

Employer Guidance

Introduction to creating recruitment pathways with prisons



Contents

Introduction.....	3
The prison employment journey	5
Section One	
Find out more.....	6
Section Two	
Register your interest	7
Section Three	
Your New Futures Network point of contact – and what you’ll need to do.....	8
Section Four	
Prison recruitment pathways – overview.....	9
This section includes a brief overview of the different pathways. You can find more detail on each one, in Section Five	11
Section Five	
Prison employment pathways – the detail	11
Employment on Release Process Map.....	11
Release on Temporary Licence Process Map	13
Commercial Work Process Map	14
Pre-recruitment pathway – Process Map.....	15
Apprenticeships – Process Map.....	16
Section Six	
What employers want to know.....	17
Frequently Asked Questions	17
Acronyms	21
Contact us.....	24

Introduction

Our mission is to change lives through work

New Futures Network is the specialist employment team in HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS).

As an employer, you may have questions about working with people in prison and hiring prison leavers.

We've developed this guide to help you navigate the prison system to recruit directly from this often-untapped talent pool.

It will also help you understand the support you can expect from us, and individual prisons.

In general, prisons work with the processes outlined in this guidance. However, different prisons have different cohorts of prisoners, so their processes might differ slightly. We'll support you to navigate this.

The business benefits of recruiting prison leavers

- **Find talent** – Around 50,000 people are released from prison each year. Many worked successfully before prison. Your business can tap into a diverse talent pool of individuals with a wide range of backgrounds, life experiences and skills to suit almost any sector.

- **Save money** – Businesses that recruit and employ this way earn loyalty from offering people a second chance. Employers report people staying with them for longer than average. This reduces recruitment costs and increases staff retention. In addition, we save you money by offering a no-fee recruitment service.
- **Transform lives** – An employment opportunity can transform not just one life but many. Each year an estimated 200,000 children had a parent in prison. Employment opportunities for those parents can make a huge difference to their families and wider communities.

Businesses agree prison leavers they employ are:

- Motivated (93%)
- Trustworthy (91%)
- Loyal (89%)
- Reliable (88%)

Watch this [video](#) to hear from the CEO of New Futures Network

** Figures are from Verian commissioned by the Ministry of Justice. Total sample size 88 businesses that employ prison leavers. Fieldwork undertaken between 21 March – 3 April 2023. Online self-completion survey.*

Watch this [video](#) to hear from the Minister for Prison, Probation & Reducing Reoffending





Who are New Futures Network and how can we help you?

New Futures Network is the specialist employment team in HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS).

We can help you tap into a nationwide talent pool of prisoners and prison leavers, with invaluable knowledge and skills to fulfil your hiring needs.

We support employers of all sizes across England and Wales.

Prisons don't necessarily release people into the area they're based in. They also have different population cohorts, and types of work and training provision.

We'll help you connect with the right prison, depending on your requirements.

We do this by:

- Working with you to understand the needs of your business and link you with other employers who've recruited prison leavers.
- Connecting you with prisons and guiding you through the process of recruiting prison leavers.
- Linking you with partners like the many excellent charities who support prisoners and prison leavers with a range of needs before and after release.
- Advising you on the employment pathways available and which prisons you can recruit from, based on your business needs.
- Guiding you through the process of identifying suitable candidates, with the dedicated specialist support of prison resettlement teams.
- Supporting you to promote the benefits of employing prison leavers to your organisation and get buy-in from your employees.



“

We are proud to provide job opportunities for these individuals as they transition back into the workplace. Of course, like employing any individual, there can be challenges, but we have found that employing people from prison has been a highly positive experience overall.

”

Leigh Maxfield –
Employment & Skills Partner at Thames Water.

The Prison Employment Journey

These are the steps most employers will follow to recruit people from prison. There are various employment pathways available. You can read about these in more detail in **Section Five**.

Employment in prisons



Section One – Find out more

New Futures Network virtual information sessions

We offer regular virtual information sessions for employers who want to learn more about working with prisoners and prison leavers.

Held on Microsoft Teams, these sessions provide an overview of the support we offer and explain how partnering with us can support your business to fill skills gaps, while integrating social value into your organisation.

The sessions also give you the opportunity to ask questions.

To join the next session, please register your interest on our [website](#).

You can read more about registering your interest in **Section Two**.

Preparing prisoners for employment

93 prisons across England and Wales have specialist staff and services to work with employers. They have:

- An [Employment Advisory Board](#) chaired by a business leader. This provides prisons with a business perspective to inform the way they work with employers.
- An [Employment Hub](#) – the equivalent of a job centre in a prison where prisoners can access employment support.
- A dedicated [Prison Employment Lead](#) – a specialist role – to run the Employment Hub and partner with employers at a local level to match the right people with the right job opportunities.
- An [ID and Banking Administrator](#) to ensure that people are administratively ready to take up work, with right to work ID and a bank account to use on release.

There are many outstanding charities and social enterprises that also assist employers, and individuals transitioning out of prison, both prior to and following their release. We can direct you to these resources as needed.

Watch this [video](#) to hear more about support from Third Sector organisations.



Section Two: Register your interest

You can register your interest in working with us at [Register - New Futures Network](#)

If you're looking to fill a vacancy, we recommended registering with us as early as possible to allow for screening and candidate matching.

If a vacancy is more than 6 months from being advertised, please register with us around the 6-month point.

What you can expect after you register

One of our New Business Account Managers will contact you, usually within 5 working days after you've registered.

You can also contact us at:
NewFuturesNetwork@justice.gov.uk
for further assistance.

We'll advise you of any relevant upcoming prison employment events that may be of interest. This includes the New Futures Network **'Unlocking'** events—our annual flagship national recruitment campaigns, when we work in partnership with key employment sectors.



Section Three: Your New Futures Network point of contact – and what you'll need to do

The New Business Account Manager will be your first point of contact.

Watch this [video](#) to learn more about the New Business Account Manager and Senior National Employment Manager roles.

To understand your needs and tailor your support offer, the New Business Account Manager will contact you (typically within 5 working days of you registering your interest), to arrange an initial scoping meeting.

This welcome discussion can be virtual or face to face, depending on your preference, availability and location.

During this call the New Business Account Manager will guide you on the best approach for your business and answer any questions. They'll explain the employment pathway options available, highlighting the most suitable options for your organisation's needs.

They'll work with you to complete a full needs analysis to agree next steps over the short, medium, and long term. These steps can differ for each employer, but initially could involve a prison familiarisation visit.

After your initial scoping call, the New Business Account Manager will introduce you to key points of contact within the prison service. There are several different people who you may need to work with, like Prison Employment Leads (PEL). They identify and match candidates to vacancies that New Futures Network and other organisations bring to the prisons.

Watch this [video](#) to hear a Prison Employment Lead talking about their role.

We'll send you [additional resources](#), and information as required.

We can also give you advice on disclosure and share best practice on adapting your hiring policies and practice.

Employers who recruit in higher volumes and work with multiple prisons can also benefit from an account management service that we provide. We can discuss this with you when we meet.

What you'll need to do at this first stage

Please support us to fully understand your organisation's requirements. This could include inviting us to visit your premises.

Think about what kind of support you might need. For example, how regularly would you like to keep in touch with us?

It would be helpful for you to share what skills or qualifications are required for specific roles within your organisation. If you're looking to fill a specific role or variety of roles, please have the details ready – such as the job specifications.

The New Business Account Manager will also ask you about your business, and for details of who'll be our main point of contact. It would be helpful for you to have to hand:

- Basic company information, like your Companies house number.
- Website details.
- Current vacancy details (if applicable).
- Organisational objectives.

Have a think about any convictions your business would consider out of scope, if any. We encourage you to consider hiring people on a case-by-case basis. This allows you to take individual details and circumstances into account and ensures you don't miss out on people who could have done a good job for your organisation.

To help you consider convictions, we've published [employer guidance](#) on the following areas:

- Individuals' disclosure of their convictions.
- Developing a recruitment policy.
- Writing a job description.
- Conducting interviews.

Section Four: Prison recruitment pathways – overview



This section includes a brief overview of the different pathways. You can find more detail on each one, in **Section Five**.

There are various recruitment pathways you may choose to opt into, each depending on your organisation's circumstances and needs.

The main pathways are:

1. Employment on release

Businesses work with prisons and probation to find talent and offer employment to people at the end of their prison sentence.

This can include interviewing and offering jobs while people are nearing the end of their sentence.

Where possible, New Futures Network will provide recruitment support for post-release employment at no cost to you.

"Hiring prison-leavers is one of the best things we do at COOK. Our RAW Talent programme supports people with barriers to employment into meaningful work.

There are few things more powerful than having a job when it comes to turning life around.

It's a learning curve, for sure, and we are still learning-but no regrets, and we'd recommend it to any fellow employer.



Please drop us a line at rawtalent@cookfood.net if you'd like to find out more."

Annie Gale, Head of Social Impact, COOK

Watch this [video](#) to hear more from COOK on employing people from prison.

2. Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL)

Businesses can offer training to serving prisoners to see first-hand what individuals can offer.

Suitable, risk-assessed people leave prison each day to work for employers in the community.

This can be full, or part-time for up to three years (in some cases) before being released.

In all cases, prisoners must be paid for their work.

Employment on release can be offered, with many organisations using ROTL as an extended work trial.

3. Commercial production & manufacturing

Businesses can set up dedicated commercial workspaces in prisons, which become part of their supply chains.

These workspaces are staffed by serving prisoners and trade-qualified, experienced instructors who work there daily, from packing and assembly work through to complex manufacturing and services.

Prisoners gain valuable and transferable skills, experience and qualifications.

HMP Academies provide spaces in prisons, hosted and branded by employers to give prisoners 'on the job' training in preparation for employment on release, and offering a guaranteed interview to successful graduates.

4. Pre-recruitment pathway

If you don't have any current or live vacancies but want to support people leaving prison to resettle into the community, this pathway enables you to add social value to your business or engage your supply chains.

This could involve presenting to prisoners about the skills required in a particular employment sector, mentoring, or supporting mock interviews to upskill prisoners before release. This could be a short or long-term programme with the prison.

Prison Employment Leads work closely with Careers, Information, Advice and Guidance organisations who are contracted to support prisoners with interview preparation, including CV writing.

You're welcome to re-contact New Futures Network through our [website](#) if vacancies become available.

"The Pre-recruitment pathway has been a great way for us at Galliford Try to engage with individuals before they leave prison. It has provided us with the opportunity to engage with, mentor and upskill prisoners through presentations and targeted support whilst enabling us to promote the construction sector.

This pathway also allowed us to contribute positively to the community, whilst engaging with individuals during the early stages of our prison recruitment journey."



Molly Splevings, Outreach Partner

5. Prison Apprenticeships

Serving prisoners can now take up apprenticeships to give them the skills and training they need to improve their employability prospects on release.

Businesses offer prisoners access to industry-standard qualifications.

"At Greene King, we are proud to be at the forefront of offering prison apprenticeships, allowing prisoners to gain valuable skills and training.

By providing access to industry-standard accredited qualifications, we are not only helping people improve their employability prospects, but also their confidence and self-esteem.



Opening doors to exciting opportunities and empowering them to develop a career within our business."

Lynne Kennedy, Talent Development Manager, Greene King



Section Five: Prison employment pathways – the detail

Employment on Release

Supporting prison leavers into suitable jobs on release is key to reducing reoffending.

From registering your interest, to candidate interviews, the complete Employment on Release pathway typically spans 1 to 3 months. This will vary depending on your hiring procedures and availability.

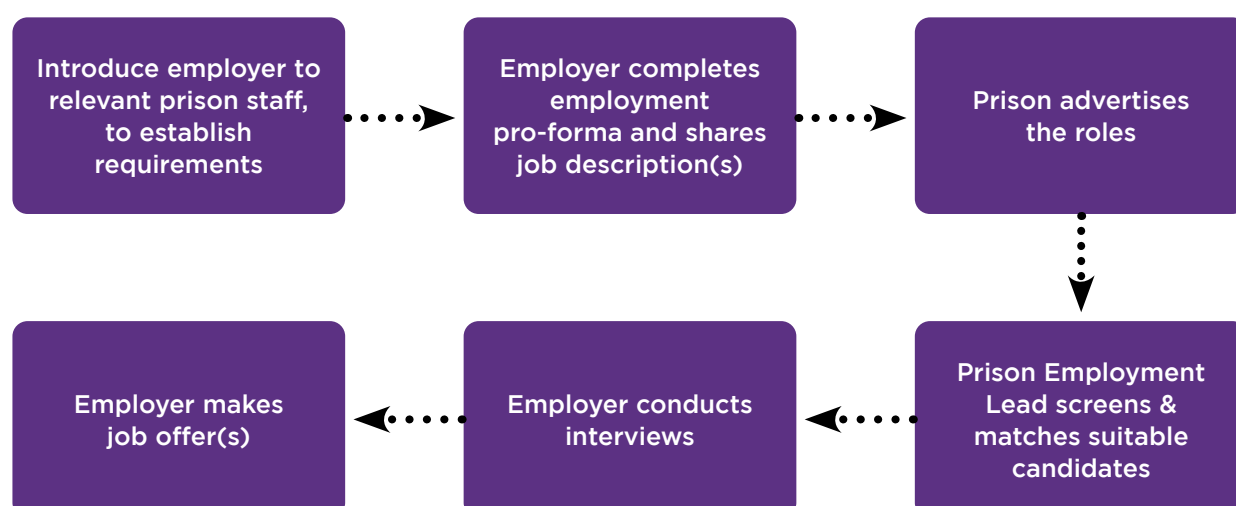
Watch this [video](#) to hear from Wates on employing people from prison.

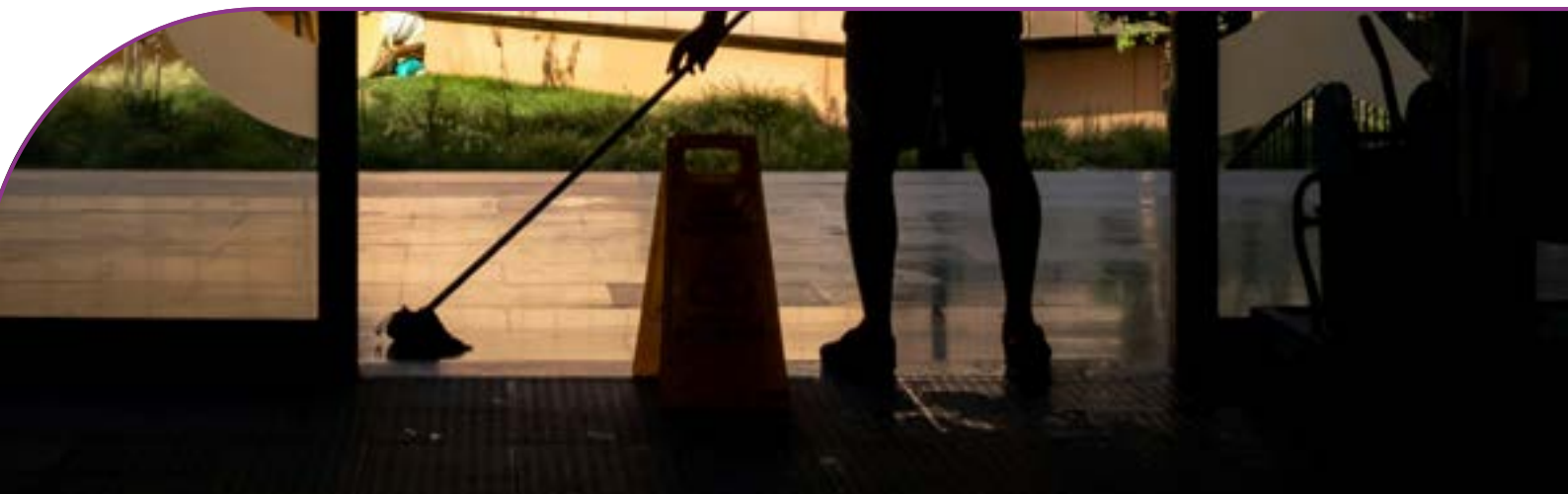
The stages of the process:

- If Employment on Release is the right pathway for your business, we'll introduce you to the relevant Prison Employment Lead and/or Regional Employment Broker.
- The Prison Employment Lead will work with you to understand your requirements and identify the right candidates for your role(s).
- You'll need to provide job descriptions for your role(s), complete a pro forma, and answer any questions the Prison Employment Lead may have.
- The appropriate prisons will advertise your roles using secure digital tools.
- Please be clear on your availability and expectations, and provide closing and interview dates at the outset, so the Prison Employment Lead can ensure the right people are available.
- Consider if you can attend the prison for interviews, or whether they can be done virtually.
- The Prison Employment Lead will begin to match potential applicants to your role(s).
- Interviews can be arranged to suit your needs.
- We know that support after release is valuable in helping people resettlement in the community. The Prison Employment Lead can make you aware of third sector organisations who offer support to prisoners post-release.
- After interviews are completed, please be clear on when an offer will be made to ensure the candidates are engaged throughout the process. Offers can be made while candidates are in custody.
- Some employers offer pastoral support through a mentor, or buddy system to help prisoners settle into roles. This can be a development opportunity for the mentor as well as valuable for the person they're supporting.

Watch this [video](#) to hear from Greggs on employing people from prison.

Employment on Release Process Map





Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL)

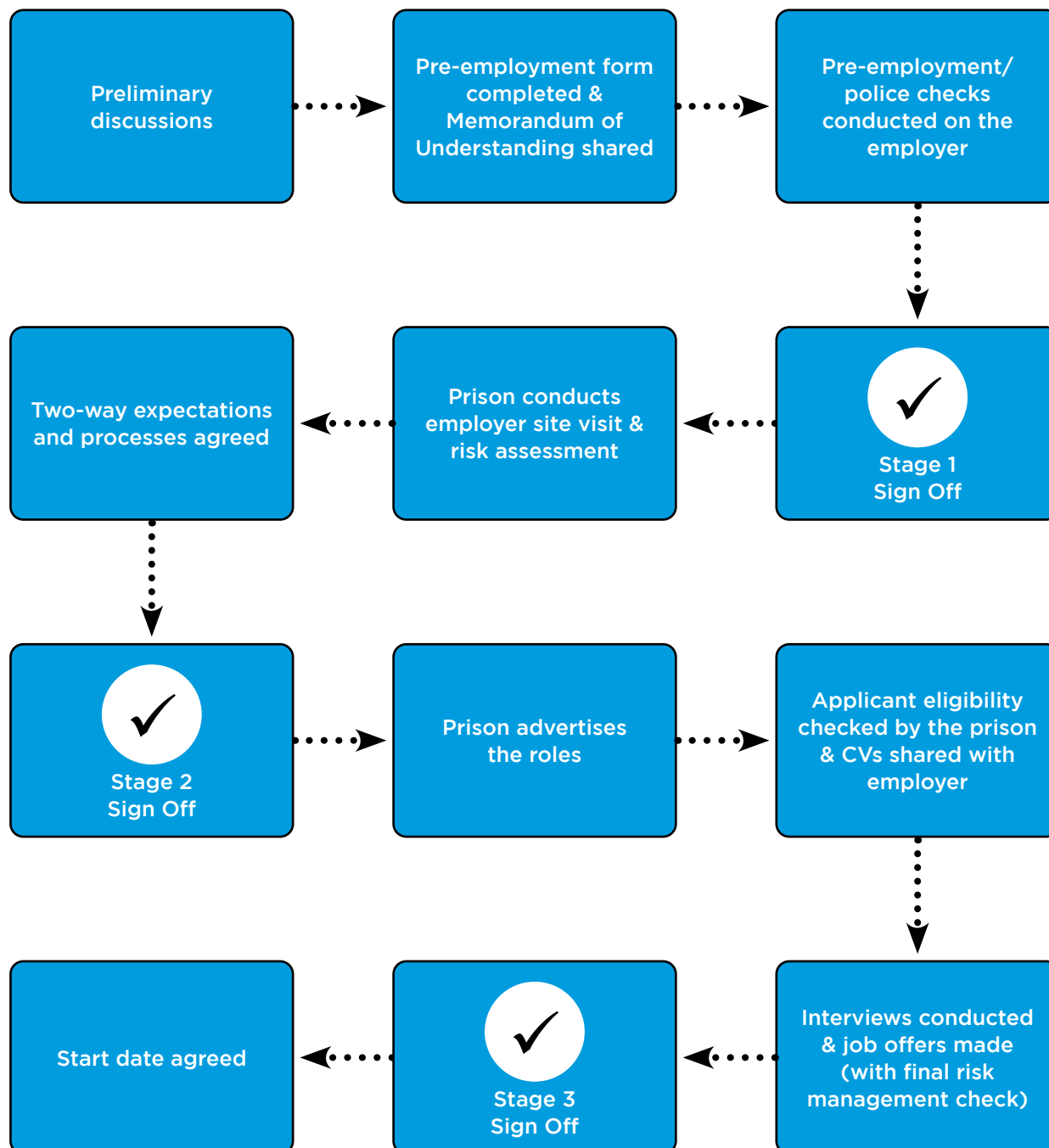
A minority of prisons provide Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) – whereby risk assessed prisoners are released daily to work in the community and then return to prison after work. This allows employers to build a relationship with an individual in a controlled way, before taking any decision about whether to employ them on release. It also helps individuals build up savings for their release, develop their skills and establish a track record with a business.

There's a careful process for managing ROTL placements with employers, so that suitable people are matched to the right placements. End-to-end, this process can take up to 12 weeks.

The stages of the process:

- If you're interested in ROTL, we'll set up a meeting with the Prison Employment Lead or Business & Community Engagement Manager to discuss the role(s) and your requirements.
- The Prison Employment Lead or Business & Community Engagement Manager will send you a pre-employment form to complete. This will be shared with the police for clearance, which can take several weeks.
- As part of the pre-employment form you'll need to submit a copy of your organisation's liability insurance and health and safety policy.
- The prison will create a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with you, which makes everyone's responsibilities clear.
- Prison staff will need to visit your place of work to conduct a Risk Assessment. We recommend this is completed before any offers are made.
- After receiving clearance, the prison's Governor will consider the request, and provide sign-off where appropriate.
- The work placement can then be set up.
- Prisoners make applications for ROTL– Resettlement Day Release (RDR), and are rigorously risk assessed and monitored by prison staff to determine suitability.
- You can promote placements by running workshops with prisoners, explaining the roles on offer. This allows eligible prisoners to meet members of your organisation and ask questions so they fully understand the job requirements.
- The job matching process begins. This is led by the Prison Employment Lead, who'll share applications for you to consider.
- Prison visits to conduct interviews will need to be arranged well in advance.
- The prison will draw up a license for RDR – specifying the time, location and purpose of the release. How a prisoner's release is managed will depend on the local policy at the prison. This process can take up to a month.
- Although you may not receive a copy of the RDR Licence, the Prison Employment Lead will ensure that you're informed of any conditions that a prisoner is released on.
- Prisoners must comply fully with the terms of the RDR licence. Any breach of the terms of the licence will lead to disciplinary action and the withdrawal of prisoner, with either temporary or permanent termination of the ROTL placement.
- The placement commences. Wages must be paid centrally, and not directly to prisoners. Further details on this will be shared with you locally.

Release on Temporary Licence Process Map



Commercial production & manufacturing

With many workshops in prisons across England and Wales, we can manufacture a vast range of goods from high specification engineered products, through to assembly, and picking and packing operations.

This daily work is valuable for prisoners, providing purposeful activity and supporting them to develop skills that will be valuable in a workplace after release.

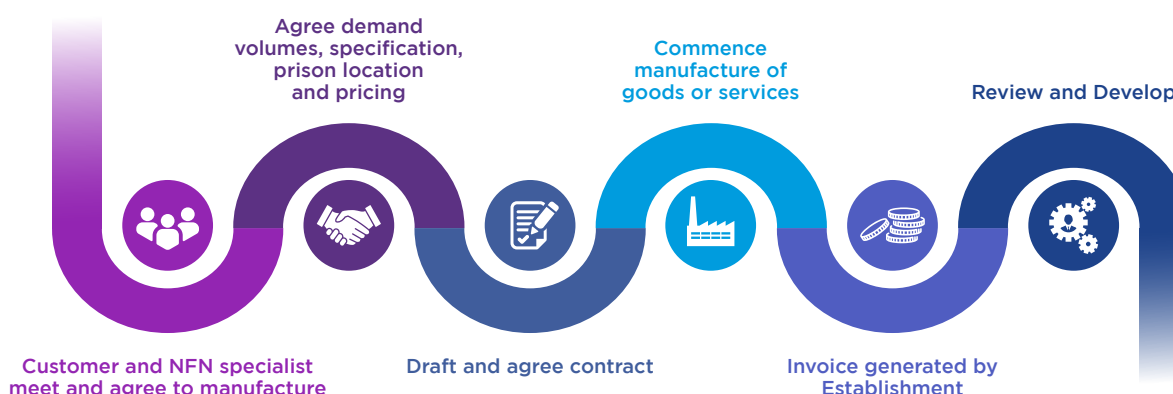
Depending on your unique requirements and circumstances, you can expect the set up process for a workshop or manufacturing operation to take approximately two to three months. This can also vary if there's a need to recruit an instructor or ensure one is in place, or to install machinery.

Many of our commercial customers provide specialist equipment, tooling and materials. In some cases, we may already have equipment in place in our existing workshops.

The stages of the process:

- If you're interested in commercial work, our New Business Account Manager will introduce you to the New Futures Network Manufacturing Lead, who will arrange a meeting to discuss your manufacturing or service requirements.
- The Manufacturing Lead will ask for a brief outline of your aspirations and interest, and work with you to agree the next steps.
- These next steps could involve visiting a prison where we might undertake production, working to your specifications/sealed sample.

Commercial Work Process Map



- The Manufacturing Lead will connect you to the right prison that has the capacity and capability to take your aspirations forward. They'll also introduce you to the Regional Employment Broker, prison's Industry Manager (IM) and their qualified, experienced team, responsible for supervising prisoners to manufacture your goods, or provide a contract service.
- The Manufacturing Lead will continue to support you, and you'll also have a local point of contact within the prison.
- **New Futures Network** and the prison will give you a quote for the tasks we undertake and enshrine the work into a contract between both parties. It can take several weeks to develop the contract.
- We'll move as quickly as your demand dictates, but it's important to recognise that we're working in prisons where sometimes, other considerations and approvals around security and spare capacity does influence how quickly we set up for mobilisation.
- It can be as quick as a week to agree volumes, products and pricing leading to production.
- We also encourage a pilot batch for both parties to better acquaint themselves with the work and working together.
- As we develop our trading relationship with commercial customers, we encourage consideration of employing prisoners on release, or on Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL). Especially those that might have working on your product range, and are therefore job-ready, with the skills and mindset to match.

Pre-recruitment pathway

This pathway offers a unique opportunity for employers to engage in the rehabilitation of prisoners and prison leavers – even if your business doesn't currently have vacancies.

Select 'Mentoring Services' on the [New Futures Network](#) registration form if you're interested in the Pre-recruitment pathway. Our New Business Team will discuss the options available and introduce you to the relevant prison colleagues.

The Prison Employment Lead(s) can work with you to coordinate activities, such as presenting to prisoners about industry-specific skills, conducting mock interviews or assisting with CV writing.

Your organisation will have the opportunity to contribute to the successful transition of prison leavers back into communities, while adding social value to your business. Our New Business Team can support you if you have any vacancies available in the future.

Pre-recruitment pathway – Process Map



Prison Apprenticeships

Prisoner Apprenticeships can be completed in both the Open and, in some cases, the Closed prison estate.

Both forms of apprenticeships must be completed on release, with full employment.

An apprenticeship is always a minimum of 12 months.

If you're interested in apprenticeships, our New Business Team will arrange for the New Futures Network Apprenticeship Lead or relevant prison colleague to contact you and arrange a virtual or face-to-face meeting, depending on your location.

The prison's Learning and Skills Manager, and/or the Prison Employment Lead will be present to discuss the role(s) and requirements.

To get the right candidates, we'll ask for your involvement throughout the recruitment process. This can take 12 weeks or more to ensure all relevant checks are completed.

Open estate Apprenticeships – and how they work

- Open apprenticeships are completed through Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL). You can find details about ROTL [here](#).
- They follow the process outlined for ROTL, with only two changes:
 - (1) The Memorandum of Understanding is signed by the apprenticeship training provider selected by the employer.
 - (2) Prisoner apprentices take part in off-the-job training as well as a paid placement in a workplace.
- This follows the usual way an apprenticeship works for individuals in the community.
- Employers can use their Apprenticeship Levy to pay for this training, as with other apprenticeships.



Closed estate Apprenticeships – and how they work

- Closed estate apprenticeships are completed in custody with you, the employer, being the sponsor.
- In the closed estate, the Apprenticeship Levy is transferred to HM Prison and Probation service, who act as the Flexi-job apprenticeship agency (FJAA). HM Prison and Probation service then pay the provider on your behalf.
- As the FJAA, HM Prison and Probation service take on the responsibility of wages until the individual is released and starts employment with you.

For both types of apprenticeships employment contracts are no longer necessary, meaning a prisoner can undertake an apprenticeship with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in place. The MOU ensures all parties, including employers, prisoners and training providers are aware of their roles and responsibilities.

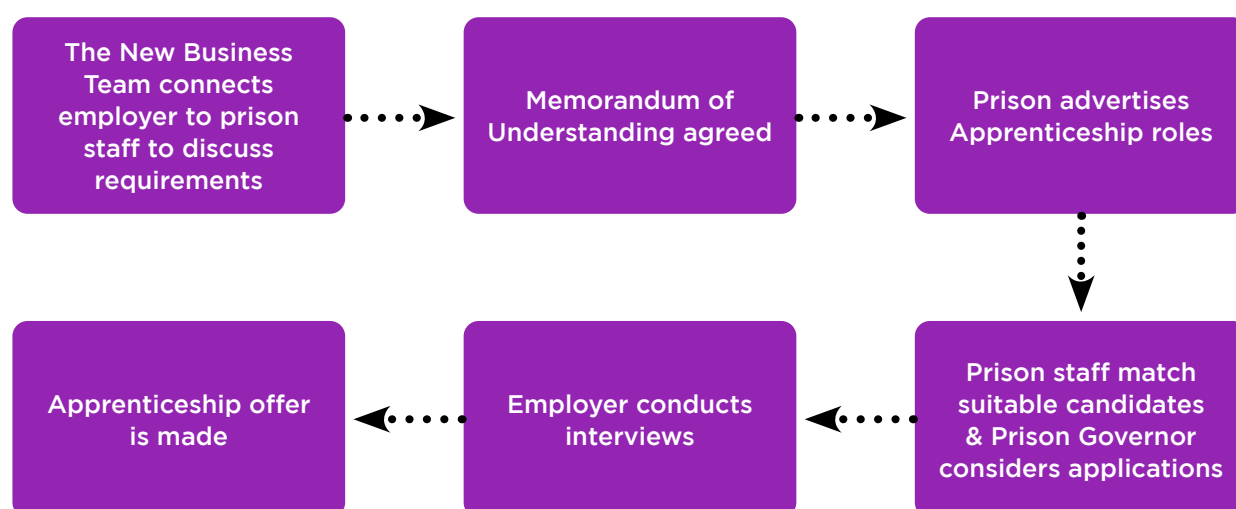
When promoting your apprenticeships, you may want to consider presenting in prisons to explain the roles on offer. We've found that this yields better outcomes, as it allows prisoners to meet members of your organisation, ask questions and understand the requirements of the role(s).

The stages of the process:

- The Prison Employment Lead will advertise your apprenticeship role(s).
- Prisoners apply for apprenticeship placements and are rigorously risk assessed and monitored to determine suitability by prison staff.
- A prison Governor will also need to approve a prisoner's apprenticeship application.
- Prison visits to conduct interviews will need to be arranged well in advance. The Prison Employment Lead will support you with this.
- The prison's Learning and Skills Manager and/or Prison Employment Lead will work with you to progress your apprenticeship offer. The Apprenticeship Lead will also support you throughout the process.
- Please be aware that should the establishment receive an OFSTED inspection, you as an employer may also be subject to an inspection.
- In addition, should you receive an OFSTED inspection due to holding apprenticeships, the prison(s) will also be subject to an inspection.

We have published further employer guidance on apprenticeships: [Prisoner apprenticeships programme - employer guide - New Futures Network](#)

Apprenticeships – Process Map



Section Six: What employers want to know

Frequently Asked Questions

How does the prison service find the right candidates for my vacancies?

- The level of support that a prisoner receives depends on their circumstances and experience.
- We have recruited Prison Employment Leads in all prisons that have a resettlement function. The Prison Employment Leads are specifically skilled to screen and match candidates to your role.
- New Futures Network are continually developing digital tools to support prisons to match the right candidates to jobs, including the development of a digital candidate matching service.
- Prison Employment Leads usually work with candidates up to 12 weeks before release to ensure they're job ready. The more specific information you can provide about the role(s), the better the Prison Employment Leads can match candidates.
- Prisoners also have access to a Work Coach from the Department for Work & Pensions.
- Prison [Employment Hubs](#) are managed by Prison Employment Leads, who work closely with key partners in the prison including Probation, Education and Information Advice and Guidance providers.
- [Employment Advisory Boards](#) (EABs) were launched to advise, support and challenge prisons on their training and employment offer to prisoners and prison leavers, supporting more people to enter sustainable employment.
- Some prisoners have extensive experience of work and require less support in this area.
- Prisoners are provided with other forms of support in prison that are relevant to them, such as education or training to ensure they're ready for rehabilitation.
- New Futures Network also offers eligible prison leavers [ID and banking services](#), ensuring that individuals leaving prison possess the resources needed to transition into employment.

There are other organisations who offer support recruiting prison leavers. Should I work with them or with HMPPS?

- There are many brilliant charities and social enterprises that support people leaving prison, both before and after release.
- This support can be extremely valuable in ensuring people are personally ready for employment and able to overcome hurdles after their release too.
- Wherever possible, HMPPS works in partnership with these organisations. For example, Prison Employment Leads in prisons will often refer employers and prisoners to these partners. Nationally, New Futures Network also works in partnership with charities and social enterprises for specific employer accounts – because those employers value the service and because we recognise the difference it makes.

I have a question on disclosure, where can I find more information?

- New Futures Network has published guidance on disclosure, which you can find here: [Publications – New Futures Network](#)
- This guidance also includes links to other organisations that specialise in this area.

What incentives/support can you offer employers considering employing prison leavers?

- We can train people before they're released, to ensure they have the skills or qualifications they need to work in your business.
- We can support you in identifying suitable candidates, setting up interviews, and any other support you might require.
- Crucially, we can offer you a strong pool of diverse talent made up of people we've vetted and deemed suitable for your organisation.
- We can work with your staff, who may have concerns about working alongside prison leavers, as well as deliver training for managers to ensure they're equipped to fully support prison leavers to release their full potential.
- We'll endeavour to support you and put you in contact with other organisations who can help, for as long as you employ prison leavers post-release.

What if employees/colleagues have concerns about working with a prison leaver?

- You'll know more about the candidates we put in front of you than those you get from any other route.
- We can work with your business to overcome any doubts your employees/colleagues may have.
- You can also reach out to other businesses for advice. For example, on the [Employers' Forum For Reducing Re-offending](#) (EFFRR).
- Having a strong and robust recruitment policy, that's communicated clearly internally, may help with any of your employees'/colleagues' concerns.
- New Futures Network has published guidance on developing recruitment policy, which you can find [here](#).

Can we speak to other employers that have done this before?

- Yes, the [Employers' Forum For Reducing Re-offending](#) (EFFRR) is a collective of local and national employers that provide training and employment opportunities for prison leavers, including Greene King, Timpson, Greggs, and many more.
- The forum's aim is to encourage more businesses to consider adapting their recruitment practices to support more returning citizens into employment, therefore reducing the impact of re-offending on our communities.

I have concerns around hiring people from prison – what reassurance can I expect?

- We'll match you to candidates who are ready and willing to work. This means we've already sifted candidates as being suitable before you interview them, which you wouldn't necessarily get through more traditional recruitment brokering.
- We won't match you to candidates who we feel won't perform to the required standards, such as turning up on time or getting along with other members of staff.
- As with any recruitment process, we can't eliminate all risk but we will work with you to ensure risk is absolutely minimised and give you the support you require.
- Testimonials from the employers we already work with suggest that issues are no more frequent than with staff who don't have a previous conviction.

- Recruiting with New Futures Network and our colleagues in HMPPS offers complete transparency from the start with regards to criminal convictions, so there are no surprises.

Do you have any success stories you can share?

- There are numerous employers who've have been proactively hiring people with a conviction for a number of years.
- A variety of case studies are available for you to read on the [New Futures Network website](#) and you can follow us on LinkedIn to see more.

Will I know the conviction(s) for individuals before hiring?

- New Futures Network has published guidance on disclosure, which you can find here: [Publications – New Futures Network](#).
- You may wish to discuss the reason why an individual is in prison before choosing whether to hire them for a particular role.
- The usual process is for candidates to disclose unspent convictions, when asked, either at the start or during the recruitment process, sometimes through a disclosure letter.
- It's important that this information comes from the individual themselves, both for your relationship with them and for legal reasons. For data protection reasons, we won't share candidate conviction information with you but you may be able to conduct a DBS check.
- It can also be valuable to understand the circumstances behind the offence and the journey the individual has been on since.
- If you take someone on, it will be important to discuss with them how and whether they wish to talk about their past with their new colleagues. Some people want a start fresh at the end of their sentence and would prefer not to share details of their past with wider staff.
- If you have risk-assessed the role as being unsuitable for individuals with certain convictions, then you can advise us of this, and we'll identify candidates who are suitable for your business.

What if something goes wrong?

- Like working with any employee, issues may arise from time to time. This is why we screen candidates before linking them to your organisation to ensure that they're ready and willing to work, and why we offer employers the ability to run thorough recruitment processes including stages for applications and interviews.
- Leaving prison can be a very anxious time for many people. We know that employers who are flexible with prison leavers, particularly as they settle into the community and employment, have more success retaining these employees.
- There are many Third Sector organisations who provide crucial wraparound support for individuals leaving prison. You can find more about some of the support available here: [Homepage](#) | [Clinks](#)

Can I pay prison leavers less than other employees?

- No. Legally, all candidates must be paid at least the minimum wage.
- National Insurance and tax is deducted from wages as normal.

Will everyone have left prison already, or will some people still be incarcerated?

- Some employers choose to start working with individuals while they're still in prison and nearing the end of their sentence – for example through Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL), or prison industry placements. This allows them to build a relationship with the individual, and even to train them to the required standard before they're released.
- Employment on release is a pathway other employers opt for. This approach is just as transparent, with employers aware of previous convictions, and the opportunity to implement support for prison leavers when needed.

What skills/education/experience do people from prison have?

- We work with a diverse group of people who have an incredibly diverse set of skills and experience, covering most sectors.
- Some candidates will have a long history of employment, and some may have postgraduate degrees, while others may have limited experience in the workplace.

- If you require specific skill sets, we can work with you to identify these candidates, or arrange training to upskill candidates.
- We'll always tailor the candidates we match you with to the needs of your business.
- On top of current education provisions, we're creating a Prison Education Service (PES) that will ensure prisoners improve skills such as literacy and numeracy, acquire relevant vocational qualifications, and access employment and training opportunities on release.
- We've recruited Education, Skills and Work (ESW) specialists in all prisons. They're qualified professionals with experience in educational backgrounds, who help to expand learning beyond the classroom into workshops and digital platforms.

How does it work with Probation and other agencies?

- Some candidates may need to report to Probation or other support services from time to time. While we work with Probation colleagues to try and co-ordinate these appointments around working hours, we ask you to be considerate of these requirements where possible when it comes to allocating shifts.
- We'll only identify candidates who are suitable for your business. If you can't accommodate specific appointment times, please ensure this is clear so it can be considered.
- Often commitments such as Probation appointments are only required for a short period after someone is released and wouldn't need longer term adjustments. However, this varies on a case-by-case basis.
- We may provide you with a point of contact in Probation who might ask you about the candidate's progress, but you won't be expected to do any extra work to employ someone with a conviction.

Do all prisoners have accommodation on release?

- During the transition from prison to the community, securing permanent accommodation can be challenging. Flexibility from employers is critical in supporting prison leavers to settle.
- HM Prison and Probation service have introduced Strategic Housing Specialists across prison groups to support prisons to be more strategic in their response to reducing homelessness.
- HM Prison and Probation service provides three tiers of accommodation for prison leavers, depending on their risk level and needs through the Community Accommodation Service (CAS).
- Tier 3 of the Community Accommodation Service (CAS3) was launched in July 2021 to provide up to 12 weeks of basic, temporary accommodation to prison leavers who are subject to Probation supervision, and at risk of homelessness on release. CAS3 provides a stable base on release to support rehabilitation.

What are the prison categories?

Male prisons are organised into 4 categories¹:

- **Category A** – These are high security prisons. They house male prisoners who, if they were to escape, pose the most threat to the public, the police or national security.
- **Category B** – These prisons are either local or training prisons. Local prisons house prisoners that are taken directly from court in the local area (sentenced or on remand). Training prisons hold long-term and high-security prisoners.
- **Category C** – These prisons are training and resettlement prisons. Most prisoners are located in a Category C. They provide prisoners with the opportunity to develop their skills so they can find work and resettlement back into the community on release.
- **Category D – Open prisons** – These prisons have minimal security and allow eligible prisoners to spend most of their day away from the prison on licence to carry out work, education or for other resettlement purposes. Open prisons only house prisoners that have been risk-assessed and deemed suitable for open conditions.

¹[Your A-D guide on prison categories – Working in the Prison and Probation Service \(blog.gov.uk\)](#)

Women and young adults

Women and young adults are categorised and held in either closed conditions or open conditions, according to their risks and needs.

Women and young adults considered high risk are categorised as ‘restricted status’, meaning they can only be held in a closed prison. In exceptional cases, women and young adults may be held in a high security prison (Category A).

Youth offenders – Young Offender Institution (YOI)

These prisons house prisoners aged between 18 to 21.

Youth Custody

These establishments house young people under the age of 18 who’ve been remanded or sentenced to periods of detention by the courts.

Does a prisoner stay in the same category throughout their sentence?

- Prison staff assess prisoners when they’re first sentenced and throughout their time in prison, to identify whether or not they’re still in the right prison category.

If a prisoner’s risks are assessed as sufficiently raised or lowered, prison staff can take action to transfer them to the more appropriate security prison.



Acronyms

ACCT	Assessment, Care in Custody, and Teamwork Care planning process for prisoners identified as being at risk of suicide or self-harm.
AP	Approved Premises Residential accommodation housing those released from custody into the community and assessed as posing significant risk of harm.
ARD	Automatic Release Date The date individuals are automatically released from serving a custodial sentence (for some at the halfway point), then be on licence in the community until the end of the sentence.
ARMS	Active Risk Management System A structured assessment process to assess dynamic risk factors known to be associated with sexual offending and protective factors known to be associated with reduced offending.
CJS	Criminal Justice System Government agencies and institutions, whose goals include the rehabilitation of offenders, preventing crime and support for victims.
CO	Community Order A community sentence where the court specifies the length of the order and the requirements they wish to attach to the order.
COM	Community Offender Manager COM cases will be in the community or about to leave prison. The COM is responsible for managing short-term cases, including assessments. They get support from a Prison Offender Manager (POM) for assessments like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Release on Temporary Licence (RoTL) • Home Detention and Curfew (HDC) • Handover at the end of time in custody
CPD	Continuing Professional Development Engaging in learning activities to develop and enhance abilities and keeping knowledge relevant and up to date.
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service The principal public agency for conducting criminal prosecutions in England and Wales.
CRC	Community Rehabilitation Company Private sector provider of probation and prison-based rehabilitative services for offenders in England and Wales.
CRD	Conditional Release Date When an individual is released before the prescribed prison term has been fulfilled.
DA	Domestic Abuse Behavior from a family member, partner or ex-partner that is controlling, coercive, threatening, violent or abusive. Happens between people aged 16 years and over.
DPS	Digital Prison Services IT system within prisons.
DV	Domestic Violence Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.

EAB	Employment Advisory Board Led by senior business leaders, Employment Advisory Boards (EABs) were launched to advise, support and challenge prisons on their training and employment offer to prisoners and prison leavers. Their goal is to see more people leave prisons and enter sustainable employment.
FNO	Foreign National Offender An individual who has committed an offence and is not a national of a particular country.
FNP	Foreign National Prisoner See FNO above.
HDC	Home Detention Curfew A scheme that allows individuals to be released early from custody if they have a suitable address to go to in the community.
IEP	Incentives and Earned Privileges A status for prisoners, set within the prisons based upon their behavior.
IPP	Imprisonment for Public Protection Created to protect the public, this is a sentence designed for those that posed a serious risk of harm and whose crimes did not merit a life sentence.
IRC	Immigration Removal Centre Short-term holding facilities and prisons for individuals being considered for deportation.
ISP	Indeterminate Sentenced Prisoner Individual sentenced to no fixed length of time in prison, i.e. no date is set for release.
LDU	Local Delivery Unit A borough probation office, where teams of probation staff are located.
MAPPA	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements Multi-agency public protection arrangements are in place to ensure the successful management of violent and sexual offenders.
nDelius	nDelius The name of the prison case management system (IT system).
NOMIS	National Offender Management Information System The name of Probation's case management system (IT system).
OBP	Offending Behaviour Programmes Programmes aimed at changing the thinking, attitudes and behaviours which lead people to offend
OMiC	Offender Management in Custody Key work, offender case management within a custodial setting.
PEL	Prison Employment Lead Employment Hubs are managed by a Prison Employment Lead (PEL), who works closely with key partners in the prison including DWP, probation, education and Information Advice and Guidance providers. All prisons that have a resettlement function have a PEL. They are the key point of contact for employment in prison to ensure serving prisoners can take up work and training opportunities, and that more prisoners leave custody with a job.
PNC	Police National Computer Computer system, consisting of several databases used by law enforcement organisations.

POM	<p>Prison Offender Manager</p> <p>A Prison Offender Manager is allocated to every person given a sentence. The POM carries out all offender management activities. These could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Categorisation • Public protection screening • Risk assessment • Screening for interventions • Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) assessments • Home Detention Curfew (HDC) • Handover to the community
PSR	<p>Pre-Sentence Report</p> <p>Report prepared on individuals due to be sentenced at Court. This provides information about the offence, the person's background, present circumstances, future plans and risk assessment. Fast Delivery Report (FDR) and Short Format Report (SFR) are types of PSRs.</p>
PTA	<p>Practice Tutor Assessor</p> <p>They coach and assess probation staff undertaking criminal justice qualifications.</p>
ROSH	<p>Risk of Serious Harm</p> <p>The likelihood of harmful behaviour of a violent or sexual nature which is life threatening and/or traumatic and from which recovery, whether physical or psychological, may be difficult or impossible.</p>
ROTL	<p>Release on Temporary Licence</p> <p>Being able to leave the prison for a short time for employment or other function.</p>
SNEM	<p>Senior National Employment Manager</p> <p>They support employers recruiting nationally with co-ordinated employment activity across England & Wales.</p>
SSO	<p>Suspended Sentence Order</p> <p>Custodial sentences that are served in the community.</p>
TTG	<p>Through The Gate</p> <p>Support to people leaving prison and resettling back in the community.</p>

Contact us

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