

What incentives work in prison?

A Prisoner Policy Network Consultation

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About the Prison Reform Trust

The Prison Reform Trust is an independent UK charity working to create a just, humane and effective prison system. For further information about the Prison Reform Trust, see www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/

About the Prisoner Policy Network

The Prisoner Policy Network is a network of prisoners, ex-prisoners and supporting organisations. It is hosted by the Prison Reform Trust and will make sure prisoners' experiences are part of prison policy development nationally. Contact ppn@prisonreformtrust.org.uk for more information or call 020 7251 5070

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Thanks to all our partner organisations that contributed to the report and the PPN members.

Executive Summary

Lord Woolf's inquiry into the causes of the 1990 Strangeways riot had at its heart a commitment to consult directly with prisoners, as well as prison staff and policymakers. The resulting report set the agenda for prison reform for a generation. It highlighted problems in the prison system of overcrowding, squalid and inhumane conditions, a lack of hope and dignity, dysfunctional relationships between staff and prisoners, and an absence of justice.

Nearly three decades on, the prison system has again found itself under intense pressure and public scrutiny, coping with vastly increased prisoner numbers, decreased staffing levels, chronic under investment, and violence and self-harm at record highs. Asking prisoners directly once more what they think and what should be done must make sense. That is what the Prisoner Policy Network (PPN) is about – creating a framework for prisoners, and the individuals and organisations most concerned for their well-being, to make their voices heard in the places where the policies that most affect them are made.

This inaugural report describes many of the same concerns highlighted by Lord Woolf so many years ago. It paints a picture of a system which is failing in some of its most basic duties. But it also contains a wealth of ideas for what a more effective approach to securing a safe and purposeful and motivating way of life in prison might be.

The PPN asked prisoners to respond to the question 'What incentives work in prison?'. The existing Incentives and Earned Privileges scheme was borne out of Lord Woolf's report; and the timing of our consultation aligned with a national policy review of IEP. Responses from over 1250 prisoners were received in a three month period, collected via letters, phone calls, emails, face to face visits to prisons across the country, and through 24 supporting partner organisations.

We did not expect or seek a homogenous response. Prisoners' situations and views differ, and this report reflects that variety. It also deliberately reflects the views that we were given, not what PRT might think. But it does seek to identify themes and conclusions which emerged most commonly.

It finds that prisoners often rejected the whole premise of the question. This was because their experience was that the system was failing to deliver a foundation of reasonable basic expectations of decent, respectful treatment. Talking about incentives made little sense when your quality of life was actually dominated by the struggle to get clean clothes or access to fresh air.

The existing IEP system was generally held in low regard. Prisoners did not trust it to deliver what it promised. It was seen as a system of punishment, not reward. And it was criticised for a lack of consistency both between and within prisons, and for unfair administration day to day.

Ideas for reform included some specific privileges, but we did not get a "shopping list" of treats that prisoners would like. More realistic wages that would give prisoners freedom to spend on the things that mattered most to the individual was a frequent suggestion, as was the provision of higher quality visits to reduce the impact of imprisonment on families.

The fundamental issues raised by prisoners included a desire to see any new scheme moving from a punitive to a positive ethos. A willingness to acknowledge progress and effort should predominate. Prisoners wanted a culture of mutual respect, and particularly valued privileges which showed a preparedness to place trust in individuals. Incentives that directly impacted their future, and in particular the prospect of bringing forward release or allowing temporary release, were key, as were incentives that built personal self-worth and hope for a better life both in and out of prison.

The report concludes with four messages for the policy makers charged with devising a new IEP scheme:

- Any incentives scheme will not work without getting basic issues right first. Defining what these basics are needs attention as well as delivering them.
- Incentives need to be meaningful to prisoners for any scheme to secure their support. Meaningful incentives outlined in this report include increased use of ROTL, higher rates of pay, better quality visits and, crucially, a chance to reduce time in custody.
- Relationships between staff and prisoners define whether any scheme will work or fail. Mutual respect, positive encouragement and collaboration must underpin the approach, and a willingness to place trust in a prisoner characterises the most meaningful incentives.
- Prisoners in turn want to trust the system, but the system needs to be trustworthy. Consistency, transparency and accountability are essential, and are widely lacking.

Introduction to this report

This report outlines the key findings of the first consultation undertaken with the Prison Policy Network (PPN) as well as some emerging issues for wider debate.

The PPN was launched in July 2018 as part of the Prison Reform Trust's strategic objective to give prisoners a stronger influence in how policy on prisons is made. It is an emerging network of current serving prisoners, ex-prisoners and connected organisations who are interested to share their experiences and ideas with policy makers. The PPN aims to share the views of people with experience of living in prison with those involved in prison policy development nationally through research, consultation and reports.

The first activity of the PPN was to consider: 'What incentives work in prison?', it was timed to coincide with Ministry of Justice's consultation on Incentives and Earned Privileges (IEP).

Hundreds of responses were received by the PPN team, as laid out in section 2. In total, this report draws on the contribution of over 1250 people.

Some of the findings have been disturbing and show a need for urgent action. But this is a complex subject and there is no single solution to all of the concerns raised. Not all prisoners are in the same position. Some are newly sentenced; some are in the middle or at the end of a sentence. Some are experiencing prison for the first time; some have been in and out for much of their lives. The range of backgrounds, personalities and offending histories represented by our respondents is broad and informs the challenge ahead for those designing and implementing a new incentives scheme.

This report has been separated into five sections. First, we give a summary of the responses collected for this consultation. Secondly, the findings section will detail the four major themes which have emerged from the responses: the need to attend to the "basics", thoughts on the existing IEP scheme, suggestions for change and a call for a broader cultural shift. We conclude with some clear calls to action.

The report attempts to represent the views of those who responded to this consultation, rather than the views of Prison Reform Trust. As such, verbatim quotes from respondents are used liberally throughout (in italics) so that the story is told through the words of those with the lived experience and not through the words of the report writer.

Submissions to the consultation

The question asked of the PPN was 'What incentives work in prison?'. It was deliberately left broad and without specific reference to the IEP scheme, leaving respondents free to interpret in whichever way they wanted.

Submissions were invited from 13th July to 1st October 2018 although further responses were received throughout the whole of October. Prisoners were invited to respond through notices in Inside Times, through National Prison Radio and through supporting partner organisations who work with prisoners both in the community and in prison, The PPN team strove to ensure every contribution submitted was given attention and every submission has been included within the analysis.

Contributions received were as follows:

- Notes from 10 tables of service users, ex-service users and professionals at the HMP Grendon launch (n = approximately 100)
- Two academic submissions from convict criminologists (Nottingham Trent University / Open University)
- Four submissions from service professionals who have also spent time in custody (Restore Support, Inside Connections, NACRO, Prisoners Education Trust)
- Notes from consultation groups held by the PPN team in 16 prisons nationwide
- Notes from consultation groups jointly facilitated between the PPN team and other agencies:
 - Change Grow Live (CGL; Worthing)
 - CGL HMP Belmarsh
 - The Good Prison project at HMP Dartmoor and HMP Exeter
 - Working Chance
 - Anawim
 - National Expert Citizens Group Fulfilling Lives (Big Lottery funded national project)
 - St Mungos Outside In project
 - Birmingham Mind
 - Every Step of the Way expert citizens group at Birmingham
 - AWP Bristol peer mentor group
 - Rise Up CIC at HMP Risley
- Independent submissions of evidence (including emails, diagrams, audio files, write ups of conversations) from the following contributors. Numbers represented by these organisations ranged from one to 74:
 - New Leaf CIC
 - Blackpool Lived Experience Team (Empowerment)
 - Service User Involvement Team (Wolverhampton)
 - PPP subgroup' for London Health and Justice Network
 - Red Rose Recovery (Preston)
 - Community Led (Manchester)
 - Voices of Stoke

- St Giles Trust
- Soccer Basics
- Leaders Unlocked
- Spark Inside
- Changing Lives
- Care UK - 55 submissions from prisoners responding in writing via a specifically created document asking about incentives; from HMP New Hall, HMP Wealstun, HMP Brinsford, HMP Leeds, HMP Foston Hall.
- Creative Inclusion; 34 participants at HMP Styal, HMP Wymott and HMP Risley
- 114 individual letters from prisoners living in 35 different prisons: some reflecting the writer's personal perspectives, whilst others reflected the perspectives of a group. An example of these group submissions is 34 prisoners at HMP Ashfield attending an internally run session which was then written into one response. In most cases, prisoners did not give numbers to enable us to determine how many prisoners had contributed.
- 1 letter from a patient at Rampton hospital
- 31 telephone calls with serving prisoners
- 1 email exchange between a prisoner's relative and PRT
- 2 written submissions from Prison Councils (HMP Rye Hill and HMP Coldingley)
- 1 storyboard created by prisoners on the Prison Council at HMP Rye Hill
- Documents submitted by prisoners at HMP Brixton, HMP Rye Hill, HMP Oakwood and HMP Coldingley to illuminate good practice within these establishments
- Document entitled: Submission to PPN at the PRT on the Incentives and Earned Privilege Policy Framework September 2018 written by Your Consultancy Group (an all prisoner legal team at HMP Oakwood)
- Other supporting documents including an MP letter, an academic essay, legal documents, Council minutes, documents outlining current issues or initiatives.

In total, this first PPN consultation received / generated 268 separate submissions, many of which represented multiple prisoners (up to a maximum of 74). A conservative estimate of numbers reached is 1250. We believe the response has shown a genuine appetite for involvement (from prisoners) and collaboration (from the sector). We have made significant inroads into building relationships and will maintain our efforts to sustain and extend these relationships in the future.

Yet we were warned:

With the level of cynicism and despair among prisoners, not to mention the frightening percentage of mental health issues, persuading inmates that they really can change prison conditions is going to be a real challenge.

HMP Highdown

Themes

The basics

Many respondents used this call for submissions as an opportunity to outline broader suggestions for change for the Prison System more generally, as opposed to focusing on the current and prospective IEP schemes specifically. This was a valuable consequence of having such a wide consultation question.

There is a recognition in the sector that prisons are very often not decent, safe and secure environments. A steady stream of damning HM Inspectorate of Prisons reports has made clear that many prisons are simply not getting the basics right. The Rt Hon David Gauke MP has publicly committed to addressing this failing through the Prison Estate Transformation Programme and some of the aims of this programme have been touched on by prisoners in this consultation. It is beyond the scope of this report to feedback all the recommendations prisoners have made about wider prison reform, but we have included them where relevant.

Several prisoners responded that the question around incentives was perhaps premature, and was a conversation to have after standards have improved:

How can we talk about incentives when we can't get the basics right, like safety, toilet roll and clean socks.

HMP Long Lartin

The sheer weight of responses suggesting quite basic entitlements as a means of incentivisation is of concern.

Incentives must never be confused with 'basic needs' although without a firm policy grip, this can all too easily become the norm.

HMP Dartmoor

Incentives only have value when there is a reliable and consistent regime because in an erratic and arbitrary regime everyone is too concerned trying to reduce basic problems to be worried about IEP Incentives.

HMP Swaleside

It appeared from responses that clear communication to prisoners about what their basic entitlements were, was often lacking. Prisoners responded with such things as access to fresh fruit, fresh air, culture, access to legal photocopying and access to dietary needs as being ways to incentivise behaviour. A prisoner working with St Giles Trust in HMP Highdown asked for bath towels. One woman referred to not being able to get underwear that fits, meaning she had to tie it on, so it didn't fall. Another spoke of wanting to have photos of family.

A prisoner at HMP Whatton said, 'Look after people's belongings when they are taken to hospital' while another referred to access to timely medication as a means of helping the population work more constructively together:

A lot of prisoners do not get their medication in the mornings around 08.30 but due to lack of staff they end up getting it around 11.30-12. Some lads are on early morning meds and end up suffering. If they were medicated on time it would end a lot of anger towards staff.

HMP Belmarsh

There were multiple calls for therapy as an incentive: reparative work, family therapy and to have more understanding about drugs.

Perhaps the most unsettling were the comments relating to dignity and relationships with staff. In relation to the ageing population, one prisoner went to great lengths to outline how challenging and degrading health needs of older people can be in prison and comments: Why is it necessary to double handcuff a prisoner who is unable to walk when going out to hospital? (HMP Littlehey). Comments such as "Eye contact when talking to prisoners" and "Being polite is a start" put in stark relief any attempt to motivate prisoners through an IEP scheme to work collaboratively towards release. A group at Anawim, a womens centre in Birmingham, endorsed the view that lack of respect experienced by prisoners from staff compounded issues of self confidence and self-esteem. A prisoner at HMP Send said that until her requests for support were responded to, she held out no hope for herself or any trust in the system. Many prisoners talked about staff apathy, and one HMP Brixton prisoner asked for management to get rid of "mischief makers" in the staff teams who undermined prisoner's faith in the system.

There could not be a clearer message that any scheme that wants to engage prisoners in a constructive way to improve both their personal prospects and the way of life in the prison has to be built on a secure foundation. That foundation is a consistent and respectful delivery of basic and reasonable expectations about how to treat another human being in your care.

The existing system

There was very little support for the current IEP system and clear backing for a revised policy. In this section, we address the fact that the current scheme does not appear to have support from those it is intended to influence. It was referred to as "irrelevant", "not fit for purpose" and "out of touch" with large sections of the population.

IEP is aged and doesn't represent now.

HMP Brixton

It is not a fair or just scheme and for some of us it is of little benefit.

HMP Oakwood

The IEP scheme is perceived as a mechanism based on punishment rather than reward, and there are multiple concerns regarding inconsistencies in implementation.

Lack of credibility and trust

Prisoners commented that there was little distinction between the bands of Basic, Standard and Enhanced, which meant that for many, reaching Enhanced was no longer worth the effort.

What's the point of being enhanced if there are no real differences offered? Rewards must be tangible.

HMP Coldingley

The scheme offers little for me, I have no private cash so don't benefit, I have few visits so don't benefit from the extra VOs and don't know how to use a games console so owning one is of little interest to me.

HMP Oakwood

One prisoner noted that since it was devised, enhanced status had “lost the currency it once had”. This statement is multi layered. It refers to not only the actual gains you have when on enhanced (listed as extra visits, extra gym sessions and extra money from private spends) but also how these benefits affect the prisoners themselves.

In 2002, no-one wanted to be on basic as you had nothing and enhanced felt like you had earned something, so you felt really good.

HMP Whatton

Circumstances have changed and whatever credibility the IEP had among prisoners has waned dramatically. An example given was that the amount of money received at enhanced level has stayed the same for a decade while canteen prices have gone up by 17%. This leads to a sense of apathy and disengagement from the scheme. The proposed scheme must be more effective in meeting the needs of prisoners if it is to capture their imagination and effect change. After all:

The scheme is redundant if prisoners don't buy into [it].

HMP Oakwood

Many prisoners wrote in to say that not everyone benefits from the current scheme. It was stated by one prisoner that it was only the “wealthy” who were at all motivated by the current IEP scheme. This permits additional private cash transfers to prisoners' current spends account enabling them to purchase additional food items on canteen and clothing which feeds into maintaining a level of status among their peers.

If you live miles from family, have no money that can be sent in and no interest in the gym, there are no “real” incentives to be enhanced.

HMP Oakwood

Incentives work only for prisoners who have and want to access external monies and support.

HMP Swaleside

Further, one prisoner from a foreign national prison stated that current benefits under IEP were of:

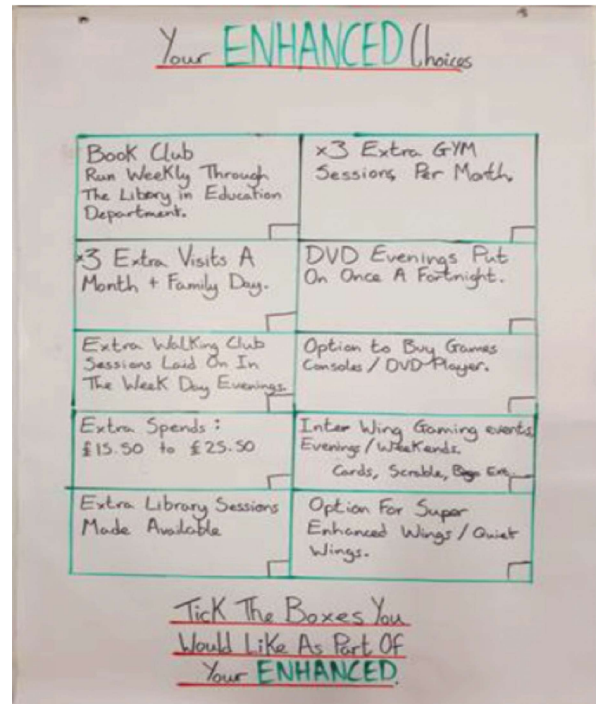
Very limited value to FNOs (Foreign National Offenders) – extra visit per month but with no family in UK it's not worth it, and the extra money isn't worth it either as they have access to limited finances. The one extra gym session can't be used as there is no sports hall (repair) and one PE officer on long term sick.

HMP Maidstone

There were multiple submissions referring to the importance of localised variations to the scheme, which is a welcome feature of the draft policy framework published for comments in September 2018. However, even within one prison there will be many different individuals and differing needs.

One group of prisoners produced a visual storyboard where they acknowledged the differing needs of two prisoners residing in the same prison. Their final illustration was the one copied onto this page, with of a list of options the governor or director could permit for enhanced prisoners, which personalises the scheme to some extent.

It is important that attention should be given to those on very short or very long sentences when considering incentive schemes:



I'm only here for 28 days on a recall, I will be getting out in 28 days regardless of whether I am basic, standard or enhanced.

HMP Exeter Good Prison Project

Stats show that under 30s on short sentences don't buy into the regime as well as long term prisoners.

HMP Oakwood

At the beginning of a 10-year sentence, who cares about being enhanced!?

HMP Sudbury

The way the consultation was conducted means we cannot say how many respondents had such sentence types and no suggestions were given as to how to incentivise those with nothing to lose due to imminent (and certain) release or those whose current behaviour is likely to have no bearing on their eventual release date. A paucity of responses from prisoners in long term high security establishments speaks to a need for more research in this area.

Punishment not incentive

A major theme emerging from the submissions about the current scheme was that the IEP scheme is not seen as a positive, incentives-based scheme but rather as a means of punishment and delivered through threats.

This scheme serves as a means of threatening and controlling prisoners rather than encouraging them to improve their status and experience any benefits associated with that status.

HMP Coldingley

Current national IEP policy sets out a vision that the scheme is not for punishment and that it should remain separate from the discipline regime, but this is not how prisoners believe it is currently used in prison. One prisoner with an indeterminate sentence referred to the way it was used as a threat: “Do this or else,” which clearly has significant connotations for someone in his position who relies on a clean record for progression and indeed release.

There are no incentives - only punishments, what we are working to avoid.

HMP Belmarsh

It's all stick and no carrot here.

HMP Ashfield

Prisoners said that negative behaviour is quickly noted, whereas positive behaviour is not.

Easier to be taken off you than to give.

Worthing CGL

One prisoner stated that he had repeatedly to ask officers to make note of his positive contributions to the wing and his efforts to show positive behaviour, and that this was not done. This led to him being classed as a ‘screw-boy’ by other prisoners which he felt was then damaging to his life on the wing.

If you behave and do what you are told, you get lost in the system.

HMP Risley

A prisoner who is routinely compliant may find it harder to earn a positive entry than someone who is routinely disruptive.

Guidelines needed as to what qualifies a person for enhanced status as it is very subjective; what are the guidelines for going beyond?

HMP Dartmoor

Where prisoners believe there, “are no incentives to engage with staff, psychologists or rehabilitation only the threats of punishment” (HMP Brixton), there is likely to be little engagement with both the existing and any revamped scheme.

In response to the draft policy framework, Your Consultancy Group (YCG; a prisoner led legal team) responded with the suggestion of:

Removing the loss of privileges from the instruction in its entirety (and instead treating loss of privileges as a disciplinary matter under a sub-set of the Adjudications regime) which would reduce concerns regarding unfairness etc. associated with downgrading under the current regime. By doing so the downgrade would become part of the discipline procedure and punishments (which is generally accepted as a fairer and more transparent regime), would not be perceived as a double punishment, would be more transparent, and would allow the IEP scheme to focus entirely on positive attainments.

One further comment was made in response to the draft IEP framework concerning prisoners who are maintaining their innocence. In this proposed scheme, prisoners can lose privileges for "...failure to engage in rehabilitative activities". Prisoners who maintain their innocence will face difficulties as they approach release if they have been found unsuitable for certain courses relating to their conviction (unsuitable due to denial of offence). In the proposed scheme, it is suggested that this will also affect their time in custody if their IEP is capped for the same reason.

Consistency and lack of fairness

Perhaps the biggest issue prisoners had with the current scheme is the inconsistency with which it is implemented. This relates to implementation both between prisons and within prisons.

In many respects, it's not the policy that's the issue – it is the interpretation of it and the level of commitment in its interpretation.

HMP Oakwood

First, this relates to inconsistency in how staff understand and implement the scheme.

It depends entirely on whether the prison officers like you or not.

Community Led

Me and her might do the same thing on different days, she'll get enhanced for it and I won't.

PRT Transforming Lives

This discredits the scheme as prisoners experience differential treatment within individual prisons from individual prison staff, as well as on transfer to different prisons. Inconsistent behaviour from officers interpreting IEP leads to contempt and apathy amongst prisoners. This is particularly the case when there is seen to be a) no transparency in the process and b) no one checking the validity of IEP warnings, as raised by members of the PPN.

Where is the scrutiny?

HMP Long Lartin

This prisoner from HMP Long Lartin raised the fact that there is no appeals process if you fail to get enhanced and there is no one to challenge negative entries in your file. It is a basic and well-established principle of procedural justice that absence of recourse to appeal results in distrust and lack of faith in its efficacy.

An example of good practice was given regarding HMP Oakwood. They operate a points system, where 10 positive points can be traded for a reward, but crucially 10 negative points triggers a downgrade board. It is the presence of a board that makes this an example of good practice, instead of an automatic, top-down process.

One prisoner relayed his concern about “new staff who don’t understand the impact of their write ups”, suggesting there was not only a bias towards negative entries but also a training need to understand the impact of these entries on prisoners. Prison officers were criticised for ‘flaunting’ their powers in relation to IEP:

The director does not see the way the frontline officers flaunt the rules against us.

HMP Birmingham

IEPs are excuses for incompetent staff to get their own back.

HMP Brixton

They threaten to ship out anyone who voices their concerns.

HMP Ashfield

My own direct experience and observation is that requests for transfer are ignored and refusals for re-categorisation are due to incomplete sentence plan when none has been produced and ‘not fully addressed sentence plan’ when all courses have been completed satisfactorily. The prisoners’ response, most of whom have done everything asked of them and not caused any trouble is, ‘why should I bother?’

HMP Lewes

Honesty – doing what they said they are going to do. That’s when it’ll change.

HMP Brixton

It is well known that relationships are strained in many prisons, particularly between prison officers and prisoners, and comments like those listed above demonstrate the extent of this strain. Any new incentives scheme would benefit from factoring in improved transparency and accountability so that both staff and prisoners feel confident in the scheme and protected from misplaced allegations.

Red entry needs to be explained or given opportunity to discuss.

HMP Brixton

Another issue is the inconsistency with which IEP entries are given for the same behaviour, suggesting that some may suffer more than others. Namely, “those with good social skills may have an advantage over those who have more difficulty communicating with officers” (HMP Belmarsh). This is an important issue to have been raised, across multiple prisons, and feeds into the importance of training, to improve consistency of treatment.

The most personable inmates wrap officers around their little fingers while the shy or socially awkward get stuck on standard.

HMP Littlehey

It's about playing the game and knowing how to play the game.

HMP Brixton

The Prison Reform Trust have previously identified that prisons house many individuals who have difficulty communicating. In 2012 we published a report which stated 7% have an IQ of less than 70, 25% have an IQ less than 80 and 60% have difficulty expressing themselves and/or understanding. If difficulty communicating affects likelihood of obtaining enhanced, this is problematic for many within prison walls. An appreciation of how prisoners are interacting with the regime, in spite of any communication difficulties would help.

More training for the officers with being compassionate, because there are other circumstances, there might be deeper issues with people they suffer from all sorts of things. But at first glance you might not see that, you might see someone who comes across as really aggressive and violent. But if they had more training on how to see past those certain things.

PRT Transforming Lives

One example of good practice was raised here: the work of the Basic Intervention Group (BIG) at HMP Oakwood. A team of enhanced prisoners who were directly tasked with working with prisoners on basic regime to support their progression to standard; as well as at HMP Liverpool which has instituted a shorter time frame from progression off basic to standard to recognise small but important steps.

Related to this were multiple responses evidencing prisoners' frustrations with 'exceptions to the IEP rule'. An example given was of prisoners with mental health conditions being given games consoles to help them keep calm. One respondent stated that this “undermined prisoner confidence, other prisoners seen as getting away with demanding behaviour”. One called it the “Mental Health Ticket”, while another openly said that “the quickest way to a single cell here is a stint in the block”.

The Restore Support Network highlighted the difficulties faced by older prisoners and those with disabilities who were not working or subject to cell confinement to gain enhanced status (although prisoners at HMP Parc mentioned good work in this respect, looking at equality impact assessments to support gaining enhanced status).

For some it wasn't about mental health needs but about privileges being afforded to those who are seeming to be disruptive: 'Rude inmates get treated better and given what they want to avoid issues in the prison.' (HMP Leeds). Again, this is an important point in relation to training and new scheme implementation. Staff being unsure or unconfident to challenge some prisoners creates an expectation that the officers aren't in control.

Clear and transparent dealing with those who break the rules so it isn't seen that if you kick off or threaten to cut up then you get what you want.

HMP Parc

This was raised by the YCG team at HMP Oakwood:

Rewards for negative behaviours are a cause for concern and a sense of injustice. Weighing genuine cases of self-harming etc. will always be necessary but there should be longer term consequences so that proper lessons are learned and compliant prisoners are assured that their good behaviour will be rewarded in the longer term.

On the flipside, those with mental ill-health or poor emotional wellbeing (estimated to be approximately 37% by the National Audit Office in 2017) report that navigating the IEP system can be unbearable, as highlighted by participants from Birmingham Mind:

Access to mental health support is terrible and therefore it's very hard to get enhanced if you have mental health issues that are deemed to be non-compliance with the regime.

It's a nightmare trying to tell an officer that you are feeling too unwell to go to work, you get a warning for it.

Another issue relating to consistency relates to prisoners moving between establishments and it is positive to see this acknowledged within the draft policy framework.

IEP – a unit of disciplinary currency which is different in each prison.

HMP Dartmoor

One of the main discussion points amongst prisoners is the vast inconsistency between prisons especially those privately run in terms of incentives.

HMP Risley

Although changing one's IEP status following a transfer was rarely discussed in the submissions, irrespective of behaviour, there were a few compelling reports of dropping IEP levels simply due to being transferred, irrespective of behaviour. The YCG submission suggested that if the IEP was completely localised, this might prove confusing and counter-productive when schemes weren't the same at a receiving prison. Members of the St Mungos Outside In group suggested that inconsistency could be mitigated if prisoners were notified before being moved prisons and given advance knowledge of what the change will mean/how the rules change.

One prisoner suggested a “Prison Passport” in response to this, recognising that PNOMIS is not always consistent or up to date. His proposed Prison Passport would be a paper document which can cross all prisons, which would contain the vital information needed for transfer, including IEP level.

One argument put forward by a respondent was that if there had to be local variations, there should still be some consistency, particularly within security categories:

All Cat Bs should surely have comparable regimes as should all Cat Cs, and your behaviour record should mean something when you move.

HMP Littlehey

One final point about consistency comes from a prisoner at HMP Swaleside who felt that local rules need some review to make logical sense.

[I can't have] access to a word processor for private study. But you can play FIFA... I cannot buy books from Amazon but I can buy video games and DVDs.

Amendments to the system

The consultation produced a wide range of recommendations for improving the system of incentives. Three themes emerged: routine incentives, financial incentives, and family ties.

Day to day incentives

In terms of what might bring the IEP scheme up to date and more in line with prisoners' needs, we have amalgamated prisoner responses as to what they felt would be worthwhile incentives:

- Having the means to make own food, such as with a toaster or sandwich maker
- Access to buying books
- Free legal advice
- Quiet accommodation
- Extra gym sessions
- Reintroduction of certification 18 cert films (with reference to terrestrial TV showing certificate 18 films / shows)
- Access to a (monitored) Freeview box
- Access to new clothes more often than the current 6 monthly cycle
- Family and friends to be allowed to send in clothes
- Use of a controlled internet (YCG suggested “a form of restricted intranet should be designed to allow prisoners onto specific, authorised sites and/or IP restricted access”)
- Film or other social nights
- Take-away nights
- Skype calls using PIN only numbers
- MP3 (controlled)

- More diverse range of sports
- Phone credit discounts
- Free calls to those with small children
- One session off per week for distance learners
- Time outside with green trees and grass not concrete yards
- Vending machines on the wings / be able to buy cakes
- Fridges on the wing
- Opportunity to access non-standard musical instrument like a violin
- Subscription to specialist magazines
- More time out of the cell
- Arts and crafts materials on the wing
- DVDs in possession
- Cooking clubs
- Pets in prison.

Finances

Financial incentives were very important to people who responded. Many referred to the rate of pay in prisons as being extremely low and felt that an increase for hard working prisoners would be a genuine incentive:

If there is an incentive it would be to do labour (work) in order to earn the bare minimum of money to use on your weekly canteen. This is the only incentive I have experienced and which other prisoners I have spoken to can think of.

HMP Risley

If the pay was a bit more then more people would want to work.

HMP Belmarsh

Paying people a living wage would be more of an incentive, rather than paying peanuts.

SUIT Wolverhampton

Individuals suggested 'super' companies like Amazon would pay more than the average £12 a week a prisoner received, which would be an incentive to work. Several contributors suggested that paygrades should be dependent on IEP level rather than on the type of employment, since at the moment enhanced prisoners can earn less than standard in different parts of the prison (and in different prisons).

Several prisoners referred to the fact education is paid lower than work which, "sets out the wrong message as to what is important". Some argued that education should be incentivised financially as a means of getting more prisoners into a classroom. The longer-term gains from education are often sacrificed in favour of short-term financial gains from employment. However, we were advised of a scheme at HMP Liverpool whereby prisoners who attend all education sessions in a week will get a small cash bonus – something the prisoners appeared to value.

From another prison, someone else asked 'Education or Employment? Why not both?'

In a rare contribution from an officer, there was reference to the stagnant nature of prisoner pay:

The £15 per week received on TC has not changed in 10 years. It would be interesting to see the canteen sheet from a decade ago.

HMP Dovegate

Suggestions were given as to alternative means of raising an income, such as the opportunity to work shifts or work in cell during the evening or weekend (for example stuffing envelopes). A number of financial initiatives were proposed which were less costly to the service but still motivating to certain prisoners such as having more money or material items sent in by family and friends. As stated above though, this benefits only those who have family and friends to send in money or items. One woman commented:

I don't have anyone to send in items from outside, I can't be the only one. Pillows, duvet, towels, plates, etc.

HMP Eastwood Park

Bonus schemes often emerged in the consultation responses. For example, for every three positive comments, a prisoner might receive vouchers for canteen or a catalogue like Avon, a hair and beauty appointment or money put onto phone credit.

Phone credit was a subject which attracted much attention. Prisoners felt that it was very costly and changes could be made to alleviate the financial strain of this. One man commented that:

I have just checked and we are actually charged on our phone account for ringing the Samaritans.

It is our understanding that calls to the Samaritans are free and unfortunately we do not have the prison location to confirm this either way. However, this is something to be explored in all prisons to ensure that prisoners are getting free calls to this service. Telephone calls are discussed more in the section on family ties on page 21.

The subject of prisoner clothing was also mentioned frequently within the consultation. Having access to clothing that fits properly, having clothes sent in by family and friends, being able to wear personal clothes for visits and more variety within the catalogue were ideas mentioned as enhanced incentives. There were also several calls to be able to have one annual clothing / footwear purchase from their private account.

Other material items were mentioned, such as toiletries and food. However, from certain comments, it seems to mean more than possession of the item itself, as highlighted in the quotations below:

Finding products for black hair, black skin was difficult. We have all different types of hair and all different types of things for hair. It feels like in there they just want you to fall apart...men and women...they just want you to disintegrate and become nothing...I'm not asking for luxuries these are things we just need to maintain ourselves.

Working Chance

People wanted something which meant their contributions and progress had been valued and to feel like they had earned something.

HMP Parc

For both this man and woman, the ability to buy personalised items enhanced their sense of identity and self respect.

Family ties

Many of the financial motivators mentioned above are related to the desire to maintain family relationships, such as through phone calls. Many contributions asked for attention to be given to family contact, such as having Skype calls with one number, having one free number on the list of approved contacts, being allowed to receive calls from one number and as mentioned above, phone credit for those who remain enhanced. One researcher with lived experience of imprisonment wrote into PRT and said:

For many, the benefits of having a mobile phone to maintain contact with family are far more valuable than an extra £5 or £10 on a canteen sheet and the risk of getting caught is an occupational hazard.

If management want to reduce the number of mobile phones in their establishments (and the security risks associated with them), enabling contact with family in a way which at least matches that offered by a mobile telephone is an important consideration.

Visits were one of the most frequently cited incentives. Visits are hugely important to a significant proportion of the prison population (but not all).

While prisoners on standard and enhanced regimes have additional visits given to them according to their IEP level, a prisoner on basic regime may actually feel that he or she is having visits removed as they are familiar with the punitive model. This perception of loss is an important one to manage within any new scheme. This is particularly the case since those on basic regime are often those who are in a state of distress or have acute needs. The quotations below from a group submission by Creative Inclusion provide some evidence and context to this statement:

*The group felt that someone who is on a basic regime and being denied meaningful family contact was more likely to just press the f***-it switch.*

Your family keep you grounded when you feel like you're just about to lose your head. They're the people who can talk me down when I'm having it with someone and I want to hit them round the head with a sock full of cans of tuna.

There are other means of rewarding enhanced prisoners through visits. The Lived Experience Team at Blackpool Addaction saw the value of rewarding prisoners who were enhanced with enhanced quality visitation. At HMP Parc, enhanced prisoners have access to 'lounge visits'. Visits take place in homely rooms, where prisoners are allowed to hold their children and watch

DVDs and play games. This level of intimacy was highly valued by prisoners, something they did not want to lose. One prisoner told us that lounge visits are the reason he keeps his head down:

How could I look my son in the eye and tell him I had lost my lounge visits?

HMP Parc

One family member emailed PRT and explained about the importance of visits to her and her family, which supports the initiative at HMP Parc:

My suggestion would be family days for all prisoners, not just prisoners with children. We would've liked to spend time on a longer, more informal visit with our relative, maybe having a meal together or doing some activity together, as this is something you miss when a relative is in prison. The importance of family relationships in helping prisoners' rehabilitation is well documented and this is an area which could be built upon. The current system is actually a disincentive to keep family relationships going, especially when your relative is imprisoned a long way from home. Our relative was placed 300miles from home (round trip) It made visiting costly, difficult and stressful. Added to this was the actual process of booking visits which could take days, in some establishments plus the length of time waiting around to enter and leave the prison. For example, to have a 2 hour visit we would travel for 6 hours and spent about 3 hours waiting around.

Prisoners from all over the country commented on a wish for longer or more relaxed visits, visits outside of the visits hall and more physical contact with visitors. Some refer to conjugal visits. Prisoners at HMP Coldingley refer to the fact that there is a lack of intimacy, warmth and opportunities to express love to maintain and develop relationships whilst in prison. Having increased physical contact with family and possibly some family therapy within these sessions would help to build healthy relationships in preparation for release.

Alongside visits, another prominent incentive was the increased use of ROTL. It was described as the "ultimate incentive" by a prisoner at HMP Rye Hill, to be able to "go home to visit family for weekend." (HMP Foston Hall) A contribution from prisoners working with Spark Inside at HMP Wormwood Scrubs was clear on ROTL

Opportunities to go on ROTL – if this was discussed early on in the sentence and you knew it was possible then it would be an incentive.

This is picked up in the section about the future on page 25.

Cultural Change

In this section, we reflect on the perception that the existing system is too punitive and consider how this could be different. We reflect on the comments regarding staff attitudes on page 9 (The basics) and consider how changes in staff-prisoner relationships could benefit any new IEP scheme. Finally, within the section, we look at the idea of incentivising behaviour by looking towards release and creating a sense of hope for prisoners.

From punitive to positive

The Rt Hon David Gauke MP has stressed that ‘people go to prison as punishment, not for punishment’ and he is striving to make prisons places of ‘humanity, hope and aspiration’. We believe that an incentives scheme based on these principles is an important part of that jigsaw. As it stands, the IEP scheme is operating as a punitive model, sitting within another punitive model (prison), alongside other punitive models (adjudications). There is certainly a gap for something more motivating:

There must be a balance shift from punitive to reward with a transparent system that can be trusted to deliver. Demonstrate, with proof, that making custodial time an experience where an individual can make a difference and bring real long term reward will be inspiring. Current snakes and ladders approach brings nothing but contempt.

HMP Oakwood

There is much around the climate ... which needs review in order to best accommodate the culture reforms which the adoption of modified incentives would represent.

HMP Dartmoor

The association of the IEP with punishment undermines its potential to motivate.

At Highdown for example the only reward you could earn was “enhanced” status and one red entry would put that out of reach for three months. That’s no way to encourage positive behaviour from inmates who tend towards self-destructive choices.

HMP Littlehey

However, a system of real incentives takes courage from leaders, to stand up for evidence-based reasoning against a brick wall of public indifference or media hostility to humane prison conditions.

I am confident that if a system of real and attainable privileges was to replace the current system, there would be a clear decrease in incidents of violence as prisoners changed their behaviour to earn these privileges. Unfortunately, until the senior staff within the prison service stop worrying about what spin the media would put on such a story, the decline of prisons will continue.

HMP Lewes.

Through many letters and submissions, we heard that recognition and praise were of fundamental importance. Managing to keep drug-free for a week deserves recognition for a prisoner intensely laden with his or her addiction. The effort involved for a prisoner like this is greater than some of

the more compliant prisoners managing another week on enhanced. Yet, at the moment, the levels of effort that go into small changes are not acknowledged. Words and encouragement can be very motivating; “small rewards go a long way” (HMP Foston Hall).

It is important to reward in a timely fashion. The wait time for review (up to three months) may be too far in the future for some prisoners to wait; in fact, a week can sometimes be too long a wait. For those on basic regime, daily encouragement and acknowledgement of any effort would be of value. At HMP Liverpool there was some good practice in acknowledging small but significant steps made by prisoners on basic with swift review processes in place.

For many, reward in a month's time is too far ahead for them to aim for.

HMP Lewes

They've tended to have had chaotic lives in childhood which has resulted in poor impulse control and lack of cause and effect thinking and the inability to plan ahead (part of what has got them into trouble in the first place) I don't have the answers to this. I know my relative found it really hard to have any thought beyond his immediate needs.

Relative

We did not have many contributions which pointed towards staff demonstrating encouraging behaviour:

I have seen no one encourage me to do anything

HMP Risley

Prisoners did however respond positively to contact with outside agencies especially those staffed by people with lived experience. One prisoner who was working with the outside agency Soccer Basics, said that through sport he was able to keep “focused” and “well behaved”. He also said that “it also shows that there are still people who are willing to help prisoners,” which has given him hope for his release. Prisoners spoke of the need for positive encouragement to take place routinely and to form a cornerstone of the next IEP scheme.

Respect and trust

Another vital component of a positive model would be a mutually respectful relationship between staff and prisoners. Respect, which at first glance may seem disconnected from an incentives scheme, is actually at the heart of the matter if prisoners are to be actively engaged:

Respect ...without it don't even start ... can't be bothered.

HMP Liverpool

We need more compassion, be treated like humans.

HMP Liverpool

Communication, Relationship, Attitude – breakdown of any of the above 3 will result in failure (e.g being called by a name not a number).

HMP Ashfield

Access to information is so poor that it feels like we don't exist.

HMP Dartmoor

Trust was raised as a powerful incentive, particularly within discussion groups when prisoners worked together and discussed the issues of most importance to them. One poignant statement came from a prisoner in HMP Wandsworth:

When you come to prison you are immediately in a position where you have broken trust in some way. Rebuilding that, and demonstrating a reduced risk in the process is extremely difficult. I believe if trust was weaved into the IEP scheme in some way, prisoners would in general respond positively.

Being afforded a bit of trust and feeling valued was important to people, and having a bit of extra freedom within the prison walls (e.g. red-bands).

Creative Inclusion

Many prisoners refer to a desire to be more involved in the Prison Service, to contribute in some way rather than be passive recipients of justice. Several prisoners referred to the need for a more collaborative relationship with staff, where both 'sides' could work together and both benefit accordingly.

Using skills prisoners already have to assist in the smooth running of prisons; improving and repairing the facilities available to all. This will lead to prisoners taking ownership of prison facilities resulting in better care and less damage as well as leading to practical experience of skilled labour. This will also save money for the prison estate as less money will be spent on outside contractors.

HMP Rye Hill

This is discussed in more detail in the section on personal hope on page 29, but releasing men and women back into the community who have been actively involved in their communities is a positive and achievable outcome for the Prison Service, as well as something being called for by contributors to this consultation.

Like many others, I benefit from being able to make a positive and productive contribution.

HMP Maidstone

Responsibility is very important as an incentive; feeling like I am doing something good.

HMP Liverpool

To give prisoners a voice in helping to shape policies that will have an acute impact on our daily lives and those of our loved ones.

HMP Highdown

The future

Release was very important to prisoners as an incentive. This is of no surprise, but has no place in the existing IEP scheme.

The only incentive in prison should be a leaving date with real hope of a future/life.

HMP Garth

Both the leaving date and the real hope of a future referred to in the above quotation are addressed within this section.

First, in terms of a leaving date, there were many calls for governors and directors to be able to approve the removal of days from a sentence in exchange for good behaviour, in much the same way that days can be added for negative behaviour.

Governors can give additional days, why don't they give days back?

HMP Coldingley

Days off sentence - 1 day off for every month enhanced?

HMP Ashfield

Further, a letter was received with an appended essay regarding the use of excessive tariffs for life sentence prisoners. In the essay the writers present a case for a "Minimum Term Tariff Review" which "allows all prisoners serving a sentence of mandatory life imprisonment or custody for life to apply to the high court for a review of their minimum term on the grounds of Exceptional Progress". The writers refer to the words of Eglash (1958-9, p239): 'Our greatest resource, largely untouched to and in rehabilitation of offenders is other offenders', and to see other prisoners released early through 'good behaviour' will have a positive impact on others in their community.

The lack of opportunity for a reduction in sentences supports the notion that prisons are only interested in punitive actions, rather than in rewarding those who progress. One prisoner from HMP Maidstone commented that he had seen early release have an impact on behaviour within his establishment:

[There is] very little violence at HMP Maidstone despite all its evident problems, because many prisoners want to go home to their home country and are working towards the Early Release Scheme, which the governor can approve (taking 25% off sentence length).

HMP Maidstone

Others suggested that any responsibility for reducing sentence length should be external from the prison:

Days off - Periodic review of sentence by outside judge.

HMP Liverpool

Should there be a judicial monitor appointed by the Court to ensure that the sentences are being carried out and these people could authorise days back?

HMP Coldingley

Similarly, there were suggestions for better use of town visits, home leave and Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) which all act as powerful incentives for prisoners, in part because this can re-establish links with family and possible employers but also because it prepares prisoners, especially those with longer sentences, for changes in society and being a part of that once more.

A prisoner from HMP Wormwood Scrubs, working with Spark Inside, said:

We need things in the community to help us progress and support us. That is what a real incentive would be – knowing that when we are released we can progress and get the support we need. We need organisations and businesses to invest in us and give us a chance. Some of the resources and skills that people have in prison i.e. drug dealing could be channelled and used to become really successful in business.

Positive write ups are key to achieving de-categorisation, and as stated earlier in this report, this is rather a haphazard process. This can be frustrating when it affects the likelihood of open conditions and the privileges that come with it.

I'd like to see my voluntary work go on my personal record for when I apply for my Cat D.
HMP Leeds

Some say that there could be more incentives regarding re-categorisation and movement around the prison estate:

The national policy should allow early re-categorisation for compliant prisoners and fast track for those who show exemplary conduct.
HMP Ashfield

Could good behaviour prioritise your move to a prison of your choice?
HMP Liverpool

There were concerns raised from prisoners at HMP Oakwood about certain related policies working in isolation from one another, causing confusion at best and apathy at worst. In particular, they are referring to the Home Detention Curfew policy which works using a timescale and does not refer to IEP status:

More needs to be done so that the IEP Policy runs in sync with HDC policy.

It doesn't run on merit and affects the credibility of the IEP scheme.

How are basic prisoners getting tag?

This reinforces beliefs that IEP is no more than a mechanism for controlling prisoners within the walls, rather than a means of motivating prisoners to make long term changes to their lives. However, as identified by a group of young people:

Incentives are not really incentives if they don't help people on the outside.
Leaders Unlocked

Others have suggested other means of working towards a more successful release:

Increased range of education and tradesmen activities leading to qualifications recognised by industry.

HMP Risley

Incentives should be linked to future planning. Incentives linked with employment connection.

HMP Dartmoor

More support with building a network outside of prison, in preparation for release.

Red Rose Recovery

Leave with a Prison Portfolio of all the good stuff you have done, raise the profile and share the positive outcomes of NA and AA via peer mentoring and sharing positive stories.

Gateshead Experts by Experience

Prisoners also discussed the need for increased work in resettlement, for undertaking both driving tests (theory and practical) and acquiring the CSCS (health and safety) card. There were multiple suggestions for generating a savings facility so that a small proportion of prison wages could be saved weekly for release.

Pay £1 for enhanced into a savings scheme

HMP Exeter.

Prisoners suggested the incentive of an inflated discharge grant for those who had been on enhanced for a certain period in the lead up to release. Prisoners currently receive £46 when they leave prison, a figure which has not changed in 23 years despite the world outside changing dramatically. The idea of a discharge grant that could support the deposit on accommodation was seen to be a powerful incentive.

Keeping up to date with current technology, via internet access and possession of gadgets (including a USB stick) was repeatedly mentioned as not only a good incentive for retaining enhanced but as a way to gain/maintain skills for release, to keep in touch with family and to complete qualifications. It is also becoming difficult to access certain goods without Bluetooth or the internet. We recognise this represents a challenge to the prison system in terms of security. YCG contributed the following in response to these concerns:

If prisoners were issued a registered USB memory stick on a lanyard and access to technology, it would be possible to have electronic mail (email a prisoner), books, films etc. downloaded to USB. This would reduce the requirement for these items to be admitted to the prison and would assist security in the battle against smuggling NPS etc. Security can be enhanced by intelligence lead searches of content. Bluetooth is short-range and is not understood to be a 'legitimate' security concern. Jamming technology is available and should be employed if there is residual concern about using this technology freely.

This section is important for consideration in future incentives schemes. If prisoners are looking forward, there is room for motivation and incentives. If they are not looking forward, there is little to gain from incentives:

Need goals and progression; lack of progression and encouragement to move forward leads to depression and drug use.

HMP Dartmoor

Personal hope

Wanting to feel better about oneself emerged as a powerful and recurring theme within the consultation responses. There were many different variations on this theme, and several means of expressing it, but ultimately the thing that respondents appeared to want most of all was a chance to redeem themselves, or feel positive. Again, this is reflected in the draft policy framework:

Personal development, and the ability to be a valued and active citizen within the prison community, are likely to be the relevant and motivating factors in making their sentence survivable.

Some of what has already been discussed through this report does contribute to these feelings of personal development – starting up a savings account and saving for the future may be means by which prisoners can accrue a sense of responsibility and agency, something that is often missing in custodial environments. Accessing courses to build a skill base will assist in building someone's self-esteem.

It is even possible to see that the smaller things are in some way contributing to the big things. Being paid a higher wage suggests that you are worth something; dressing in fashionable clothes can be the means by which you re-connect with your self-identity and having a toaster might be the means by which you feel some control over your own life.

Currently, there is no incentive to really try, to push oneself outside of comfort zones. There is:

No incentive that helps us get away from the mind-numbingness that is daily prison life.

HMP New Hall Care UK

No purposeful activity or striving for anything, no access to challenging education.

NECG

Several prisoners reflected on a desire to be a part of something, to vote, to be an active citizen at least within the prison walls; wanting to take some shared responsibility for the prison and having the opportunity to contribute to policy that affects them. One ex-prisoner described a wing where they, 'created their own incentives, have houseblock competitions, tidiest room etc', others have written in to describe rehabilitative cultures and peer led schemes which have been successful in encouraging collective responsibility and accountability on both sides.

It is evident that there has been a shift, that, 'Prisoners don't want things done to them, want the chance to do it for themselves,' and this should be recognised within any framework to encourage behaviour:

Prisoners need to take responsibility for their own futures.

HMP Ashfield

Doing things for ourselves is better than being dependent on the goodwill of others.

HMP Rye Hill

There was a sense that prisoners not only wanted to contribute positively to their establishments but also wanted to remain connected with society in some way during their time in custody.

Bring more ex-prisoners back in to help us feel part of society.

HMP Dartmoor

Provide more information about lived experience opportunities.

Expert Citizens CIC

Access to the internet to secure housing and benefit claims before release.

Nacro Community Voice

Pay tax.

HMP Whatton

Outside engagement – access to outside opportunities, e.g. Dominoes Tournament.

Leaders Unlocked

Detail matters, but the broad themes which seem to emerge are respect, a chance for an improved life on release and some sense of hope. Prison presents an opportunity for change but prisoners told us of an often toxic environment.

I would rather die in the gutter than live in a prison without hope.

HMP Garth

Conclusion

This consultation and indeed the PPN more generally, provides us with a unique opportunity to hear from prisoners across the country on matters that affect them. These voices are strengthened further by the contributions of ex-prisoners and those working to support them. We started this consultation with a broad question: what incentives work in prison, and open minds as to what might come.

We heard from a number of specialist groups, including women, lifers, those on basic regime, older prisoners and the young. One size clearly does not fit all:

Some will jump through hoops and do tricks for a chocolate biscuit, some will demand a whole pack of biscuits.

HMP Garth

Others resisted the question entirely, arguing that they do not need to be persuaded to comply with the prison regime. But the majority not only engaged with the debate but offered strategic insight into issues very much more profound than the day to day business of the IEP scheme and how it operates. So we have been able to hear not only prisoner perspectives on the current IEP scheme, but also their views on what a more effective approach to securing a safe and purposeful way of life in prison might be. Crucially too, they offered their perspectives on the context in which incentives schemes will succeed or fail.

We did not expect nor did we receive a simple collective message. Indeed, the credibility of the process depends on its ability to reflect multiple perspectives and a range of ideas. But some very clear common themes have emerged and should underpin the incentives scheme reform. We summarise these messages as follows:

- **Any incentives scheme will not work without getting basic issues right first. Defining what these basics are needs attention as well as delivering them.**
- **Incentives need to be meaningful to prisoners for any scheme to secure their support. Meaningful incentives outlined in this report include increased use of ROTL, higher rates of pay, better quality visits and, crucially, a chance to reduce time in custody.**
- **Relationships between staff and prisoners define whether any scheme will work or fail. Mutual respect, positive encouragement and collaboration must underpin the approach, and a willingness to place trust in a prisoner characterises the most meaningful incentives.**
- **Prisoners in turn want to trust the system, but the system needs to be trustworthy. Consistency, transparency and accountability are essential, and are widely lacking.**

Lord Woolf's inquiry into the causes of the 1990 Strangeways riot had at its heart a commitment to consult directly with prisoners, as well as prison staff and policymakers.

Nearly three decades on, the prison system has again found itself under intense pressure and public scrutiny, coping with vastly increased prisoner numbers, decreased staffing levels, chronic under investment, and violence and self-harm at record highs. Asking prisoners directly once more what they think and what should be done must make sense.

This inaugural report describes many of the same concerns highlighted by Lord Woolf so many years ago. It paints a picture of a system which is failing in some of its most basic duties. But it also contains a wealth of ideas for what a more effective approach to securing a safe and purposeful and motivating way of life in prison might be.

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