

# Unlocked

Leading change  
on the inside



# TRANSFORMING PRISONS: 2023 – 2026

# OUR VISION IS A PRISON SYSTEM WHERE EVERY PRISONER RECEIVES THE SUPPORT THAT THEY NEED TO FLOURISH AND DESIST FROM CRIME.



**NATASHA PORTER**  
CEO, Unlocked  
Graduates

Prisons are less visible than most other public services, but no less vital. Their performance affects all of us. Almost every prisoner will eventually be released, and at the moment too many subsequently reoffend. Not only does this result in a huge waste of human talent, reoffending ex-prisoners also commit crime in our communities. This makes us all less safe. Furthermore it costs an estimated £18Bn each year to the public purse.

Rather than successfully teaching people to survive their sentence, prisons must focus on giving people the support they need to lead productive and fulfilling lives post-release.

At the heart of this is the excellent relationships between prison officers and prisoners.

Prisons need frontline staff who believe their job is to prepare prisoners to lead successful lives post-release. These staff need motivation, training and support to deliver that. This is where prison leaders and reformers need to focus their efforts.

# 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.

## OUR MISSION:

# WE DEVELOP OUTSTANDING LEADERS TO BREAK CYCLES OF REOFFENDING IN PRISON AND THROUGHOUT SOCIETY

## HISTORY OF UNLOCKED

**MAY 2016**

Coates' review  
of education in  
prisons published

First Unlocked  
participant recruited

**MAR 2017**

**NOV 2018**

Awarded  
Graduate Scheme  
of the Year

**JUL 2019**

First cohort  
graduation event at  
10 Downing Street

Launch as national  
programme

**SEP 2019**

**OCT 2019**

First Ambassador  
in a Governor role

**JUN 2020**

Practice embedded  
into standard prison  
officer training

500 Unlocked  
Graduate prison  
officers celebrated  
at House of Lords

**DEC 2021**

**OCT 2022**

20,000th  
application started

# STRATEGIC GOALS

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# 1

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

This work will always be at our core. Since launch, we have placed 600 prison officers in 37 prisons and receive over 20 applicants for each place on the programme. To increase our impact, we will recruit more officers and work in more prisons, reaching more prisoners. As we grow, we will be relentlessly focused on ensuring our offer remains extremely high-quality.

### BY 2026 WE WILL:

- Accelerate brand appeal and targeted awareness amongst future applicants and their influencers.
- Maintain strong diversity of applications – current participants have studied 91 different subjects. More than one in five is from a Black, Asian or ethnic minority background (compared to nine per cent of all prison staff).
- Develop participants excellently and efficiently.
- Continue to collect and respond quickly to data to retain participants on the landing throughout the two years.
- Grow the size of our cohorts while maintaining quality. This is to maximise impact as well as value for money to the taxpayer.

# STRATEGIC GOAL

## 2

### SUPPORT AMBASSADORS TO PROGRESS INTO OPERATIONAL PRISON LEADERSHIP ROLES

We now have a fast-growing group of 300 Ambassadors and want them to have the greatest impact possible. 90 per cent are in jobs which align with the Unlocked mission and 70 per cent stay in prison at the end of the two year programme. We trust Ambassadors to identify how they can make the most impact, however many tell us they want to stay in operational roles but feel unable to do so. We are going to unpick what these push factors are and begin to resolve them.

#### BY 2026 WE WILL:

- Invest resources into creating equity between onward progression for those staying in the prison service, and options if they go elsewhere.
- Take more responsibility for participants nearing the end of the programme and ensure they have clear options to stay and progress in operational prison roles – as an initial step better understand progression routes and development options.
- Embed community organising principles so Ambassadors are empowered to work together to drive change in prisons.

# STRATEGIC GOAL

## 3

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

We have spent the past six years researching what makes the most effective prison officers and applying this to recruitment, training and support. Our training approach has influenced wider prison officer training, and organisations regularly reach out to us to learn from our work. The retention of Unlocked participants is currently 13 per cent higher than the standard entry route and 100 per cent of Governors we recently surveyed would recommend Unlocked to other prisons.

#### BY 2026 WE WILL:

- Share solutions we have found to workforce issues in the prison service by codifying them in accessible ways.
- Share our research - which describes the techniques great prison officers use - and find ways to embed these across the system.
- Codify solutions previous participants and Ambassadors have found and share with subsequent cohorts.
- Pilot a middle leadership programme to improve the support prison officers get from line managers, including whilst completing the Unlocked programme.
- Work more closely with HMPPS to mainstream best practices.

# STRATEGIC GOAL

# 4

## PROVE WHAT WORKS TO CREATE A CATALYST FOR 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. Over 300 papers and dissertations have now been written by Unlocked participants, and we have invested over £65,000 of fundraised income into innovations reaching almost 15,000 prisoners. 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.

### BY 2026 WE WILL:

- Explore multiple different ways to show our impact, with continued focus on trying to show our ultimate impact: reduced rates of reoffending post-release from prison.
- Identify what the sector would consider to be the strongest proof points that the prison officer is the agent of change.
- Develop a staged approach to respond to this.

## WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

Five years ago, the idea of a highly prestigious prison officer graduate scheme was described as undeliverable, and yet we now get over 20 applications per place and hold multiple awards for our work.

Unlocked does not exist to develop an attractive job route for graduates. We exist to transform our prison system in order to reduce reoffending.

We need a prison service with rehabilitation at its heart. Delivered through mission-aligned, well-trained and supported frontline staff. Empowered by leaders who recognise prison officers' uniquely powerful position to deliver change.

If like us you want to see a future where prison gives people what they need to flourish post-release, then please do support our work.

### YOU CAN:

- Join the Unlocked graduate scheme, or if you are already a prison officer, apply to a support role.
- Fund our work, enabling us to innovate, disrupt and create proof points.
- Share your expertise and help deliver this aspirational work.



**UnlockedGrads**



**unlockedgrads**



**unlockedgrads**



**unlocked-graduates**