

The Rt. Honourable Boris Johnson, MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

16-17 Walkden House
Devonshire Square
London
EC2M 4SQ

The Rt. Hon Robert Buckland QC, MP
Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice
Ministry of Justice
102 Petty France
SW1H 9AJ

11 September 2020

Dear Prime Minister and Secretary of State

Re: Accommodation for prison leavers and the Comprehensive Spending Review

We are writing as senior leaders of voluntary organisations across the justice, health, housing and homelessness sectors to call on the UK Government to commit to ensuring that everyone leaving prison has somewhere to live. This should be safe and secure accommodation which provides a foundation for them to make positive changes and move away from a life of crime. For people leaving prison, being released homeless is simply setting them up to fail. We believe it is time to ensure that all prison leavers have a place to live upon release.

We all know how important having a safe and secure home is. But for too many people leaving prison this has seemed an impossible dream for too long. Almost 1,000 people are released from prison homeless every month, and it is estimated that over 30% of rough sleepers have been in prison.

Having nowhere to live holds people back from accessing support, getting a job, or moving on in their lives. And for people released homeless, the risk of committing another crime is significantly higher. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation recently confirmed that the proportion of service users recalled or resentenced to custody within 12 months of release was almost double for those without settled accommodation in a sample of cases they looked at.

We know that the best way to tackle homelessness is to stop it happening in the first place. Leaving prison is a predictable and preventable route into homelessness, but for many of the most vulnerable in our society it is part of the cycle from the streets to a cell and back to the streets. The continued use of very short prison sentences for repeated minor offending exacerbates the problem.

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The additional funding introduced during COVID-19 to help people leaving prison at risk of homelessness was a welcome step but this is now coming to an end and no longer available for people being released from prison. But even during COVID-19, far too many people have been released from prison with nowhere to stay.

We believe that Government has a duty to ensure that everything possible is done to help people find and keep a home, with the support needed. In a recent public opinion survey commissioned by Nacro, 84% of people said that they think it is important for those being released from prison to have somewhere to live in order to make a fresh start. We know that this is the right thing to do, but it is also cost effective, and positively impacts on the whole of society.

To tackle the barriers people leaving prison face in securing housing, it is critical that Government drives a cross-departmental approach with adequate resource to ensure that everyone leaving prison has somewhere to stay. We as leaders in our fields are all committed to supporting this and we call on Government to commit to ensuring that everyone leaving prison has somewhere to live and for adequate provision for this to be included in the 2020 Comprehensive Spending Review.

For further information, please contact helen.berresford@nacro.org.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Campbell Robb, Chief Executive, Nacro



Peter Dawson, Director, Prison Reform Trust



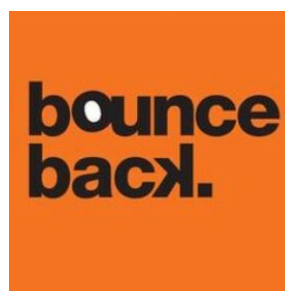
Frances Crook, Chief Executive, The Howard League for Penal Reform



Andy Keen-Downs, Chief Executive, Pact



Francesca Findlater, Executive Founder and Interim CEO, Bounce Back Foundation



Alison Frater, Chair, Clean Break Theatre Company



Mike Trace, Chief Executive, Forward Trust



Rick Henderson, CEO, Homeless Link



Cara Cinnamon, CEO, Khulisa



Tracy Wild, Chief Executive, Langley House Trust



Paul Grainge, Chief Officer, RECOOP



Martin Hancock, Chief Executive, BCHA



Jean Templeton, Chief Executive, St Basils



Rob Owen OBE, Chief Executive, St Giles Trust



Alice Dawnay, Founder and CEO, Switchback



Penelope Gibbs, Chief Executive, Transform Justice



Christopher Stacey, Co-director, Unlock



Samantha Graham, Chief Operating Officer, Clean Sheet



Lesley Howard, National Homelessness Lead, Change Grow Live



Vicki Cardwell, Chief Executive, Spark Inside



Kate Paradine, Chief Executive, Women in Prison



Alison Mohammed, Director of Services, Shelter

