

Neurodiversity support managers: improving support for neurodivergent people in prison

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Case Studies have been provided by Neurodiversity Support Managers across the Prison Service, including **Donna Smith-Emes** (HMP Ford), **Holly Owen** (HMP Long Lartin), **Rosalind Collier** (HMP Hull), **Liz Duffy-Griffiths** (HMP Swansea), **Dainya Pinnock** (HMPIYOI Downview), **Louise Henson** (HMP The Verne) and **Rebecca Stokes** (HMP Kirkham).

Neurodivergent individuals are overrepresented in the criminal justice system (CJS), with evidence from the 2021 Criminal Justice Joint Inspection review suggesting that at least half of the adult prison population in England and Wales can be expected to have needs arising from neurodivergence, compared with 15–20 per cent of the general population.¹ The impact of neurodivergence on an individual's daily life varies, however some individuals are particularly vulnerable and find elements of the prison environment distressing. This may include challenges in areas such as sensory processing, communication, accessing learning opportunities, maintaining employment and building relationships with others.

Ensuring neurodivergent people in prison are supported with appropriate adaptations is critical for prison safety,² accessible services,³ sentence progression, and engagement with rehabilitative opportunities,⁴ that can contribute to reducing reoffending.⁵ The Joint Inspection review also reported evidence of good adaptations being made in some prisons, while also identifying several areas where improvements were required.⁶ As part of the review,

people with personal experience of neurodivergence within the CJS highlighted areas that they found challenging. These included repeatedly needing to explain their needs, processes and environments not being inclusive (e.g., unclear expectations and inconsistent routines), and a lack of staff knowledge, awareness and specialism regarding neurodivergence.⁷

In response to the review a Cross-Government Action Plan was published, detailing how recommendations from the review would be implemented to boost staff awareness and capability, improve information sharing, and enhance support for neurodivergent people across the CJS.⁸

The neurodiversity support manager role in HMPPS

To help drive improvements in these areas and improve support for neurodivergent people in prison, HMPPS introduced the Neurodiversity Support Manager (NSM) role. This specialist prison-based manager role was trialled in 2021/22⁹ before being rolled out across the prison estate by 2024.¹⁰

NSMs are responsible for implementing a whole-prison approach to neurodiversity. This includes

1. Criminal Justice Joint Inspection. (2021). *Neurodiversity in the Criminal Justice System: A Review of Evidence*. HM Inspectorate of Prisons, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, HM Inspectorate of Probation.
2. Talbot, J. (2008). *Experiences of the criminal justice system by prisoners with learning disabilities and difficulties prisoners' voices*. Prison Reform Trust.
3. NHS England. (2023, December). *Meeting the Needs of Autistic Adults in Mental Health Services*. Department of Health & Social Care.
4. See footnote 1: Criminal Justice Joint Inspection. (2021).
5. Ministry of Justice. (2013). *Transforming Rehabilitation: A summary of evidence on reducing reoffending*. Ministry of Justice.
6. See footnote 1: Criminal Justice Joint Inspection. (2021).
7. User Voice (2021). "Neuro...what?" *Neurodiversity in the criminal justice system*. User Voice.
8. Ministry of Justice. (2022). *A Response to the Criminal Justice Joint Inspection: Neurodiversity in the Criminal Justice System, A Review of Evidence*. Ministry of Justice.
9. Ministry of Justice. (2023). *£50m Reducing Reoffending Package Process Evaluation*. Ministry of Justice.
10. Ministry of Justice. (2024, May 16). *Greater support for neurodivergent offenders in bid to cut crime* [Press release]. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/greater-support-for-neurodivergent-offenders-in-bid-to-cut-crime>

improving processes to identify and support prisoners with neurodivergent needs and ensuring neurodivergent prisoners can access the education, skills and work opportunities within the prison.

The action plan identified five key priority areas that all NSMs should be working on:

1. Facilitating the sharing of information on neurodiversity and identification of need across the prison service.
2. Providing training and support for prison staff to equip them to better understand and support those with neurodivergent needs within the prison.
3. Ensuring that reasonable adjustments are made throughout the prison to help develop a more 'neurodiversity supportive environment'.
4. Ensuring that individual or targeted support is available where appropriate, practical, and reasonable.
5. Incorporating consideration for additional requirements of neurodivergent prisoners when preparing for release.

Although the priority areas are consistent across the prison estate, actions taken by individual NSMs should be tailored to meet the needs of their prison. This includes considering factors such as the prison's size, population make-up, function, and available specialist provision. As a result, the NSM role looks different in each prison.

The following seven case studies, provided by NSMs, illustrate the breadth of support NSMs provide across the Prison Service and demonstrate that by delivering improvements across the five priority areas they are improving the support neurodivergent people in prison receive throughout their time in custody.

Priority 1: Sharing information and identifying the needs of prisoners

Case 1: Neurodiversity supportive induction

Prison: HMP Ford

NSM: Donna Smith-Emes

Prison details: Category D Open men's prison

Other priority area(s) covered: 1, 2, 3

It is expected that upon arrival in prison, prisoners are promptly inducted and receive support to understand life within that prison.¹¹ This includes identifying any additional needs and developing a learning plan to help them prepare for release.¹² For

some prisoners, their neurodiverse needs can lead to additional challenges in adapting to prison life and during induction.¹³

When I first started in role, I spent time observing the prison's induction process. I reflected that during these sessions I was bombarded with information and it felt like this to me, then it is likely that prisoners also feel similar. I raised these observations regarding accessibility for neurodivergent prisoners with my Head of Education, Skills and Work (ESW), and we were able to inform a review of the induction process to help improve it for neurodivergent prisoners.

As an ESW team we identified the key people prisoners needed to meet during induction and developed a programme that would allow essential information to be shared. This incorporated a wide range of stakeholders including prison staff (e.g., ESW staff, ID and Banking Lead) as well as a number of partner agencies (e.g., the Department for Work and Pensions, Shannon Trust), and covered a range of topics from careers advice and guidance to support from the NSM.

Induction had previously been a single session of less than 1 hour. The new process I helped develop now takes 10 hours, spread over 3 days with breaks built in between sessions. This allows neurodivergent prisoners to slow down, regulate themselves, process the information clearly, and ask questions to any member of staff. We have been able to achieve this by all ESW managers and partners committing to a team approach, and each spending at least 1 hour a week delivering the induction programme. This is coordinated by the Learning and Skills Manager, allowing us to plan our time, whilst all being flexible in supporting each other when required.

I then worked to ensure the process was accessible and supportive of neurodivergence. For example, the timetable shows the day, time, exact location, a brief overview of what the session is about, and who it is with, and copies are distributed in a variety of colours to support individuals with visual processing needs. Doors and windows are shut, and lights are turned off when possible, to create a low stimuli environment. We explain acronyms and abbreviations and write in clear language. Staff are available to help with any paperwork, such as completing screenings¹⁴ and assessments, or choices about education, skills and work opportunities in the prison. A calendar is also provided, helping prisoners to keep track of their progress through the induction process and enabling

11. HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2023). *Expectations Criteria for assessing the treatment of and conditions for men in prison*. HMIP

12. Ministry of Justice. (2019) *Prison Education & Library Services for adult prisons in England Policy Framework* (PSI 20/2000). Ministry of Justice.

13. Coates, S. (2016). *Unlocking Potential A review of education in prison*. Ministry of Justice.

14. HMPPS offers screening to all prisoners on entry to prison to help identify any additional needs that they may have that might impact their ability to engage with the regime or education, skills and work opportunities in the prison.

them to start taking responsibility for managing their own appointments.

It is vital that we identify neurodiverse needs at the earliest possible opportunity. To do this in HMP Ford, I helped streamline a process where the team that interview prisoners on their first night and second day in custody pass relevant information to the ESW team. This has helped develop a more inclusive environment and helps overcome barriers, enabling neurodivergent prisoners to settle more quickly. The wider ESW team and I continue to develop and review the induction process to further improve accessibility for neurodivergent people in prison. Our plans include smaller sessions for prisoners who find large groups challenging, using peer mentors as we find prisoners absorb more information from people with lived experience, and adapting our presentations to make them dyslexia friendly and easy read.

Case 2: Enabling access to purposeful activity

Prison: HMP Long Lartin

NSM: Holly Owen

Prison details: Category A Long Term High Security (LTHS) men's prison

Other priority area(s) covered: 1, 2, 3, 4

An unannounced inspection of HMP Long Lartin by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) found that those sentenced to life imprisonment often find themselves lost, lacking a sense of purpose and not motivated to engage in purposeful activity.¹⁵ Therefore, a key focus is on settlement into careers in custody and finding a prisoner's intrinsic motivation.

Many of the prisoners within HMP Long Lartin 'are among the highest risk and most serious offenders in the country'.¹⁶ Due to this, many people on my caseload are considered 'complex cases' often with needs arising from several areas including neurodivergence, mental health conditions, trauma and low self-belief. To illustrate the work I carry out, I am presenting a specific case that is representative of the support required by many within the LTHS estate. To ensure anonymity, the person's name has been changed to 'Adam'.

Adam had a reputation for 'violence' and 'instability'¹⁷ and was often moved to the Close Supervision Unit or segregation for his and others'

safety. He contacted me for support after seeing posters on his wing which I had created to raise awareness of the high prevalence of neurodivergent conditions. Upon meeting, he informed me he had attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and autistic traits and felt like he was unable to manage his needs on his own. I worked with him to understand how his neurodivergence impacts him, his areas of need and to identify the support or adjustments that may help. This included needing a structured routine and support to understand when he is starting to feel overwhelmed and how to manage this.

I also worked to understand his likes, dislikes and motivations, and having enjoyed sports previously, completing a gym course was his goal. However, this course has strict entry requirements relating to prisoners' behaviour, and Adam needed to work towards meeting these. I used the information I had gathered to develop a 'support plan' to help communicate Adam's goals, needs and support requirements to staff. Once developed, I met with relevant staff across the prison to upskill them on his plan. This included gym instructors, wing staff and prison managers. I also worked with Adam to ensure he understood it. In turn, he shared that he finally felt he had something to work for and that people understood him.

Staff have noted the progress made by Adam, with the Head of the Gym stating, 'he is like a totally different person from 12 months ago'. It hasn't always been straightforward, and Adam has been involved in some incidents, but importantly these have been less significant, occurring less often and Adam has managed to regulate himself much more quickly. Adam has not been segregated for 12 months now, and is on the gym course and engaging well. He also now volunteers as a Listener, providing support to others as he wanted to show others that 'change is possible'.

Priority 2: Staff training and support

Case 3: Neurodivergence in prison safety

Prison: HMP Hull

NSM: Rosalind Collier

NSMs are responsible for implementing a whole-prison approach to neurodiversity. This includes improving processes to identify and support prisoners with neurodivergence.

15. HM Chief Inspector of Prisons. (2022). *Report on an unannounced inspection of HMP Long Lartin*. HMIP.

16. See footnote 15: HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2022).

17. As stated by operational staff in the prison.

Prison details: Category B Reception men's prison

Other priority area(s) covered: 1, 2, 3, 4

The Prison Safety Policy Framework sets out the requirements to make prisons safer places, emphasising the importance of understanding the population and ensuring individuals' needs are addressed.¹⁸ Neurodiverse individuals may have needs with communication, interaction and emotional regulation which, with links to self-harm,¹⁹ self-inflicted death,²⁰ and substance misuse,²¹ can impact on prison safety.

Following concerns raised by HMIP relating to use of force,²² HMP Hull undertook significant work to make progress in this area, including implementing a weekly panel to scrutinise incidents.²³ Being aware that prisoners with additional needs are more likely to be subject to use of force,²⁴ the NSM ensured consideration of neurodiverse needs was part of the scrutiny process.

The NSM noticed neurodiverse prisoners were experiencing use of force during non-violent incidents, especially in relation to verbal threats or refusing to return to their cell. Neurodiverse needs can impact on how an individual understands verbal instructions and how they respond to them especially in an escalating, noisy and fast-moving situation, which is often the case within the prison environment. In these circumstances there can be a perception the person is refusing to cooperate or follow instructions. However, it could be they are struggling to focus on the requests being made, or to follow instructions that are given too quickly for them.

A strategy was developed by the NSM to improve awareness of prisoners' neurodiverse needs and ensure these were being considered across the prison to provide holistic support. One aspect of the strategy was to develop and deliver neurodiversity training to all staff. This covered general neurodiversity awareness and implementing neurodiversity supportive practices,

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including adapting communication and de-escalation strategies in relation to use of force.

The targeted training on de-escalation was delivered as part of the annual control and restraint training, by the NSM but in collaboration with the prison's use of force team. Staff noted that the training has been 'eye opening' with the Head of Safety stating it 'changed my approach to safety'. The recent HMIP inspection noted the progress to date mentioning the work leading to improvements in awareness of prisoners needs, environmental adjustments and collaboration with other departments.²⁵

Priority 3: Developing neurodiversity supportive environments

Case 4: A neurodiversity supportive approach to education

Prison: HMP Swansea

NSM: Liz Duffy-Griffiths

Prison details: Category B Reception men's prison, Welsh Estate

Other priority area(s) covered: 1, 2, 3, 4

Prisons are expected to ensure all prisoners access and engage in 'purposeful activity' such as education, work, or social activities that support their well-being and promote effective rehabilitation.²⁶

As part of my NSM role, I encountered a number of neurodivergent prisoners who were not engaging in purposeful activity and identified that there were limited opportunities to support them to progress into off-wing activities.

To address this, I developed a proposal for a neurodiversity support hub. Given the name 'The Harbour', it was designed to be used by neurodiverse prisoners who were not yet ready to access the existing range of ESW activities. Allocation was considered on a case-by-case basis and tailored as part of the support planning for those not engaged in ESW, with priority

18. Ministry of Justice. (2024). *Prison Safety Policy Framework*. Ministry of Justice.

19. Blanchard, A., Chihuri, S., DiGuseppi, C. G., & Li, G. (2021). Risk of Self-harm in Children and Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder. *JAMA Network Open*, 4(10), e2130272.

20. Cassidy, S., Au-Yeung, S., Robertson, A., Cogger-Ward, H., Richards, G., Allison, C., ... Baron-Cohen, S. (2022). Autism and autistic traits in those who died by suicide in England. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 221(5), 683–691.

21. Mariani, J. J., & Levin, F. R. (2007). Treatment strategies for co-occurring ADHD and substance use disorders. *American Journal on Addictions*, 16(s1), 45–56.

22. HM Chief Inspector of Prisons. (2021). *Report on an unannounced inspection of HMP Hull*. HMIP.

23. HM Chief Inspector of Prisons. (2022). *Report on an independent review of progress at HMP Hull*. HMIP.

24. See footnote 2: Talbot, J. (2008).

25. HM Chief Inspector of Prisons. (2024). *Report on an independent review of progress at HMP Hull*. HMIP.

26. See footnote 11: HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2023).

given to individuals with needs arising from Autism Spectrum Condition, and who are at risk of self-harm or suicide.

The Harbour was designed to be a safe space that is neurodiversity supportive, person centric, tailored and responsive to individual needs, delivering a curriculum that enables this whilst also being holistic and evidence based. The curriculum was based on the Autism Education Trust Transition Progression Framework.²⁷ This enables tracking of progression across eight personal development strands, including communication and interaction, learning and engagement, and independence and community participation.

The curriculum is delivered through a range of activities across the four distinct areas within The Harbour:

- ❑ The 'Quiet Workspace' where teachers deliver a variety of sessions (e.g., emotional wellbeing, turn-taking in conversations, Introducing Welsh);
- ❑ The 'Sensory Space' which prisoners can use throughout the day to build self-regulation skills;
- ❑ The 'Interventions Space' where other teams come to provide support (e.g., Working Wales bring in mentors to meet people in prison preparing for release, Occupational Therapy deliver 'Activity Through Recovery' sessions); and
- ❑ The 'Counselling Space' where healthcare deliver support (e.g., talking therapy).

The hub is now well established at HMP Swansea and provides prisoners with opportunities to learn a helpful combination of self-advocating and self-regulation techniques. Since opening in September 2023, many prisoners have progressed through The Harbour moving onto mainstream ESW opportunities within the prison. Others have been released into the

community and are accessing the support they need, and positive feedback about the hub has been received from staff and people in prison.

Priority 4: Individual and targeted support for prisoners

Case 5: Neurodivergence in the women's prison estate

Prison: HMP/YOI Downview

NSM: Dainya Pinnock

Prison details: Women's prison

Other priority area(s) covered: 4

To build greater awareness of neurodivergent needs for women I delivered targeted workshops including a Sensory Regulation workshop and a series on 'Neurodivergence and Me'.

Although the prevalence of neurodivergence is higher in custody than in the community,²⁸ people in prison are less likely to have received an official diagnosis. This is due to a range of factors, such as an increased likelihood of having been excluded from school or experiencing homelessness.²⁹ In addition, as most research and diagnostic tools have been developed based on the experiences of neurodivergent men, there are higher levels of under- and misdiagnosis in women.³⁰

For women in HMP Downview, many have little understanding of their neurodivergence or how it impacts them. To build greater

awareness of neurodivergent needs for women I delivered targeted workshops including a Sensory Regulation workshop and a series on 'Neurodivergence and Me' (ND and Me). This included an ADHD and Me workshop delivered alongside an operational member of staff with lived experience of ADHD. The workshop looks at a range of topics including how ADHD can present for women, hormonal changes and their impact on how women with ADHD feel and function, masking, emotional regulation, and support strategies.

Historically, most ADHD research has been based on the experiences of men.³¹ Due to this, there are

27. Christie, P., Farrell, S., Fidler, R., & Lyn-Cook, L. (2021). *The development of a progression framework for children and young people with autism Literature Review and Consultation*. Autism Education Trust.

28. See footnote 1: Criminal Justice Joint Inspection. (2021).

29. Kirby, A. (2023). Professor Amanda Kirby, CEO Do-IT Solutions Rationale and evidence for taking a person-centred approach to screening in prison. <https://doitprofiler.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Rationale-for-a-person-centred-approach-to-screening-for-ND-in-prisons-January-2023-Kirby.pdf>

30. See footnote 1: Criminal Justice Joint Inspection. (2021).

31. Skoglund, L. B. (2024, April 18). *ADHD Symptoms in Women Aren't "Hidden." They Are Misinterpreted*. ADDitude. <https://www.additudemag.com/adhd-symptoms-in-women-female-signs/>

limited relevant resources, and I have, understandably, found this a barrier to the development and delivery of the sessions. However, as research develops, so too will the workshops. I am currently reviewing and revising my ADHD and Me workshop to include recently published research (e.g., on hormonal changes and late diagnosis),^{32 33} and working collaboratively with healthcare teams to develop further workshops.

The workshops have been well attended with good levels of engagement. Women who have attended have commented the sessions felt 'very inclusive' and this was the first time they felt seen and understood; now having a better understanding of how they 'take in the world around them' and 'react to things'.

Priority 5: Preparing neurodivergent prisoners for release

Case 6: Neurodivergence and sentence progression

Prison: HMP The Verne

NSM: Louise Henson

Prison details: Category C Trainer men's prison for people convicted of sexual offences

NSM priority area(s): 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

HMP The Verne holds a complex population where all prisoners have been convicted of sexual offences. With two-thirds serving sentences of over 10 years, almost a fifth serving sentences of 20 years or more, and at least 30 serving Indeterminate Sentences for Public Protection (IPP).³⁴ Consequently, my role as NSM is vital in helping prisoners who are serving long or indeterminate sentences to address barriers to their sentence progression where these are impacted by neurodiverse needs.

When supporting people in prison I make sure that I am always honest with them, even if this means telling them something that they might not like to hear. I find this builds trust and most neurodivergent people tend to prefer a direct approach. The examples here illustrate some of the ways I support neurodiverse prisoners having identified several barriers relating to their Parole Board hearings and licence conditions.

Parole

Several prisoners were referred to me by their Offender Managers³⁵ because they were not representing themselves well during parole hearings. Gathering information from colleagues, reviewing parole outcomes and working with prisoners in a person-centred way helped me to understand the barriers encountered by our neurodivergent population when trying to demonstrate their level of risk of reoffending.

I found some neurodivergent prisoners were experiencing difficulties with showing the expected level of remorse or emotion, fixating on minor details, communicating effectively, becoming dysregulated, and in some cases refusing to attend. From this I identified areas where individual, targeted support could help

prisoners to overcome these barriers and effectively prepare for their parole board hearings.

For some I have provided support to help them build a neurodiversity communication profile, setting out their strengths, needs and any support requirements. With the prisoner's consent, I share this with their Offender Manager which allows it to be shared with the Parole Board in advance of their hearing. This helps the Parole Board members to understand the prisoner and their needs, and has helped empower prisoners, who have told me that for the

first time they feel seen in terms of their neurodivergence and the challenges they face. For others I have provided support with preparation for the different kinds of questions they may be asked, including focusing on recognising their achievements. Through this I aim to build their confidence and sense of hope for the future.

Licence conditions

Most prisoners released from HMP The Verne will be subject to a Sexual Harm Prevention Order (SHPO) and will have additional registration requirements, in addition to their regular licence conditions. Prisoners

I have worked with neurodivergent prisoners with IPP sentences to understand the causes of non-compliance.

32. Eng, A. G., Nirjar, U., Elkins, A. R., Sizemore, Y. J., Monticello, K. N., Petersen, M. K., Miller, S. A., Barone, J., Eisenlohr-Moul, T. A., & Martel, M. M. (2024). Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder and the menstrual cycle: Theory and evidence. *Hormones and Behavior*, 158, 105466.

33. Lotta Borg Skoglund. (2023). *ADHD Girls to Women*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

34. HM Chief Inspector of Prisons. (2024). *Report on an unannounced inspection of HMP The Verne*. HMIP.

35. These are prison and probation staff who work in courts, prisons and in communities. Their primary goal is to support people's rehabilitation and reduce the likelihood of re-offending. This involves a range of activities, including conducting risk assessments, sentence management, and providing support and guidance.

with an IPP sentence are regularly recalled due to non-compliance with licence or registration requirements, rather than for re-offending.³⁶ I have worked with neurodivergent prisoners with IPP sentences to understand the causes of non-compliance.

From reviewing licence conditions, registration requirements and SHPOs, I identified areas of challenge. For example, the large volumes of information causing visual or emotional overwhelm, and use of statutory/legal language or phrases like 'if this applies' causing confusion. These may lead to a neurodivergent prisoner misunderstanding conditions, or becoming fixated on irrelevant information (e.g., why their licence conditions include a paragraph about deportation when that 'does not apply' to them).

To overcome these challenges, I realised neurodivergent prisoners may require additional time and individual support to help them process and understand their conditions or requirements. To enable this, I work with Offender Managers to obtain copies of these for prisoners as far in advance of their release date as possible. For some individuals, with the authorisation of their Community Offender Manager,³⁷ I have also provided additional simplified versions of these documents to the prisoner including images where possible.

One of the prisoners I supported found it helpful to go through the document highlighting areas he found confusing. I then went through the document with him so he could ask questions and clarify any of the areas he found challenging. I used examples of situations that could arise on release — such as bumping into someone he had been in prison with, so knew them to be a person convicted of a sexual offence. Talking these through helped him consider how to manage the situation and decide what he should do if that situation arose in the community to ensure compliance with his conditions. He now has a better understanding of his conditions which could reduce the likelihood of him breaching them and being recalled in the future.

Case 7: Neurodivergence and preparing for release

Prison: HMP Kirkham

NSM: Rebecca Stokes

Prison function and population details: Category D Open men's prison

NSM priority area(s): 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

From working with prisoners who are preparing for release I have noticed that many find being released from custody as challenging as their early days in prison. Regardless of the sentence length, they often say they feel the world has 'moved on' — this may relate to relationships, employment, housing or even technology.

For neurodivergent individuals, approaching change can be a time of anxiety and overwhelm. My role as NSM is key in helping ensure neurodivergent prisoners access the opportunities, services, and support they need to prepare for release into the community. Working with stakeholders both within

HMPPS and in the community, I ensure neurodiverse needs are considered throughout the resettlement process enabling a smoother transition into the community, which can reduce the likelihood of reoffending.³⁸

I provide individual support to help prisoners better understand their neurodivergence, helping them to feel informed about their needs and triggers, with an awareness of coping strategies and methods they can use to support themselves

independently. I play a crucial role in ensuring this information is shared with their Community Offender Manager, so that key professionals including the Parole Board or approved premises, are aware of what support or adjustments are needed. This vital sharing of information between myself and those working to support resettlement has allowed for appropriate housing, employment opportunities and crucial support in the community to continue.

When preparing for release, prisoners receive a large volume of documentation and information from a range of services, including probation and other external resettlement services. In my role as NSM I provide support, advice and guidance to ensure neurodivergent prisoners can access and understand this information. Examples include creating audio versions of information sheets that prisoners receive (e.g., explaining how to access financial support), and

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36. Ministry of Justice. (2024, October). *Offender management statistics quarterly: April to June 2024*. Ministry of Justice.

37. These are probation staff who assess and manage the risk posed by people on probation with community sentences or on licence from prison to protect victims of crime and the general public.

38. See footnote 5: Ministry of Justice. (2013).

working with probation, to support the development of easy read versions of key information.

I also provide training to staff within the Employment Hub to ensure they are considering neurodivergence and providing relevant advice and guidance when helping neurodivergent prisoners to prepare for employment on release. During this training I cover a range of topics including understanding rights, how to disclose neurodivergent needs to potential employers and specialist employment opportunities (e.g., supported internships).

Conclusion

The above case studies illustrate just a few examples of the work NSMs are carrying out across the five priority areas in prisons in England and Wales. They highlight the varied areas of focus required to support neurodivergent people in prison dependent upon the differing needs of the prisons and their populations.

Whilst the NSM role continues to embed across the Prison Service, HMPPS is committed to driving further

improvements. Working with partners from across Government, we aim to ensure the prison estate meets the needs of neurodivergent people, and that knowledge of best practice is shared amongst staff. As part of new education contracts commencing this year the Prisoner Education Service are procuring a new digital, web-based screening tool to identify the additional learning needs of people in prison. This will help overcome challenges with the reliability and consistency of data on the prevalence of neurodivergence,³⁹ and improve our understanding of the needs of people in prison.

Through the above, HMPPS are creating prison environments that are more supportive of neurodivergent needs, enabling neurodivergent prisoners the opportunity to engage in rehabilitation and reduce their chances of reoffending.⁴⁰ Although notable progress has been made in recent years, HMPPS are aware of the challenges that remain for neurodiverse prisoners and remain committed to improving support for neurodivergent people in prison.

39. See footnote 1: Criminal Justice Joint Inspection. (2021).

40. See footnote 5: Ministry of Justice. (2013).