



The Parole Toolkit

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Developed in partnership with Prison Reform Trust (Building Futures programme), The Parole Board, Nottingham Trent University and Wellsburcombe Solicitors

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The purpose of this toolkit

This toolkit has been designed by prisoners in the Prison Reform Trust (PRT) Building Futures Network Group at HMP Rye Hill. The aim of this toolkit is to help you understand what support is available in prison and what you can do to progress through your sentence. It explains key words and processes you may hear about, including offender management, sentence planning, interventions, categorisation and parole.

It also aims to help you feel more confident asking the right questions, speaking to the right staff, and preparing evidence of your progress. This includes understanding what information is used in decisions about progression, open conditions, ROTL (Release on Temporary Licence) and parole.

This toolkit is a guide only. Everyone's sentence is different and policies and timeframes can change. If you are unsure about anything in this booklet, speak to your Keyworker, Prison Offender Manager (POM), Offender Management Unit (OMU) or a solicitor.

Abbreviated words and key terms

- **AP – Approved Premises**
Accommodation in the community where some people are required to live after release to help manage risk and support resettlement.
- **COM – Community Offender Manager**
Your probation officer in the community. They are responsible for managing your licence and supervising you after release.
- **EDS – Extended Determinate Sentence**
A sentence that includes an additional licence period after release to help manage risk.
- **HMPPS – His Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service**
The organisation responsible for running prisons and probation services in England and Wales.
- **IMB – Independent Monitoring Board**
An independent group of volunteers who monitor prisons to ensure people are treated fairly and according to prison rules.
- **Keyworker**
A member of prison staff assigned to support you, meet with you regularly and help you progress through your sentence.
- **MOSOVO – Management of Sexual or Violent Offenders**
Police teams responsible for managing and monitoring certain offenders in the community.
- **MTD – Mandatory Drug Test**
A compulsory drug test carried out in prison.
- **OASys – Offender Assessment System**
A tool used by prison and probation staff to assess risks, needs and sentence plan targets.
- **OMiC – Offender Management in Custody**
The system used to manage your sentence while in prison, including support from Keyworkers and Prison Offender Managers.
- **OMU – Offender Management Unit**
The department in prison responsible for managing sentence progression, categorisation and parole processes.
- **Oral Hearings**
A meeting where you, the Parole Board, and relevant professionals (such as a psychologist or psychiatrist) attend to consider your case.
- **P-NOMIS – Prison National Offender Management Information System**
The prison computer system used to record information about your behaviour, progress and sentence.

- **PPCS – Public Protection Casework Section**

The department within HMPPS responsible for decisions relating to parole, recall and licence conditions.

- **PED – Parole Eligibility Date**

The date when you first become eligible to be considered for release by the Parole Board.

- **PLI – Peer Led Initiative**

Support provided by trained prisoners to help others in custody.

- **POM – Prison Offender Manager**

The prison-based staff member responsible for managing your sentence plan, risk assessment and progression.

- **PSI – Prison Service Instruction**

Official instructions that explain how prisons must operate.

- **PSO – Prison Service Order**

Older policy documents that may still apply in some areas.

- **Psychologists**

Psychologists may be involved at different stages of your sentence, depending on your needs and the prison you are in.

- **Release Test**

The Release Test is the legal test the Parole Board must apply when deciding whether you can be released. It looks at your risk and whether you can be safely managed in the community under a suitable risk management plan and licence conditions.

- **ROTL – Release on Temporary Licence**

Temporary release from prison for approved purposes such as work, education or family contact.

- **TED – Tariff Expiry Date**

The date when the minimum custodial part of an indeterminate sentence has been served.

Helpful staff, support or information

There are many staff members, services and support networks available in prison who may be able to help you during your sentence. Some can support your wellbeing, while others can help with sentence progression, education, interventions, parole preparation and release planning.

If you are unsure who to speak to, ask a member of staff on your wing or submit an application.

Keyworker

Who are they?

A member of prison staff assigned to support you throughout your sentence.

What can they help with?

- Sentence progression
- P-NOMIS entries
- Categorisation
- Adjudications
- General wellbeing
- Referrals to support services

How do I contact them?

Speak to staff on your wing or submit an application.

Why are they important?

Keyworker entries on P-NOMIS may be considered during categorisation reviews, intervention referrals and parole decisions.

More about keywork

Your Keyworker should meet with you regularly to discuss your progress, behaviour, goals and any support needs you may have. They act as a bridge between you and departments such as the Offender Management Unit (OMU).

Keyworker sessions can help you:

- Understand what is expected of you during your sentence
- Discuss sentence progression and parole
- Build evidence of positive change
- Talk about concerns, wellbeing and future plans

“The purpose of the keyworker role is to develop constructive staff-prisoner relationships, foster positive behaviours and build prisoner trust, confidence, hope and commitment to change. Prisoners will be challenged and supported away from violence and reoffending”.¹

¹ Ministry of Justice. (2021). *Prisons strategy white paper* (CP 581). GOV.UK. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/61af18e38fa8f5037e8ccc47/prisons-strategy-white-paper.pdf>

Prison Offender Manager (POM)

Who are they?

A prison-based staff member responsible for managing your sentence plan, risk assessment and progressions.

What can they help with?

- Sentence plans
- OASys reviews
- Categorisation
- Progression
- Intervention referrals
- Parole preparation

How do I contact them?

Submit an application to your POM or the OMU.

Why are they important?

Your POM may write reports and assessments that are used by the Parole Board and other decision makers.

Offender Management Unit (OMU)

What do they do?

The OMU is responsible for managing sentence progression and parole processes within the prison.

What can they help with?

- Categorisation reviews
- Transfers
- ROTL
- Sentence progression
- Parole administration

How do I contact them?

Submit an application to OMU.

Prison Officers

What can they help with?

- General prison information
- Day-to-day support
- Signposting to services
- Applications and processes

How do I contact them?

Speak to officers on your wing or unit.

Psychologists

What can they help with?

- Complete risk assessments
- Recommend interventions
- Prepare reports for parole reviews
- Attend oral hearings as witnesses
- Advise the Parole Board in complex cases

Why are they important?

Psychology reports and assessments can carry significant weight during parole reviews and progression decisions.

Healthcare staff

What can they help with?

- Physical health
- Mental health
- Medication
- Emotional wellbeing
- Referrals to specialist services

How do I contact them?

Submit a healthcare application or speak to staff if the matter is urgent.

Education staff

What can they help with?

- Courses and qualifications
- Functional skills
- Vocational training
- Employment preparation

Why is this important?

Education and qualifications can help support progression and provide evidence of positive change.

How do I contact them?

Submit an education application.

Independent Monitoring Board (IMB)

What do they do?

The IMB independently monitors prisons to ensure people are treated fairly and according to prison rules.

When might they help?

- Concerns about prison conditions
- Fairness or treatment
- Access to services
- Prison complaints

Important to know

The IMB does not work for the prison. IMB members are independent volunteers from the local community.

How do I contact them?

Submit an IMB application.

Listeners

Who are they?

Prisoners trained by the Samaritans to provide confidential emotional support.

Important to know

Conversations with Listeners are confidential unless there is an immediate risk of serious harm or safeguarding concern.

The Listener scheme operates in most prisons in England and Wales.

How do I contact them?

- Ask an officer
- Ring your cell bell
- Speak to a Listener directly

Chaplaincy

What can they help with?

- Emotional support
- Bereavement
- Family concerns
- Faith support
- Release preparation

Important to know

Chaplaincy staff are separate from wing staff and can often provide support in a more private and confidential setting.

How do I contact them?

Submit an application or speak to a member of staff.

Solicitors

What can they help with?

- Parole reviews
- Legal advice
- Licence conditions
- Recall cases
- Sentence issues

Important to know

It is strongly recommended that you seek legal advice to help you navigate the parole process. You may be eligible for legal aid to assist with the costs involved.

How do I contact them?

Speak to a legal representative as early as possible to understand your options.

Understanding your sentence

Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) model

The OMiC model is how your sentence is managed while you are in prison. It is designed to help you understand your offending, work on your sentence plan, and prepare for release.

Your Keyworker and Prison Offender Manager (POM) play an important role in this. By meeting with you regularly, they build an understanding of your behaviour, your needs, and what may affect progress. This information is recorded and used to help assess your risk, your progress, and what work you still need to complete. This information may be used in decisions about your categorisation, sentence planning, and parole.

Different services work together as part of OMiC, including prison staff, probation, healthcare and others. Sharing information helps make sure you are getting the right support and that any risks are managed.

It is not always clear what you need to do to progress through your sentence. Your POM and OMU should help you understand what areas you need to work on and what is expected of you. This can help you make progress and prepare for key decisions such as categorisation reviews and parole.

Your sentence plan and risk

Offender Assessment System (OASys)

The prison and probation service uses a tool called the Offender Assessment System (OASys). This is used by staff to assess your risk and needs, and to help understand the factors linked to your offending and what support or work may help reduce the likelihood of reoffending. Your OASys assessment will be used to help create your sentence plan. This may include any OBP's required, education or employment needs, substance misuse, and any learning difficulties or neurodiversity needs. Addressing these areas can help you progress through your sentence and prepare for release.

The prison and probation service also assess your risk of harm to yourself and others and set targets to help you address and manage those risks.

1. You should be assessed as part of your prison induction within eight weeks of being sentenced.
2. If you are serving a determinate sentence with under two years to serve there is no requirement to review your OASys assessment. Even where there is no routine review date, OASys should be reviewed if something significant changes, or if it is needed for key decisions such as recategorisation, transfer, ROTL or parole preparation.
3. If you are serving a determinate sentence with over two years to serve your POM should review your OASys assessment at least every two years prior to handover to your COM.
4. If you are serving an indeterminate sentence your POM should review your OASys at least every three years prior to handover to your COM. It should also be reviewed two years and 24 weeks prior to parole eligibility date (PED) for the purposes of the pre-tariff sift (please see our information sheet about the parole board and parole reviews for more information on this).
5. Your OASys will be taken into consideration as evidence for decisions such as, re-categorisation, ROTL and parole reviews.
6. The prison should supply you with a copy of your completed OASys assessment.

In addition to the above, your OASys should be reviewed at the following times:

- Prior to transfer to open conditions and again within 8 weeks of having been transferred
- Whenever there is a significant event which changes the risk management and/or sentence plan

If you think that your OASys assessment has not been reviewed recently, you can put in an application to OMU to request this. You could also make a formal complaint if it is causing problems with your progression.

Sentence plan

Alongside keeping the public safe, your sentence should focus on reducing your level of risk and addressing your risk factors. The prison will complete an assessment of your needs and risks. They will use this information to create a plan known as your sentence plan. Your sentence plan will include targets for you to complete. Successfully completing them will help to reduce your needs and risks. Objectives could include:

- Offender Behaviour Programmes (OBPs)
- Education
- Substance misuse work

This can help you progress through your sentence, move to a lower security category and build evidence of positive change that can be included in your parole dossier.

Interventions and Offender Behaviour Programmes (OBPs)

Interventions are all the activities and work you complete to help reduce your risk and address your offending behaviour. They form an important part of your sentence plan and are used as evidence of your progress.

Interventions are designed to help you:

- understand your offending behaviour
- develop skills to manage risk
- make safer choices in the future

Offender Behaviour Programmes (OBPs)

OBPs are a specific type of intervention. These are structured and accredited programmes designed to address particular types of offending behaviour.

They are usually delivered in groups and follow a set format. Accredited programmes are approved by HMPPS and are based on evidence about what works to reduce reoffending. The programmes available may vary depending on the prison.

Other types of interventions

Interventions are not limited to programmes. They can include a range of different activities and support, such as:

- **Education, training and work**
For example, English and maths, vocational training or prison jobs to help you build skills for release
- **Psychology-led interventions**
For example, Building Choices, PIPE (Psychologically Informed Planned Environment), or support through Personality Disorder (PD) services
- **Substance misuse support**
Support to address drug or alcohol use, including one-to-one work or structured workbooks
- **Personal development work**
Courses or sessions designed to improve thinking, behaviour and decision-making

Building Choices

Building Choices is a psychology-led intervention designed to help you understand your offending behaviour and manage your risk.

It focuses on identifying patterns in your thinking, behaviour and relationships, and helping you develop safer ways of responding.

It may be delivered one-to-one or in small groups and is often used where more individual or intensive work is needed.

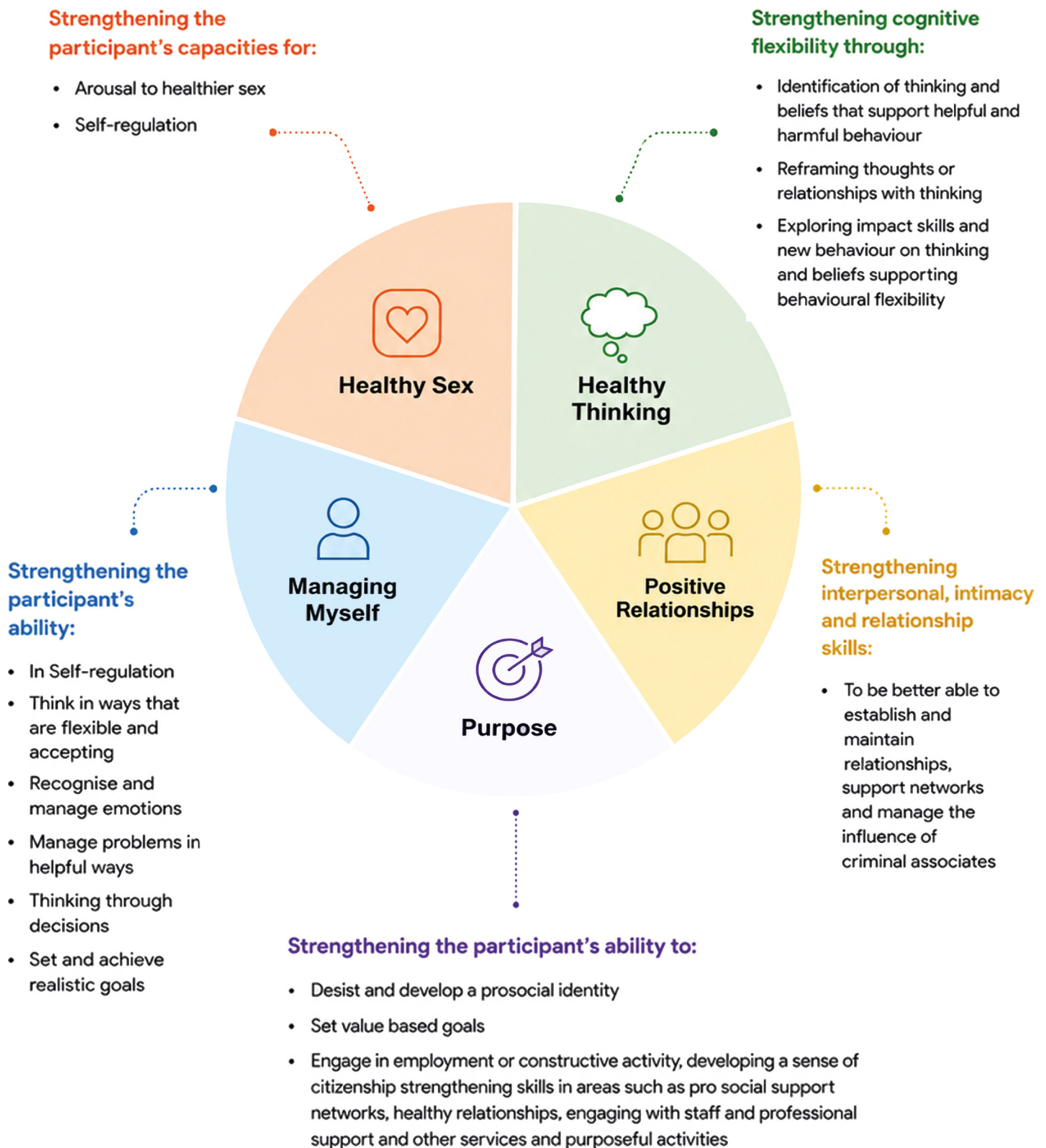
Progress made through Building Choices may be used as evidence when decisions are made about your progression and parole.

The diagram below shows the main phases of Building Choices. Some participants may first complete a “Getting Ready” phase as part of the High Intensity Pathway. This pathway is designed for people who have been assessed as having higher levels of risk and need and includes additional sessions to support engagement with the programme. The Getting Ready phase helps participants prepare for the intervention and build a positive working relationship with facilitators. The programme then focuses on developing skills in self-management, problem-solving, relationships and future planning to support positive change and reduce the risk of reoffending.²



² Ministry of Justice. (2025). *The next generation of accredited offending behaviour programmes: Building Choices* (Process evaluation report). UK Government. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68763e2f88da2e5804bb6a51/next-generation-behaviour-report.pdf>

Strengths-based version of the Success Wheel



Psychologically Informed Planned Environment (PIPE) units

PIPE units could be part of your sentence plan. They are residential environments within prison that are specifically designed to support the progression of prisoners with complex needs and personality related difficulties.

PIPE units are also part of the Offender Personality Disorder Pathway (OPDP) which is a connected set of interventions for prisoners who are likely to meet the criteria for a diagnosis of PD.

Overall, PIPE units aim to improve the psychological health of participants, to improve the participants' quality of relationships and to reduce the likelihood of reoffending.

It is important to understand that completing a programme is only one part of your sentence plan. Your behaviour, engagement and progress across all interventions will be considered when decisions are made about your progression, categorisation and parole.

It is not just about completing a course but showing what you have learnt and how you have changed.

The 7 Pathways to Reduce Reoffending

The 7 pathways approach focuses on the key areas that can help you move forward and reduce the risk of returning to prison.

You may be assessed against these pathways so that support can be put in place and clear goals agreed.

The aim is to help you build a more stable life both in custody and after release. The 7 pathways are:

1. Accommodation

Having somewhere safe and stable to live after release is important. Without this, it can be much harder to move forward and build a stable future.

2. Attitudes, thinking and behaviour:

Understanding how you think and react can make a difference. Support and programmes can help you recognise patterns in your behaviour and make positive changes.

3. Children and family:

Staying connected with family and supportive people can help you stay on track. Positive relationships can make it easier to rebuild your life.

4. Drugs and alcohol:

Getting support with drug or alcohol use can improve your chances of moving forward. Treatment and support services are available to help you manage this.

5. Education, training and employment:

Gaining skills, qualifications, or work experience can help you find employment and support yourself after release. This can help you build a more stable future.

6. Finance, benefit and debt:

Managing money, accessing benefits, and dealing with debt are important parts of resettlement. Support is available to help you get on top of these.

7. Health:

Looking after your physical and mental health is important. Getting the right support can help you cope better and focus on moving forward.

Your behaviour and record

Rules and adjudications

Prison rules apply to everyone in custody. If you break these rules, it may be treated as an offence and could lead to an adjudication.

The governor may also set local rules for the prison. Breaking these rules may lead to action being taken, depending on the circumstances.

If prison staff believe that you have committed an offence, you can be charged and you will then have to attend a hearing. This is called 'an adjudication'. Depending on the nature and severity of the allegation, the adjudicator may refer the case to either the police or to an independent adjudicator who has the ability to give the accused extra days in custody if they are found guilty.³

At the adjudication, prison staff will state the facts of the offence and you will have the opportunity to offer your version of what happened.

The adjudication officer will decide if you are or are not guilty of the offence. If you are found guilty you may receive a punishment such as loss of certain privileges known as 'losses'.

Please note: Adjudications may have an impact on your progression and may impact your chances of achieving a positive parole decision when your adjudications are considered by the Parole Board.

Progressing through your sentence

Progression

While navigating through your sentence you will have the opportunity to lower your security categorisation status. This would allow you to move to a lower security category prison and assist in demonstrating a positive change in your behaviour which will be useful for your parole.

If you are transferred to open conditions (Category D) you may have the opportunity for Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) which will allow you the opportunity to rebuild family ties, access work opportunities and demonstrate re-integration into the community in preparation for release.

Please note: If you are serving an indeterminate sentence, such as an Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentence or any type of Life sentence, the Parole Board can direct your release, if it considers it safe to do so. The Parole Board can also recommend a transfer to open conditions (Category D). Any recommendation for a transfer to open conditions must be approved by the Secretary of State for Justice before a transfer can take place. In some cases, the secretary of state may also approve a move to open conditions without a Parole Board recommendation. This is known as a *Guittard decision*.⁴

If you are serving a determinate sentence, such as a Standard Determinate Sentence (SDS), Serious Offence Protection Case (SOPC) or Extended Determinate Sentence (EDS), it is the responsibility of the Governing Governor at your current prison to approve your re-categorisation to open conditions.

Changes

It is important to be prepared for things to change, be delayed and to build new relationships. It's very likely that the prison and probation staff will change during your sentence, and many of the practices and policies will also change during this period.

³ An HMPPS adjudicator is a senior staff member or independent official responsible for presiding over prison disciplinary hearings (adjudications) when prisoners are accused of breaching prison rules. See the Prisoner Discipline Procedures (Adjudications) Policy Framework for more detail on the process.

⁴ Guittard decisions relate to the Secretary of State's authority to approve transfer to open conditions for indeterminate sentenced prisoners outside of the Parole Board process.

These changes could be brought in by HMPPS for example, changes to interventions including OBPs or changes to risk assessment tools used to assess your risk factors. These changes could have an impact on you and/or your sentence. You can keep updated with changes by speaking to your POM and other prison staff or reading prison newspapers such as Inside Time.

Please note: The Prison Reform Trust have an advice service to assist in keeping prisoners up to date with policy changes, their contact information can be found at the end of this booklet.

Family engagement and supportive personal relationships

Some people leave prison knowing they will be caring for family members. This can feel challenging while getting used to life back in the community. However, caring for others can also give you a sense of purpose, responsibility, and motivation. This can help you stay focused on your goals and support your progress after release.

HMPPS encourages people in prison to stay in touch with family and build positive relationships. Keeping contact with people who support you can improve your wellbeing while in prison and help you feel more prepared for release.

Research shows that people who keep positive contact with family and friends are less likely to return to prison. Having support from others can help you deal with challenges, make better decisions and build a more stable future.

Using your time in prison to build skills, maintain relationships, and prepare for release can help you create a more stable, meaningful and crime-free future.

Ways to keep in touch

There are several ways you can stay in contact with family and people who support you while in prison:

- **Phone calls**

You can add approved numbers to your PIN and stay in regular contact by phone. Speak to staff if you need help setting this up.

- **Letters**

Writing letters can be a reliable way to stay in touch, especially if phone access is limited.

- **Social visits**

You may be able to have visits from family and friends. These can take place in person or through video calls (Purple Visits).

- **eMates/digital messaging services**

Some prisons allow family and friends to send messages electronically through approved services, such as eMates or Purple Visits.

- **Family days and extended visits**

Some prisons offer longer or more relaxed visits, which can help maintain relationships.

If you are finding it difficult to stay in touch, you can speak to:

- Your Keyworker
- Your POM
- Family support services (if available in your prison)
- Chaplaincy

They may be able to help you arrange contact or provide support with family relationships.

Parole and release

Tariffs

Tariff Expiry Date is the date that your minimum sentence is served. If you have not reached this date you are referred to as pre-tariff. If you have served beyond your Tariff Expiry Date, you are classified as post-tariff due to you having served over the minimum requirement.

Please note: Tariffs do not apply to those who are serving a whole life order. Prisoners serving a whole order are not referred to the Parole Board and can only be released by the Secretary of State for Justice in exceptional circumstances. This is usually on compassionate grounds for example, when the prisoner has a terminal illness.

Dossier

Information known as evidence should be included within your parole dossier, this will be considered by the Parole Board, for example:

- Reports written by the HMPPS
- Reports from other professionals such as psychologists or the chaplaincy team
- Reports from courses or interventions you have undertaken
- Information regarding your current and previous offences
- The judge's sentencing remarks or comments
- Healthcare reports (if required)
- Prison security or intelligence reports
- A victim personal statement from the victim(s) or their family members (if applicable)
- Any representations you have submitted

Please note: You can send written evidence (information) to the Parole Board to be considered for inclusion into your dossier, these are called your 'representations'. If you discover an error in your dossier, you must make the Parole Board aware through your legal representative.

Release

If you are serving a sentence that includes parole, you may be considered for release by the Parole Board once you become eligible. For people serving an indeterminate sentence, such as an IPP or life sentence, this is usually after they have completed their tariff (the minimum time they must spend in prison). The Parole Board will decide whether it is safe to release you. If you have been recalled to prison after release, you may also need a Parole Board review before you can be released again.

It is best practice to start to prepare for release years in advance, gaining as many skills and as much knowledge as possible to afford you the best opportunity of success when you are back in the community.

The Parole Board is responsible for deciding if you are safe to be released. They will scrutinise your risk management plan among other evidence during the process. The Parole Board must be satisfied that it is no longer necessary for the protection of the public for you to be kept in closed conditions (in prison).

It is important to note that it is possible you may remain in custody after your tariff date if the Parole Board remains dissatisfied. It is also worth noting that the Parole Board only makes recommendations for a move to open conditions for indeterminate sentence prisoners, such as people serving IPP or life sentences. In these cases, the Secretary of State has the final say.

Release test

The release test is the legal test the Parole Board must apply when deciding whether you can be released. It considers whether your risk has reduced enough to be safely managed in the community and whether the proposed risk management plan and licence conditions are sufficient to manage any remaining risks.

The Parole Board will consider evidence such as:

- What was happening in your life that led to your offending?
- What have you learnt from what happened?
- How have you addressed issues that contributed to your offending e.g. drugs and alcohol dependency?
- How will you act differently?
- Have you completed any OBPs? How can you apply these skills in the community?
- What has your custodial behaviour been like?

The Parole Board will consider information in your Risk Management Plan, such as:

- How will you cope in the community?
- Where will you live?
- What support will you have?
- Will you have a job?
- What is your relationship with your COM like?
- Will you be open and honest?
- What licence conditions are being proposed to manage your risk in the community?

Oral hearings

When an oral hearing is scheduled, the Parole Board will allocate a date where all parties involved are available. You will normally be given advance notice of your hearing date, although exact timings can vary.

The Parole Board will allocate members to hear your case.

Depending on the details of your case, this may be made up of one to three panel members.

One panel member will be the 'Chair', and they will manage and direct the procedure of the hearing. For some cases a specialist member can be needed, this could be a psychologist or psychiatrist.

The hearings are usually conducted remotely via a video link, with you remaining at the prison you are currently located in, but placed in a private room. Sometimes the panel will attend in person. That might happen when there are identified complexities or vulnerabilities in a case that would mean a remote video hearing would be difficult or potentially unfair on you.

During the hearing, the Parole Board panel members and your legal representative (if you have one) will ask the professionals a series of questions to better understand your case and risks. You will also be asked questions by the panel.

This is your opportunity to speak about what you have done with your time in custody, for example:

- What offender behaviour work have you completed?
- What have you learnt from attending those courses and how would you apply those skills when you are back in the community?
- What are your plans if you are released, where will you live, what will you do for work, etc.?

The decision

The Parole Board must issue its decision within 14 days of the end of the oral hearing (or after a paper decision)⁵. The prison must provide you with a written copy of the decision.

When the parole review is finished, anyone can request a summary of your parole decision. This includes the victim(s), the public and the media. These summaries are called “Summary Decisions” or Parole Board Decision Summaries (PBDS).

When can a parole decision be changed?

After the Parole Board makes a decision about release, there are limited situations where that decision can still be changed.

There are three possible routes:

1. Reconsideration (within 21 days)
2. Setting aside a final decision
3. Referral to the High Court (serious offences only)

1. Reconsideration (first 21 days)

When the Parole Board makes a decision about release, it will usually remain provisional for 21 calendar days from the date it is issued.

During this time, an application can be made asking the Parole Board to reconsider (look at again) its decision. If no application is made within 21 calendar days, the decision becomes final.

Who can apply?

- The prisoner
- The Secretary of State for Justice (through PPCS)

Victims or members of the public cannot apply directly, but they may ask the Secretary of State to consider applying.

What are the grounds?

Reconsideration can only be requested if the decision was:

- **Procedurally unfair** - For example, important evidence was not shared, or the correct process was not followed

OR

- **Irrational** - The decision does not logically follow from the evidence that was considered

⁵ In some cases, the Parole Board can decide a case using the written evidence alone, without an oral hearing, known as a paper decision. This means the decision is based on reports and other documents rather than evidence given at a hearing.

Important points

- The application must be made within 21 calendar days of the decision
- Late applications are normally not accepted (unless an extension is granted)
- A recommendation for open conditions cannot be reconsidered

Who does this apply to?

The reconsideration mechanism mainly applies to:

- Life sentence prisoners
- IPP prisoners
- Extended sentence prisoners
- Certain discretionary conditional release cases
- Some terrorism-related sentences
- Recalled prisoners serving these types of sentences

2. Setting aside a final decision

This is a separate process from reconsideration. It applies after the 21-day reconsideration period has ended, when the decision has already become final.

The Parole Board has the power to set aside (cancel) its final decision in certain circumstances.

A final decision can be set aside if:

- There was a serious error of law or fact.

OR

- Important information was not available to the Parole Board when the decision was made.

OR

- There has been a significant change in circumstances.

If the Parole Board directed release

The Secretary of State for justice (through PPCS) may apply to set aside a decision:

- Within 21 calendar days if there was an error of law or fact
- At any time before release if there is new information or a change in circumstances

The Parole Board can also begin this process itself if necessary.

If the Parole Board refused release

You (or your legal representative) may apply to have the decision set aside if there was an error of law or fact.

You can write directly to:

Parole Board for England and Wales
Floor 3
10 South Colonnade
Canary Wharf
London
E14 4PU

3. Referral to the High Court (serious offences only)

The Secretary of State for justice has the power to refer certain Parole Board release decisions to the High Court.

This applies only to the most serious offences:

- Murder
- Rape
- Terrorism offences
- Causing or allowing the death of a child

If a case is referred, the High Court — not the Parole Board — will decide whether the prisoner can be released.

A referral will only be made if the Secretary of State for justice believes:

- Release would seriously undermine public confidence in the parole system, AND
- The High Court may not be satisfied that the legal test for release has been met

Key differences between changes to parole board decisions

Reconsideration

- Must be applied for within 21 calendar days
- The decision is still provisional
- Based on procedural unfairness or irrationality
- Can be requested by the prisoner or the Secretary of State

Setting aside

- Happens after the decision becomes final
- Based on serious error of law or fact, missing information or significant change in circumstances
- Can be requested by the prisoner or the Secretary of State (depending on the situation)

High Court Referral

- Only applies to certain very serious offences
- Used after a release decision has been made
- The Secretary of State refers the case
- The High Court makes the final decision about release

Email: settingaside@paroleboard.gov.uk

You should seek legal advice before applying if possible.

If a decision is set aside, the case will be reconsidered either on the papers or at a new oral hearing.

After release

Licence conditions

Licence conditions are the rules you must follow upon release. Breaking these rules is deemed a breach and may lead to you being recalled to prison.

Your licence conditions will be written in your licence documents. These will be issued to you upon release and you will be required to sign for them to show you understand what you are required to do or not to do.

There are standard licence conditions which apply to all prison leavers. There are also additional licence conditions that can be applied if your Community Offender Manager (COM) deems them necessary and they are approved by the Parole Board. There can also be bespoke licence conditions that can be applied for a specific risk that is identified by your COM and not covered by the standard or additional conditions previously mentioned. Again, these must be approved by the Parole Board.

Please note: Licence conditions are covered by the Licence Conditions Policy Framework.

Standard licence conditions

The following are standard licence conditions and will be on every licence. During your licence period you must:

1. Be of good behaviour and not behave in a way which undermines the purpose of the licence period
2. Not commit any offence
3. Keep in touch with the supervising officer in accordance with instructions given by the supervising officer
4. Receive visits from the supervising officer in accordance with instructions given by the supervising officer
5. Reside permanently at an address approved by the supervising officer and obtain the prior permission of the supervising officer for any stay of one or more nights at a different address
6. Not undertake work, or a particular type of work, unless it is approved by the supervising officer and notify the supervising officer in advance of any proposal to undertake work or a particular type of work
7. Not travel outside the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man except with the prior permission of your supervising officer or for the purposes of immigration deportation or removal
8. Tell your supervising officer if you use a name which is different to the name or names which appear on your licence
9. Tell your supervising officer if you change or add any contact details, including phone number or email

Additional licence conditions

You may also have additional licence conditions. These can restrict the things you do or require you to do something. These could include, but are not limited to:

- Restrictions on some activities
- Restrictions on using the internet
- Restrictions on using mobile phones and cameras
- Not be permitted to contact your victim, or anyone under 18 or not be permitted to stay in a house with anyone under the age of 18
- Not to enter or remain in sight of places where there are children, such as schools or children's play areas
- Not be permitted to be in contact with any known sex offenders, except during courses or where they live at the same hostel as you
- Not to enter a certain area or go to a certain place ('an exclusion zone')
- Not to be in contact with another prisoner
- Not to work or volunteer in a place that will involve a person under a certain age
- To take part in a sex offender programme
- To attend polygraph test sessions
- To tell your supervising officer if you start a new relationship or to tell your supervising officer if you start a new relationship where the person resides in a house with someone under the age of 18
- To stay at home between certain hours 'curfew'
- To report to a police station to give details of any car you use
- To attend appointments with a psychiatrist or mental health worker. (This condition can only be used with your consent and if mental health services agree to treat you.)

Some licence conditions will include the words, "without the prior approval of your supervising officer", so they may be allowed if your probation officer is aware and agrees.

Your COM must make sure that a request for additional licence conditions is necessary and proportionate. The Licence Conditions Policy Framework defines these criteria in the following way:

- **Necessary:** Any licence condition requested must have been identified as a way to manage a specific risk or issue posed by the individual, without limitation to the current index offence.
- **Proportionate:** Any licence condition must be the least intrusive means of enabling that management.

Some victims have the right to have their views considered about what conditions they think you should be subject to, and to be told about relevant conditions which are included in your licence. There is more information about this in the Licence Conditions Policy Framework.

The Licence Conditions Policy Framework lists the following categories of licence condition which could be added to your licence:

- Residence at a specified place
- Restriction of residency
- Making or maintaining contact with a person
- Participation in, or co-operation with, a programme or set of activities
- Possession, ownership, control or inspection of specified items or documents
- Disclosure of information
- Curfew arrangement
- Freedom of movement
- Supervision in the community by the supervising officer, or other responsible officer, or organisation
- Restriction of specified conduct or specified acts
- Extremism
- Polygraph condition
- Drug testing conditions
- Electronic monitoring conditions

Bespoke conditions

Your supervising officer may decide that the wording of the standard or additional licence conditions are not enough to manage a specific risk. They may make an application to the Public Protection Casework Section (PPCS) for a bespoke condition. If your release decision is determined by the Parole Board, they have the responsibility to ensure the licence conditions are correct for the particular individual.

Exclusion zones

You may have an exclusion zone included in your licence. This means you cannot enter a specific area whilst on licence. This could be based on where previous victims live or locations that are linked to offending behaviour. The licence conditions policy framework states that 'exclusion zones must have clear boundaries that can be understood on the ground.' You should speak to your COM if you do not understand an exclusion zone or have a concern about access to something within it such as a hospital to be used.

Alcohol

Supervising officers are advised that conditions restricting alcohol use must be clear and enforceable. Any condition must be necessary and proportionate to manage risk.

Please note: A condition to 'be of good behaviour' may still be breached if alcohol use leads to behaviour that is unacceptable or increases risk, which could result in recall. You should also be aware that complying with alcohol testing could be a condition of an Approved Premises. Being evicted from an Approved Premises for consuming alcohol could result in being recalled to prison.

Electronic monitoring

Electronic monitoring, also known as ‘tagging’, is used to monitor conditions such as curfews, exclusion zones, alcohol monitoring and abstinence monitoring. It means having a ‘tag’ attached to you, usually on your ankle, and a monitoring unit installed in your agreed place of residence.

The Electronic Monitoring Service (EMS) will check the information from your tag and tell your COM if there is any indication you are breaching your licence conditions. If you have any problems or questions about your electronic tag, you should contact EMS on 0800 137 291.

Electronic monitoring can now be included as a licence condition for a wider range of people, including people serving extended sentences (e.g. EDS, or an Extended Sentence for Public Protection (EPP)). If you have this on your licence and are not sure why, speak to your POM or COM about it, or call PRT’s advice service for more information.

Use of computers and mobile phones

Additional condition number five relates to your use of electronic devices, and may place restrictions on devices such as mobile phone and computers.

For example, you may not be allowed to have more than one mobile phone or any device with a camera function. You may be expected to make devices such as computers and phones available for inspection and told not to delete internet history information. You may be restricted from using any computer or device which is internet enabled without the prior agreement of your COM.

Approved Premises

Your COM may include residing in Approved Premises (AP) as part of the residence conditions of your licence. They might do this if they think it will help to manage any risks when you return to the community. Refusing to stay at an AP would be considered a breach of your licence and you could be recalled to prison.

In addition to your licence conditions, if you are staying at an AP you will have to follow their rules, which may include a curfew and signing in. There is more information available in the Community Accommodation Service Tier 1 (CAS1) - Approved Premises Policy Framework.

Prison Reform Trust contact, advice information service

We are a small service which provides information and advice for people in prison. We are independent from the prison service.

Our Freephone information line is **0808 802 0060**.

This number is open:

- Monday 3pm to 5pm
- Wednesday 10.30am to 12.30pm
- Thursday 10.30am to 12.30pm

When we are not taking calls, you can leave a short voicemail.
Please give:

- Your name
- Prison number
- The prison you are in
- Details of the information you are looking for

Voicemails will be checked during work hours Monday to Friday. We will respond as soon as possible by post or by using the email a prisoner service.

You can write to us at:

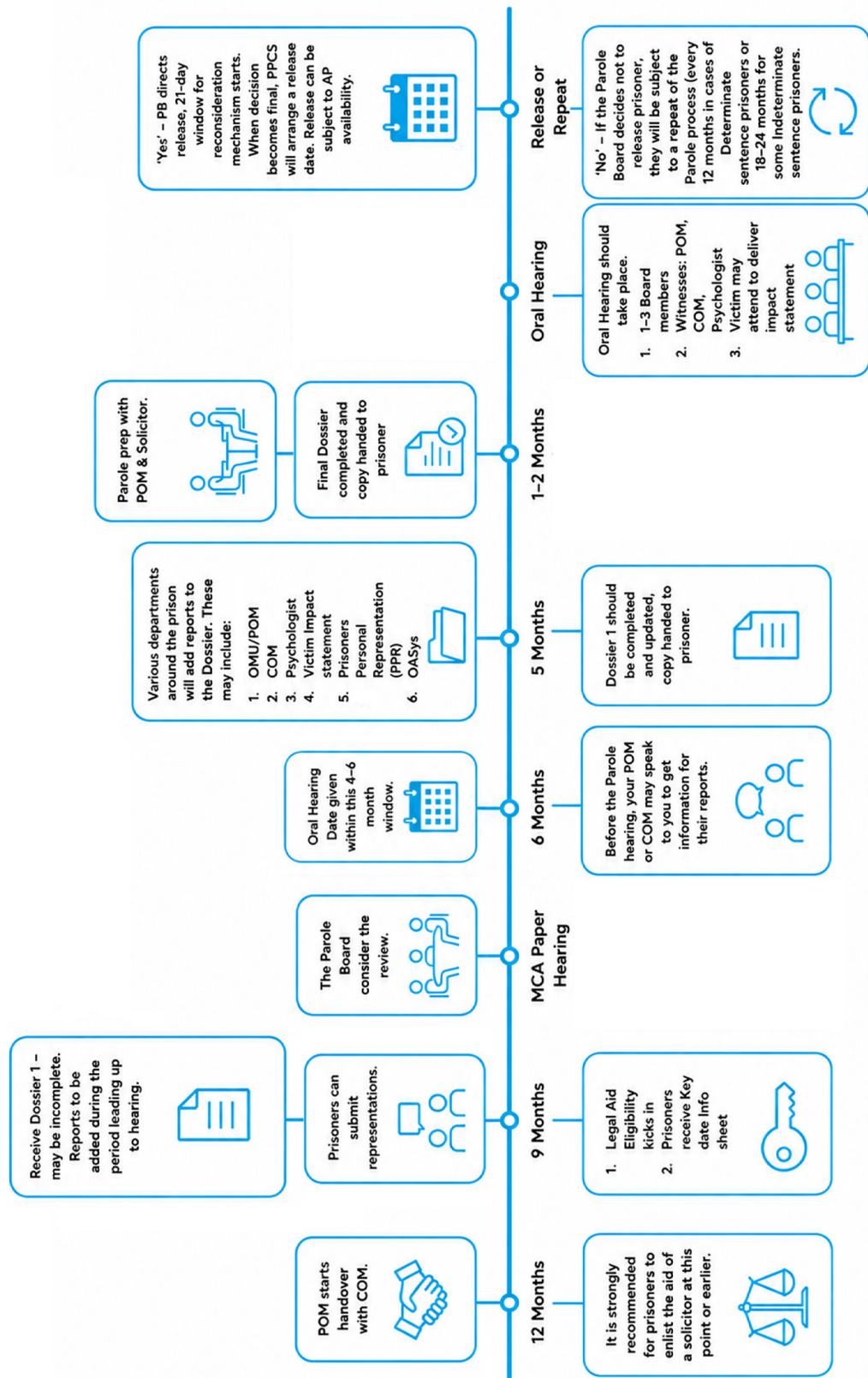
Prison Reform Trust Freepost
ND6125
London
EC1B 1PN

You do not need to use a stamp

12 Month Parole Timeline

Every parole review is different, but most follow a similar process and timetable. The timeline on the following page provides a simple overview of the key stages that usually take place in the 12 months leading up to a parole decision. It is designed to help you understand what to expect, identify when important reports and decisions are likely to happen, and prepare for each stage of the process. Timeframes can vary depending on individual circumstances, so always check with your POM, OMU or legal representative if you are unsure about your own case.

12 Month Parole Timeline



The logo for the Prison Reform Trust, featuring the words "PRISON", "REFORM", and "TRUST" stacked vertically in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The text is set against a solid dark red rectangular background.

**PRISON
REFORM
TRUST**

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