The Rt Hon Lord Timpson
Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending
102 Petty France
London
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October 2025

Recall Reform Coalition

Dear Minister Timpson,

We are writing to you on behalf of the Recall Reform Coalition, a diverse group of organisations ranging from national law reform charities to local level frontline services with shared concern that the current use of recall is unsustainable.

We believe that introducing an effective package of measures on recall, such as those outlined below, could reduce the prison population, significantly reduce the cost of unnecessary recalls, make a net positive contribution to economic growth through supporting more people on licence to achieve sustainable employment more quickly and, importantly, reduce re-offending rates. If recall rates could be returned to 2020 levels, this would save over 10,000 prison places annually. A return to 2010 levels would save over 20,000 prison places annually. A reduction of this scale is urgently needed given the prison capacity crisis.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss this.

Increase in recalls

The statistics on recall are increasingly alarming. In the first quarter of 2025 alone, there were 3 licence recalls for every 4 prison releases. As the prison population hits record numbers and capacity remains under extreme pressure, meaningful action on recall is urgently needed.

We know that you share many of these concerns and are already taking action to address the high rate of recall. We are pleased to see that the Government has accepted the Sentencing Review's recommendation on recall and that it is bringing forward legislation to reduce the use of standard recalls. We particularly welcome the ambition to make recall a rare and last resort.

However, we are concerned that the plans announced so far focus on changing the length of recalls, rather than addressing the fundamental causes of the high rate of recall. We are concerned that ignoring the underlying issues risks creating even more of a revolving door cohort. We are also concerned about the impact on rehabilitation and resettlement planning of recall on prison leavers. At a time when the evidence about the ineffectiveness of short sentences is rightly leading to a reduction in their use, we urge you to not inadvertently recreate the same negative impact through the back door of recall.

Urgent need for reform

We share your ambition to make recall a true last resort and stand ready to support you to make that a reality. Although we represent a diverse group of organisations, we largely agree on the underlying issues and how these could be addressed. Independently, several of our organisations have carried out research and published reports to substantiate these. We collectively believe that a package of measures could quickly reduce the rate of recall, including:

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- **Action to meaningfully involve individuals in the co-production of their licence conditions and improve the wider communication of licence conditions**. This work should account for gender-specific needs; the impact of trauma and abuse and high levels of neurodiversity, literacy and wider speech and language needs among people on probation.

- **Taking forward HMIP's recommendation to introduce a clear framework for decision-making for probation practitioners about whether to recall**, with consideration of how the recall decision will impact a person's level of risk and prospects of rehabilitation in the long term, taking into account prison conditions and the availability of rehabilitative opportunities and resettlement services, with clear routes of escalation to address non-compliance.

- **Further investment in resettlement support**, including effective and timely pre-release support, holistic support to assist individuals in securing employment or education and training opportunities, appropriate healthcare and crucially housing. Housing support must create a sustainable pathway to stable housing. A relational approach based on human relationships is key to making resettlement support effective.

- **An independent decision-maker for non-emergency recall decisions:** This would take pressure off probation officers to take sole responsibility for recall decisions, freeing them up to focus on rehabilitation and reducing the incentive to recall as a 'safe' option to avoid reoffending. It would also improve the transparency and accountability around decision making.

- **Adopting and rolling out best practice which have reduced the use of recall in the UK and internationally.** For example;

    - In the United Kingdom, Catch 22's highly effective ACE '**navigator mentor'** service supported people at significant risk of non-compliance with co-produced structured support and probation liaison and advocacy. ACE achieved an indicative reduction in recall rates. The success of this project demonstrates how effective, relational support can reduce the risk of recall.

    - In New York City, the '**Less is More'** reforms which introduced an '**Earned Time Credits'** (aka "30 for 30") system allowing those on licence to earn 30 days of time credit for every 30 days they adhered to their parole conditions. Prior to the Less is More reforms, New York imprisoned more people than any other state for noncriminal technical violations of parole. The reforms have contributed to a dramatic reduction in the prison population; with the result that New York has been able to close six state prisons. Since the reforms there has also been an overall fall in the New York City crime rate, including a fall in a number of major crimes such as homicides, rapes and shootings. International examples of good practice demonstrate that a flexible approach can be effectively applied.

We are grateful for your continued efforts and commitment to improving the justice system. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and your officials to discuss our proposals to decisively reduce the rate of recall, thereby easing the prison capacity crisis and improving rehabilitation outcomes for prison leavers.

Yours sincerely,

Sian Williams, CEO, **Switchback**

Naomi Delap, CEO **Birth Companions**

Penny Parker, CEO, **Standout**

Pavan Dhaliwal, CEO, **Revolving Doors**

Abbi Ayers, Director of Strategic Development, **National Women's Justice Coalition**

Melanie Jameson, **Quakers in Criminal Justice**

Liz Mack, Chief Executive, **Advance**

Helen Dyson, Acting CEO, **Nacro**

Matt Randle, Director of Justice, **Catch 22**

Natasha Finlayson, CEO, **Working Chance**

Anne Fox, CEO**, Clinks**

Fiona Rutherford, Chief Executive, **Justice**

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