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5-MINUTE WELLBEING WORKOUT

Leading change in prisons is challenging and the reality of the prison environment can include exposure to trauma. If that trauma accumulates, there can be a risk of burnout, and even mental health issues. It is therefore vital that you practice building your mental resilience and wellbeing.

Prioritise these five resilience practices to help you stay well.

Unlocked

Leading change
on the inside

5-MINUTE WELLBEING WORKOUT



PRACTICE 1 HEALTHY BODY, HEALTHY BRAIN

To ensure your body is able to process any trauma you might be exposed to, prioritise your health. Limit sugar and alcohol, maintain consistent sleep, and balance regular exercise with rest and active relaxation (e.g., breathing, meditation).

Running is particularly effective at relieving stress. Shorter bursts of activity (30 mins a day) can be as beneficial as one longer session. Deficits in any of these areas makes poor mental health more likely.



PRACTICE 2 TREAT YOURSELF RIGHT

Take a few minutes post-shift, or after an emotionally draining incident, to ask yourself – “what do I need right now”? What is the smallest thing you can do to recharge your inner energy and get prepared to get back on the landings again? This might be as simple as a walk, a cup of tea or catching-up with a friend/family.

Remember self-care helps prevent compassion fatigue.



PRACTICE 3 GET CONNECTED

Although you may feel a need to spend time alone with your thoughts, connecting with others is a vital antidote to dealing with stress and is especially effective for processing trauma. Face-to-face contact is found to be particularly beneficial for triggering hormones that relieve stress. Connecting in other ways (e.g. text, video call) can also help.

Remember, this doesn't necessarily mean talking about work or traumatic experiences, simply doing “normal” things with friends, family and colleagues - sitting together, going for a walk, listening to music - can help you build stress resilience. You may also find comfort in other professional and peer support groups (e.g. group supervision) – providing a safe space to talk with others who have shared experiences.



PRACTICE 4 TELL YOURSELF SAFE

Establishing in the brain that a stressful event or day is over resets the stress response and permits us to reengage with the present. To help with this, identify a safe space that is free from noise and distraction which you are in each day, for example the other side of your closed front door.

Each day actively tell yourself you are safe in that space and use being there to reset. This will help you to come out of heightened, high alert states too.



PRACTICE 5 ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

Reflect on three things that you are grateful for or proud of that happened today. These can be tiny or enormous! Practicing gratitude and celebrating the good things that happen positively contributes to our mental health as well as boosting our relationships with others.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

For more insights on the resilience practices shared here, please refer to Miller, J. (2022). The Policing Mind. Policy Press.

Visit Mind: <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/trauma/effects-of-trauma/>

If you would like to speak to someone at Unlocked Graduates about your wellbeing, please contact your MPO in the first instance. If it feels more urgent, then call 999 or visit A&E. For anything less urgent you can contact NHS 111.

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MENTORING PRISON OFFICERS: SUPPORTING, DEVELOPING AND RETAINING PRISON OFFICERS TO BREAK CYCLES OF REOFFENDING

Mentoring Prison Officers (MPOs)

This paper shares our learning and insights on the role of Mentoring Prison Officers (MPOs). MPOs play a vital role in enhancing the support, performance and retention of prison officers, and in so doing their ability to break cycles of reoffending.

MPOs are existing prison officers who are closely aligned with the Unlocked mission: *to develop outstanding leaders to break cycles of reoffending in prison and throughout society*. On their two-year secondment, they typically work across two to three prisons and look after approximately twenty prison officers. The MPO model has several defining and deliberate design features, summarised below.

MPOs are recruited for a prestigious position using a rigorous selection process

Choosing the right MPOs is critical to the effectiveness of Unlocked participants. This begins with positioning the MPO role as a prestigious and highly skilled role, challenging the low occupational prestige typically associated with coaching and training roles across public services. We have a rigorous application process, to ensure prospective MPOs have values-aligned and have the relevant skills and approach to coaching and mentoring, including evidence of impact in the prison service, emotional-intelligence, relationship-building and problem-solving skills.

MPOs are positioned as external to the placement prisons, boosting capability and expertise

MPOs are explicitly positioned as external to the placement prison (i.e., not placed in their home establishment). This means they possess internal domain knowledge and expertise to help participants develop and grow, and there are no issues with sensitive information being shared. Their external positioning enables them to maintain distance and separation, which allows participants to be more open about the challenges they are facing. This creates the conditions for MPOs to work proactively toward resolutions that drive staff retention, wellbeing and performance.

Being positioned as external to the placement prison, but with frontline insight across establishments, MPOs provide a voice like no other to governors and their leadership teams. MPOs confidence to engage with senior leaders builds during their time with Unlocked, ensuring they can provide an independent, objective and informed perspective on pressing cultural and operational challenges facing governors.

MPOs complete structured training and professional development

MPOs complete a structured programme to develop expertise in supporting new prison officers to be effective and stay in their role, which begins with a four-week induction period. Following this, all MPOs support with the initial training of our participants. This builds in-depth familiarity with initial training and ensures MPO practice is current and accurate.

Through their time supporting participants, MPOs spend four days each week in prisons and on the landings. On these days they deliver one-to-one mentoring and coaching sessions, complete observations of practice, deliver regular group supervision, and occasionally teach sessions where content is reviewed or built on. On the fifth day each week, MPOs work collectively on their own development, culminating in a level five Foundation Degree in Coaching and Mentoring.

MPOs develop and share domain knowledge and expertise across establishments

In a recent survey, 95 per cent of MPOs agreed that performing the role has enabled them to have a positive impact on the prison service. One of the main things that MPOs reflect on when speaking about this impact, is the opportunity to work across multiple prison establishments. This provides unique and valuable opportunities to build prison to prison relationships and share best practice across the prison estate:

“It has been fantastic to work in different establishment and gain an understanding of both the similarities and differences between. This has helped my knowledge of the prison estate enormously and reinvigorated me to return to HMPPS with fresh ideas”.

Current Unlocked MPO

Tailored support and leadership development to enable impact

The prison officer role requires outstanding leadership, emotional-intelligence and problem-solving skills. When prison officers do their job well and with legitimacy, they can transform the lives of prisoners. MPOs provide tailored support and leadership development to help participants develop these skills. 87 per cent of Unlocked participants¹ rate their MPO's support as being excellent or good, and 95 per cent rate their MPO as highly effective or effective in supporting their work to break cycles of reoffending:

“My MPO is approachable and warm yet balances this with realism, constructive support and feedback and has been helpful in giving great advice when required. She maintains regular contact with us all and provides feedback that is both confidence boosting and contributory towards our professional development”.

Unlocked participant, 2022 cohort, HMP Liverpool

¹ Online survey with 138 Unlocked participants, June 2023.



MPOs are directly accountable, trained and supported to improve retention

MPOs play an increasingly vital role in encouraging and supporting talented prison officers to remain in the prison service. Only 1 in 3 Unlocked participants rated the quality of support they are receiving with their professional development from their establishment as a good or excellent, and less than half of participants describe their establishment as a 'good place to work'. MPOs are held directly accountable, trained and supported to improve retention against this challenging backdrop.

Part of the MPO role is regular performance, wellbeing and retention monitoring of participants. Unlocked has codified what we have seen change participants' minds to stop them from withdrawing, and MPOs are expected to have worked through this before someone makes a final decision to withdraw. Evidence suggests that the Unlocked MPO model is effective in this context. Data collected in April 2022 showed that the retention of Unlocked officers in their first two years is 13 per cent higher than officers entering via the standard route.

"I would not have got through (my role as a prison officer) without my MPO".

Unlocked participant, 2021 cohort, HMP Feltham

Building leadership capabilities and improving retention across prisons

Performing the MPO role provides an unmatched opportunity for existing prison officers to develop prison officers who are new to the service, whilst also accelerating their own professional development. 95 per cent of MPOs agree the role has developed their decision-making and strategic thinking skills, and 100 per cent agree that the role has strengthened their communication. We have had two MPOs return to home establishments in roles where they look after new starters. Both achieved retention rates of over 90 per cent having taken learning from the MPO model.

Impact of the MPO role beyond the prison workforce

Former MPOs that have now left the prison service tell us that their experience in the MPO role with Unlocked has added significant value and positive impact to their wider career progression. This includes the development of their coaching and management skills, senior leadership and improving perceptions about the impact of prison officers:

"Being an MPO helped to improve my belief that prison staff can have positive impacts in achieving prison goals and to help both staff and prisoners in small, but meaningful ways"

Former Unlocked MPOs

For more information, please visit www.unlockedgrads.org.uk or contact:
Natasha Porter OBE, CEO | natasha.porter@unlockedgrads.org.uk



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Leading change
on the inside



CULTURE, CHALLENGE AND CHANGE:

OUR 2023 – 2024
IMPACT REPORT

OUR IMPACT AT A GLANCE

30,000+

prisoners currently reached by Unlocked Graduates; more than a third of the total prison population

90%

of Unlocked participants tell us they had not considered a job in the prison service before hearing about our mission

30:1

ratio of applications per place for our Leadership Development Programme

8 IN 10

Unlocked participants get promoted or take on additional responsibility in their first two years

19%

higher retention than those coming into the prison service via the standard route

3/4

of Ambassadors to complete the programme since 2017 continue to work towards the mission of breaking cycles of reoffending in their primary role



“ I have to say I was a bit sceptical of Unlocked. I was not convinced graduates would bring any special skills and was concerned their training programme meant that the Unlocked officers would sometimes have to be off the wing when we needed them. But a number of years since I first had a group of Unlocked officers join, I am a complete convert. These officers bring a different perspective and genuinely challenge me (in a good way) with their new ideas and follow through. I'm now lobbying to get more each year.

JENNY LOUIS,
No 1 Governor, HMP Belmarsh

WHY WE EXIST

THE PROBLEM

More than a third of those who leave our prisons today will be reconvicted within a year. Not only does this reoffending make our communities less safe, but it also represents a huge waste of human talent and potential. It breaks up families, destroys livelihoods and prevents people from meaningfully contributing to society. And it is expensive, **costing the taxpayer over £18 billion every year.**

But there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Most of the more than 87,000 prisoners require tailored expert care and robust security. They come from some of society's most vulnerable groups and have a disproportionately high risk of drug addiction, mental illness, homelessness, and suicide; **last year alone there were more than 63,000 reported incidents of self-harm.** 62% of prisoners have the literacy skills below those expected of an 11-year-old and 26% were taken into care as a child.



OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

We recruit, train and challenge outstanding individuals to lead prisoner rehabilitation with the aim of creating high-performing leaders who will break the cycles of reoffending in prisons and throughout society.

OUR SOLUTION

We believe that the way to break cycles of reoffending is through outstanding prison officers. In the same way an outstanding teacher can transform a child's life, **a remarkable prison officer can radically alter the outcomes of a prisoner in their care.** They set the culture on the landings and have the power to create a safe and secure environment focused on rehabilitation. Evidence shows that a good prison officer is critical to improving prisoner outcomes across a range of key measures, including self-harm, violence, legitimacy and even reoffending post-release.

Unlocked Graduates exists to make this happen. Every year, we recruit, train and support a diverse group to deliver reform on the frontline of some of our most challenging prisons and develop incredible leadership skills in the process. They are encouraged to be radical disruptors, pushing boundaries to come up with new solutions and acting as a catalyst for change across the prison system in the process.

TRANSFORMING PRISONS: OUR 2023 – 2026 STRATEGY

Our strategy reflects on everything we have learnt over the past five years, and the steps we now need to take to build the prison system we need. With this in mind we are committing to four areas of work:

- 1 RECRUIT, DEVELOP AND RETAIN MORE HIGH-QUALITY GRADUATES AS PRISON OFFICERS**
- 2 SUPPORT AMBASSADORS TO PROGRESS INTO OPERATIONAL PRISON LEADERSHIP ROLES**
- 3 MAINSTREAM OUR SOLUTIONS SO ALL PRISON OFFICERS BENEFIT FROM OUR RESEARCH AND WORK**
- 4 PROVE WHAT WORKS IN PRISONS TO CATALYSE WHOLE SYSTEM CHANGE**

This is where Unlocked can use our unique strengths to best help the system. We look forward to working with all of you to deliver the reform our prisons need.





STRATEGIC GOAL 1

RECRUIT, DEVELOP AND TRAIN MORE HIGH-QUALITY GRADUATES AS PRISON OFFICERS

This work will always be at our core. To increase our impact, we need to recruit more officers and work in more prisons, reaching more prisoners. As we grow, we are relentlessly focused on maintaining the best and most diverse pool of applicants, ensuring our offer remains extremely high-quality.

IMPACT IN THE LAST YEAR:

- ▶ Placed and trained our **750th high-flying prison officer in our 38th prison** across the UK through our award-winning Leadership Development Programme.
- ▶ Reached more people who would not otherwise have considered entering the service, but who bring a diversity of problem solving and innovation which is essential to catalyse change.
- ▶ Continued to improve the status of the prison officer role:
 - ▶ Rising to **22nd on the Times Top 100 list** of graduate employers in 2023; the first time the prison service has been represented on the list.

“ Every day I know I am contributing towards breaking cycles of reoffending and helping those in my care. Applying for Unlocked Graduates was the best decision I’ve made.

KAT GARTLAND,
Unlocked Ambassador and MPO

- ▶ 90% of our participants tell us they had not considered a career in the prison service before hearing about Unlocked.
- ▶ Seen a record **30 applications for every place** on the programme.
- ▶ Succeeded in recruiting our most diverse cohort ever:
 - ▶ **One in five participants coming from ethnic minority backgrounds** (compared with one in ten of the broader prison officer population).
 - ▶ **72% women** (compared with 41% of the prison service).
- ▶ Maintained our laser-like focus on quality:
 - ▶ The Summer Institute (SI) was highlighted as a particular strength, with **99% of current participants rating the quality of training at SI 2023 as excellent or good.**
- ▶ **Winner** – Institute for Student Employers – Graduate Development Programme of the Year 2023.

“ I think the quality of training that the Unlocked Graduates receive is far superior to regular prison officer training.

DEPUTY GOVERNOR,
Unlocked partner prison

STRATEGIC GOAL 2

SUPPORT AMBASSADORS TO PROGRESS INTO OPERATIONAL PRISON LEADERSHIP ROLES

Unlocked has always been agnostic about where our participants end up. However, we recognise the pressing need for the prison service to retain the very best talent in frontline operational roles. That is why we are currently focusing our efforts on supporting Ambassadors to progress into operational roles and empowering them to work together on prison reform. For the majority of Ambassadors, this translates into promotion on the landings, becoming policy makers and working towards reducing reoffending in other mission-aligned roles.

IMPACT IN THE LAST YEAR:

- ▶ Supported more of our highest performing graduates to continue their focus on rehabilitative reform as part of our Ambassador network:
 - ▶ The majority of Ambassadors stay focused on prison reform after the programme; **79% of Ambassadors from our 2021 cohort are still operational in the prison service or the Ministry of Justice.**



“ After graduating from the Unlocked Graduates scheme no less than three months had passed and I had been successful in gaining my Custodial Manager role. Without the support from Unlocked, mainly my MPO’s and regional team, I don’t think I would have been successful.

DAN CLEMSON,
Unlocked Ambassador

- ▶ 72% who have completed the programme since 2017 continue to work towards the mission of breaking cycles of reoffending in their primary role.
- ▶ **85% of our most recent cohort to graduate were promoted or took on additional responsibility** during their time on the programme (2021-2023). These include roles as Band 4 supervising officers, counter-terrorism liaison officers and equalities officers.
- ▶ Used community organising principles to better formalise our alumni network and create more opportunities for Ambassadors to develop their influence as leaders together:
 - ▶ **Events and study visits arranged organically, including knowledge sharing events, study visits and networking opportunities.**
 - ▶ A group of Ambassadors are working to share best practice on how prisoners with neurodiversity can be better supported.
 - ▶ Evidence-gathering trip to Little Scandinavia at SCI Chester to exchange ideas on how to make prisons more effective for everyone and ways to better measure impact on prison staff and prisoner outcomes.
 - ▶ 2024 will also see the launch of an Ambassador Think Tank – Prisons Solved - to connect research and evidence about what works and help frontline staff solve the most pressing problems.



“ A prison officer is integral to anyone’s prison experience. If you ask anyone who’s served time or is serving time, they’ll tell you that a good officer can make all the difference. A bad officer can also make all the difference.

FEMI,
Ex-prisoner



STRATEGIC GOAL 3

MAINSTREAM OUR SOLUTIONS SO ALL PRISON OFFICERS BENEFIT FROM OUR RESEARCH AND WORK

We have spent the past seven years researching what makes the most effective prison officers and applying this to our recruitment, training and leadership development. Our approach to training and support has influenced wider prison officer training and development, and organisations from across the world regularly reach out to us to learn from our work.

IMPACT IN THE LAST YEAR:

- ▶ Prison officers joining through Unlocked participants are less likely to leave the service in their first two-years: **in the last year, overall retention of Unlocked participants was 19 percent higher than prison officers joining via the standard route.**

- ▶ 100% of governors that we recently surveyed said they thought Unlocked Graduates were contributing positively to the prison service and they all would recommend Unlocked to other prisons.
- ▶ Developed **unique insights** on prison officer recruitment, experience and retention and shared this with our partners.
- ▶ Given oral evidence to the Justice Select Committee of the House of Commons and engaged with prison leaders and policy makers across the globe.
- ▶ Invested fundraised income to **pilot a Middle Leadership Programme** to improve the support prison officers get from line managers.
- ▶ **Winner** - International Corrections and Prison Association (ICPA) - Gary Hill Memorial Award for Staff Wellbeing and Development 2023.
- ▶ Transformed our internal data pipework and research methodologies, and kicked-off a series of applied research projects with leading academics.

“ The three of them have been a revelation. They listen to prisoners and use their education in a good way – they see things from a different viewpoint... by having the way my staff talk to everyone down there better – that is how it’s been so successful. And that is slowly rubbing off. It’s just a different way to be a prison officer.

CUSTODIAL MANAGER,
HMP Pentonville



STRATEGIC GOAL 4

PROVE WHAT WORKS IN PRISONS TO CATALYSE WHOLE SYSTEM CHANGE

We want to create reform through the prison service, and to do this we need to prove that change is possible, particularly in areas where failure is expected. We ultimately want to use excellence and proof of concept on the frontline to drive change across the whole sector and from this, build a system which effectively breaks cycles of reoffending.

OVER THE LAST YEAR, WE HAVE:

- ▶ Worked with leading academics and expert thinkers to celebrate excellence and share evidence-based approaches on the frontline to inspire change:
- ▶ Launched our **Evidence Exchange series to facilitate the frontline exchange of ideas**, what works evidence and solutions for change with leading thinkers and academics (topics include food in prisons; drug recovery; prison officer wellbeing; equity, diversity and inclusion).

- ▶ **Invested almost £1 million of fundraised income** in frontline prison innovation and accelerator projects, including the pilot of a Middle Leadership Programme.
- ▶ Continued our work to find ways to robustly measure our impact with independent experts, academics and behavioural scientists alongside frontline leaders.
- ▶ Analysed prison performance data to assess the indicative impact of our participants on prisoners and prisons. **This shows positive movements on measures associated with reoffending** in the most challenging prisons where we have placed participants for the longest period.
- ▶ Commissioned independent analysts to evaluate our contribution to society from an economic perspective – providing indicative evidence that for every £1 spent on Unlocked at least £59 is saved to society over a five-year period.
- ▶ **Over 400 papers and dissertations have now been written by Unlocked participants**, including award-winning publications in the Prison Service Journal, developing the evidence base on topics including prisoner wellbeing, rehabilitative practices and culture change.

“ The standards that Unlocked Graduates have for their cohort is phenomenal, and in my opinion, is a strict process that we should follow across the entirety of the prison service. The levels of enthusiasm are unmatched and should be a requirement for all prison officers; to do the right thing.

PEOPLE HUB MANAGER,
Unlocked partner prison

CEO UPDATE



NATASHA PORTER
CEO, Unlocked
Graduates

I feel a great sense of pride in what we have achieved at Unlocked over the past year. We have continued to transform the status of the prison officer role, rising to 22nd on the Times Top 100 list of most prestigious graduate employers. Our retention rates have further improved and remain higher than the standard entry route, and we continue to deliver a recruitment and training model that attracts, motivates, and supports the very best talent to pursue a career in the prison service and make a positive impact. None of this would be possible without the staff, partners and supporters who have helped make it happen. Working alongside their dedicated colleagues, Unlocked participants and Ambassadors continue to inspire in all that they do, working tirelessly to deliver system change and give the people in their care the support they need.

But the scale and urgency of reform needed to improve prisons and better prepare prisoners for life post-release cannot be understated. There is still much to do to ensure our prisons are places that are focused on helping those in their care receive the help and support they need to desist from crime. The relationship between prison officers and prisoners is central to this.

“ I think Unlocked is starting to influence how we too recruit and support. It is also attracting some brilliant people into the prison service as officers in other roles.

NO 1 GOVERNOR,
Unlocked partner prison

In the year ahead, we will maintain our relentless focus on reaching more prisoners with brilliant people, all focused on delivering high-quality, evidence-based solutions to tackle deeply entrenched problems and break cycles of reoffending. We look forward to rolling out our middle leadership programme to improve the support prison officers get from their line managers. This is one of the most effective ways to recharge the engine room of prisons, addressing the middle leadership capability gap that participants and Ambassadors identify as the single biggest opportunity to scale culture change and impact on the prison landings, whilst also improving retention and performance of frontline staff. Alongside this, we will focus our efforts on exchanging evidence and identifying solutions that work, ensuring this is accessible for frontline staff given their uniquely powerful position to deliver change.

N. Porter



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