



Welsh Affairs Committee

Monday, 1 December 2025

Nick Millington
Route Director for Wales and Borders
Network Rail

Dear Nick,

Thank you for participating in my committee's inquiry into *prisons, probation and rehabilitation in Wales*.

During the session, we were unable to cover all of the questions my committee had intended to ask you. As such, I would be grateful if you could provide answers to the following:

- What are the main challenges you encounter when delivering prisoner training schemes or recruiting ex-offenders in Wales?
- What challenges do ex-prisoner employees face when entering the workplace?
- What could government and prison leaders do to address either of these challenges?

I would be very appreciative if you could also fill in the survey linked below to provide your experience regarding giving evidence.

The survey should take no longer than five minutes to complete and neither Committee staff nor Members of Parliament are able to see individual responses, and answers are not linked with individual evidence. Further information about how we look after personal data is available the privacy notice in the survey.

The survey does also contain optional diversity monitoring questions, which allow us to understand whether different groups have different experiences when giving evidence, so that we can improve the way we work. It also ensures we are aware of the diverse range of voices that provide evidence.

I would therefore be very grateful if you could spare the time to fill in the below survey:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=nt3mHDeziEC-Xo277ASzSh02a84io6BGIXcJV5Do4e1UOE01SIBZOVpESIAxOTNKOUNSVzIFUjI5TyQIQCN0PWcu>

Thanks again for your contribution to my committee's inquiry.

Yours sincerely,



**Welsh Affairs
Committee**

Ruth Jones MP
Chair of the Welsh Affairs Committee

Network Rail
St Patrick's House,
17 Penarth Road,
Cardiff,
CF10 5ZA

Ruth Jones MP
Chair of the Welsh Affairs Committee
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SW1A 0AA

23 January 2026

Dear Ruth,

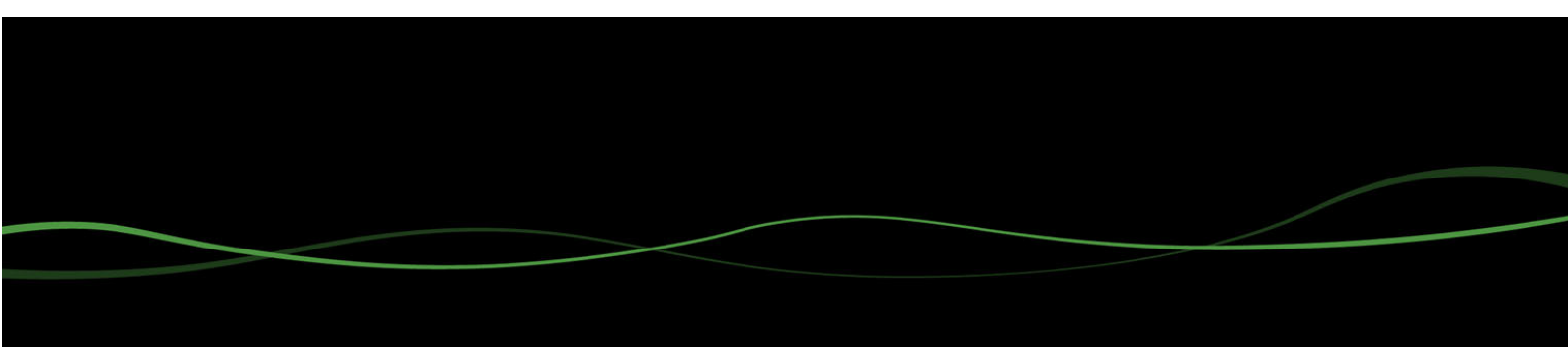
I would like first to thank you and the Welsh Affairs Committee for your time back in October. It was a pleasure to present and answer questions about what Network Rail Wales and Borders route are doing to help support prisoner rehabilitation and the benefits it can bring to the community.

Over the last year, the Wales and Borders route has worked with the Ministry of Justice to provide employment opportunities for those with past convictions and care leavers through direct contact with prisons. I'm pleased that two were successfully onboarded into our maintenance teams, who were working with us while on a temporary licence.

Each year, reoffending costs the UK economy £18.1 billion. One in two individuals reoffend within six months of release. However, if given meaningful career opportunities, it reduces this to one in five. Our goal is to expand our model further so that we can provide more opportunities to ex-offenders from prisons across Wales and Borders and widely in the UK. The UK transport industry alone will need more than 120,000 new hires over the next five years to keep up with attrition and growth targets.

Both Gemma Thomas (Head of HR in Wales and Borders) and I are board members with Rebuilding Future Alliance (RFA), which is a not-for-profit organisation established by industry leaders in transport including Merseyrail and Transport for Wales (TfW). The organisation helps create national opportunities for employers, delivering real scale in placing people with low-level past convictions into full-time, meaningful careers.

I have detailed below the answers to your questions and useful information relating to our experience with prisoner rehabilitation in the workplace.



What are the main challenges you encounter when delivering prisoner training schemes or recruiting ex-offenders in Wales?

One of the main challenges when recruiting ex-offenders would be the additional support needed to shortlist and prepare candidates. This includes a bank account being set up so they are paid, CV preparation and the logistics for getting to an interview. It's also vital that colleagues are involved in the interview process to help with integration.

Currently, we are relying on a lot of goodwill and people giving up their time to support the initiative. The Wales and Borders route has a limited financial settlement for the next 3 years and continued support and growth of the scheme would need more investment so that we can continue to deliver this important social value.

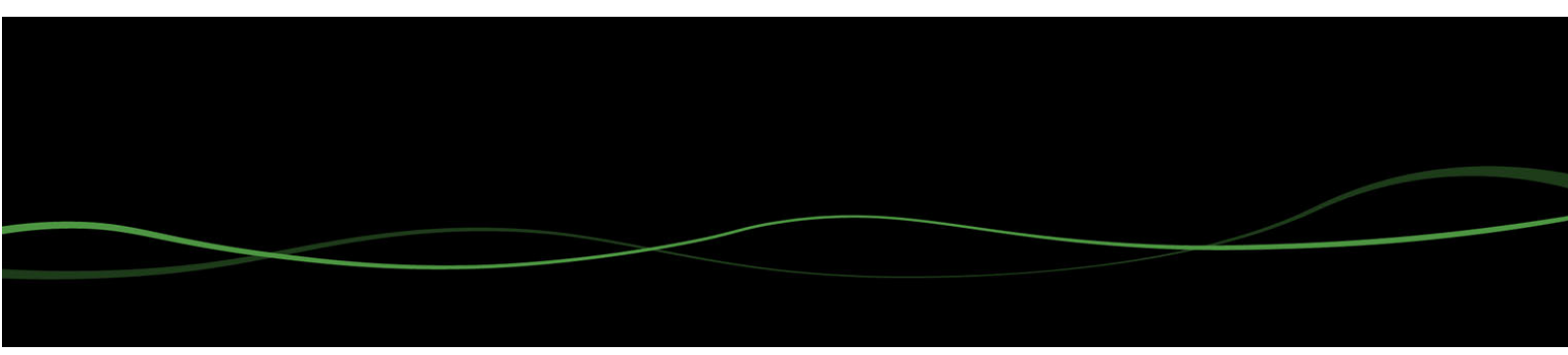
We also found barriers with ex-offenders on release on temporary license (ROTL) that prevented seamless employment being awarded. In Network Rail, we aren't able to employ people who are effectively in prison. Whilst it might sound unique, I imagine it's a similar situation in other organisations too. During the recruitment process, ex-offenders may have weak professional references, which form an important part of our onboarding process.

The lack of data on ex-offenders once released is also another challenge when recruiting. This is why RFA have been working on a data collection system to offer greater insight into preventative intervention and crime mitigation. We are working to document our learning up to now so that it helps support the case for scaling up and able to be shared as useful case studies.

What challenges do ex-prisoner employees face when entering the workplace?

A big challenge for ex-prisoners when entering the workplace is practical barriers, such as stable housing and transportation to and from work. This is especially the case after ex-offenders have left prison, where the support from the prison is lessened. For those individuals on ROTL schemes, it means they would have to be local to the prison on day release. However, they may not necessarily be from the area of the prison and may limit their ability to accept permanent employment. This would be less of a risk if we were to recruit those who have left prison or are care leavers.

Whilst legislation encourages fair recruitment, unconscious bias can still influence decisions. This requires training to educate the business and line managers to give a fair chance of hiring to all.



Another challenge is re-entering work when home life may not have changed which can be a risk of reoffending and is something we have seen in ROTL schemes. It is also a risk that an organisation could invest time and money training individuals and if they breach their licence would be sent back to prison. A previous experience could again influence line managers to not want to support the scheme going forward.

One of the main benefits of the RFA is that they provide a support service to all candidates for their first year of release. This helps to track and gain insight whilst providing support to help prevent re-offending and integrating back into the community.

What could government and prison leaders do to address either of these challenges?

To address the challenges, more emphasis is needed on improving education and skills training in prisons. This can help ensure the best possible opportunity for individuals leaving prison to get into employment. It also includes providing recognised qualifications training that matches what employers need. Again, the strengthening of pre-release preparation is also important to help individuals with CV writing, interview practice and job search training.

An opportunity for organisations to receive grants or funding to cover training, supervision or risk management costs would support and encourage organisations to look at schemes. Providing funding for training employers on fair chance hiring and unconscious bias would also help in the hiring process.

I would also encourage government and prison leaders to work with organisations such as Network Rail, TfW and Mersey Rail to understand the resourcing requirements and support pathways programmes into work. This includes providing additional funding for post release employment support, such as job coaches or employment mentors, for the first 12 months. In doing so, they can help address some of the challenges mentioned in this letter and prevent re-offending.

I hope this information is helpful, and if you have any questions, please do get in touch.

Yours sincerely,



Nick Millington,
Route Director, Network Rail Wales & Borders route

