

2025

# The Prison Recall Report



in partnership with  
our Experts by  
Experience Board



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Foreword



by Switchback’s Experts by Experience Board

“From October 2024 – March 2025, members of Switchback’s Experts by Experience Board (EbE) came together to conduct research on prison recall and its significance for effective resettlement and reducing the prison population. It was good to be part of a research group with people who had similar experiences. We could all speak and voice our opinions, and they were well received by each other. There were a few things we all agreed on when it came to recall, like probation.

Our research highlights how various offences, sentences, and probation officers’ behaviour impact the recall rate.

It shines a light on the different experiences we’ve had with different probation officers and the lack of consistency and compassion for prison leavers, especially for those who are neurodiverse.

Everyone has a different experience of probation because every probation officer is a different person, so it’s inconsistent and depends on who you get. It can be daunting. You’re in prison waiting to be released and you don’t know what your probation officer is going to be like – especially if your licence conditions are a bit tricky.

During our research we met with Martin Jones, HM Chief Inspector of Probation, and discussed our views and opinions on probation through firsthand experience. We discovered that we were on the same page about most things that lead to recall and the effects it has on individuals.

The fear of being recalled can knock your confidence. You can be less inclined to do certain things like try new opportunities, because it’s always in the back of your mind. You feel restricted. This is an important conversation to have because we’re voicing the opinions of a section of society that’s often underrepresented.

We feel like we don’t have a voice a lot of the time because we’re prison-leavers, so it’s good to have these conversations. They don’t just work towards the safety of the public, but also towards making sure that probation officers are working responsibly and to avoid overly punitive justice, where people get recalled for issues out of their control.

This research project highlights the patterns, problems, and potential solutions to recall and reoffending rates.

We created a survey with the help of a magnificent researcher, Rushaa Hamid, who helped us figure out the kinks, work out the best questions to ask and design and analyse the results of a survey.

If there’s one thing people can take from the report, it’s that prison-leavers are people too. We have rights and it’s important that they are considered. If probation is flowing the way it’s meant to be, it can only benefit society as a whole because you’re helping to rehabilitate people.”

Adam Chaab, Abid, JM Kapu, Sabbir, and Sage Tashan on behalf of Switchback’s EbE.





The use of licence recall has grown to unsustainable levels. At the time of writing, Government statistics show that **one in five** people in custody are on recall. The rate of recall has **nearly doubled in the last 15 years** and has **risen by 27% in just the last year**. Overuse of recall has significantly contributed to overcrowding in prisons. Reducing recall rates would be a significant step towards solving the prison population crisis.

We have worked together with our research partner, Toynbee Hall, and a group of our Experts by Experience Board (EbE) to investigate this issue. We have found a system that is not working for anybody, neither the people leaving prison, nor the probation officers or the wider public.

There is limited publicly available research on recall, and to the best of our knowledge this is one of the largest recent studies of recall which has been undertaken. The research provides deeper evidence for themes that charities and people with lived experience have been raising in relation to recall. The research particularly uncovers the challenging relationship between probation officers and people on licence and the barriers this creates to meaningful relational practice in the justice system.

In the last month the Government have announced welcome new action on recall and the Independent Sentencing Review has called for a new model for recall to be introduced. This report has been published at an ideal moment, setting out in detail, the challenges with the existing model and setting out what an alternative model could look like. Crucially we are calling for both urgent steps to bring recall rates under control and for longer term solutions to address the root causes of the recall crisis.

## Key Findings

**Key Finding 1:** Good relationships are key to preventing recalls, but most survey respondents did not report having a good relationship with their probation officer.

**Key Finding 2:** People on probation do not feel safe to share their challenges with their probation officer, limiting the potential for relational support.

**Key Finding 3:** Gaps in resettlement support lead to reoffending and recall.

**Key Finding 4:** Recall decision-making is inconsistent and unpredictable, meaning that recall is not being used as a last resort.

**Key Finding 5:** Communication about licence conditions and how to avoid recall is not clear. Communications fail to account for high levels of neurodiversity, speech and language needs among people on probation.

**Key Finding 6:** When people are recalled, they are ‘forgotten about’. Proper process is not followed, the reasons for their recall are not explained, rehabilitative work is limited, and they are not given resettlement support on release.

**Key Finding 7:** Avoidable recalls damage positive progress and can make people lose faith in their ability to live a different life.

## Recommendations

### Urgent actions to bring recall rates under control

**Recommendation 1. The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) and Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS)** should refer all non-emergency recall decisions to an external decision maker such as the Magistrates Court or the Parole Board to ensure there is appropriate transparency and accountability.

**Recommendation 2: MOJ and HMPPS** should develop a clear structure for decision-making with escalation routes to ensure recall is only used as a last resort.

**Recommendation 3: MOJ and HMPPS** should improve the quality of data to allow true analysis of the causes of recall.

**Recommendation 4: Leaders in HMPPS** should take responsibility for making sure that statutory standards and best practice principles are being delivered.

**Recommendation 5: HMPPS** should make greater use of technology to create communication tools that allow all people on licence, including those who are neurodivergent, to understand their rights and responsibilities.

### Long-term solutions to address the root causes of this issue

**Recommendation 6: MOJ and HMPPS** should support probation officers to carry out truly relational work with people on licence, by improving recruitment and training, and by addressing high caseloads.

**Recommendation 7: MOJ** should work with other key government departments to introduce a national resettlement framework to provide holistic support for every person leaving prison, including the option of a mentor.

**“Don’t ever think your thoughts and opinions are small and invalid, because the conversations here get passed to the Government and people who can change things. We really are the voice of the streets, so don’t ever shy from your opinions.”**

Sage, Peer researcher and EbE Member

This is a report from Switchback, a prison resettlement charity, created in partnership with our Experts by Experience Board members. Our EbE Board was launched in 2017, and this group of current and former Switchback Trainees meets regularly to ensure that all our work is rooted in lived experiences of those who understand the impact of the prison and probation system best.

We are publishing this report at a timely moment. On 14 May 2025, the Government announced it would end standard recall for all people serving sentences of less than four years. This is a welcome step to tackling the damaging overuse of recall, which is harming people’s chances of rehabilitation. We are encouraged to see that the Government has heard the voices of the voluntary sector and those with lived experience who have been calling for change on this issue.

Changing the length of recall will mitigate some of the worst impacts of its overuse, but it won’t reduce the very high levels of recall or prevent its negative impact on both people leaving prison and wider society. Without further action, we will continue to see thousands of people being recalled every month. For this reason, we welcome the Independent Sentencing Review’s call for a new model for recall for those

serving standard determinate sentences. This report sets out a clear direction for how that model should be designed and we would be pleased to work with the relevant bodies on its implementation.

Through this report we have identified clear challenges with the existing system of recall and the wider prison release process. We have made recommendations that, if implemented, would enable the Government both to quickly slow down the rate of recall and to root causes driving high recall rates.

The scale of the problem is extreme. **Almost one in five** of the sentenced prison population are held in custody on recall. Today, there are **12,920** people in prison on recall. Over the last 15 years the use of licence recall has **nearly doubled**. In just the last 12 months in the year to September 2024, there were **32,000** recalls, a **27% rise** on the year before. This is particularly alarming when we consider that in the 1990s recall was barely used and there were **fewer than 100** people in custody on licence recall. Importantly, the rise in recall isn’t driven by new offending – **over 73%** of recalls do not relate to a new offence.

This growth in the rate of the recall has significantly inflated the prison population and is a major driver of the prison population crisis. Between April and June 2024, **for every four prison releases there were three licence recalls**. Tackling the unsustainably high rate of recall is essential to addressing this problem. Measures like Standard Determinate Sentences (SDS40) alone have limited impact.



This is not just about the numbers or prison capacity, it’s a problem that can ruin lives. We have worked with men who have overcome significant barriers to build a stable foundation for their future only to be recalled over a miscommunication. These men have done the hard graft to get into work, hold down stable housing, reconnect with children and loved ones, only to lose all of that due to avoidable recalls.

Since 2023, both our Experts by Experience Board and our Switchback Mentors (our experienced team who provide intensive support and mentoring to prison leavers) have been flagging worrying cases of avoidable recall. Our advocacy on this issue was echoed by many other organisations who shared our concerns. Together with Catch 22, we established the Recall Reform Coalition, bringing together large and small organisations across the sector to campaign for change. Along with our partners we have been ringing the alarm bell about this problem, through individual briefings and reports and collective letters to ministers.

During this time, this problem has grown worse and is increasingly recognised as being a key contributor to the national prison crisis. The Chief Inspector for Prisons described the rise as “a symptom of a system under huge pressure.” The National Association for Probation Officers have also raised concerns about the high rate of recall. In a new report published in May 2025, **‘Build, baby build – A new generation of prisons’** – the think tank Policy Exchange called the rate of recall ‘staggeringly high’. The Secretary of State for Justice recently described the rate of recall as ‘unsustainable’. This growing consensus crosses party political lines and demonstrates both the scale and seriousness of the challenge.

We are honoured to have worked closely with our EbE Board and our incredible peer research team to make this important contribution to the conversation. Together, we have found a recall system that is not fit for purpose – a system that is in fact driving reoffending and impeding rehabilitation. We urge policymakers to consider the solutions we have put forward to build a fair and proportionate recall system.

The recall system needs urgent and wholesale reform. Ultimately, though, this is a bigger issue. This is about how we support people in building a life after prison. Our **‘Mental Health and Prison Release Report’** published in 2024 clearly illuminated the ways that support for people leaving prison falls short of being truly rehabilitative. Our peer research group will look next at the impact of other key factors for effective resettlement, including housing, employment after prison and the importance of one-to-one relational support. We want to work with other organisations up and down the country who have an interest in these issues.

If you are interested in collaborating with us, we’d love to hear from you at [policy@switchback.org.uk](mailto:policy@switchback.org.uk)

You can also follow our journey on [Instagram](#) and [TikTok](#). We will keep advocating for change until our justice system gives every person leaving prison a real chance to live life differently.

**We invite you to join us!**

## Switchback's influencing work

The transition from prison back into the community is so often where the system fails. Over and over again, Switchback meets people who want to make a new start after prison but are held back by barriers, some of which are beyond their control.

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. As an expert resettlement organisation, one of our primary influencing goals is to elevate the role of effective resettlement as a national policy issue. We do this by drawing the link between investment in resettlement and crime reduction, and by modelling the role of effective relational support in successful resettlement. We agree with the broad public that our justice system is a tool for providing justice for victims, and ultimately to benefit wider society, and that reducing reoffending is a vital way to meet public need and keep us safe. Primarily, our goal is to put forward workable resettlement solutions that reduce reoffending and create safer communities.

Our work amplifies the voices of those with firsthand knowledge and experience in our organisation, including our Trainees. We work closely with our team of Mentors, who highlighted the issues in the recall system and have provided deep insight into the challenges facing prison leavers. Our Experts by Experience play a crucial role in shaping our agenda. They have also been raising the issue of prison recall for many months, including through previous research.

We published our first report on ['Mental Health and Prison Release'](#), in January 2024. That report explored the challenges that prison leavers experience when coming up to release. We were proud to work in partnership with Toynbee Hall for that project. We have partnered with Toynbee Hall again for this body of work and want to thank the organisation and particularly our lead researcher, Rushaa Hamid, for her significant contribution to this project.

## The Policy Framework for Recall

### Definitions

**Licence Recall:** Prison recalls in the UK occur when a prisoner released on licence is returned to prison due to breaching their licence conditions or posing an unacceptable risk to the public. This decision takes place without the involvement of the courts.

**Fixed Term Recall:** A licence recall where an individual is recalled for a fixed period of 28 days and is then released to serve the remainder of their sentence in the community.

**Standard Recall:** A licence recall where an individual is recalled to spend the remainder of their sentence in prison. In theory, the probation and prison service should work with the individual towards re-release.

The HMPPS Policy Framework sets out when each designation of recall should be used.



## HMPPS Policy Framework

There are three main policy documents that are publicly available in relation to recall:

1) ['Recall, Review and Re-Release of Recalled Prisoners Policy Framework'](#) – A policy framework setting out the key statutory and policy requirements in relation to recall.

2) ['Working with Recalled Prisoners'](#) – Guidance which sets out the principles for how prison and probation staff should work with recalled prisoners.

3) ['Joint National Protocol – Recall Process for Offenders Subject to Licence'](#) – A joint national protocol which establishes high level roles and responsibilities for agencies involved in the recall process. This guidance relates mostly to logistical partnership working. We have not included further details about it in this report.

## Recall, Review and Re-Release of Recalled Prisoners Framework

The policy framework sets out the criteria which probation officers must demonstrate when deciding to recall an individual. It does not set out a clear decision-making framework and the criteria are open to broad interpretation. They are set out below;

- Exhibits behaviour similar to behaviour surrounding the circumstances of the index offence;
- Exhibits behaviour likely to give rise (or does give rise) to a sexual or violent offence;
- Exhibits behaviour associated with the commission of a sexual or violent offence; or

- Is out of touch with the COM/Probation Practitioner and the assumption can be made that any of (the previous three criteria) may arise.

The framework sets out the operational steps that must be taken to recall an individual and the relevant clearance processes. It sets out that the decision to recall should be discussed with a senior probation officer and must be approved by the Public Protection Casework Section (PPCS) a division of the Ministry of Justice. No guidance is provided on the process which the PPCS uses to approve recall decisions or the rate of approval for recall applications.

The framework also establishes the concept of an emergency recall which can be used when an individual presents an imminent risk of serious harm or reoffending, or is subject to MAPPA Level 3 arrangements or an indeterminate sentence.

The policy further sets out the expectations of what should happen once someone has been recalled to prison. Importantly, it sets out clear expectations that:

- An oral hearing should take place within 28 days of the recall. This hearing is to assess whether a person can be safely re-released from prison.
- The prison must put appropriate support to help people in prison manage the impact of recall within 28 days.
- Probation must contact the person in prison within 15 days to discuss the reason for the recall.
- The person in prison must receive a recall dossier including the key information about why they were recalled and what should happen next.

## Working with Recalled Prisoners

The Best Practice Guide ‘[Working with Recalled Prisoners](#)’ – goes on to set out principles of the work that should be undertaken with people who have been recalled. The guidance sets out principles that;

- Recall should be done with and not done to.
- The process should recognise loss and instil hope.
- The process should recognise, reinforce and protect progress and ensure chances to succeed.
- The probation officer must maintain contact with the person in prison on recall and clearly communicate how they can work towards re-release.
- People in prison should actively be undertaking intervention to reduce risk and support re-release.

It also sets out key steps in this process such as a three-way meeting between the probation officer, prison offender manager and the person being recalled, within 10 days of the recall.

## What have the Inspectorates said?

HMIP most recently published ‘[A thematic review of probation recall culture and practice](#)’ in 2020. They highlighted inconsistency in decision-making and patchy use of alternatives to recall. They also noted that decision-making could be highly sensitive to national policy ‘mood music’. Inspectors also observed that major national incidents, for example the re-offences of Joseph McCann and the subsequent serious case reviews, could lead to an increased risk averse culture in relation to recall decisions. Inspectors noted:

**“Recall culture and practice are directly influenced by national policy and high-profile serious case reviews. In recent years there was a widespread belief among operational staff that recalls should be minimised.”**

This thematic further highlighted that many probation officers feel fear about the consequences of failing to recall an individual, often feeling that they may be held personally responsible if something goes wrong. We have included some of those observations below.

**“More recently there have been fears that responsible officers will be unfairly held responsible for any adverse consequences resulting from a failure to instigate recall. Both perceptions undermine professional decision-making.”**

**“During our review, responsible officers repeatedly spoke of their ‘fear’ of failing to recall individuals immediately, if and when concerns about compliance and behaviour arose. They feared being held individually responsible for any serious further offences committed.”**



**“You don’t feel certain you will always be supported. You feel responsible but recalls should always be shared decisions. There is always concern that you will be held responsible if you do not make the right decision.”**

**“Fear is an issue in the decision. You are always concerned that something serious could happen. Often the police want recall so they don’t have to rush their investigation. This does put pressure on probation staff and they often feel they cannot take any risks.”**

## What has the sector said?

The voluntary sector has been vocal about the issue of recall, particularly in recent years. Switchback co-founded and chairs a coalition of organisations working on this issue, the Recall Reform Coalition. Our coalition partners have published several key contributions on this subject. For example:

- Revolving Doors published a briefing in April 2024 ‘[Recalls in crisis: What needs to change?](#)’ – highlighting the rise in the rate of recall. This briefing highlights the way that recall is contributing to a revolving door problem in prison and the importance of the relationship between probation officers and people on licence.
- In February 2025, Catch 22 published an insights paper on ‘[Fixing Fixed Term Recall](#)’ – setting out the particular issues caused by fixed term recalls. The paper highlights issues in the communication of licence conditions and the lack of alternatives to recall.
- In August 2023, the Howard League produced ‘[Know your rights: An animation on licence and recall](#)’ – a video animation to support people in prison, to know their rights when it comes to recall. They produced this video having noted that recall is one of the common issues raised on their legal advice line.
- In February 2025, the Prison Reform Trust published their ‘[Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile](#)’ and highlighted the rising rate of recall. They describe the dramatic rise in the rate of prison recall as threatening to undermine emergency overcrowding measures.
- In January 2025, a coalition of charities collectively wrote an open letter in support of Gaie Delap, a woman who was recalled because the probation service could not find a tag small enough to fit her. This case was used to spotlight wider failings in the recall system for women.
- We have previously submitted evidence to the Justice Select Committee Inquiry into the ‘Future prison population and estate inquiry’ in November 2023 and the Sentencing Review in January 2025, highlighting the issue of recall as a driver of the high prison population.



For this project we used a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach. This style of research involves professional researchers and members of communities (peer-researchers) working in partnership to understand a topic and make changes to improve a situation. This was Switchback's first PAR project.

We have partnered with Toynbee Hall who have extensive experience of using PAR to address issues impacting their local community in Tower Hamlets, as well as at a London and national level. We have previously worked with Toynbee Hall on a paper exploring the relationship between mental health and prison release, in our ['Mental Health and Prison Release Report'](#), published in 2024.

That paper was based on scoping workshops with our EbE, but excitingly for this project, EbE members have stepped into the role of peer researchers. The peer researchers who worked on this project discussed the issue, highlighted themes, and worked with our professional researcher, Rushaa Hamid from Toynbee Hall, to design a survey. The peer researchers proposed the key commendations **based on the findings** and drove the project throughout.

Using their personal networks and those of Switchback and our sector partners, the peer researchers surveyed 26 men and held an in-depth, in-person workshop with six of the initial respondents. We want to thank all our colleagues who shared this survey, particularly Userveice, who generously supported our work.



The men who responded to our survey largely reflected the location and age range of our service and of our peer researchers. 88% of respondents were based in Greater London. Respondents were spread relatively equally throughout the London boroughs, with 23 out of 32 London boroughs represented. All respondents, except one, had been on licence within the last five years and 57% were on probation at the time they completed the survey.

The findings from this research clearly indicate issues that are significantly affecting people on licence. Further work is required to understand how these issues vary in different parts of the country, and among people of different ages. We also recognise that recall is an issue that has disproportionately impacted women, and we support the continued campaigning and advocacy of our partners in the women's sector, such as Women in Prison, Birth Companions, Advance, and National Womens Justice Coalition on this issue.



Good relationships are key to preventing recalls, but most of our survey respondents did not report having a good relationship with their probation officer.



“

When there's no relationship, all they've got is just pages full of notes about an 'offender', a person they've never met. How can you make decisions based on that?

”

## What our survey respondents told us

- No one who rated their relationship with their probation officer as 'very good' had been recalled or rated themselves as close to being recalled.
- Two thirds of people said that the possibility of recall changed how they interacted with their probation officer.
- Just one third of people felt comfortable discussing mental health challenges with their probation officer.
- Only around one quarter of people felt that their probation officer worked with them to avoid recall.
- Over three quarters of people said that recall could have been avoided with more support from their probation officer.

“

My probation officer, he didn't even have a copy of my licence. I had to give him my own copy of my licence to even go through it with him.

”

“

I was not given information to help guide me or given structure to help me not commit crimes again. It was often quick appointments of interrogation more than interest. As soon as anything goes wrong you are sent back to jail with not much explanation.

”

“

I barely had any interactions with [my probation officer], any interactions were very brief.

”

“

I've had over a dozen probation officers over the years, some good, some bad, some engaged, some not, some bullies, some supportive. There were never any solid connections and it all felt transitory and random.

”

“

He was new, nice enough, and clearly wanted the best for me. However, because I followed instruction, turned up etc. I was not his priority, so when I did need his help, it was slow or non-existent.

”



# Key Finding 1 continued

Throughout our research we heard that the relationship between people on probation and their probation officers was a key factor in recall. Several reasons were put forward for why relationships were so important.

- Good relationships make it more likely that people on probation will share their journey with their probation officer. This can put non-compliance issues into a wider context and allow probation officers to more accurately assess risk of further harm. Without this context, probation officers make key decisions based on limited information and make incorrect assumptions about the actual level of risk.
- Good relationships provide insight into the challenges that somebody is facing. This in turn enables probation officers to make the appropriate referrals and signposting to provide the most effective support to help people to overcome barriers to change.
- Good relationships enable probation officers to clearly communicate expectations with people on probation and to ensure that licence conditions are understood and feel meaningful. Without this understanding, people on licence may struggle to understand the boundaries with which they must comply.
- Good relationships allow probation officers to address issues directly through communication and warnings before having to escalate to recall decisions. Without relational escalation options, officers have a more limited set of ways to encourage compliance and are therefore more reliant on recall.

- Good relationships are crucial to preventing recalls, but people described positive relationships as the exception not the rule. Those people who had benefitted from strong relationships, praised their impact and highlighted the willingness of their officer to go above and beyond to support them.

For many people we spoke to, their relationships with their probation officers were indifferent at best and antagonistic at worst. Many reported that their probation officer didn't have the time or skills to build a meaningful relationship, and their interactions were limited to five minute meetings with no opportunity to seek support. Most people described having to advocate, very strongly, for their needs and demonstrate significant positive progress before being able to get any support. Having multiple probation officers and thus having to constantly rebuild relationships were also common themes. Some people felt that their probation officer actually wanted them back in prison and didn't want them to succeed on release.

“

It's just pot-luck sometimes.

”

Despite all this, people had empathy for the capacity struggles that probation officers experience, acknowledging that they had too many people to see and they didn't have the time or training to build meaningful relationships. Alongside understanding, we also found frustration and disappointment about negative cultural attitudes in the probation service and a perceived lack of belief in people's capacity to build different lives for themselves.

# Key Finding 2



People on probation do not feel safe to share their challenges with their probation officer, limiting the potential for relational support.



“

Probation officers only rank risk, they don't support. Any admission of weakness raises your risk level and therefore heightens the possibility of recall. If I had a problem, I would approach a charity or support organisation while at the same time telling my probation officer 'everything is fine'.

”

## What our survey respondents told us

- Just one third said that they would discuss mental health challenges with their probation officer.
- Fewer than one quarter told us they would discuss family issues with their probation officer.
- Fewer than one quarter told us they would discuss problematic drug use with their probation officer.
- Around half would discuss skills and education with their probation officer.

- Around half said they would discuss housing issues with their probation officer.
- Around half said they would be likely to discuss employment problems with their probation officer.
- Over two thirds said the threat of recall impacted how they interacted with their probation officer.

“

I don't feel comfortable speaking to my probation officer about certain topics. The space and meeting environment does not feel comfortable for me to be open.

”

“

It feels like everything will be used against me. As I have seen in my OASys (Offender Assessment System) they use things how they like.

”

“

They can send me to prison easily. It all depends on them.

”

“

A probation officer could turn your life upside down. You could get someone who likes you or you could get someone who is out to get you. I could have the worst week of my life and I'm not really trying to seek out help. I know that I'm at a disadvantage just being there. I'm not trying to seek out help because I already know I'm at a disadvantage being there.

”

## Key Finding 2 continued

“

I believe they look for any excuse to create problems, so I would rather pretend everything is okay.

”

Relational practice is key to supporting people to move away from crime. This is clear in the academic evidence, as highlighted in the background. Cracknell, recently summarised the academic evidence in [‘Effective practice in Resettlement’](#) – a briefing that was co-produced with HM Inspectorate of Probation. Cracknell found that a key theme of criminology research was the importance of a relational, strengths-based approach to desistance. This is consistent with the work of charities like Switchback who provide relational, one-to-one support for people leaving prison.

The Probation Service has recognised the importance of this approach, and recent policies and strategies have placed a growing focus on relational support. For example, [‘The Target Operating Model for Probation Services in England and Wales’](#), published in 2021, sets out the ambition that probation practitioners should ‘actively engage in evidence-based change work’ by building trusting relationships with people on probation.

Through our research we have identified a major barrier to implementing this approach. People on probation do not feel safe to share the reality of their experience and challenges with probation officers. The potential for probation officers to recall people on licence was cited as a key

cause of this reluctance. Overall, participants expressed the view that the probation service prioritised its work on compliance ahead of any genuine attempt at rehabilitation. This contributed to them feeling that they should take a closed-off approach to their relationship with probation.

This issue is made worse by the fact that some probation officers use recall as a threat to manage behaviour. Around half of all survey respondents said that recall was used as a threat to manage their behaviour, but fewer than 10% said that the reason why they might be recalled was clearly explained. Survey respondents who said that recall was regularly used as a threat said it made them feel depressed, confused, hopeless and unable to build a relationship with their probation officer.

“

I’m more scared of my probation officer than I was the most violent prisoner in prison. My hearts beating I’ve got to please this person. If I don’t, I’m going back to prison.

”

This gives rise to major implications which the probation service must take seriously. Probation practitioners have the opportunity to link people on probation to a range of helpful rehabilitative services, many of which are underutilised. However, they will be unable to do this effectively if they don’t know the actual challenges that people are managing. The probation service cannot fulfil its ambition for relational change work until this issue is addressed.

## Key Finding 3



Gaps in resettlement support lead to reoffending and recall.





“

If I had support, not just supervision, I could have navigated the issues I was going through before I got recalled.

”

## What our survey respondents told us

- Over three quarters said that their recall could have been avoided if they had received appropriate support on release.

“

If I could have worked with my probation officer to get into work and manage the issues I was going through, I could have avoided [the situation that led to my recall].

”

“

I just needed housing support.

”

Throughout, our research participants emphasised the importance of supporting people leaving prison through the necessary adjustment to life in the community. Issues such as homelessness, difficulties finding employment, and mental health challenges, were raised as reasons why people reoffend and why they breach licence conditions. Our peer researchers discussed the fact that many people leave prison wanting to live life differently, but feel overwhelmed by the barriers they face on release, leading to them making mistakes and reoffending or breaching their licence conditions.

This echoes our previous work looking at the relationship between mental health and prison release. We found that the time of prison release can be a period of high anxiety with multiple overlapping stresses that can be overwhelming. Faced with major practical challenges such as homelessness, many people who are released from prison wanting to live a different life, can slip up and end up being recalled to prison.

“

I told them I was having issues where I live and they didn't want to deal with me. They don't want to have to house me. I live in Tottenham but I was placed with Enfield Probation. I didn't understand why. When I came out, I got switched back to Enfield. They did a home visit, saw that I was having problems living with my mum. I asked them for help to find my own place to live and said I was struggling. Next appointment they told me, 'You'll be going back to Enfield. We can't help you.'

They just sent me back to Enfield. Enfield can't house me 'cause I'm not from there [no local connection]. Everyone's just passing the buck. Now I'm struggling, but when it came to recalling me then they all said 'Oh it was out of our hands.'

”

Locations have been changed to protect identities

Our wider advocacy has highlighted the importance of stability in key areas, particularly housing. Without a stable place to live it can be extremely difficult for individuals to maintain a commitment to live life differently on release. Instability and stress contribute to a worsening state of mind, poorer mental health and poorer decisions being made. Many thousands of prison leavers do not get the benefit of one-to-one support and mentoring during this time and so feel completely unsupported during this process. These barriers can lead people back down the path of reoffending or breaching licence conditions.



Recall decision-making is inconsistent and unpredictable, meaning that recall is not being used as a last resort.



“

There's no firm structure on who goes back or why they go back or what they go back for. It's just you're getting recalled, you're getting recalled.

”

### What our survey respondents told us

- Fewer than a quarter said that their probation officer actively helped them to avoid recall.
- More than three quarters said that they had felt unsure about whether they might be recalled even when trying to follow the rules.

“

They should have called me in for an explanation for the breach. I didn't find out the reason for the recall until two weeks of being incarcerated.

”

“

In my area they are understanding, but I know other people who have been recalled just for missing an appointment.

”

“

We need strict rules and regulations to say when someone has to be recalled – and stick to the fact that it's the last resort.

”

## Key Finding 4 continued

Recall decision-making is highly inconsistent. Breaches that are sometimes handled with a conversation by one probation practitioner can lead to immediate recall by another. Participants shared several personal stories about recalls where the decision to recall had been taken for lower examples of non-compliance. Some instances appear to be purely caused by miscommunication.

There is no clear decision-making framework for recall. The recall policy framework includes a high-level set of criteria that must be fulfilled before a decision is taken to recall an individual. These criteria relate to risk of further harm, breach of licence conditions and leave considerable room for interpretation by individual probation officers.

This inconsistent approach to decision-making is particularly concerning when we consider the major impact of recall decisions. People can serve additional years in prison for missing an appointment or technically breaching licence conditions. Their progress in building a stable life outside of the justice system is often lost, as recall also likely means loss of housing, work and disrupted relationships, as well as declining mental health. The strongest way to illustrate the inconsistency of decision-making is by sharing personal stories of recall that were shared with us throughout this research and in our wider work as a resettlement organisation. These stories demonstrate the personal injustice that can be experienced by prison leavers and the significant impact on rehabilitation

## Recall Stories



### Jamie's story:

Jamie was staying at an approved premises on licence. One evening he went out with some family for his brother's birthday. Jamie's curfew was 7pm and although he returned to his hostel before this time, he didn't return to his room. He sat on the steps of the hostel building smoking and spending more time with his family, until he returned to his room around 10pm. Jamie thought this was acceptable, because he regularly came out of his room to smoke after his curfew.

Staff at the approved premise reported this incident to Jamie's probation officer. His probation officer did not discuss this breach with him. Instead, on Monday morning, Jamie awoke to Police Officers in his bedroom, informing him he had breached his licence and was being returned to prison. Jamie was instantly recalled with no opportunity to discuss the breach. Jamie regrets that he did not have a relationship with his probation officer, as his officer had changed multiple times during his licence.

### Lance's story:

Lance is a young black man. He was arrested as police believed that he matched the description for several robbery offences that had been committed in the area. Lance maintained his innocence and reported the situation to his probation officer the next day.

Two weeks later, police arrived at Lance's home address and told him that he was being recalled. He was not charged with any crime. Lance was originally told that he would be in prison for 28 days and was then told he would be released for Christmas. He was kept in prison into the new year. He did not receive any charge, communication about the case or details about an appeals process. He had to wait in prison with no information. Five months later the police concluded that no further action needed to be taken in relation to the case and Lance was released without any resettlement support or planning.





## Kareem's story:

Kareem was recalled one day after being released from prison, due to a miscommunication with his probation officer. On his first day he was told to be at his approved premise address by 8pm. He was given an address with no door number and, when he arrived, he couldn't find the approved premises and was running up and down the road trying to find the right place. He finally found the correct place and thought he had arrived just in time, but staff informed him that the curfew was 7pm, not 8pm.

Kareem was recalled the next morning. He was in prison for 6 days with no communication, before being released unexpectedly at the end of the week. Kareem had no communication during this time and had assumed he would be spending the rest of his licence period in prison.

## Bakar's story:

Bakar was released from prison two years ago. Since then he has worked to build a new life for himself, overcoming many challenges. He is now in stable employment and housing. Whilst his usual probation officer was on leave, Bakar's duty probation officer wrote to him with details of a new appointment. The caretaker in his building signed for the letter but it was not passed on to Bakar and he missed the meeting.

A recall was immediately issued despite the fact this was the first time he had missed an appointment. He was asked to come into the probation office and immediately attended and explained the situation. Despite this his duty probation officer decided to proceed with the recall decision. A warrant was issued for Bakar's arrest.

However, Bakar was supported through this process by Switchback. His Switchback Mentor contacted his probation officer as soon as they returned from leave and the probation officer overrode the decision to recall. Bakar's positive relationship with his Switchback Mentor and with his usual probation officer was protective and led to the recall being overturned. Today he is successfully continuing to live a life away from crime.

## Franklin's story:

Franklin has been out of prison for nine months. During this time, he has overcome many barriers to establish a good relationship with his children, find stable housing and get himself into stable employment. Franklin had problems attending appointments as his probation office was located far from where he lived. He had made attempts to address this but his probation office were not responsive to this. Franklin's engagement with probation was getting worse and he began to miss appointments.

His probation officer decided to issue a fixed term recall for him, with the intention of rebalancing him, although she had not formally warned him or followed any process of escalation. Franklin was on an Extended Determinate Sentence (EDS) and his Switchback Mentor contacted the probation office to highlight that people serving EDS were not eligible for fixed term recall. The probation officer then took the decision to rescind the recall as she did not believe that a full recall was justified. Franklin's Switchback Mentor had a clear conversation with him to explain why his previous poor engagement with probation was not acceptable. Following this incident Franklin has continued to work and maintain a good relationship with his children and improved his engagement with probation. If he had not been supported by Switchback, he may have been recalled.

This example demonstrates that probation officers can look to recall as a means to address non-compliance and behavioural issues, without fully appreciating the impact of a recall. Even a 28 day recall would have led to Franklin losing his job, his housing and the progress he had made. Probation officers appear to have a lack of options to address issues without using recall.



Communication about licence conditions and how to avoid recall is not clear. Communications fail to account for high levels of neurodiversity, speech and language needs among people on probation.

“

I didn't know. They didn't tell me. I found out from people I know who were getting recalled. No one told me. I just had to see and learn.

”

## What our survey respondents told us

- Over three quarters of felt unsure whether they might be recalled even when they were trying to follow the rules.
- Fewer than 1 in 10 people said that recall was explained clearly and in detail during their first probation meeting.
- When asked if they knew the process their probation officer had to follow, over half of people reported their confidence level as under 5 out of 10.

“

If you don't understand your licence conditions do you know how dangerous that is? You could be doing your best and make a mistake because you didn't know and you could be recalled.

”

“

Where are these kinds of rules? I knew about it from the people around me. The stories, the 'this happened to me', that's how I knew.

”

“

I was just getting information off different mandem. Couple of them are saying you can breach once or twice. Then one of my bredrin he breached once and bang, he went back. One of the mandem he got away with it twice.

”

## Key Finding 5 continued

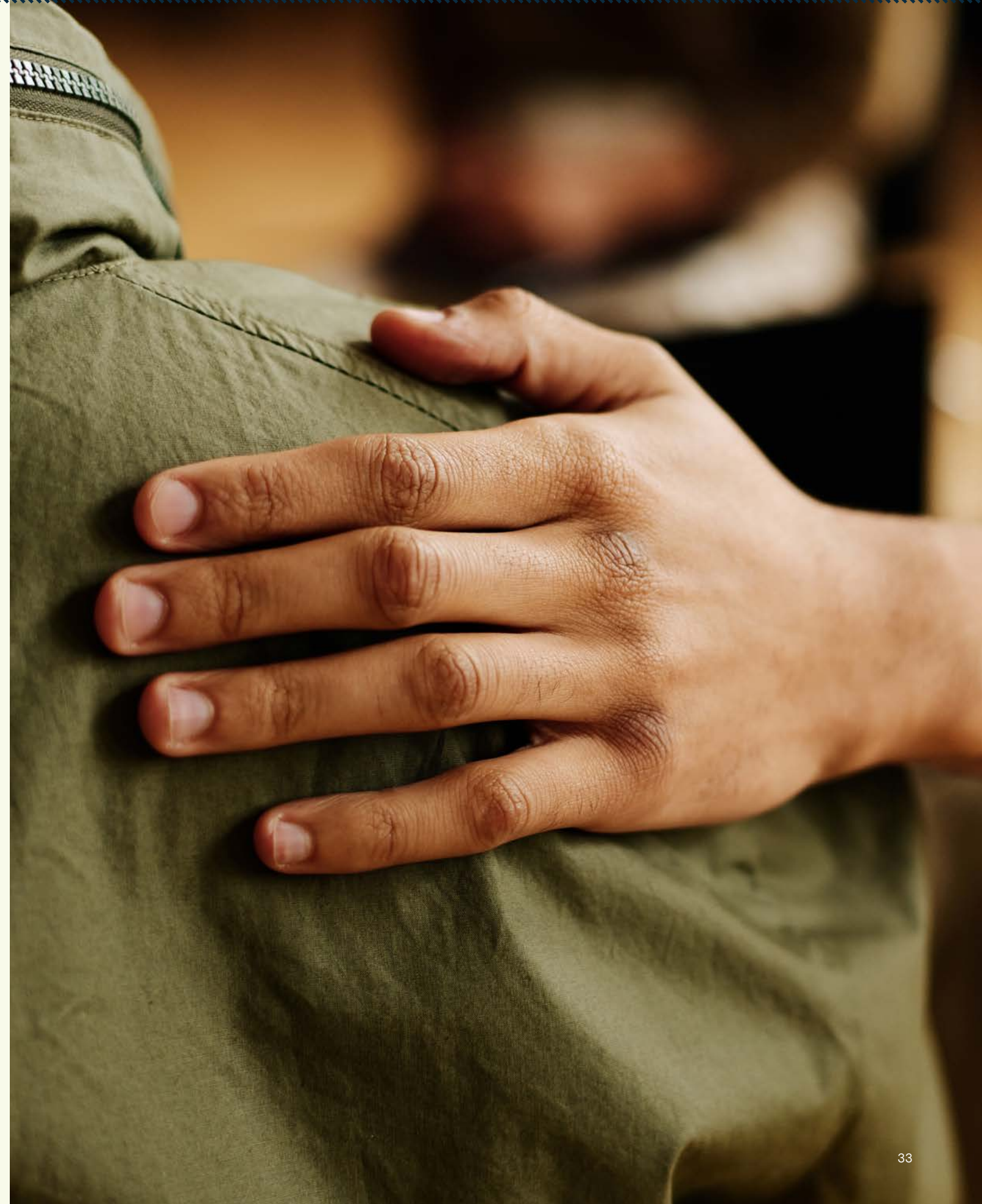


Common themes throughout our research were confusion, uncertainty and anxiety. Inconsistent decision-making, lack of clear thresholds for recall and unclear communication all contribute to this problem. In workshops, people said that they learned about the boundaries of recall through experiences and stories from friends who had been through similar situations, rather than through official communication. Survey respondents highlighted feeling anxious about the potential of recall and not knowing how to manage it.

Fewer than 1 in 10 people said that recall was explained clearly and in detail, highlighting the challenges that arise from limited and poor relationships between probation officers and people on licence. During workshops, participants also raised that they found it difficult to retain information they were told during the first meeting, as they felt overwhelmed and stressed.

Factors such as higher levels of neurodiversity and speech and language needs among people on licence do not appear to be taken into account in the way that crucial information is communicated. The system is overly reliant on verbal communication that often takes place in stressful environment during overwhelming times.

Clear communication with clear boundaries can reduce the levels of stress, confusion and anxiety that recall creates for many people.







When people are recalled, they are ‘forgotten about’. Proper process is not followed, the reasons for their recall are not explained, rehabilitative work is limited, and they are not given resettlement support on release.

“

They should have a plan in place, from the minute they give you a recall. They should tell you, this is why you’re being recalled, this is your plan. When you address this you can come home. Not just you can go sit in a cell and we’ll send you a parole date in nine months. For a man’s mental health that is the unhealthiest thing. You’re not in control of your own life.

”

## What our survey respondents told us

- HMPPS policy is that prisoners who are recalled should have a meeting with their Prison Offender Manager (POM) and Community Offender Manager (COM) within 10 days of going back to prison. Two thirds said this meeting did not take place.
- HMPPS expects the POM and the COM to work together with the person who has been recalled to explain the reasons for the recall and work towards re-release. Over three quarters said their COM did not stay in contact with them at all during the recall.
- HMPPS expects both the POM and COM to clearly explain the reasons for any recall decision to the person on recall within 10 days of them returning to prison. Over three quarters did not have the reasons for their recall clearly explained to them.
- Prisons must communicate the right to legal advice and provide a list of legal aid lawyers, but over 8 in 10 people said this did not happen.
- Prisons have a duty to provide a recall dossier within one day of the decision to recall. Over half did not receive this dossier.

## Key Finding 6 continued

HMPPS has published a policy framework 'Recall, Review and Re-Release of Recalled Prisoners Policy Framework', and a 'Best Practice Guide' paper 'Working with Recalled Prisoners', to set out expectations in relation to recall. Although there is no clear framework for decision-making, there are clear standards about the implementation of the recall, aimed at making the process as rehabilitative as possible. These are set out in the background of this report. Our research shows that those standards are not being consistently met.

The expectation to work towards re-release is clearly set out and yet almost no one we spoke even knew that their probation officer should be actively working towards their re-release. Furthermore, the guidance document sets out principles of open communication, procedural justice, recognising loss and working to address the reasons for the original recall. These are welcome principles, but in our research there was a clear consensus that they were not being implemented. In interviews, people described being completely in the dark about the reasons for their recall and the potential to appeal.

“

A three-way meeting? I didn't know that. That would have been a bit of closure. That did not happen.

”

“

They forgot about me, it was just 'send him to prison', he won't be a problem there.

”

Rather than being emotionally supported, often people felt that they were forgotten about by the probation officer or even had the officer changed before re-release, with no contact until they were in the community.

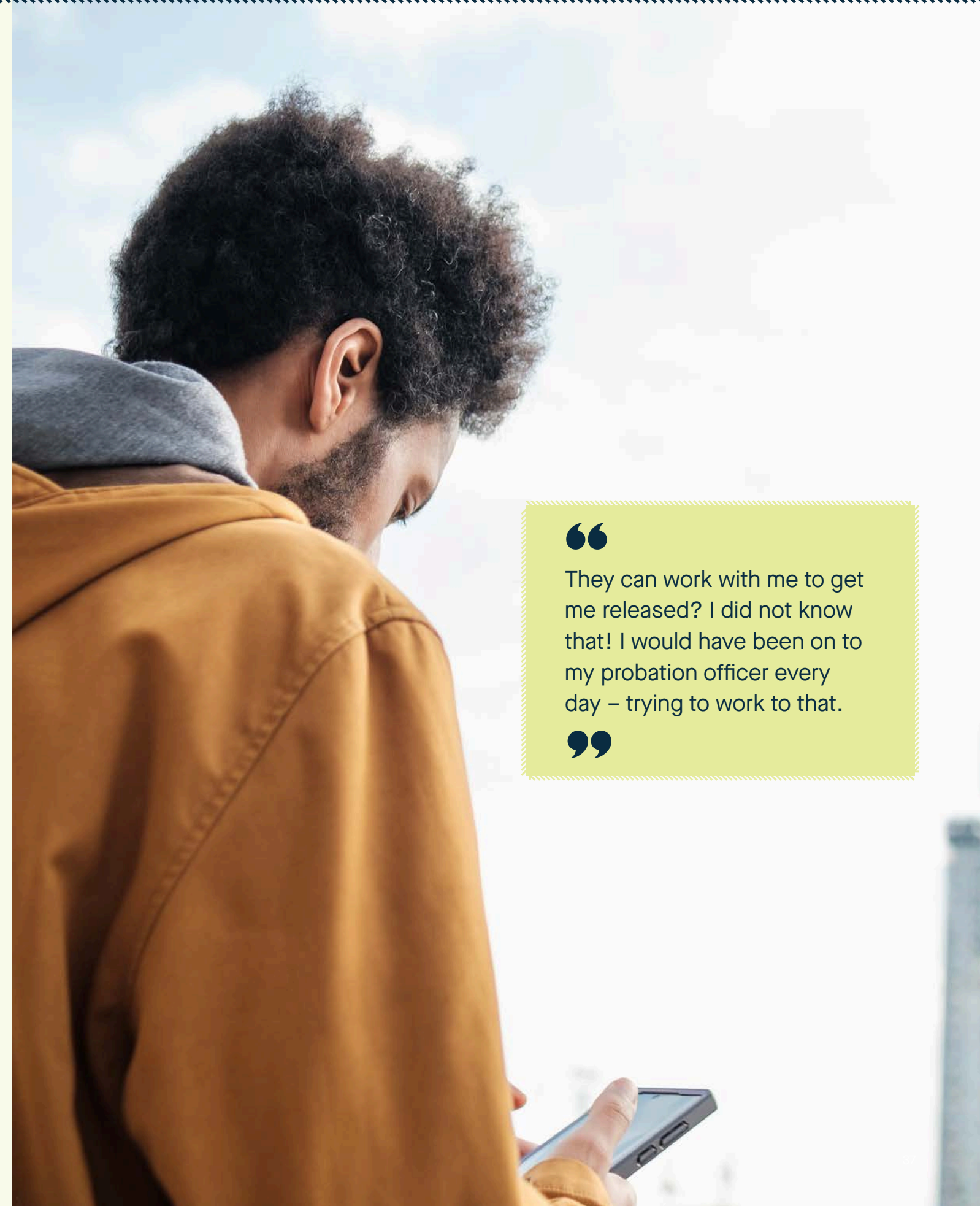
Recalling people and leaving them to sit in their prison cell until their release date, with no clear explanation of why they have been recalled, creates a sense of being arbitrarily punished. This creates further anger and a sense of powerlessness. With no meaningful work to address the reasons for the original breach, people are released back into the community more likely to offend and cause harm in the community.

“

I didn't find out the reason for the recall until two weeks of being incarcerated.

”

## Key Finding 6 continued



“

They can work with me to get me released? I did not know that! I would have been on to my probation officer every day – trying to work to that.

”



Avoidable recalls damage positive progress and can make people lose faith in their ability to live a different life.

“

They're gonna sit there and stew and think I'm in here for no reason. When I get out, I'm going to [go back to crime], there's no point.

”

Recalls are overused, often as a way to manage 'risk' of future offending. This way of thinking about risk is shortsighted. Throughout our research, we saw the destabilising impact that recall can have on people on probation. The journey of changing your life after prison is long and full of setbacks. Finding stable housing, regular employment and rebuilding connection with friends and family, especially children, can take months or years. Avoidable recalls eliminate positive progress and people have to start rebuilding their lives from scratch again, on release.

The time spent in prison lacks purpose. People describe feeling like they were essentially abandoned during the period of their recall. This period could be a dark time mentally as a person reflects on time wasted, particularly if the

“

You're taking him away from his whole network. Try not to send them to prison, that's got to be your last option. Look at that person's mental health.

”

“

Whatever progress they've made in the community, that recall will destroy their progress. They have to start all over again and you're sending them back to a university of criminality.

”

decision to recall feels unjust or arbitrary from their perspective. People spoke about how recalls impacted their motivation to change, leaving them feeling hopeless, confused and lacking power in their lives. These emotions are much more likely to lead people back into familiarity, and away from the difficult process of trying to change their lives. Overall people described a fatalistic feeling, that no matter what they did they would be pulled back into the revolving door of prison and crime and it wasn't worth trying to fight this.

The harm caused by arbitrary recall decisions must be considered when a decision is taken to recall an individual. Recalls that disrupt positive progress are much more likely to postpone harm than they are to prevent it.



## Urgent actions to bring recall under control

1. Refer all non-emergency recall decisions to an external decision maker such as the Magistrates Court or the Parole Board.

**“If they didn’t have the power to recall you, you could have a real genuine relationship with them. Instead of them being the one person who could send me back to jail, why can’t they be the one person who could keep me out of jail.”**

We echo the recommendations of both the Institute for Government and the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies to introduce an external decision maker for recall decisions. This would increase accountability, transparency and independence in decision-making. This could lead to improve practice by probation officers and alongside a framework for recall, could bring a higher level of consistency to decision-making. Improved practice and consistency would lead to a reduction in the rate of recall.

This step would have wider benefits. We have highlighted through Key Finding 2 that the power a probation officer has to recall an individual can be a major barrier to building positive relationships. We found that strong positive relationships can reduce the chances of avoidable recalls. Wider evidence has demonstrated that relational work is crucial to reducing reoffending. In a recent thematic report, HMIP highlighted that probation officers spoke repeatedly about the ‘fear’ and pressure they felt to recall individuals immediately in case of non-compliance.

This measure could support probation officers to focus on building strong relationships that are crucial for both rehabilitation and public protection. It would remove some of the personal burden carried by individual probation officers for recall decisions.

Emergency recalls are already defined in guidance, with criteria including an individual presenting an imminent risk of serious harm or reoffending. As such, probation officers would continue to be able to act swiftly when necessary. This measure would largely apply to recalls for issues of non-compliance.

Further work is needed to consider the most appropriate external decision maker. We are aware of pressure in other parts of the system, the magistrates courts are not facing the same capacity challenges as the crown courts and could be considered as an option. Regardless of which body is given this role, it must be independent of the probation office, supervision a person on licence.

2. Develop a clear structure for decision-making with escalation routes to ensure recall is only used when necessary.

**“Probation officers need a list of tools at their disposal that they should use before recall. Extend the licence, put them on tag, sign-ins, curfews. Recall should be the last resort. If you don’t appreciate the consequences then at that point, yeah you should go back to prison. We need strict rules and regulations to say when someone has to be recalled – and stick to the fact that it’s the last protocol – the last option.”**

**“There need to be policies in place where I know, ok if I were to breach twice I’ll get a warning and then I’m gone. Or you know what there’s no warning it’s just if you breach and you don’t have a good reason you’re gone.”**



In 2020, HMIP recommended the development of a clear decision-making framework for making recall decisions, but this has not been taken forward. The policy framework on recall provides criteria for when a recall should be considered, but these criteria can be interpreted very broadly. The lack of a framework may be driving the inconsistency in decision-making established in Key Finding 4.

A decision-making framework could clarify the kinds of scenarios that would justify a decision to recall. It could also clarify the escalation routes that are available to a probation officer, with clear guidance on how these can be used. Thought should be given to what options probation officers have at their disposal and whether further escalation options are needed. A decision-making framework could embed a clear principle that recall should be a last resort, which should be avoided if possible.

A decision-making framework should also embed the principles of considering positive progress made by individuals when assessing whether to recall them. For example, if an individual has engaged positively with training and support, found work or reconnected with friends and family, this could be taken into account in any assessment of risk relating to non-compliance.

The framework could still empower probation officers to move to recall individuals where there was a clear risk of reoffending or further harm, and to move quickly to do this when this was appropriate.

## 3. Improve data quality of reasons for recall.

Existing data on recall does not enable analysis of the primary cause of recall decisions. Probation officers must report reasons for recall, but they often report multiple reasons for each recall. They do not have to provide a primary reason for any recall. For this reason we cannot accurately understand what is driving recall decisions through this data. Probation officers should be asked to report a primary reason for each recall through the data. If this data was collected it would allow HMPPS to fully understand the drivers of recall and to take meaningful action to address those drivers.

Furthermore, our researchers highlighted that, in their experience, recall rates could vary significantly by probation office. It may not be possible to publish this data, as it may be personally identifiable, but we recommend that HMPPS analyse recall rates by probation office, to understand hot spots and potentially carry out remedial action in the offices with the highest rates of recall.

## 4. Prison and probation leaders take responsibility for making sure that statutory standards and best practice principles are being delivered.

**“A lot of my breddrins get recalled and it’s supposed to be 28 day recall and they end up serving their whole sentence.”**

**“I’ve never heard of someone getting out through re-release.”**

As set out in Key Finding 6, throughout this research we have found that practice around recall falls short of the standards which HMPPS

sets for itself. There are examples of individuals being recalled when they do not meet the threshold in policy, and consistently people are not being supported when they are recalled. HMPPS’ own research has found that proper engagement and support during the recall is essential in creating good outcomes when people are released from prison.

It is crucial that leaders in prisons and probation services take the policy expectations and requirements for recall seriously, and work with staff to ensure that they are aware of the policy and are supported to implement it. Failure to reach these standards is worsening the impact of recalls and harming resettlement prospects for people who have been recalled. It is also leading to people spending longer in prison than they should.

## 5. Make greater use of technology to create communication tools that allow all people on licence, including those who are neurodivergent, to understand their responsibilities and their rights on licence.

Key Finding 5 highlights that communication about recall is not clear and does not fully account for neurodiversity, high levels of stress and overwhelm or speech and language needs for those on licence. It is key that HMPPS considers its approach to communicating key information to people on licence. Currently communication appears to be overly reliant on individual meetings such as the first face to face meeting with the probation officer. People we spoke to did not remember being told key information relating to their licence. This may be because information is not being shared thoroughly by probation officers, or it may be because people are told the information when they are anxious and so struggle to retain the information. It may also be due to people’s neurodiversity or specific



speech and language or literacy needs that they experience. This issue also extends to knowledge about the kind of support that probation officers can refer them to, which respondents to our survey were largely unaware of.

HMPPS should consider the role of technology in improving communication. For example, they could consider providing recorded information that people could engage with at home, during lower stress situations. We suggested considering creating a release information pack that could be provided to every person on their release from custody which includes information presented in short, clear videos as well as community languages.

## Long-term solutions to address the root causes of this issue

## 6. Support probation officers to carry out truly relational work with people on licence, by improving recruitment and training and addressing caseloads.

**“You have to fight probation to get support sometimes. And it’s not a level playing field because not everyone has the skills or knowledge to do that.”**

**“Imagine if every probation officer was like yours – the recall rate would be way down!”**

As established in Key Finding 1, throughout this research, the relationship between the probation officer and the person on licence was the most discussed topic. People expressed empathy with probation officers because of their high workloads and stress but also expressed frustration at a missed opportunity. They were frustrated that instead of having the chance to work with someone who could guide and support

them through reintegration, they felt they had another person they to manage in order to succeed.

Effective relational support is crucial to driving down reoffending. It’s not about a binary of soft versus hard justice. It’s about following the evidence on what actually works to prevent crime and therefore keep everyone safe. Supporting the probation service to work in this way would also enable the service to address two of its most serious challenges – poor morale and low retention. In recent work for the Probation Quarterly, academics have found that probation officers are frustrated and leave the service because the work feels too compliance focused, with ‘hope outsourced to other organisations’.

The journey towards achieving this level of relational support is a long one. Reducing the scale of recall and ending the dominance it has in many supervision relationships is a key part of this. Recruiting the right staff and putting the right training in place will be crucial to driving this change long-term.

- **Put relational support at the heart of recruitment:** People skills, empathy and understanding of relational practice should be key characteristics in the recruitment process for probation officers. Involving people with lived experience on recruitment panels could give greater insight into a candidate’s approach, and how they might work with people on licence.
- **Training with people with lived experience:** Probation officers must be trained in high quality relational practice, that supports them to build trusting relationships where they can both support positive progress and challenges negative behaviours by people on licence.



Again, involving people with lived experience in training could support better empathy and understanding of the challenges faced by those people who are trying to live a different life after prison.

## 7. Introduce a national resettlement framework to provide holistic support for every person leaving prison, with a Mentor for every one who wants one.

As we identified in Key Finding 4, lack of support for people leaving prison is a key driver of reoffending and of non-compliance with licence conditions. People are often released into chaotic circumstances with very limited professional support, struggling with issues such as housing and poor mental health.

This high level of instability can lead to lapses in judgement and, under the current recall system, one mistake can lead to an individual being recalled to prison for the rest of their sentence. Addressing the systemic barriers will support prison leavers to better understand and comply with relevant licence conditions.

We believe that a national resettlement framework would provide holistic support for every person leaving prison. Crucially, we are calling for mentoring support for every person who wants it, based on the importance of relational one-to-one support on release. The structure can also deliver higher levels of integrated multi-agency support.

- **A Mentor for every person who wants one**, including a named single point of contact, for every prison-leaver.
- **Minimum standards** of support for every prison leaver with clear cross departmental and agency responsibilities for delivery.
- **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 and ensure access to a phone, photo ID and a bank account to every prison leaver who needs one in a timely manner.
- 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.



## What's next?

This research clearly indicates that the existing system of recall is not working and needs reform. The Independent Sentencing Review came to the same conclusion and made a clear call for reform to the recall system. This provides deep insight from people with lived experience, on what is going wrong with the existing system and sets out a path forward to reforming the recall system.

We invite parliamentarians, officials, probation officers and anyone else with a stake in this system to carefully review these findings and to consider how the recommendations could be taken forward. We are very happy to work in partnership with anyone to reform this system. We will continue to advocate for a fairer and more proportionate recall system. We are proud to be working in coalition with a number of our partners across the justice system as part of the Recall Reform Coalition.

## Who we are

Switchback is an award-winning charity supporting young Londoners, to find a way out of the justice system and build stable, rewarding lives after prison. Switchback's model is centred on a meaningful 1-to-1 relationship between a Switchback Mentor and a Switchback Trainee, beginning in prison and lasting as long as it takes after release, alongside real-work training.

Switchback's 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 half move into long-term work. Building on 15 years of impact, Switchback, and our Experts by Experience Board work with others to inspire change across the justice system and beyond.

## Our partners

### Toynbee Hall

Toynbee Hall fights poverty, inequality, and exclusion, supporting over 20,000 people each year with debt counselling, legal advice, and community wellbeing initiatives, while advocating for systemic change through research shaped by lived experience.

[info@toynbeehall.org.uk](mailto:info@toynbeehall.org.uk)



**Toynbee Hall**

### Recall Reform Coalition

The Recall Reform Coalition is a group of committed justice reform organisations campaigning for a recall system that is fair, proportionate and focused on rehabilitation. Our members include many third sector organisations committed to urgent reform. We convened regularly to ensure action was taken by government to reform recalls, and our members will continue to reaffirm this positive action and monitor the outcome. We remain committed to championing workable solutions to the crisis in our prison system.

We're particularly grateful for the support of Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and Barrow Cadbury Trust for their generous support over the last three years. Their funding was instrumental in building the expertise and capacity of Switchback and our Experts by Experience Board, allowing us to produce work such as this.





From charitable trusts to employers providing work experience for Trainees, we are very grateful to the fantastic partners and supporters who make Switchback's work possible. **Thank you** to all those who made this report possible.

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