

**PRISON  
REFORM  
TRUST**



# **Strategic Plan 2024 – 2029**

# Prison Reform Trust Strategic Plan 2024–2029

## Introduction

The Prison Reform Trust (PRT) was founded in 1981 to inform and influence public debate on prison conditions and the treatment of prisoners, amidst concerns about a projected prison population of 48,000 by 1984. With the prison population in England and Wales projected to rise to as high as 114,800 by March 2028, the charity remains as important to civic society today as it was then.

PRT has a strong track record of effecting change in policy and practice upon which this plan builds. PRT's CEO Pia Sinha started in April 2023 and has triggered a fresh approach towards PRT's priorities and vision. Under her leadership, PRT's work will focus on projects that are outcome focused and demonstrate the impact of PRT's influence on the day to day lives of people in prison. The charity will seek to strengthen the core "foundation lane" of its work in providing advice and information, prisoner engagement and policy advocacy. Securing the core "foundation lane" of its work will enable the charity to develop an "innovation lane" of projects focused on delivery on the operational frontline.

In developing this plan, PRT has consulted widely with its key stakeholders, including most importantly people in prison. It has listened carefully to their views on the work of PRT and what they would like the organisation to achieve over the next five years. PRT has selected its priorities based on a thorough assessment of the wider political and policy context. It has also considered where it is best placed to contribute and add value given its strengths as a charity.

## Our vision

A fair, humane and effective justice system.

## Our mission

To achieve positive change for people in prison and the wider criminal justice system.

## Our aims

- Reduce the unnecessary use of prison.
- Improve conditions for prisoners.
- Promote equality and human rights in the justice system.

## **Our priorities**

### **Ensure prison is used fairly and proportionately as the punishment of last resort:**

- End the imprisonment of people serving sentences of Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) and abolish the lifelong IPP licence.
- Challenge sentence inflation and reduce barriers to sentence progression.
- Ensure a fair and efficient parole system.
- Reduce the imprisonment of women.
- Divert people from prison who don't need, or are not well enough, to be there.
- Reduce the recall and remand populations.
- Promote non-custodial alternatives.

### **Improve life in prison:**

- Reduce demand on prison and levels of overcrowding.
- Work to achieve prison regimes which are safe, decent, fair and purposeful.
- Provide accurate and up to date advice and information to people in prison.
- Provide prisoners with opportunities to shape the policies to which they are subject.
- Encourage innovation and the sharing of best practice in how prisons are run.
- Ensure better access to in-cell technology and the internet.
- Increase access to home detention curfew and release on temporary licence.

### **Challenge prejudice against, and promote knowledge and understanding of, people in prison:**

- Give prisoners a chance to speak for themselves and share their insights.
- Recognise achievement and celebrate the success of people in prison.
- Highlight and disseminate the facts about prisons and promote evidence-based policy.
- Build alliances and work in collaboration to influence the public, policymakers and the media towards reform.
- Provide the secretariat to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Penal Affairs.
- Publish the Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile.

### **Promote equality and human rights in the justice system:**

- Secure a statutory framework of minimum standards of imprisonment.
- Reduce racial disproportionality, including the disproportionate use of force.
- Ensure the distinct needs of women, children and young adults in the justice system are met.
- Achieve better outcomes for vulnerable groups, including people with mental health needs, learning disabilities and neurodiverse conditions.
- Ensure the health and social care needs of an ageing prison population are met.

## Foundation lane

To fulfil PRT's mission and achieve its ambitious priorities for reform will rely upon strengthening and securing the core foundations of its work. This is the foundation lane of PRT's activity. PRT's foundation lane consists of:

- **Advice and information** — PRT's advice and information service responds to around 10,000 contacts from prisoners per year. It provides an invaluable service to people in prison by helping them to understand the complex rules and procedures in prison and how they should be treated. It also provides an important ear to the ground, alerting the charity to emerging policy issues and concerns which may need addressing with individual prisons or at the national policy level through its advocacy work.
- **Prisoner engagement** — The Prisoner Policy Network (PPN) is a growing network of current serving prisoners, ex-prisoners and connected organisations who want to share their experiences and ideas with policy makers. It provides those with lived experience of the justice system a valuable opportunity to be involved in prison policy development nationally through research, consultation and reports.
- **Policy, communications, research** — PRT's policy, communications and research team provides the bedrock of the charity's policy and advocacy work. A key strength of PRT is its ability to pursue "principled opportunism", reacting swiftly to opportunities to shift policy and priorities within government. By working closely with ministers and officials, responding to relevant consultations and highlighting concerns in parliament and the media, it allows the organisation to effect change at the national policy level. PRT's policy team also provides the secretariat to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Penal Affairs and produces the highly regarded Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile. These are both crucial in enabling the charity to get the facts about prisons better known and influencing politicians and the wider public towards reform.

## Innovation lane

PRT wants to maximise the impact of its core work to make a real difference to the day to day lives of people in prison. Placing the core "foundation lane" of our work on a sustainable basis will enable us to develop an innovation lane of activity focused on making an impact on policy and practice on the operational front-line. The innovation lane of our work will draw on the existing skills, capacity and networks of our foundation lane, and will consist of:

- A Next Generation Leadership Programme for aspiring governors, probation practitioners and policy leaders.
- Resetting the approach to women's imprisonment — a solution-focused evaluation of why the imprisonment of women remains stubbornly high 17 years after the Corston Report.
- Developing a Reward, Recognition and Active Citizenship award scheme for people in prison.
- Based on what prisoners have told PRT, advocating for a revision in the prisoner pay policy to achieve safer and more secure prison regimes — with particular impacts on reducing self-harm, violence, bullying and drug misuse in prisons.
- Reporting on prison workforce reform, with particular focus on consultation with prisoners on the future role of the prison officer.

## Enablers of our plan

PRT's ambitious plan is supported by a number of core enablers drawing on its strengths as a leading UK independent prison reform charity. These include: its reputation, influence and track record of achieving change; its people, culture and values; and a solid foundation of strong governance and finance.

### A track record of achieving change

PRT has a strong track record of achieving change in policy and practice. PRT's approach to influencing is founded on being a critical friend to government – not being afraid to speak truth to power but also being willing to work alongside ministers and officials to achieve reform. PRT sits on a number of government advisory panels and is regularly called upon to provide evidence to select committee inquiries and statutory consultations. Key policy outcomes from the last five-year strategic plan which PRT has contributed to include:

- Reform of the IPP licence, including a reduction of the qualifying period from 10 to three years and making provision to automatically terminate the IPP licence.
- Introduction of a power of executive release of recalled IPP prisoners, and a requirement for the government to publish an annual report to be presented to parliament on progress made on delivering the IPP action plan.
- The establishment of a more transparent and accountability IPP action plan, supported by an external stakeholder group of which PRT is a member.
- Reversal of the criteria for transfer to open prison conditions to enable indeterminate sentenced prisoners to progress in their sentences.
- Government commitment to expand the eligibility criteria for home detention curfew, including to those sentenced to prison sentences of more than four years.
- Establishment of a Ministry of Justice women in the criminal justice system expert group, of which PRT is a member, to drive the delivery and implementation of the government's female offenders strategy.
- Government commitment to legislate for a presumption to suspend short prison sentences of less than 12 months.
- Improvements to a number of Sentencing Council guidelines, including greater recognition of mitigating factors such as immaturity and primary care responsibilities.
- Government commitment to end the use of prison as a place of safety for those in acute mental distress.
- Roll-out and expansion of liaison and diversion services, community sentence treatment requirements and problem-solving courts.

## Our people, culture and values

PRT is an independent UK charity that is focused on its mission to create a fair, humane & effective justice system.

PRT does this by working collaboratively, critically and in a solution-oriented way with the system it seeks to influence. It uses evidence generated from diverse sources to provide independent, reliable and accessible information to both the people working within the justice system and those impacted by it. PRT will strive to innovate and lead the charity sector by engaging with practitioners so that we benefit and grow through knowledge exchange.

Through our behaviour and relationships with each other and our stakeholders, we will enact the values of integrity, courage, curiosity, inclusivity and tenacity.

We will do this by creating a culture of trust, compassion and respect within PRT:

- **Culture of trust** — We embrace our differences and assume the best of each other.
- **Compassion** — We are kind, non-judgemental, tolerant and demonstrate humility towards each other.
- **Respect** — We show our respect for each other by being present, responsive and collegiate. We value each other's contributions and challenge differences with maturity and empathy. We are reflective and self-aware and encourage this in others.

## A solid platform of sound governance and finance

PRT is governed by an experienced and knowledgeable Board of Trustees which meets four times a year. It operates within an equal opportunities policy, the implementation of which is kept under review. Oversight of personnel matters and risk management is maintained by its Staffing and General Purposes sub-committee. Oversight of money is overseen by the Finance and Fundraising sub-committee. Management and development of the charitable company is delegated to its CEO, Pia Sinha, who is accountable to the Chair. Reports are submitted as required to Companies House and the Charity Commission by the Company Secretary. Systems for line management, appraisal, staff development and supervision are in place together with grievance and complaints procedures.

To maintain its independence, PRT does not seek nor accept direct government funding. PRT is grateful to the many trusts and foundations and individuals that generously fund the majority of its work. PRT will also seek to diversify its funding base including by increasing the proportion of its funds secured from major donors and corporations. All the work outlined in this plan is subject to adequate funding being secured.



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Prison Reform Trust

15 Northburgh Street

London EC1V 0JR

020 7251 5070

[www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk](http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk)

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