



Background

In 1968, there were only 168 people serving sentences of 10 years in custody – now there are over 18,500.

The Prison Reform Trust wants to understand what this means for the people serving these sentences, the families and friends left behind, and the system that is responsible for their care. Then we want to make a difference – to the way of life in prison for people serving very long sentences and to their ability to build a future in the community to which almost all will return.

The Building Futures will be an innovative *prisoner-led project*. It will give long term prisoners the opportunity and skills to influence the policies and practices that affect them, and to build the bridges between prison and community on which their futures depend.

As its Research Officer, you will be working to the Programme Lead; contributing to research design, conducting desk research and gathering data, amongst other responsibilities to ensure this new, unique five-year programme is facts-led. You will put prisoners, families and prison staff at the heart of the work, and will be working alongside them, as well as staff at the Prison Reform Trust and other organisations.

The Prison Reform Trust

Over nearly 40 years, Prison Reform Trust (PRT) has established its reputation as a knowledgeable, principled but pragmatic advocate for prison reform. We take no money from central government so that our freedom to say what needs to be said is always beyond question.

We work closely with the operational services and with officials, often quietly behind the scenes, as well as making the case for reform with politicians and the general public. In 2018, after 12 months of consultation, especially with prisoners, we published our five year strategic plan which sets out what we are like and what we want to achieve. Central to that plan is a determination to make our privileged access to decision makers and opinion formers more available to the people who live in prison.

The promotion of equality and human rights underpins our mission.

Supported by a diverse board of trustees, the PRT team delivers a mix of long-term programmes and in-depth analysis alongside our signature brand of “principled opportunism”. The team contains a depth of knowledge and experience that allows it to respond quickly to the rapidly changing context of penal policy, but always grounded in our values and our knowledge of what has gone before. Our central aim is to improve conditions for the people who live in prison, and we believe that that can only be achieved by reducing our use of imprisonment overall. The promotion of equality and human rights underpins our mission.

Based in a single open plan office in Farringdon, our diverse team includes people from a wide variety of personal and professional backgrounds, including people who have lived and worked in prisons. We have no political affiliation, and work closely with many individuals and organisations across the statutory, voluntary and private sectors. We prize a willingness and ability to think objectively from a foundation of scrupulously sourced evidence, and we work as a team.

The Building Futures programme

This programme, with funding of just over £2.6m spread over five years from the National Lottery Community Fund, reflects PRT’s assessment that perhaps the greatest challenge facing our prisons for the foreseeable future is to adjust to the reality of many more people serving very long and indeterminate sentences. In 1968, there were only 168 people serving sentences that would guarantee at least 10 years in custody – now there are over 18,500. We have more people serving indeterminate sentences than any other European country – over 1 in 10 of our prison population.

Through an intensive phase of listening and research, this programme is designed first to understand the hugely varied characteristics and experience of people serving very long sentences. But ultimately its goal is to help those long term prisoners design and help implement an approach to incarceration which allows for a meaningful existence inside, while bridging the gap between them and the communities to which most will eventually return.

The funding for the programme will support a small core team of three, but will also enable key contributions from other parts of the PRT team on prisoner engagement, research and public relations, partnership arrangements for the rest of the UK, and the commissioning of specialist independent research and evaluation as required.

How to apply

- Please send your **CV** (no more than 2 pages)
- Also complete an **outline as to how you meet the person criteria** (no more than 1,000 words)
- Please also complete the **monitoring form**
- Send these by to sam@prisonreformtrust.org.uk by **gam Monday 16th September 2019**. **Head your email- 'Research officer-Application'**
- You can alternatively post: Sam O'Sullivan, Prison Reform Trust, 15 Northburgh Street, London EC1V 0JR