

# Executive Summary: Recruiting, Developing, and Retaining Leaders to Break Cycles of Reoffending

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**Overview:** This presentation highlights the critical importance of recruiting, developing, and retaining talented prison officers to address systemic issues in prisons, reduce reoffending rates, and foster a rehabilitative culture. The focus is on identifying barriers to retention, proposing actionable solutions, and emphasizing the role of leadership in driving meaningful change within the correctional system.

## Key Themes of the Presentation

### 1. Current Challenges in Prisons (England and Wales):

- **Reoffending Rates:**
  - 38% of adults are reconvicted within a year of release (57% for sentences under 12 months).
  - Reoffending costs £18.1 billion annually.
- **Mental Health and Safety:**
  - 70% of prisoners have mental health needs.
  - Rising incidents of self-harm and violence.
- **Poor Conditions:**
  - Over 40% of prisoners spend at least 22 hours a day in cells.

### 2. Why Recruiting and Retaining Talent Matters:

- Prison officers who use their authority carefully and legitimately can significantly improve outcomes, including reducing violence and fostering rehabilitation.
- *Officers are uniquely positioned to influence culture and systemic change within prisons.*

### 3. Barriers to Retention:

- **Personal:**
  - High impact of the role on physical and mental health.
  - Strain from anti-social shift patterns and poor work-life balance.
- **Professional:**
  - Limited progression opportunities, unfair promotion processes, and lack of managerial support.
- **Cultural:**
  - Negative staff cultures, resistance to change, and lack of alignment with rehabilitative goals.

- **Structural:**
  - High staff turnover, limited wellbeing support, and external stigma surrounding prison work.

#### 4. Proposed Solutions:

1. **Improved Line Management:**
  - Supportive managers to guide officers and inspire systemic change.
2. **Focus on Rehabilitation:**
  - Emphasize the role of prison officers in reintegration measures to enhance job satisfaction and public trust.
3. **Career Development and Pathways:**
  - Structured development programs, flexible working options, and clear career pathways to retain talent.

#### 5. The Unlocked Graduates Model:

- **Comprehensive Training:**
  - High-quality initial training and a fully funded Master's degree.
  - Leadership responsibilities from day one.
  - Increased mobility opportunities and system understanding.
- **Mentoring Model:**
  - Tailored support from external mentors to build trust and capacity.
  - Focused retention efforts through structured feedback and skills development.

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## Conclusion

- Prisons require skilled and diverse talent to create rehabilitative environments.
- Effective support, mentoring, and leadership are critical to retaining officers and inspiring cultural change.
- Policymakers must address systemic barriers to ensure prisons fulfill their reintegrative mission.



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