

Job Specification
SEO Policy Officer: Health and Wellbeing Team
Prison Leavers Project

Contract type: Secondment

Duration: November 2020 to October 2022

Salary: Successful candidates will continue to receive their existing salary from their home organisation (reimbursed in full by the Ministry of Justice).

Time commitment: Successful applicants will be expected to work four days per week on the Prison Leavers Project for at least the first twelve months (with potential reduction thereafter), and continue working at their 'home organisation' one day per week.

Location: The role is likely to require regular working in a central London location (when appropriate given COVID-19 restrictions), with the option to work from home for part of each week.

Some flexibility is available on start dates and time commitment, if required. Organisations interested in discussing alternative arrangements should contact prisonleaversproject@justice.gov.uk.

The Prison Leavers Project

Prison Leavers is a new project to improve the social inclusion of people leaving prison. It recently received £20million funding from the HMT Shared Outcomes Fund, which supports innovative approaches to complex challenges which 'cut across' multiple departments.

When people leave prison they face a wide range of inclusion challenges, such as securing employment and financial security; improving and maintaining their physical and mental health; obtaining safe and stable accommodation; and building positive relationships with family, friends and the wider community. These issues are complex, and many individuals will have multiple, connected needs.

A huge number of departments, agencies, local authorities, charities and others play important roles in delivering services to prison leavers, but often these services are not as joined-up as the challenges they seek to address. If we cannot address prison leavers' overall needs – recognising that they may also be job seekers, patients in treatment, or sleeping rough – we risk a cycle of missed opportunities, social exclusion and reoffending.

The Prison Leavers Project recognises that to solve such intractable and interconnected challenges, we need to work in new ways. It adopts a systems-led approach, bringing together more than 30 organisations including government departments, local authorities, police and charities, to establish joint ownership of the problems and solutions for people leaving prison. By building a better understanding of the entire system, we aim to identify key points of leverage where interventions might have a wider ripple effect, and adopt new approaches which address the barriers which people face on release, increasing their ability to participate and feel included in their communities. In doing so, we will improve the experience and outcomes for our service users, and support key Government priorities such as reducing reoffending, ending rough sleeping, supporting people to enter work and enhancing social mobility.

The team

We are establishing four multi-disciplinary teams drawn from across the public and third sector, including experts in policy, operational policy, service design, user research and project management. Teams will act as 'innovation hubs', with responsibility for developing and testing new approaches to solving the complex challenges facing people leaving prison. They will be expected to adopt and test new ways of working, including systems thinking, and to put our service users at the heart of their work, co-creating solutions with people with lived experience of prison.

Each team will take the lead on a different policy challenge, but they will need to collaborate closely to ensure the project takes a 'whole system' approach rather than seeing issues in isolation.

The four teams we are establishing are:

- Employability and skills;
- Community ties and relationships;
- Health and wellbeing;
- The day of release from prison.

Over a period of two years, each team will:

- Develop our understanding of their challenge area, and of the wider system it sits within;
- Co-create solutions with a range of experts, including people with lived experience of prison, frontline staff and academics;
- Prototype and test these new approaches, learning from initial implementation in order to adapt and scale the model over time;
- Collaborate with evaluation leads to maximise learning from all stages of the work, taking opportunities to identify best practice and 'what works'.

All four teams will also work closely with people with lived experience of prison, and collaborate with stakeholders across the Criminal Justice System and beyond it, including Government departments, local authorities, third sector organisations, the private sector and academia.

We are a friendly, enthusiastic and collaborative team with a strong emphasis on ensuring team members feel happy, supported and engaged in their work; and supporting everyone to play their part in improving outcomes for people leaving prison. We have a strong commitment to personal and career development, helping everyone to grow and fulfil their potential.

Role and responsibilities

We are recruiting a high-performing third sector candidate for the Policy Officer role within the Health and Wellbeing team.

The successful candidate will be expected to:

- Take a systems-led approach to the challenges and solutions, focusing on opportunities where a small intervention could lead to a large impact.
- Support the problem diagnosis for their challenge area, working closely across the team to develop problem statements and a theory of change.
- Support the development and prototyping of potential solutions, working closely with specialists in the team to prioritise those with most potential.
- Support the implementation of at least one intervention, including monitoring, testing and iterating the model following early learnings.
- Support the team's engagement with key stakeholders from the public, third and private sector and academia.
- Lead the team's engagement with analysts and social researchers, to ensure a robust evaluation of the team's work.
- Lead the team's engagement with another strand of the Prison Leavers Project – the Prison Leavers Innovation Challenge. This will include supporting start-ups and small and medium enterprises to build an in-depth understanding of the challenges facing Prison Leavers, and design, develop and pilot appropriate interventions.

Requirements

Thinking strategically

We are looking for enthusiastic, strategic thinkers who are proactive in identifying opportunities to innovate and work in new ways, and able to identify policy gaps and opportunities. Successful candidates will be comfortable seeing challenges within their wider context, looking across the system to identify potential knock-on impacts, points of leverage and opportunities for collaboration.

Stakeholder engagement

Our work involves constant collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders across the public, private and third sectors, and so the skills to develop relationships with and encourage input from a wide range of people, each with different styles and approaches, is essential.

Adaptable approach

Successful candidates will have a strong focus on delivery, but be comfortable taking an agile approach to policy development and implementation, adapting and iterating plans based on early implementation and learning.

Subject expertise

Successful candidates are likely to have prior knowledge or experience of health and wellbeing challenges for prison leavers and an existing network they can draw on to ensure the project joins up with other related work, and is informed by the latest thinking.

Application process

1. Potential candidates should confirm their line manager supports their application, before completing the attached 'Expression of Interest' form and returning it to prisonleaversproject@justice.gov.uk by 4pm on Friday 9th October.
2. We will arrange short video interviews with a shortlist of candidates w/c 12th October.
3. We aim to contact successful candidates and their home organisation by Monday 19th October, to confirm the offer and discuss arrangements for the secondment.