



Understanding the process and experience of recall to prison

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This research was conducted to develop an evidence-based and systematic approach for the management of determinate sentenced prisoners on standard recall. The number of recalled prisoners in custody has steadily increased over time, with the largest proportion at any one time being on 'standard' recall, and many remaining in custody until the end of their sentences. Thus, the focus was on standard recalled prisoners and the re-release process. The work had four strands: a Risk, Need and Responsivity profile of recalled prisoners; two qualitative investigations of the experience of recall for men and for women; and a survey of Offender Managers (OMs) and recalled prisoners. The aim was to identify the obstacles and opportunities in the current re-release process, and identify ways for recall to become more rehabilitative.

Key findings

- Recalled prisoners had high levels of risk and need, and complex responsivity issues. Many of them would be suitable for, and might benefit from, cognitive skills and violence interventions to enable them to address their needs and progress to re-release.
- Prisoners and OMs had different perceptions of how much prisoners understood recall, how much they communicated with each other, and the impact of recall on their relationship.
- In interviews and surveys, recalled prisoners described their recall as unjust, finding it hard to trust the process or those involved. They could feel stranded, confused about what was expected of them, or felt they were not supported, communicated with or included enough in decisions.
- Interview and survey findings showed that prisoners found recall distressing and associated with loss. They found recall to be solely punitive, not rehabilitative. Prisoners' meaningful engagement and relationships with OMs could be negatively affected when recalled.
- Recalled prisoners continued to show motivation to change, determination to have a different future, and some wanted more opportunities to achieve this.
- For women, the period immediately before and after their initial release emerged as the time of particular vulnerability.
- OMs appeared to generally have good understanding and confidence in using the recall and re-release processes. They worked to keep in touch with the prisoners they managed.
- OMs experienced barriers to progressing cases. These included external factors (e.g. a lack of access to interventions and accommodation) and internal barriers (e.g. poor prisoner motivation to engage with their OM following recall). Delays in helping prisoners progress to re-release were reportedly due to difficulties establishing frequent contact, heavy workloads and insufficient time.
- If recall is to become more rehabilitative, engage prisoners and help them achieve earlier re-release, the findings of this research emphasise the need to refine recall and re-release processes to include better communication and relationships between those involved.
- Small sample sizes, particularly of OMs surveyed, may reduce the generalisability of the research findings.

The views expressed in this Analytical Summary are those of the author, not necessarily those of the Ministry of Justice (nor do they reflect government policy).

Context

On 30 September 2016 there were 6,710 recalled prisoners in custody in England and Wales – people who had breached their licence conditions and were returned to prison at the instigation of their Offender Manager (Ministry of Justice, 2016). This number has steadily increased over time. The increase can be partly explained by changes in how licence conditions are enforced in the community, rather than representing an increase in serious reoffending by those on licence, or to a growing prison population (Padfield and Maruna, 2006). Additional contributory factors include licence supervision being extended to those serving shorter sentences, and the introduction of extended sentences (NOMS, 2014).

The purpose of recall is to protect the public. Individuals are recalled if their behaviour indicates an increased risk of serious harm to the public and/or (for people with determinate sentences) an increased risk of further offending, where this risk cannot be safely managed in the community. There are two types of recall for determinate sentenced individuals: 'fixed term' and 'standard'. Fixed term is a recall to prison for 28 days followed by automatic re-release. Standard recall involves returning to custody, potentially until sentence expiry, with re-release decisions made by the Parole Board or HMPPS's (formerly NOMS) Offender Management Public Protection Group (OMPPG) using the Secretary of State's executive powers. Standard recall was the main focus of this programme of research.

There is little published research about the process of recall and the experience of recalled prisoners in the UK. Two previous studies have identified themes of poor information provision, limited prisoner understanding of recall and re-release processes, and delayed communication and decision-making (Digard, 2010; Padfield, 2013). These studies found also that recalled prisoners experienced the process as unfair and questioned the authority of those involved, felt unable to contribute to the decision-making, and experienced recall as punitive rather than rehabilitative.

The effectiveness of the review and re-release processes, and the successful resettlement of recalled prisoners into the community, has important consequences for recalled prisoners, HMPPS and the

public. With increasing numbers of recalled prisoners in custody, and a paucity of existing research, the current project aimed to expand what is known about this group, and bring improvements to their case management. Four research projects were conducted. Different methodologies were used to triangulate different sources of information to help understand the current state and identify opportunities for improvement:

- Study 1: a profile analysis of standard recalled prisoners
- Study 2: a qualitative study of the experience of recall for men
- Study 3: a qualitative study of the experience of recall for women
- Study 4: a survey of Offender Managers (OMs) and prisoners

Study 1: A profile of recalled prisoners

Information from five sources was matched for all recalled prisoners aged 18 or over in custody on 31 March 2014: Prison NOMIS records¹, Police National Computer records, OASys² risk and need assessments, accredited intervention attendance records, and recall and re-release records. The matching process was successful for 5,125 (of 5,191) individuals. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics, t-tests and Chi-square tests to understand the risks and needs of recalled men and women, and the services needed to help them progress to re-release.

Limitations: The Risk, Need and Responsivity profile provides a snapshot of the recalled population at a single point in time. It also does not identify potential strengths of individuals that might contribute to positive outcomes.

The majority of recalled prisoners were male (96%) and white (80%). The primary reason for recall³ for 43% of the prisoners was for non-compliance. 23% were recalled following a charge for a further criminal offence, 12% for failing to reside at a specified location and 9% for being out of touch with their OM. The frequency of the range of other recall reasons summed to 13%.

76% of the 5,125 prisoners profiled had been recalled to prison on standard recall. 57% of the standard recall group had been back in custody for less than six months, 21% between six and 12 months, and 18% had been

¹ The National Offender Management Information System (NOMIS) is a nationwide information management tool containing a record for every person in custody.

² The Offender Assessment System (OASys) is a tool used to assess a person's risk of reconviction, criminogenic needs and responsivity needs to inform a sentence plan with appropriate interventions as targets.

³ At the time this research was conducted, although there could be multiple reasons for recall, only one reason was routinely recorded for each person.

recalled over a year previously. Around a third of prisoners on a standard recall had a year or more to serve until their sentence expiry date. The most common index offence was violence against the person (29%), although many had index convictions for robbery (15%) or acquisitive crime (22%). The frequency of each of the other offence types for standard recalled prisoners was 6% or less, together summing to 34%.

Table 1 shows that standard recalled prisoners had particularly high levels of risk. Compared with the rest of the not-recalled sentenced prison population, those on standard recall were younger, had longer criminal histories and a higher average number of previous breaches. They were at higher risk of reconviction for any offence, and for violent, sexual and serious crimes specifically. They were also more likely to be classed as High Risk of Serious Harm – consistent with the explicit role of recall in managing the risk of serious harm to the public. For interest, the risk profiles for other recall groups are included in the appendix.

Recalled prisoners had high levels of need across all criminogenic need domains assessed in OASys, and significantly greater need than the wider prison population on all but the drugs domain. Standard recall prisoners presented with significant needs in 5.8 domains compared to an average of 5 for the rest of the prison population. Figure 1 shows that for the individual OASys items that are particularly associated with reoffending (Howard, 2015), standard recalled prisoners have more serious levels of need than other sentenced prisoners.

Sufficient OASys data were available for 3,699 standard recalled prisoners to determine broad suitability for, and attendance on, accredited interventions. Using current intervention criteria, Table 2 shows that more individuals were suitable for an accredited intervention than had attended one. Particular gaps could be seen between the need for, and attendance on, cognitive skills and violence interventions. For example, of the 1,730 prisoners assessed as needing cognitive skills intervention, 60% had not attended this (or any other) intervention.

Table 1: Assessment of risk for all, all recalled and all standard recalled prisoners

Mean	All other sentenced prisoners (N = 64,494)	All recalled prisoners (N = 5,125)	Standard recalled prisoners (N = 3,912)
Age (years)	35.0	33.1	32.2
Time since first sanction (years)	13.3	14.2	13.8
Previous breaches	2.1	2.9	3.0
OGRS3 ^a (2-year)	48.0	60.7	62.2
OGRS4v ^b (2-year)	31.0	41.7	43.2
OSP ^c (2-year)	1.2	1.5	1.5
RSR ^d (2-year)	2.4	3.5	3.6
High or Very High RoSH ^e (%)	39.0	61.6	64.2

Note. ^a OASys Group Reconviction Scale (v3) predicts proven reoffending within one and two years using static factors (Howard, et al., 2009). ^b OASys Group Reconviction Scale (v4)/violence predicts proven violent reoffending within two years using static factors (Howard, 2015). ^c OASys Sexual reoffending Predictor predicts proven sexual reoffending within one and two years using static factors (Howard and Barnett, 2015). ^d Risk of Serious Recidivism indicates the likelihood of a person committing a seriously harmful offence within two years. It is based on static risk factors, but can include dynamic factors where these are scored (Moore, 2015). ^e Risk of Serious Harm assess the relative likelihood that an offence or harmful act will occur, and the relative impact or harm caused by the offence (Moore, 2015).

Figure 1: Assessment of need for standard recalled and all other sentenced prisoners

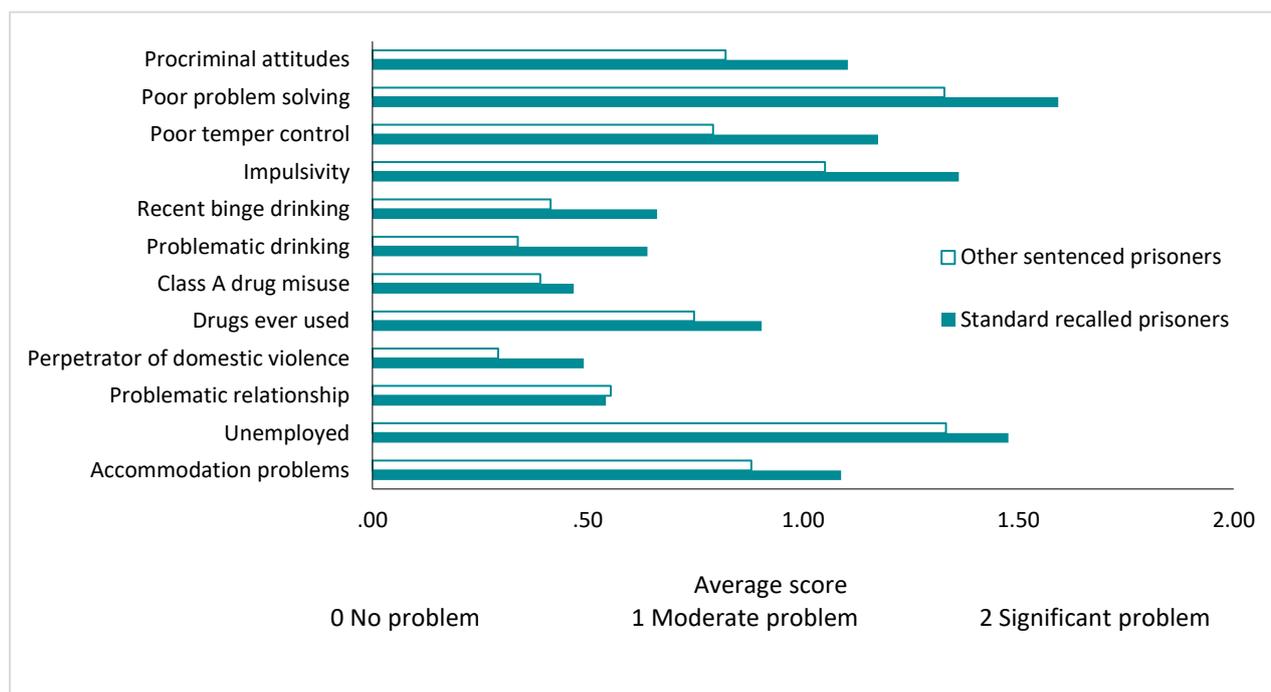


Table 2: Recalled prisoner accredited programme suitability and attendance

Intervention ^a	Suitable	Attended (%)	Did not attend (%)	
			(attended something else)	(unmet need)
Cognitive skills ^b	1730	29.9	9.7	60.4
Moderate violence ^c	1057	6.3	33.0	62.8
High intensity violence ^d	1348	0.1	42.1	57.9
Domestic violence ^e	321	4.7	29.9	65.4
Alcohol related violence	748	4.0	36.1	59.9
Substance misuse	1482	17.2	23.1	59.6

Note. N = 3,699. ^a Sexual offending programmes are not included here as the available data was not sufficient to model suitability. ^b Current criteria target those with non-acquisitive convictions and an OGRS score of 25 or more. ^c Includes those with a violent index offence and violence risk between 30-59%. There is no further refinement on the needs targeted by programmes such as Resolve. ^d As with ^c this estimate is based on offence type and risk of violence. Treatment teams undertake further assessments on need. ^e This is a conservative estimate based on risk and the OASys item that describes the current offence as linked to partner violence. We know that there are more men in custody who are perpetrators of partner violence where the link to index offence has not been made.

Responsivity is a term for those features of a person and their circumstances which might mean they need some differential service or treatment. This might, for example, reflect age, gender, culture, ethnicity or health needs. This profile of recalled prisoners identified higher levels of learning disability

and personality disorder than in the rest of the sentenced prison population. They were also more vulnerable, being significantly more likely to have problems around emotional well-being (for example, experiencing difficulties with emotional stability, coping, anxiety and depression).

Study 2: The experience of recall for men

Seven adult men from two Category B prisons were interviewed (having approached ten initially; one of whom refused and two consented but later withdrew). The participants were standard recall prisoners, serving determinate sentences, who had been back in custody for less than one year. The reasons for recall varied across participants but none had been charged with a further crime. A topic guide structured the interviews, which were recorded and transcribed verbatim prior to analysis. The transcripts were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA; Smith, 2015). The analysis of the seven transcripts yielded five higher order themes that capture the respondents' rich experience of recall (Table 3), and further interviews were not considered necessary as no new themes were emerging.

Limitations: Studies of experiences may not accurately reflect interactions in terms of what is actually said, done or intended. However, the unique goal of qualitative research is to understand the experience from the person's perspective.

Table 3: Themes of men's experience of recall

1. Perceived unjust recall
2. Impossible progress, unattainable future
3. Distress, loss and counter-productiveness
4. Disengagement
5. Future orientation – engaging and going forward

The men interviewed experienced recall as unfair; they thought standard recall was too severe a response, and questioned the consistency of recall and re-release decisions. They had an inadequate, and sometimes inaccurate, understanding of the reasons for their recall and how to progress. As the following extracts illustrate, they reported feeling abandoned or stranded once back in custody, and not being a priority for progression.

I see people in here, like in and out on recall for new offences and getting, like, 28 days.

...Probation should have told me why I'm in here for recall for. They didn't tell me nothing at all. I'm still waiting

[Probation] go about changing the rules to suit them. It's like 'we're above the law'.

They said they were not given enough help by, or had enough contact with, those involved in their management. Recalled men found it hard to trust the

recall process, asserting that those involved were uninterested in helping them, had ulterior motives and abused their authority.

Theme 2: Impossible progress, unattainable future

The men interviewed were frustrated about their progression to re-release. They experienced barriers to re-release and delays in decision-making which felt out of their control. They reported problems with accessing interventions in custody, finding accommodation in the community, or getting help from staff. The following extracts illustrate that some prisoners felt hopeless and 'stuck'; they felt anxious when having to cope with an uncertain future.

I don't know what to do, I can't get out of this rut. It feels like I'm never ever gonna break the cycle.

...You're on a year waiting list. ...and then if you ain't suitable you've got to wait another 6 months.

These experiences meant that some prisoners believed they were in a 'cycle' from which they could not break out. This feeling was reinforced when they believed their progress went unnoticed and they were only seen as their 'old selves' by other people.

Theme 3: Distress, loss and counter-productiveness

Prisoners experienced recall as emotionally painful; they reported feelings of anger, anxiety, stress and loss. They reported that they had lost important features of life in the community (such as relationships and parental roles) as well as their freedom. The first quote below shows how after being recalled, prisoners found it hard to maintain the previous progress they had made in the community (such as establishing employment or pro-social networks).

It's quite frustrating because, like I say, when I met like a whole different circle of friends, a new partner, I actually had a pro-social lifestyle, for once.

...Being thrown into the wilderness, that to me doesn't make no sense. You're isolating me away from my family down here.

...That's just like trying to drive someone bad, that's trying to drive someone crazy.

These experiences meant that prisoners perceived recall to be punitive rather than rehabilitative – a process that 'takes away' rather than helps (as illustrated by the second quote above).

Theme 4: Disengagement

For some recalled prisoners, their experiences and their strong negative feelings (anger, grievance and mistrust) about recall, led to them disengaging from the 'system' and the people managing them who they no longer respected or trusted. Disengagement came in two forms – active defiance and feigned compliance, as illustrated in the following extracts.

...I don't want [early re-release] because then – because it's back to the same thing. If I get re-released that means probation is going to be involved.

You finally, finally broke me. You've done me. So from now on f*** your questions, f*** your supervision. I come in here and I say my name, I say my date of birth, I get my bus fare refunded and I ain't telling you s***.

Active defiance meant prisoners choosing to have as little contact with Probation as possible, even preferring to stay in custody until their sentence end date to avoid this. Feigned compliance meant prisoners 'going through the motions' but not engaging in a meaningful and open way. Some prisoners believed that only in disengaging from OMs and the re-release process would they protect themselves from further punishment, or from being viewed or assessed negatively.

Theme 5: Future orientation – engaging and going forward

The previous themes show that recalled prisoners can experience hopelessness and powerlessness. However, some prisoners experienced investment from staff at times, and were motivated to progress and have a different life in the future. Wanting a different life is not the same as believing this is possible. Some prisoners felt they were stuck but still wanted something more positive. Others wanted something better and believed they could achieve this with or without support of OMs.

I want to stop drinking as this is the problem with me...I'd love to change...I just got to go forward and just change my life, get a job in the world.

He said "I can see that you was a violent kid, you've done all your mad stuff", --- He said "I can see you've changed, you're trying to progress".

Study 3: The experience of recall for women

The data collection and analysis for Study 3 was the same as for Study 2 but in this case six adult women (serving determinate sentences and in custody on standard recall) in one closed prison were interviewed. All the women who were approached to take part in the study did so. The transcripts were analysed separately to those for the men in Study 2. The research yielded five

higher order themes that capture their experience of recall (Table 4).

Limitations: see Study 2.

Table 4: Themes of women's experience of recall

1. Doing what is expected as opposed to what is right
2. Negative psychological effects of release
3. Failure to support and guide – over-reliance on self-efficacy
4. Seeing the recall process as significantly flawed
5. Making recall more rehabilitative for the future

Theme 1: Doing what is expected as opposed to what is right

The women described negative experiences following their initial release (prior to recall). They felt their release had limited planning, they had little involvement in arrangements and did not feel able to voice concerns without looking obstructive.

I feel I have no options but to do what they want me to do. I feel like I am being set up to fail, like a puppet on a string being manipulated but you have to be careful, what you say, you can't voice your concerns as you will be seen as not engaging.

I had to go to a hostel, but only got told I had to go a week before I got out. It were just like being in jail but with more drugs and more freedom.

The extracts above illustrate how the women perceived their treatment to be unfair at times and felt they had little control over the process. The women found it difficult to understand the release planning, reasons for licence conditions, and the lack of flexibility with conditions once they were in the community.

Theme 2: Negative psychological effects of release

The women interviewed reported feeling scared and alone on release from custody. They felt confused and did not understand their licence conditions, which they saw for the first time soon before release (and were unable to change). They described the period before release as one of particular uncertainty; they believed they needed more time to manage their anxiety and feel better prepared for release.

It's scary because all you think when you get out of them gates, "I am going to be back", because I've got nothing at all. ...and especially when you've ended your licence, they can just chuck me out...I could be made homeless.

I'd never even be to [location] before, so I was absolutely petrified. It's a big change, do you know what I mean?

Theme 3: Failure to support and guide – over-reliance on self-efficacy

These recalled women felt unsupported and left to work things out alone before release, during their time on licence and again when back in custody on recall, as illustrated by the following extracts.

I got told 16 hours before I got my parole, "oh you're going home tomorrow". They chucked me out with £46. It made me mad and I thought "why ain't nobody helped me?"

I feel condemned and unsupported towards release. I feel like they want me to fail... I feel that pressure. The prison service is failing me.

They reported a lack of contact from OMs, and felt that staff investment in their rehabilitation was not a priority (or even important). Instead, they reported feeling judged, not believed or trusted and that people in authority abused their position.

Theme 4: Seeing the recall process as significantly flawed

The women did not dispute the reasons for their own recall. However, they questioned how the process had been conducted, the length of their recall and the impact this had on them. As the following extracts illustrate, they were confused about receiving standard recall (rather than a fixed 28 day recall), and were frustrated and angry about the lack of communication from OMs at crucial times.

I don't even speak to me probation officer – she don't know me, so I weren't willing to speak to her because I just got frustrated with her... She didn't know what was going on...

...with her promising the 28 day recall and I thought I'm only going to be here 28 days, and then I come here and I'm getting told "Oh, you're a standard..."

Anger and mistrust led to them feeling 'let down' by, and disengaging from, OMs.

Theme 5: Making recall more rehabilitative for the future

Despite their negative feelings, the women still expressed hope for the future, and wanted more opportunities to learn transferable skills.

I believe I can change, I know they (Officers) don't but I do. I didn't think I would be able to cope but I am. I have lots of goals I want to achieve and I need to change.

...There needs to be more accredited course. They need to look at the reasons why you come back and how they can help you change that.

They felt existing services were insufficient, and that they had fewer services and opportunities than male prisoners. They identified ideas for adding to or improving rehabilitative and release preparation activities, such as gaining qualifications or learning how to complete employment applications. Despite the difficult relationships with OMs reported in previous themes, the women still wanted to work together with their OMs to improve their chances of success and ease their anxiety about re-release.

Study 4: Surveys of Offender Managers and prisoners

OMs and standard recalled prisoners were surveyed to understand their views, knowledge and experience of the recall and re-release processes. Surveys had the potential to capture the views of a wider group of staff and prisoners than the qualitative approach used in Studies 2 and 3, and enabled us to triangulate different data sources. The findings from Study 2 were used to inform some of the questions, with the aim that the survey would provide an indication of the wider prevalence of views and experiences of recalled prisoners. The OM survey was sent to all National Probation Service (NPS) divisions to be completed online by OMs who managed standard recall prisoners; few OMs responded (26 in total⁴). The prisoner survey was sent to all standard recall prisoners in three male prisons (to be completed electronically or by hand); 68 prisoners responded (a response rate of 34%). Women prisoners were not surveyed as the primary focus of the overall project was on men recalled to prison. The survey data was analysed using frequency and thematic analysis.

Limitations: The surveys had low response rates, particularly with OMs. As such, the findings might not generalise to all OMs or all recalled prisoners. Women

⁴ It was not possible to calculate a response rate for OM returns as it is not known how many OMs in the divisions have recalled prisoners

on their cases (the survey was sent to all OMs, but with the instruction that it was for those who managed recalled prisoners).

prisoners were not surveyed. Furthermore, it is possible that survey respondents were those with more negative experiences, and their responses may therefore not represent all recalled prisoners' experiences or views.

Prisoner experiences

The survey provided an understanding of the recall and re-release experience for 68 male prisoners. Five themes summarise their responses (Table 5).

Table 5: Themes of prisoner experience

1. Perceptions of unfairness and mistrust
2. Poor understanding and communication
3. Little contact with, and help from, staff
4. Progression – barriers and positive thinking
5. Effect of recall – positive and negative

Theme 1: Perceptions of unfairness and mistrust

The majority of prisoners (68%) believed that the recall process was unfair, and more than half believed that the reasons for not being re-released were also unfair. When asked what recall was for, free text responses related to unfairness, benefits to Probation (e.g. recall being easier for OMs) or ulterior motives (e.g. to make money). When asked about barriers to re-release, respondents also reported believing staff power was being abused, and that staff were unwilling to complete paperwork.

Theme 2: Poor understanding and communication

Most prisoners understood the reasons for their recall, but over half did not understand why they had not been re-released. 62% reported receiving no advice or information about how to achieve re-release.

Theme 3: Little contact with, and help from, staff

The majority of prisoners knew who their OM was and how to contact them (over 75%). However, 32% reported having had no contact since returning to custody, and a similar percentage had had no contact with their Offender Supervisor. Although the majority of prisoners did not believe their OM or prison staff were helping them to progress, many really wanted this and were open to engaging.

Theme 4: Progression – barriers and positive thinking

Over half of prisoners felt positive or hopeful about the future and being able to progress to re-release. They identified a range of barriers to progression. Most of these were external barriers, such as Parole Board decisions, lack of help from others and lack of community

accommodation. Although lack of help was commonly cited as a barrier, approximately half of the prisoners did not view help from others as necessary for them to progress. A small number of prisoners reported that it was their own behaviour that was affecting their re-release.

Theme 5: Effect of recall – positive and negative

A small number of prisoners identified positive effects; the most frequently cited was an improvement in their motivation to progress and understand their risk factors. They reported that recall gave them time to reflect on their lives and look forward to a positive future. Most prisoners felt that recall had had a negative effect however, particularly on their personal relationships, accommodation and trust in the system. The most commonly reported negative effects were loss of family, anger at the system, perceived injustice and lack of help. 39% reported preferring to stay in prison until their sentence end date, or were unsure whether they wanted re-release. The main reason given for wishing to stay in prison was to avoid working with Probation and such restrictions again.

Offender Manager experiences

The OM survey provided an understanding of the recall and re-release knowledge and experience of OMs. Three themes summarise their responses (Table 6).

Table 6: Themes of OM experience

1. Good knowledge and understanding
2. Contact and relationships
3. Challenges to progression and re-release

Theme 1: Good knowledge and understanding

OMs reported a good understanding of the recall and re-release processes, and confidence in using and explaining these. However, this was not always true in relation to the Secretary of State executive re-release powers (which offer OMs another route for re-releasing prisoners). Low survey response rates mean direct comparisons between OM and prisoner findings should be made somewhat tentatively. The findings suggest differences in perceived levels of understanding; most OMs believed that the prisoners they managed had a good understanding of the recall and re-release processes, whereas most prisoners reported poor understanding.

Theme 2: Contact and relationships

OMs reported that good contact and communication, between the OM and prison staff, and with the prisoner, were important to them in order to progress cases to re-release. Most OMs reported contacting recalled prisoners soon after their return to custody and using a variety of methods to do this (videoconference, telephone or in-person visits). 14 of the 26 OMs said they did this within a week, and 7 reported doing this within 2/3 weeks of the prisoner returning to custody. The majority of OMs reported keeping in contact with prisoners every 2-6 months; which contrasts with most prisoners reporting less frequent contact (most either yearly or having no contact).

Although direct comparisons should be made tentatively, OMs and prisoners appear to have felt differently about the impact of recall on their relationship with each other. Most OM respondents believed this was slightly detrimental, whereas prisoners reported much more negative perceptions (summarised in previous sections).

Theme 3: Challenges to progression and re-release

OMs identified a range of barriers (internal and external) to progression and re-release. The most common external factors included having appropriate accommodation on release and intervention access in custody (which is consistent with how the prisoners reported their experiences). The most common internal barriers included lack of prisoner change and motivation to change. OMs found that having all of these in place enabled them to recommend re-release.

As with the prisoners' experiences, the OM experiences highlighted the delays in progressing cases to re-release. They reported procedural delays (such as Parole Board delays), heavy workloads and insufficient time, lack of contact with prison staff and lack of access to interventions as the most common reasons for delayed progression.

Limitations

The limitations of each individual study have been reported in previous sections. Whilst acknowledging these limitations, the chosen variety in methodologies for the four studies enables different sources of data to be triangulated, and therefore allows us to be more confident in our conclusions.

Conclusions and implications

Recalled prisoners are a high risk and vulnerable group of prisoners, who commonly have poor emotional well-being, learning difficulties and personality disorders. The profile shows that the majority of these individuals have been recalled to prison on standard recall and, as such, they could remain in custody until the end of their sentences. Many more recalled prisoners are suitable for accredited interventions than have attended one, suggesting that there may be missed opportunities both before first release, and post-recall, to help them address areas of outstanding need and progress to re-release. Particular gaps between the need for, and attendance on, cognitive skills and violence interventions have been identified.

Consistent with the profile that shows many recalled prisoners experience emotional vulnerability and anxiety, and supporting the findings of previous research on recall, prisoners report finding recall emotionally distressing and they interpret this as entirely punitive (rather than rehabilitative) and unjust or unfair. Perceiving procedures to be unjust has been linked with defiance and non-compliance (Tyler, 2008), a response which appears to be particularly pertinent for recalled prisoners. The loss prisoners experience by being recalled, although unsurprising, is a reaction that should be recognised by all who deal with recalled prisoners. Research has identified features that help people to successfully desist from offending, such as relationships, pro-social networks, hope and being believed in (Burnett and Maruna, 2004; Farrall, 2004; Laub, Nagin and Sampson, 1998). The findings show that these are particularly scarce for recalled prisoners.

Furthermore, recalled prisoners' experiences of loss of control and sense of powerlessness have negative implications for their re-adjustment to prison life and their chances for success on re-release (Pugh, 1993). Their powerlessness and frustration is often related to the delays and difficulties accessing opportunities to progress. The findings show that OMs experience these barriers too. They face a difficult task in managing large caseloads, and prisons face the challenge of meeting the complex needs of their populations with finite resources.

Prisoners said they experience little collaborative working with those involved in their management, although they want this. A post-recall process that is experienced as collaborative, in which prisoners feel they have a voice, may encourage more meaningful engagement and compliance (Tyler, 2008). The negative impact of recall on the relationships between OMs and recalled prisoners may be underestimated by OMs.

For women, preparation for their first release feels inadequate, and contributes to their recall circumstances. For example, their feelings of being under-prepared for release, and alone and unsupported on release can leave them feeling 'set up to fail'. For men, feeling stranded and alone seems strongest once they are back in custody. This suggests that the timing of extra support may potentially be needed, and be most effective, at different times for men and women.

Although the research findings suggest that recall is a predominantly negative experience, this does not mean that recalled prisoners do not want or are not motivated to achieve a different future. Acknowledging, reinforcing and supporting this motivation may be one way to enhance the rehabilitative nature of recall.

The research findings highlight the challenges faced by OMs and the deleterious effects that recall can have on prisoners, on their working relationships and on their future engagement. Refining the recall and re-release processes, with a focus on the swiftly establishing collaborative and trusting relationships between prisoners and staff, could help make recall more rehabilitative and achieve better outcomes for prisoners, staff, the public and HMPPS.

These research findings have informed some changes to OM practices, which have been piloted in two NPS divisions in England and Wales. They have also informed new HMPPS Better Outcomes and Best Practice Guidance documents for the care, engagement and progression of recalled prisoners, and a new training package for OMs. Future investigation of how these practices affect the experience of recall for prisoners and OMs, and facilitate successful re-release before sentence end dates, would lend support to them.

The changes include providing clear and timely information about licence, recall reasons and how to progress to re-release. Greater emphasis is placed on communication (between prisoners, prison staff and OMs) and collaboration in the setting of licence conditions, progression to re-release plans and assessments of risk for re-release. Relationships are being promoted that are based on trust, openness and rehabilitation, where success is rewarded and recognised, hope and belief in the person's chance of success are communicated, and where any distress caused by recall is empathised with. Finally, changes include actively seeking opportunities, including and beyond Offending Behaviour Programmes to address areas of concern on recall, and in preparation for release. This might include considering rehabilitative opportunities in the community to follow release.

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Appendix: Assessment of risk for all prisoners and prisoners by recall type

Recall type	N	Mean							
		Age (years)	Time since first sanction (years)	Previous breaches	OGRS3 ^g 2-year	OGRS4 ^v ^h 2-year	OSP ⁱ 2-year	RSR ^j 2-year	High or Very High RoSH ^k (%)
All other sentenced prisoners	64494	35.0	13.3	2.1	48.0	31.0	1.2	2.4	39.0
All recalled prisoners	5125	33.1	14.2	2.9	60.7	41.7	1.5	3.5	61.6
Standard ^a	3912	32.2	13.8	3.0	62.2	43.2	1.5	3.6	64.2
Extended ^b	459	36.2	14.7	1.9	51.6	36.7	1.7	4.1	88.9
Fixed term ^c	306	31.6	15.2	3.7	69.7	41.3	1.1	2.7	4.6
IPP or DPP ^d	215	36.1	15.9	2.0	55.3	38.9	1.2	2.7	59.5
Life ^e	159	45.6	19.7	1.2	40.5	28.2	0.7	1.7	57.2
HDC ^f	74	31.9	14.0	3.1	61.6	35.7	0.4	2.3	6.8

Note. ^a Recalled prisoners on standard recall. ^b Recalled prisoners serving extended sentences. ^c Recalled prisoners on fixed term recall. ^d Recalled prisoners serving indeterminate sentences for public protection. ^e Recalled prisoners serving life sentences. ^f Recall from Home Detention Curfew. ^g OASys Group Reconviction Scale (v3) predicts proven reoffending within one and two years using static factors (Howard, et al., 2009). ^h OASys Group Reconviction Scale (v4)/violence predicts proven violent reoffending within two years using static factors (Howard, 2015). ⁱ OASys Sexual reoffending Predictor predicts proven sexual reoffending within one and two years using static factors (Howard and Barnett, 2015). ^j Risk of Serious Recidivism indicates the likelihood of a person committing a seriously harmful offence within two years. It is based on static risk factors, but can include dynamic factors where these are scored (Moore, 2015). ^k Risk of Serious Harm assess the relative likelihood that an offence or harmful act will occur, and the relative impact or harm caused by the offence (Moore, 2015).

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service is committed to evidence-based practice informed by high-quality social research and statistical analysis. We aim to contribute to the informed debate on effective practice with the people in our care in prisons, probation and youth custody.



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