

# Report calls for radical rethink on support given to released prisoners recovering from addiction

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A major new report examining the help given to prisoners recovering from addiction has set out a series of "blueprints" which its authors say

could "transform" the way prisoners are supported once they have served their sentence.

Previous research has shown a "cliff-edge" of support for released prisoners recovering from [substance abuse](#).

Nearly 20 percent of prisoners serving short sentences are released homeless, 10 percent are released to unsettled accommodation, and 60 percent reoffend. Despite the role drugs play in reoffending, support pathways for ex-prisoners who want to stay drug- and alcohol-free are almost non-existent.

## Clarion call

Now a panel of experts chaired by Lord Patel of Bradford, which includes leading academics, the Chief Executives of national charities and a former director general of HM Prison Service, has outlined four possible blueprints aimed at supporting prisoners recovering from addiction once they leave jail. The blueprints focus on men and women; and on prisoners serving short and long-term sentences.

The "Ex-Prisoners Recovering from Addiction" (EPRA) report says it has identified evidence-based, cost effective ways to support prisoners who want to transform their lives post release.

The report recommends a "planned pathway" away from drugs and alcohol addiction, with residential rehabilitation and supported housing at its core.

EPRA Chair, Lord Patel, said: "This report sounds a clarion call to all those who think that prisoners who have served their time inside deserve an opportunity to make radical, [positive changes](#) in their lives, and have a right to be properly supported in so doing."

"It is simply not acceptable that prisoners who genuinely want to make radical changes in their lives face a cliff-edge of support on release, leaving prison without housing, employment and often, without much hope."

"I know the current Government also sees this as unacceptable and I hope that we can work together and with the excellent voluntary sector organizations in the field, in providing evidence-based, effective support for prisoners who want to make transformational changes to their substance use and in their wider lives."

Key recommendations include:

- Establishing pathways into specialist drug-free supported housing, which is much cheaper than imprisonment
- Investment to fund residential treatment in the community
- Dedicated, segregated units within prisons, free from novel psychoactive substances and other drugs
- More use of early release, reducing the costs of imprisonment and overcrowding
- Prisoners move from abstinence-focused prison treatment into abstinence-focused, substance misuse specialist community accommodation
- Throughout both prison and community provision, a strong emphasis is placed on progressing to secure independent tenancies, maintaining or re-establishing family ties and providing education, training and employment opportunities

## **Outstanding potential**

Professor Charlie Lloyd, a reader in addiction research at the University of York and one of the report authors, said: "Too many prisoners are simply released onto the street after they have served their prison

sentences and end up living on the street or staying in dangerous and very unpleasant accommodation. It is no wonder they go back onto drugs and re-enter the cycle of substance dependence and reoffending.

"We can't go on doing this. We have to put the money in to stop them from reoffending. After serving their time inside, they deserve a fresh chance and at the moment we simply aren't giving them any chance.

"We believe that these blueprints offer outstanding potential for spending better to save, by perceiving abstinence-focused interventions as a continuous process and not one that begins and ends in prisons."

**More information:** Blueprints for the treatment and throughcare of prisoners with histories of drug dependence.

[www.york.ac.uk/media/spsw/docu ... epra-report-2019.pdf](http://www.york.ac.uk/media/spsw/docu...epra-report-2019.pdf)

Provided by University of York

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