

Written evidence submitted by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons

Introduction

1. We welcome the opportunity to submit a response to the Public Accounts Committee inquiry about improving resettlement support for prison leavers.
2. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMI Prisons) is an independent inspectorate whose duties are primarily set out in section 5A of the Prison Act 1952. We provide independent scrutiny of the conditions for and treatment of prisoners and other detainees and report on our findings.
3. HMIP findings and data helped to inform the National Audit Office report¹ referred to in the Call for Evidence for this inquiry. The response below is therefore intended as a high-level summary of some of our key findings from 2022-23. The response focuses on resettlement support in the adult prison estate.

The Offender Management in Custody model

4. Our scores for prison rehabilitation and release planning (RRP) this year reflect ongoing challenges in this area. In 2022-23 we rated 5% (n=2) of prisons as "good" for RRP, compared to 4% (n=1) in the previous year and 27% (n=14) in 2019-20.
5. Our joint thematic inspection with HM Inspectorate of Probation (published November 2022) uncovered significant issues with the Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) model that underpins much of the resettlement activity in prisons.²
6. Key findings included implementation concerns due to staff shortages and the impact of probation unification, insufficient keywork in the male estate, ineffective handovers from prison offender managers (POMs) to community offender managers (COMs), a lack of accredited programmes available to prisoners, a negative resettlement experience for prisoners on remand, fragmented resettlement planning and confusion about roles and responsibilities. In only just over a third of the cases inspected did we consider the level and nature of pre-release contact with prisoners to be sufficient to reduce reoffending. We made 16 recommendations to HM Prison and Probation Service, highlighting where improvement is required to better support prison leavers.
7. Beyond OMiC, HMI Prisons has concerns about levels of purposeful activity and access to accredited programmes, the experience of remand prisoners and the provision of accommodation on release, all of which are addressed below.

¹ [Improving resettlement support for prison leavers to reduce reoffending \(nao.org.uk\)](https://nao.org.uk)

² [A thematic inspection of Offender Management in Custody – pre-release \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://justiceinspectorates.gov.uk)

Lack of Purposeful Activity and access to Accredited Programmes

8. We expect prisoners to be given opportunities to engage in activity during their time in prison that is likely to benefit their employment and overall resettlement prospects on release. However, too often very limited opportunities are available, especially prisoners in Category C prisons, to improve their English, reading and mathematics skills and to take relevant accredited qualifications.
9. Significant progress is required to reach even the low pre-pandemic levels of time out-of-cell and levels of purposeful activity (PA). In 2022-23, we only rated one establishment holding adult and young adult men as being 'good' for PA, all others were deemed 'not sufficiently good' or 'poor' in this area. In our survey, 42% of prisoners in the male estate said they were in their cells for more than 22 hours a day on weekdays, and even more at weekends. In the women's estate, 36% in our survey said they were unlocked for less than two hours on a typical weekday, rising to 66% on Saturdays and Sundays.
10. Accredited programmes and interventions are often required by the prison service or the parole board to allow prisoners to progress to lower-security categories within the prison estate. However, when we inspect, we continue to find a lack of accredited programmes and interventions available to support this ambition and enable progression.
11. At Category C and D prisons, Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) is not being used to full effect to help prisoners to demonstrate risk reduction and assist with resettlement ahead of release.

Remanded prisoners

12. Our joint thematic on OMiC found that prisoners remanded awaiting trial or sentencing were especially impacted by a loss of resettlement provision associated with probation unification. Remanded men and women could not always access even very basic resettlement support, such as assistance with tenancy arrangements, debt or cancelling credit cards, despite this population having grown by 50% since the COVID-19 pandemic.³ Where support was available, this tended to be due to specific leaders using their own resources.

Accommodation on release

13. Significant gaps remain with the availability of suitable and sustainable accommodation on release, with too many prisoners released homeless or to very short-term accommodation. In male prisons such as Pentonville, Brixton and Ranby, we found up to half of prisoners were released to no fixed abode or their accommodation status unknown. In the women's estate too often the support a woman received depended on her release address. Without a known address prior to release effective co-ordination of release planning is limited, as other services are not able to be put in place.
14. Data about the suitability and sustainability of the accommodation into which prisoners are being released is crucial, but usually only limited data is collected. Establishing the effectiveness of an establishment's accommodation provision is therefore challenging.

³ [Offender management - Prisons data - Justice Data](#)

Some good practical innovations

15. Despite challenges with OMiC and those detailed above, individual prisons had often put in place some good practical innovations to support prisoners on release, especially in the women's estate. The through-the-gate support provided to women with mental health issues at Bronzefield was identified as notable positive practice, as was the key work and 'departure lounge' to support women at the point of release at New Hall.

16. In the men's estate our inspectors found some excellent facilities to enable visits and family support and 'employment hubs', such as those at Leeds, Nottingham and Liverpool, were promising. These initiatives however are not consistently available across the estate. For example, good practical arrangements for prisoners on the day of release were only identified in just under a third of male prisons.

Conclusion

17. Overall, our scores reflect a decline in outcomes for prisoners in rehabilitation and release planning in recent years, despite some excellent pockets of positive practice. Continued staff shortages, both in prisons and the community, coupled with projected increased demand for resettlement services pose a significant challenge to delivering improved resettlement support for all prison leavers.

I hope that you find this information useful and should you require anything further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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