

Unlocked

Leading change
on the inside



CULTURE, CHALLENGE AND CHANGE:

OUR 2023 – 2024
IMPACT REPORT

OUR IMPACT AT A GLANCE

30,000+

prisoners currently reached by Unlocked Graduates; more than a third of the total prison population

90%

of Unlocked participants tell us they had not considered a job in the prison service before hearing about our mission

30:1

ratio of applications per place for our Leadership Development Programme

8 IN 10

Unlocked participants get promoted or take on additional responsibility in their first two years

19%

higher retention than those coming into the prison service via the standard route

3/4

of Ambassadors to complete the programme since 2017 continue to work towards the mission of breaking cycles of reoffending in their primary role



“ I have to say I was a bit sceptical of Unlocked. I was not convinced graduates would bring any special skills and was concerned their training programme meant that the Unlocked officers would sometimes have to be off the wing when we needed them. But a number of years since I first had a group of Unlocked officers join, I am a complete convert. These officers bring a different perspective and genuinely challenge me (in a good way) with their new ideas and follow through. I'm now lobbying to get more each year.

JENNY LOUIS,
No 1 Governor, HMP Belmarsh

WHY WE EXIST

THE PROBLEM

More than a third of those who leave our prisons today will be reconvicted within a year. Not only does this reoffending make our communities less safe, but it also represents a huge waste of human talent and potential. It breaks up families, destroys livelihoods and prevents people from meaningfully contributing to society. And it is expensive, **costing the taxpayer over £18 billion every year.**

But there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Most of the more than 87,000 prisoners require tailored expert care and robust security. They come from some of society's most vulnerable groups and have a disproportionately high risk of drug addiction, mental illness, homelessness, and suicide; **last year alone there were more than 63,000 reported incidents of self-harm.** 62% of prisoners have the literacy skills below those expected of an 11-year-old and 26% were taken into care as a child.



OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

We recruit, train and challenge outstanding individuals to lead prisoner rehabilitation with the aim of creating high-performing leaders who will break the cycles of reoffending in prisons and throughout society.

OUR SOLUTION

We believe that the way to break cycles of reoffending is through outstanding prison officers. In the same way an outstanding teacher can transform a child's life, **a remarkable prison officer can radically alter the outcomes of a prisoner in their care.** They set the culture on the landings and have the power to create a safe and secure environment focused on rehabilitation. Evidence shows that a good prison officer is critical to improving prisoner outcomes across a range of key measures, including self-harm, violence, legitimacy and even reoffending post-release.

Unlocked Graduates exists to make this happen. Every year, we recruit, train and support a diverse group to deliver reform on the frontline of some of our most challenging prisons and develop incredible leadership skills in the process. They are encouraged to be radical disruptors, pushing boundaries to come up with new solutions and acting as a catalyst for change across the prison system in the process.

TRANSFORMING PRISONS: OUR 2023 – 2026 STRATEGY

Our strategy reflects on everything we have learnt over the past five years, and the steps we now need to take to build the prison system we need. With this in mind we are committing to four areas of work:

- 1 RECRUIT, DEVELOP AND RETAIN MORE HIGH-QUALITY GRADUATES AS PRISON OFFICERS**
- 2 SUPPORT AMBASSADORS TO PROGRESS INTO OPERATIONAL PRISON LEADERSHIP ROLES**
- 3 MAINSTREAM OUR SOLUTIONS SO ALL PRISON OFFICERS BENEFIT FROM OUR RESEARCH AND WORK**
- 4 PROVE WHAT WORKS IN PRISONS TO CATALYSE WHOLE SYSTEM CHANGE**

This is where Unlocked can use our unique strengths to best help the system. We look forward to working with all of you to deliver the reform our prisons need.





STRATEGIC GOAL 1

RECRUIT, DEVELOP AND TRAIN MORE HIGH-QUALITY GRADUATES AS PRISON OFFICERS

This work will always be at our core. To increase our impact, we need to recruit more officers and work in more prisons, reaching more prisoners. As we grow, we are relentlessly focused on maintaining the best and most diverse pool of applicants, ensuring our offer remains extremely high-quality.

IMPACT IN THE LAST YEAR:

- ▶ Placed and trained our **750th high-flying prison officer in our 38th prison** across the UK through our award-winning Leadership Development Programme.
- ▶ Reached more people who would not otherwise have considered entering the service, but who bring a diversity of problem solving and innovation which is essential to catalyse change.
- ▶ Continued to improve the status of the prison officer role:
 - ▶ Rising to **22nd on the Times Top 100 list** of graduate employers in 2023; the first time the prison service has been represented on the list.

“ Every day I know I am contributing towards breaking cycles of reoffending and helping those in my care. Applying for Unlocked Graduates was the best decision I’ve made.

KAT GARTLAND,
Unlocked Ambassador and MPO

- ▶ 90% of our participants tell us they had not considered a career in the prison service before hearing about Unlocked.
- ▶ Seen a record **30 applications for every place** on the programme.
- ▶ Succeeded in recruiting our most diverse cohort ever:
 - ▶ **One in five participants coming from ethnic minority backgrounds** (compared with one in ten of the broader prison officer population).
 - ▶ **72% women** (compared with 41% of the prison service).
- ▶ Maintained our laser-like focus on quality:
 - ▶ The Summer Institute (SI) was highlighted as a particular strength, with **99% of current participants rating the quality of training at SI 2023 as excellent or good.**
- ▶ **Winner** – Institute for Student Employers – Graduate Development Programme of the Year 2023.

“ I think the quality of training that the Unlocked Graduates receive is far superior to regular prison officer training.

DEPUTY GOVERNOR,
Unlocked partner prison

STRATEGIC GOAL 2

SUPPORT AMBASSADORS TO PROGRESS INTO OPERATIONAL PRISON LEADERSHIP ROLES

Unlocked has always been agnostic about where our participants end up. However, we recognise the pressing need for the prison service to retain the very best talent in frontline operational roles. That is why we are currently focusing our efforts on supporting Ambassadors to progress into operational roles and empowering them to work together on prison reform. For the majority of Ambassadors, this translates into promotion on the landings, becoming policy makers and working towards reducing reoffending in other mission-aligned roles.

IMPACT IN THE LAST YEAR:

- ▶ Supported more of our highest performing graduates to continue their focus on rehabilitative reform as part of our Ambassador network:
 - ▶ The majority of Ambassadors stay focused on prison reform after the programme; **79% of Ambassadors from our 2021 cohort are still operational in the prison service or the Ministry of Justice.**



“ After graduating from the Unlocked Graduates scheme no less than three months had passed and I had been successful in gaining my Custodial Manager role. Without the support from Unlocked, mainly my MPO’s and regional team, I don’t think I would have been successful.

DAN CLEMSON,
Unlocked Ambassador

- ▶ 72% who have completed the programme since 2017 continue to work towards the mission of breaking cycles of reoffending in their primary role.
- ▶ **85% of our most recent cohort to graduate were promoted or took on additional responsibility** during their time on the programme (2021-2023). These include roles as Band 4 supervising officers, counter-terrorism liaison officers and equalities officers.
- ▶ Used community organising principles to better formalise our alumni network and create more opportunities for Ambassadors to develop their influence as leaders together:
 - ▶ **Events and study visits arranged organically, including knowledge sharing events, study visits and networking opportunities.**
 - ▶ A group of Ambassadors are working to share best practice on how prisoners with neurodiversity can be better supported.
 - ▶ Evidence-gathering trip to Little Scandinavia at SCI Chester to exchange ideas on how to make prisons more effective for everyone and ways to better measure impact on prison staff and prisoner outcomes.
 - ▶ 2024 will also see the launch of an Ambassador Think Tank – Prisons Solved - to connect research and evidence about what works and help frontline staff solve the most pressing problems.



“ A prison officer is integral to anyone’s prison experience. If you ask anyone who’s served time or is serving time, they’ll tell you that a good officer can make all the difference. A bad officer can also make all the difference.

FEMI,
Ex-prisoner



STRATEGIC GOAL 3

MAINSTREAM OUR SOLUTIONS SO ALL PRISON OFFICERS BENEFIT FROM OUR RESEARCH AND WORK

We have spent the past seven years researching what makes the most effective prison officers and applying this to our recruitment, training and leadership development. Our approach to training and support has influenced wider prison officer training and development, and organisations from across the world regularly reach out to us to learn from our work.

IMPACT IN THE LAST YEAR:

- ▶ Prison officers joining through Unlocked participants are less likely to leave the service in their first two-years: **in the last year, overall retention of Unlocked participants was 19 percent higher than prison officers joining via the standard route.**

- ▶ 100% of governors that we recently surveyed said they thought Unlocked Graduates were contributing positively to the prison service and they all would recommend Unlocked to other prisons.
- ▶ Developed **unique insights** on prison officer recruitment, experience and retention and shared this with our partners.
- ▶ Given oral evidence to the Justice Select Committee of the House of Commons and engaged with prison leaders and policy makers across the globe.
- ▶ Invested fundraised income to **pilot a Middle Leadership Programme** to improve the support prison officers get from line managers.
- ▶ **Winner** - International Corrections and Prison Association (ICPA) - Gary Hill Memorial Award for Staff Wellbeing and Development 2023.
- ▶ Transformed our internal data pipework and research methodologies, and kicked-off a series of applied research projects with leading academics.

“ The three of them have been a revelation. They listen to prisoners and use their education in a good way – they see things from a different viewpoint... by having the way my staff talk to everyone down there better – that is how it’s been so successful. And that is slowly rubbing off. It’s just a different way to be a prison officer.

CUSTODIAL MANAGER,
HMP Pentonville



STRATEGIC GOAL 4

PROVE WHAT WORKS IN PRISONS TO CATALYSE WHOLE SYSTEM CHANGE

We want to create reform through the prison service, and to do this we need to prove that change is possible, particularly in areas where failure is expected. We ultimately want to use excellence and proof of concept on the frontline to drive change across the whole sector and from this, build a system which effectively breaks cycles of reoffending.

OVER THE LAST YEAR, WE HAVE:

- ▶ Worked with leading academics and expert thinkers to celebrate excellence and share evidence-based approaches on the frontline to inspire change:
- ▶ Launched our **Evidence Exchange series to facilitate the frontline exchange of ideas**, what works evidence and solutions for change with leading thinkers and academics (topics include food in prisons; drug recovery; prison officer wellbeing; equity, diversity and inclusion).

- ▶ **Invested almost £1 million of fundraised income** in frontline prison innovation and accelerator projects, including the pilot of a Middle Leadership Programme.
- ▶ Continued our work to find ways to robustly measure our impact with independent experts, academics and behavioural scientists alongside frontline leaders.
- ▶ Analysed prison performance data to assess the indicative impact of our participants on prisoners and prisons. **This shows positive movements on measures associated with reoffending** in the most challenging prisons where we have placed participants for the longest period.
- ▶ Commissioned independent analysts to evaluate our contribution to society from an economic perspective – providing indicative evidence that for every £1 spent on Unlocked at least £59 is saved to society over a five-year period.
- ▶ **Over 400 papers and dissertations have now been written by Unlocked participants**, including award-winning publications in the Prison Service Journal, developing the evidence base on topics including prisoner wellbeing, rehabilitative practices and culture change.

“ The standards that Unlocked Graduates have for their cohort is phenomenal, and in my opinion, is a strict process that we should follow across the entirety of the prison service. The levels of enthusiasm are unmatched and should be a requirement for all prison officers; to do the right thing.

PEOPLE HUB MANAGER,
Unlocked partner prison

CEO UPDATE



NATASHA PORTER
CEO, Unlocked
Graduates

I feel a great sense of pride in what we have achieved at Unlocked over the past year. We have continued to transform the status of the prison officer role, rising to 22nd on the Times Top 100 list of most prestigious graduate employers. Our retention rates have further improved and remain higher than the standard entry route, and we continue to deliver a recruitment and training model that attracts, motivates, and supports the very best talent to pursue a career in the prison service and make a positive impact. None of this would be possible without the staff, partners and supporters who have helped make it happen. Working alongside their dedicated colleagues, Unlocked participants and Ambassadors continue to inspire in all that they do, working tirelessly to deliver system change and give the people in their care the support they need.

But the scale and urgency of reform needed to improve prisons and better prepare prisoners for life post-release cannot be understated. There is still much to do to ensure our prisons are places that are focused on helping those in their care receive the help and support they need to desist from crime. The relationship between prison officers and prisoners is central to this.

“ I think Unlocked is starting to influence how we too recruit and support. It is also attracting some brilliant people into the prison service as officers in other roles.

NO 1 GOVERNOR,
Unlocked partner prison

In the year ahead, we will maintain our relentless focus on reaching more prisoners with brilliant people, all focused on delivering high-quality, evidence-based solutions to tackle deeply entrenched problems and break cycles of reoffending. We look forward to rolling out our middle leadership programme to improve the support prison officers get from their line managers. This is one of the most effective ways to recharge the engine room of prisons, addressing the middle leadership capability gap that participants and Ambassadors identify as the single biggest opportunity to scale culture change and impact on the prison landings, whilst also improving retention and performance of frontline staff. Alongside this, we will focus our efforts on exchanging evidence and identifying solutions that work, ensuring this is accessible for frontline staff given their uniquely powerful position to deliver change.

N. Porter



UnlockedGrads



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