbE members. The event was featured in the iPaper and Resident Advisor.



## 2024 was a powerful year of lived experience engagement:

- Our Experts by Experience membership has doubled in 2024, with members attending a minimum of 3 consecutive sessions.
- We ran 12 EbE sessions over the course of 2024.
- EbE received training in media skills, entrepreneurial skills, research techniques, event management and production, TikTok and social media, facilitation and financial literacy.
- We launched our Mental Health and Prison Release Report in partnership with our Experts by Experience.



“Switchback helped me gain a sense of wanting to be free and ‘normal’. It changed my whole perspective and the way I saw myself. Now I feel enlightened. That’s the word I’d use. That’s not a small word, it’s a big one. If you enlighten someone it’s a big change and I feel like Switchback has helped me help myself and know that I can do anything if I want to do it. Real talk.”  
Devante’s story

“On the day I was released from prison I felt elated and ecstatic. No-one wants to be in jail. The first thing I did was go to my mum’s. She baked a cake and had a banner. I was with the family and had some lamb shank, some Somali rice – it was a very good day. I missed my mum the most when I was inside.”  
Mohamed’s story

“Switchback has impacted my life a lot. They got me my job at one of their hospitality training partners and other opportunities. Shout out my Mentor Abbie. I don’t know what the future holds for me just yet, but I know it doesn’t involve jail. I’m certain of that. I want to do something of value.”  
Mohamed’s story



# 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**





# Aim 1: A platform for more young Londoners



**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.**

## Year 3 update

### Overview

We continued to build our capacity to reach more young Londoners leaving prison by recruiting four new Switchback Mentors, including a former Switchback Trainee and others with relevant lived experience. With new Mentors joining the team, we invested in a comprehensive training programme including safeguarding, maintaining clear professional boundaries, and increasing Mentors' personal and professional resilience and wellbeing, alongside providing clinical supervision, reflective practice and personal development support.

We said a fond farewell to several long-standing members of the Delivery Team, including our Interim Head of Delivery, Sarah Dedola, who had served a total of six years – first as a Switchback Mentor, then as Delivery Manager and finally

leading the team. Sarah is succeeded as Head of Delivery by Charmaine Best, who brings valuable experience in programme development and measuring impact, as well as practical knowledge of the probation system. Charmaine has already used her extensive network to increase our wellbeing and mental health support offer for Trainees.

In 2024, 67 young men committed to our 1-1 Real Lasting Change programme, through which Trainees build their resilience across our 10 pathways and access training and employment opportunities. This year we strengthened our support around financial stability, supporting Trainees to access their entitled benefits, and we had a record year of Trainees obtaining their ID, which is essential for accessing housing and employment, financial and other essential services. We were able to offer a greater range of experiences and routes to work and supported

**One Mentor single-handedly advocated for a person in prison who was eligible for Home Detention Curfew but was not set for early release due to a lack of housing. The Mentor contacted an external housing charity, arranged for an in-prison assessment, and collaborated closely with the charity to secure housing for the Trainee. Despite numerous challenges and extensive liaison with probation services, the Trainee was ultimately released early. Without this intervention, the Trainee would have spent an additional four months in prison.**

# Aim 1: A platform for more young Londoners continued



more Trainees to achieve more stable housing outcomes. More Trainees than ever before reported that their engagement with Switchback had a positive impact on their physical health, in part due to our inner-city running club and strong partnership with Street Soccer.

We supported 721 men in total in 2024, both in prison and in the community. One-off support typically involves warm referrals to other, more specialist services, a motivational interview conversation aimed at identifying what type

of training or work might be suitable and then signposting to the relevant course or provider, or supporting someone to access ID, a bank account or housing services. We also continue to provide support to former Trainees as and when they request it, often to solve a probation issue or access housing or training. Whilst not officially part of a Mentor's caseload, these sessions ensure that hundreds of men each year are able to access the right support, at the right time, which can make the difference between staying out of prison or being recalled.

## Year 3 progress

### Impact



**Regular presence in 6 prisons**



**We received 83 referrals from Probation Officers during our first year as an HMPPS grantee**



**Extending our referral period to six months post-release led to an additional 32 Trainees**



**Spoke to over 400 probation officers about relational working and the role that Mentors can play supporting their caseload**



**Trainees had the opportunity to join a wide range of activities, ranging from Zorb football, museums, galleries, music events and trips to NQ64, monthly football sessions, a run club, boxing sessions, Jiu Jitsu classes, and yoga at Mission E1**



# Aim 2: A platform for changing the system



**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.**

## Year 3 update

### Overview

We seized the key opportunities presented by the 2024 London Mayoral and general elections and the prison capacity crisis to raise awareness amongst the general public and policymakers of our central message – we must Reshape Release if we want to reduce reoffending. We have continued to champion the need for effective resettlement, with dedicated relational support for those who need it, in our engagement with the new Government, including in regular third sector roundtables with Lord Timpson, Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending.

In March we launched our first report in partnership with our Experts by Experience Board. The Mental Health and Prison Release 2024 report established us as a small but mighty organisation capable of proposing effective solutions for reducing reoffending grounded in rich qualitative insight with lived experience at its heart. The report highlighted what Switchback Mentors were seeing first hand – a sharp rise in mental health needs, alongside consistent underinvestment in mental health services as a key determinant of poor resettlement outcomes.

We recruited our first ever Influencing Intern, Jason, a former Switchback Trainee. The internship gave Jason the opportunity to work on national media pieces, and meet councillors, London Assembly Members, MPs and the Ministry of Justice Resettlement team. Jason's blog series on resettlement, recall and his first day of being released is insightful, highlighting his continued struggle with housing and how that has affected his capacity to maintain his internship. Homelessness remains a key driver of recall due to non-compliance with licence conditions and is thus a priority issue in our National Resettlement Framework recommendations.

In March, the Mayor of London Sadiq Khan visited Switchback, a recipient of the Propel youth mentoring grant programme, to mark a renewed investment in mentorship for young Londoners. The visit helped strengthen our partnerships at a city level, introducing us to the London Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) and deepening our connection with the London Assembly. Both have played a strategic role in supporting our relational work across the city this year.

# Aim 2: A platform for changing the system continued



The voice of prison-leavers drove our campaigning in the run up to both the General and London Mayoral elections: we worked in close partnership with our EbE Board, collaborating with a group of committed former and current Trainees to produce high quality and engaging creative content, multimedia campaigns, national news pieces, briefings and evidence submissions. Hundreds of thousands of people have seen EbE's social media videos

discussing party manifestos and urging the mayor to invest in travel, housing and community spaces. Our media work has established us as a credible voice on effective resettlement. We also strengthened our media engagement process, ensuring that all our activity centres the wellbeing and aspirations of each EbE Board member and gives them ownership of how they want to convey their experience as a tool for changing the system.





# Aim 2: A platform for changing the system continued



## Highlights



Our National Resettlement Framework was featured in the Liberal Democrat party Manifesto for the 2024 general election



London Mayor, Sadiq Khan renewed his commitment to providing access to mentorship and relational support to young adults across London – he announced this during a visit to the Switchback office

86

Our EbE Mayoral manifesto was sent to 86 London-based councillors. The manifesto and campaign were endorsed by Catch22, the Black Equity Organisation and the VRU and received a positive response from the Mayor



We supported Shelter’s ‘Made in Social Housing Campaign’ and Centrepoin’s ‘Make Work Pay’ campaign



We supported the sector as a part of the Transition 2 Adulthood (T2A by Barrow Cadbury), ‘Better Justice’ coalition, ‘Cover the Cost’ coalition, working alongside Clinks and supported the CJA Time for change: A call for collaborative criminal justice reform report



Our media profile increased across print, digital, radio and screen on local and national news. We featured in The Sunday Times, BBC Politics Live, The Times, The Daily Express, CityAM, The Standard, BBCR4, BBC News, iPaper, The Weekender, Resident Advisor, Channel 4 News and Channel 5 News amongst many others





# Aim 3: A platform for collaboration

**A platform for collaboration: we'll work creatively with others to enable growth of our delivery and drive change across the system.**

## Year 3 update

### Overview

Switchback's model of intensive 1-1 mentoring is enhanced by our strong partnerships through which Trainees can access a wide range of support and opportunities that will enable them to build a stable, rewarding life after release. We are constantly seeking to grow our partnerships in breadth and depth, so that they meet as many Trainees' needs as possible. In 2024 we focused on increasing our support across our 10 Switchback pathways, as well as broadening the range of employers we work with. We also developed new influencing and corporate partnerships, thus broadening our impact and increasing our resources.

Our partnership with the Dusty Knuckle Bakery, our primary Real Work Training partner, continued to provide high quality training and work opportunities for 35 Switchback Trainees. The Dusty Knuckle Bakery are an exemplary partner as they demonstrate how employers need to adapt their staff onboarding process to support people with recent lived experience of the care and/or criminal justice system, giving them time to meet obligatory commitments such as probation appointments and demonstrating vital understanding of how much a culture shock it is to move from an institution back into general community life.

Working in partnership with another of our Real Work Training partners, XO Bikes, we continued to test the suitability and impact of our model for prison leavers aged over 30. Whilst the numbers for this pilot remain small, our experience so far shows that men who have served most of their

adult life in prison face very similar challenges to those aged 18-30. We are therefore continuing the pilot into 2025 to continue to gather impact evidence before deciding on whether we should permanently extend our age criteria.

In 2024 we formed a new partnership with the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama to provide Drama and Movement Therapy sessions for Trainees. This innovative approach offered an alternative to traditional NHS therapy and gave Trainees faster access to therapeutic support in an environment of lengthy waiting lists. The service has received hugely positive feedback. Alongside this, we were able to grow our wellbeing offer for Trainees, adding new sports and recreation partners, gym sites, yoga teachers and providing opportunities for watching and playing football. We've also connected with Maslaha, an anti-Islamophobia charity, to offer therapeutic support to Trainees from Muslim communities facing racial discrimination and abuse.

We continued to grow our reach into the culture and arts industries, building on feedback from the EbE Board about Trainee aspirations to access a wider range of training and work opportunities. We launched our first ever film training programme with Hatch Films, which resulted in three Trainees completing paid work placements on two different film sets, with two Trainees starting a 4-week internship at Shine TV supporting MasterChef.

Finally, we have continued to grow our connections to universities and research partners, including hosting a visit from 12 psychology and criminology students from the University of Texas, who wanted to learn about the impact of our relational model.





# Aim 4: A platform on strong foundations

**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.**

## Year 3 update

### Overview

The first half of 2024 saw an intensive recruitment and induction phase. As well as several staff posts we needed to fill, we also recruited three new Trustees and a Board Adviser in early 2024, and all four have now completed a robust induction process. We had originally planned to appoint the Board Adviser as a full Trustee but it took a full six months to obtain a waiver from the Charities Commission before he could be formerly appointed. We were convinced that his lived experience and his wider skill set would add significant value to our Board's decision-making, so we were delighted when the waiver was successfully approved in January 2025.

Throughout each recruitment process we offered an online Q&A session where potential applicants could learn more about the role, Switchback and the recruitment process. This was well attended with strongly positive feedback, and we have now incorporated it as a permanent part of our recruitment process.

The welcoming core of Switchback's culture can be felt throughout our office; its low-key, warm and optimistic vibe puts new Trainees and supporters alike at ease and showcases Trainee successes in the form of beautiful photographic portraits, awards and artwork. But we have long struggled with the lack of confidential space for 1-1s between Trainees and their Mentors. In 2024 we rearranged the office, including moving walls and giving the whole place a paint facelift. The highlight was the installation of three meeting pods, finally creating the confidential space that Trainees need to feel safe to open up and work through their fears and plans for the future. We also renewed our lease, giving us much-needed stability in an otherwise changing external environment.

As part of the requirements for accepting our Probation Service grant, we completed our Cyber Essentials certification.

Whilst the fundraising landscape remains saturated and ever challenging, we continued to put in place the infrastructure we need to pave the way to diversify our income in 2024 and beyond. For the first time we had more senior capacity under two Heads of Department dedicated to focus on individual giving as well as trusts, foundations and corporate partnerships. This has meant that we were able to put in place more detailed income diversification and growth strategies.

# Aim 4: A platform on strong foundations continued

As well as focusing on setting up the systems we need to support income growth, we tested new approaches and started new partnerships with forward thinking businesses including Bywaters, The Ripple Effect and Peters & Peters Solicitors LLP, who not only fundraise but support us across the organisation.

In December, we again took part in the Big Give Christmas Challenge Campaign, where we successfully raised £40,000 from individuals committed to our work. We were thrilled to raise even more than we did in 2023 and forge stronger relationships with our supporters.

We were delighted to receive new grant funding from Comic Relief, Fishmongers' Company and LandAid. We were also grateful for the continued support from organisations such as The Henry Smith Charity, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and Bernard Lewis Family Charitable Trust.

We are also incredibly grateful to Baker McKenzie LLP for the pro bono support we received from their dedicated team over 2024.





**Aim: Building a diverse team and Board representative of our Trainees and modern London**

Nine in ten Switchback Trainees are from an ethnic minority background, so it is vital that our team is representative of the men we support. It's also key that our influencing work clearly challenges the structural reasons underpinning the overrepresentation of ethnic minority communities in the justice system, and that our organisational culture proactively includes and supports all forms of diversity. Switchback's Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Policy focuses on both our people and our operational delivery and is published on our website.

**Embedding Equity, Diversity and Inclusion across Switchback**

We have established a new People and Culture Subcommittee (PCSC) of the Board, responsible for overseeing our EDI policy and practice, alongside strengthening our wellbeing and developmental support to staff and Trainees. The PCSC is chaired by one of our 2024 intake of Trustees, Nicola Hurley, who has an extensive career in HR and EDI leadership. Under Nicola's guidance, we are working through our policies and practice to ensure we are embedding EDI principles in all aspects of Switchback's organisational infrastructure. As part of this process, in 2024 we also reviewed and revised our Family Friendly and Leave Policies, so that they now reflect the more diverse range of experiences of London families and provide better support for staff at different life stages. We also revised our Safeguarding Policy to meet the needs of our larger team engaging more Trainees in a wider range of settings.



**Our inclusive recruitment approach is delivering greater diversity**

In our previous Annual Report (2023) we set out some of the changes we had made to our recruitment practice with the aim of attracting a more diverse set of candidates for roles at all levels, as well as removing the barriers for people with lived experience of the justice system to join our team. In 2024 we were delighted to appoint three people with direct lived experience to Board and leadership positions, and a further four members of staff across the organisation with personal or familial lived experience. Among them, we welcomed a former Trainee to join the Delivery Team as a Mentor, continuing our commitment to offering a professional development pathway for people leaving prison.

Following positive feedback from candidates, we have continued to include online Q&A sessions in all our recruitment processes. We hear that this approach gives less confident or less experienced candidates, particularly those with relevant lived experience, the opportunity to explore the role and Switchback and check out any concerns before committing to an application process. We also continue to offer flexible working wherever it meets both our HR and business needs. This is being used proactively both in recruitment and our management practice and enables us to make Switchback a more accessible workplace, as well as being able to provide support to staff to better manage their wellbeing.

**Our Board**

Our new Trustees, Jasmine, Nicola and Harriette, and Omar, originally appointed as a Board Adviser but who subsequently became a full Trustee in 2025, together brought a wide range of invaluable skills, experience and connections to our Board. Jasmine is a Consultant Solicitor and a Visiting Lecturer at a leading law school in London, and is particularly passionate about social justice, working to make legal services more accessible, inclusive, and responsive, especially for those from underrepresented communities. Nicola is a seasoned coach and HR professional with a specialisation in anti-racism and social value, which she puts into practice in her role as Global Head of HR and Operations at Freedom Fund. Harriette is a funding and social value expert, supporting nonprofits around the world to build capacity and grow their social and environmental impact, including in her current role at I.G. Advisers. Finally, Omar brings invaluable lived experience insight to our work supporting Trainees, as well as his professional expertise in social value and mentoring programmes through his roles at Capita, Project ReMake and a new role at Capgemini. We have already benefitted from their diversity of thought and experience and are hugely grateful for their commitment to our work.

**Our team**

Our annual staff survey snapshot showed that our team continues to become more diverse in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and caring responsibilities.

In 2024, 38% of Switchback staff had caring responsibilities, (twice as many in 2023), while the percentage of staff known to have a disability (14.3%) was slightly higher than for the general London population (13.2%).



# People and culture update continued

## Ethnicity and gender

Switchback underrepresents people from Asian and other ethnic backgrounds but overrepresents Black and mixed-race people. Overall, Switchback has made huge strides in improving the ethnic diversity of the team through changing our recruitment process and we now better represent the ethnic backgrounds of our Trainees.

| Ethnicity               | % of staff in 2021 | % of staff in 2022 | % of staff in 2023 | % of staff in 2024 | 2021 Greater London census |
|-------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| Asian or Asian British  | 0%                 | 10.5%              | 9.1%               | 9.5%               | 20.8%                      |
| Black or Black British  | 8%                 | 10.5%              | 9.1%               | 14.3%              | 13.5%                      |
| Other ethnic background | 0%                 | 0%                 | 4.5%               | 4.8%               | 6.3%                       |
| Mixed                   | 15%                | 10.5%              | 18.2%              | 19%                | 5.7%                       |
| White                   | 77%                | 68.4%              | 59.1%              | 52.4%              | 53.8%                      |
| Prefer not to say       | 0%                 | 0%                 | 0%                 | 0%                 | 0%                         |

Switchback now has a more balanced staff team in terms of gender. We have increased the number of men in the team each year, which is important both for the diversity of the team and for the representation of our Trainees.

| Gender            | % of staff in 2021 | % of staff in 2022 | % of staff in 2023 | % of staff in 2024 | 2021 Greater London census |
|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| Female            | 77%                | 84.2%              | 68.2%              | 52.4%              | 51%                        |
| Male              | 23%                | 15.8%              | 31.8%              | 47.6%              | 49%                        |
| Non-Binary        | 0%                 | 0%                 | 0%                 | 0%                 | unknown                    |
| Other             | 0%                 | 0%                 | 0%                 | 0%                 | unknown                    |
| Prefer not to say | 0%                 | 0%                 | 0%                 | 0%                 | unknown                    |

## Next steps

Our 2025 work plan includes a full benchmarking review of our pay scales, as well as continuing to develop the staff EDI Advisory Group’s capacity to contribute to shaping our policy and practice.





## Income and expenditure summary

We had an exceptional fundraising year for Switchback with a record amount of income raised for the organisation – resulting in 27% year on year growth. We continued to benefit from existing donors and multi-year grants as well as securing new multi-year grant funding. Included within income are gifts in kind totalling £134,196 in relation to legal and professional fees.

The total cost of the Switchback programme in 2024 was budgeted at £1.33 million. Expenditure for the year was higher than budgeted at £1,413,469. Included within expenditure are gifts in kind totalling £134,196 in relation to legal and professional fees. Staff turnover and subsequent delays in recruitment, alongside other unforeseen

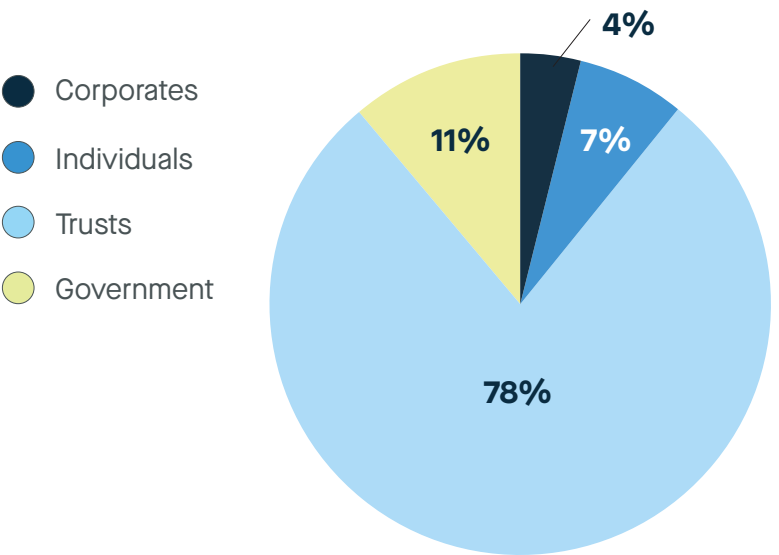
staff costs savings, resulted in staff costs being significantly lower than budgeted. Taken together with our successful fundraising efforts, we delivered a £139,010 surplus, putting us in a healthy position to start the next financial year with confidence despite the challenging fundraising climate.

The lease for our office space was renewed in August 2024 and extended until January 2029. The new lease increased the annual rent and service charge costs by 9%. The annual costs are due to increase again in August 2026 by 3.5%. Expenditure was appropriately focused to facilitate the achievements and performance set out in this report. Our expenditure on charitable activities increased by £174,521 in 2024 of which £134,196 are gifts in kind as detailed above.

| £   | 2021    | 2022      | 2023      | 2024      |
|---|---------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Income                                    | 914,653 | 1,151,335 | 1,219,788 | 1,552,479 |
| Expenditure                               | 859,676 | 1,151,342 | 1,216,990 | 1,413,469 |
| Surplus/(deficit)                         | 54,977  | (7)       | 2,798     | 139,010   |
| Total funds – restricted and unrestricted | 984,259 | 984,252   | 987,050   | 1,126,060 |

## Income by type in 2024

Our income mix is very similar to previous years with the main change being an increase in government funding. This is due to recognising a full year of our grant from the Probation Service supporting our delivery work with young people from ethnic minority backgrounds.



Some of our key donors are listed below, and we are hugely thankful to those many loyal funders who have chosen to support us again in 2024. Additionally, we extend our enormous thanks to the generous donors not listed here, both those who chose to remain anonymous, as well as all those many supporters whose donation was less than £10,000 – these gifts are all truly vital to our work.

## Donors that supported Switchback in 2024 (£10,000 or more)

City Bridge Foundation  
Garfield Weston Foundation  
Ministry of Justice  
The Henry Smith Charity  
The National Lottery Community Fund  
The Swire Charitable Trust  
Aurum Charitable Trust  
Barrow Cadbury Trust  
Bernard Lewis Family Charitable Trust  
Comic Relief  
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation  
Girdlers' Company  
Iguano Group  
Milton Damerel Trust  
Propel  
R.U.B White Charitable Trust  
Raise Your Hands  
The Mark Leonard Trust  
The Tom Ap Rhys Pryce Memorial Trust  
The Fishmongers' Company  
Paul Stephenson Memorial Trust  
LandAid  
Vitol Foundation  
Charles Hayward Foundation  
Highway One Trust  
John R Murray Charitable Trust  
Belpetch Charitable Trust  
Michael Firth

We would also like to extend a special thank you to the team at Peters & Peters Solicitors LLP for their wonderfully generous fundraising activities on behalf of Switchback in 2024.

## Management pay

The key management personnel are comprised of the Chief Executive and four Directors/ Heads of Department. The remuneration for key management was reviewed during the Trustees' annual salary review for the whole team. Their review considers the following:

- The charity's financial position.
- Changes to cost of living and inflation.

## Investment policy

Our annual Investment Policy review concluded Switchback funds will not be invested (outside of regular deposit accounts) as the Trustees feel it inappropriate to take on the level of risk that investment brings at this current time.

## Fundraising regulation

Our fundraising activity is wholly carried out by our in-house fundraising team. Switchback follows the Fundraising Regulator's Code of Fundraising Practice although we are not members of their directory due to the scale of our fundraising activities. There have been no failures to comply with the Fundraising Code nor has Switchback received any complaints concerning its activities in this area since the foundation of the organisation.

## Reserves policy

Switchback provides a long-term programme, and we know that our reserves policy should reflect the commitment we make to our Trainees that we will remain available to them for as long as they need, not constrained by limited timeframes. The Board of Trustees is required to annually review and agree the reserves policy.





The Finance & Resources Sub-committee, therefore, reviewed our current policy at its meeting in January 2025, and its recommendations were then agreed by the full Board at its meeting in January 2025. In setting our reserves policy, the Trustees wish to maintain a level of reserves that provides a stable basis for continuing activities whilst at the same time ensuring that funds are utilised for the benefit of Trainees.

Our policy states that the minimum level of reserves should be the cost associated with the extreme scenario of having to wind down the organisation, in an orderly fashion, were no more funds to be received. This is calculated at 4 months' running costs. Beyond this, we want to ensure that we are able to maintain sufficient financial flexibility to enable us to move quickly on an innovation to enable us to enhance our impact or to cover the costs of any unforeseen loss of funding or adverse circumstances, prior to taking remedial action.

Our reserves policy, therefore, is to retain unrestricted reserves of 4–6 months of the following year's budgeted expenditure. Based on our 2025 forecast expenditure of £1.5m, this requires retaining unrestricted reserves of between £494,981 and £749,971. These figures are regularly reviewed by the Finance & Resources subcommittee.

The Trustees are confident that there are sufficient unrestricted reserves to meet future commitments. At 31 December 2024, Switchback's unrestricted reserves stood at £705,587 (2023: £640,619).

## Structure, governance and management

The charity number, principal addresses and details of professional advisers are included in the administrative information sheet at the front of these accounts.

The Switchback Initiative (trading as "Switchback") is a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales on 10th June 2008 and governed by Articles of Association. 2024 has seen some changes to our trustee board as three Trustees were appointed to the Board with a further trustee appointed in early 2025.

We started a recruitment process at the end of 2024 to identify a new Chair for the Board with our current Chair due to step down in February 2026. We are looking to appoint a new Chair in 2025.

Switchback has always been grateful for the support of a range of experts, advisers and supporters from a range of fields. Special thanks to our long-term Patrons: Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall and Primrose Bell for their continued support and advice.

**Trustees as of 30 April 2025**

Duncan Shrubsole – Chair

Olivia Gillan – Deputy Chair

Gillian McMillan – Treasurer

Burphy Zumu

Harriette Tillott

Jasmine Ashley-Tagoe – Safeguarding Co-Lead

Nicola Hurley – Diversity Lead and Safeguarding Co-Lead

Omar Mentesh



## EbE Board Adviser

The post is currently vacant, and we are in the process of recruiting up to two Advisers to join the Board in summer 2025.

## Recruitment, induction and training of new Trustees

We appointed three Trustees in 2024 with a further Trustee appointed in early 2025. The four Trustees were supported through our robust induction process which is designed to ensure that new Trustees fully understand their roles and responsibilities as well as the objectives, activities and ethos of the charity. New Trustees meet with the CEO, the leadership team and the Chair as well as being provided with relevant background information about the charity. Trustees also visit the Switchback office, training environments and a prison to help their understanding of how we deliver the programme, the environment in which we work and the associated risks.

## Trustees' responsibilities

The Trustees (who are also the directors of the Switchback Initiative for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the income and expenditure of the charitable company for that period.

In preparing those financial statements, the Trustees are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently,
- Observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- State whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charitable company's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities,

The Trustees' Report has been prepared in accordance with the special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

The Trustees delegate day to day decision making and operations to the CEO and the leadership team. The Trustee Board has set up a Finance and Resources Sub-committee that meets quarterly to review management accounts, fundraising forecast and cashflow analysis. Recommendations are then



# Financial review continued

presented to the full Board which also meets quarterly. The Trustees believe that the charity is a going concern and for this reason, the going concern basis of the preparation for the financial statements is considered valid.

## Risk management and uncertainties

Effective risk management is critical in working towards the achievement of our mission. The Board of Trustees maintains overall accountability for ensuring that effective risk management practices are in place. They review and agree these arrangements on an annual basis. They are supported in this by the Finance and Resources Sub-committee, which reviews the risk register every quarter.

The Leadership Team have responsibility for the risk register and review this monthly. A summary of the principal risks and uncertainties identified by the Trustees are as follows:

- **Retention & Recruitment of Mentors:**

There has been a high turnover of staff within our Mentor team resulting in the team not being at full capacity in 2024. This impacts on the level of Trainees we can work with as an organisation. We are exploring how the culture and wellbeing of the team can be enhanced as well as upskilling staff and providing opportunities for personal development. We have recruited two new Delivery Managers in early 2025 and will be undertaking a recruitment process to bring the Mentor team back to full capacity in 2025.

- **Trainee Engagement:**

Engaging potential Trainees is reliant on access to prisons and referrals from partners such as the Probation Service. We are working in a range of prisons, however there are changes to the prison system expected in 2025. This could result in changes to the demographic of prisoners in prisons in which we operate, and this could have an impact on our work. We are exploring with the London Prison Lead how Switchback could work in new prisons, including those outside of London that house people returning to London.

The Trustees are satisfied that the risks identified above have been mitigated or addressed as required and that arrangements are in place to review them on an ongoing basis.

The financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the Companies Act 2006, and the charities Statement of Recommended Practice. The Trustees have taken Charity Commission Guidance on public benefit into account.

The Trustees' Report was approved by the Trustees on 30 April 2025 and signed on their behalf by



**Duncan Shrubsole, Chair**







**Thank you** to all our partners, supporters and donors for your continued support. It's thanks to you that Switchback can support even more young men to build stable, rewarding lives.

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**SWITCHBACK**

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