



newconnections

Impact Report 2024

building new connections for a brighter future

**get out
and stay
out**



New Connections is an organisation which provides support for prisoners and ex-offenders with addiction and mental health challenges, and who are preparing for parole or release after a substantial period of imprisonment.

We work with men and women, during the months building up to a Parole Board hearing to help prepare a plan for dealing with addiction issues. Upon release, we are available for support in the community to help them both with the practical challenges they face as well as supporting their addiction issues.

This year our focus has been on developing the post release side of our work, building partnerships and investigating various funding avenues. You will see over the rest of the report what we have achieved this year and what we plan for the coming year.



Edward Baillie,
Founder & Director

Having started New Connections in 2018, I am so proud of the work we do, the clients we have helped and the connections and networks we have built.

We have grown and converted to a CIC at the end of 2023 and now have a team of 4 full time members of staff and in 2025 will be welcoming our first cohort of high calibre university placements students from Leeds Trinity University, who will work along side us and our brilliant volunteers with lived experience, who come to us primarily through Working Chance.

With a team comprised of individuals with a wide variety of experience covering all areas of our work, plus a focus on training and development of our staff in 2025 we have great hopes for the coming year.

This only leaves me to say thank you to all of you who have supported us from the beginning to now, and in the future. I hope that New Connections will help even more individuals reach their potential. With the news that IPP licenses can be revoked after two years, we hope that we can help these individuals break the release-recall cycle and really build new lives, stay out and build lives in the community.

Our Mission

New Connections believes that everyone has the right and the ability to fulfil their potential. Those dreams and that potential are harder to achieve while an individual is still in the grasp of addiction, depression, crime and imprisonment. Our aim is to help prisoners find their way to living a life in the community, contributing and managing the triggers that have affected them in the past. Becoming individuals capable of making the transformational change necessary to live very different lives.

Our Values

Equality: We strongly believe in equality for both our clients and staff. Our non-discriminatory approach respects all backgrounds, ethnicities, genders, and neurodiversities, and we endeavour to provide support that encompasses this, both to clients and staff.

Open Communication: Open communication is essential, both between us and our clients, as well as with their support teams (COM/POM/Psychologists, etc.), and within our organisation. This fosters stronger relationships and ensures our work has the maximum possible impact.

Collaborative approach: Our approach has always been collaborative, allowing us to work effectively with all available services to support our clients. By adopting a multi-disciplinary approach, we ensure that clients receive the best possible support. This method is also crucial for securing funding and expanding our network, enabling partners to share knowledge and enhance the support available to clients.

Active Listening: We prioritise active listening both internally and externally. Within our team, this means giving staff the opportunity to be heard, contribute ideas, and provide feedback on what's working and where additional support is needed. When engaging with clients, active listening ensures they feel truly 'heard' and respected, which is crucial for the effectiveness of our work.

Supporting change and growth: Our aim with our clients is to help them grow and change, for this they need a lot of support. This involves fostering an environment of trust, empathy, and accountability, where individuals are encouraged to confront their past actions and work towards rehabilitation. For those working with them, this requires patience, commitment, and a collaborative approach to helping prisoners develop the skills and mindset needed for successful reintegration into society.

Personal development: for our clients and staff is essential for fostering self-awareness, resilience, and growth, creating an environment where both individuals and staff can continually improve and contribute to successful rehabilitation and reintegration.

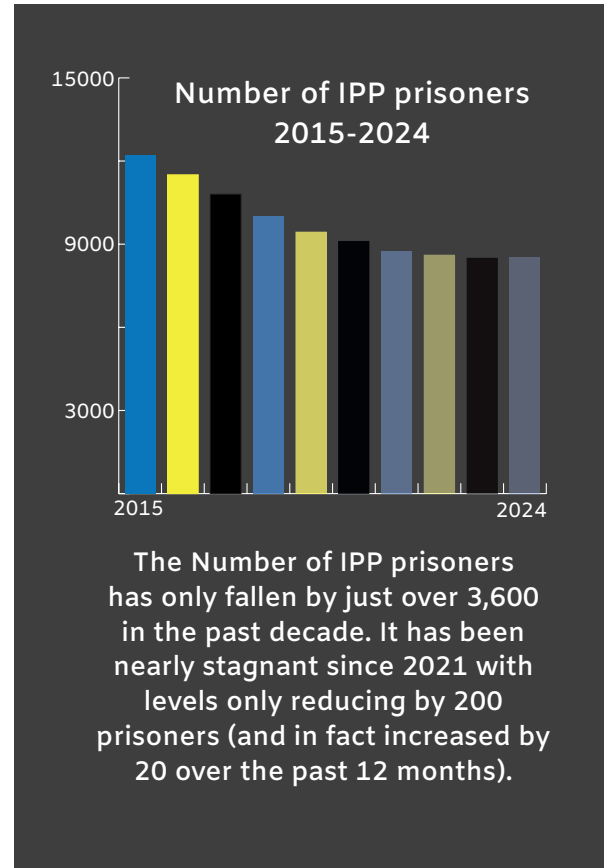


The Challenge

The rate at which IPP/Lifers are being released and recalled is a national problem. For this reason, we are now focusing on our Post Release support as much as possible. There is currently not enough adequate support for IPP/Lifers in the community. We have found that there are a number of challenges that face individuals for which they have insufficient support, some are related to addiction or substance misuse but others are life issues.

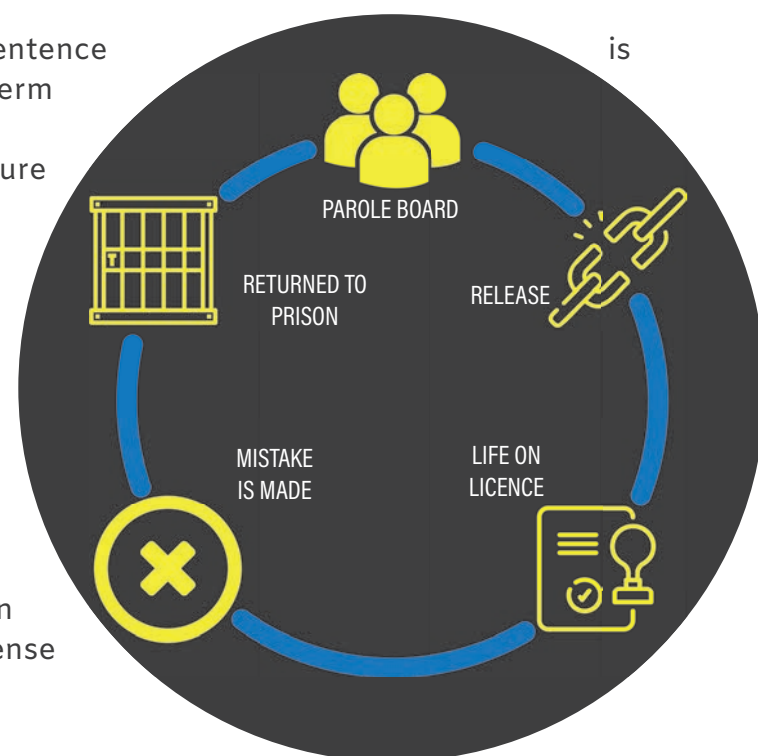
Working with IPP prisoners and lifers who have substance misuse issues presents a unique challenge, as the complex interplay between trauma, addiction, and the indeterminate nature of their sentences can make it difficult to engage in effective rehabilitation.

In 2024 legislation was passed allowing those with an IPP license to apply for it to be terminated after two years in the community, increasing the importance of our work in supporting individuals to reach this goal.



Psychological impact of the IPP sentence and life on license

The psychological impact of the IPP sentence can be profound, often causing long-term anxiety, uncertainty, and a sense of injustice due to the indeterminate nature of the sentence and the lack of clear release criteria. For prisoners, the fear of being trapped in the system without a defined path to release can lead to feelings of hopelessness and despair, affecting mental health and rehabilitation progress. Life on license, while offering a chance for reintegration, can also be a source of ongoing stress, as the constant supervision and potential for recall can hinder personal development and a sense of stability.



What can we do

We focus primarily on IPP and life sentence prisoners at New Connections. The challenge of reintegration into the community after such an extended sentence is great and many will be faced with issues such as having no knowledge of how to apply for benefits online, how to gain a bank account or photo ID, how to use a smartphone or the internet, sourcing move on accommodation etc. alongside their ongoing addiction and trauma.

Part of the challenge is developing the necessary interagency collaboration with clients as well as with probation. Medical services, mental health agencies, social services, and educational / training organisations are all considered when we work with clients. We have started to fill the coordination gap between these agencies by holding multi-disciplinary meetings between all parties. We are constantly evolving our post-release program both to meet our clients needs and to work closely with probation to help ensure positive outcomes. Especially now with the IPP sentence termination after two successful years in the community.

“...he goes above and beyond I feel I relate to him on many levels especially anxiety addiction and IPP he knows exactly what it’s like and what we’ve been through he told me how much you care about me and he really has invested in me”

Tammy, client

Our Connections

Over the past year, our company has been able to foster growth by establishing stronger connections between us and prisons/probation as well as new relationships with lawyers and law firms. By building collaborative relationships with both lawyers and HMPPS we can help to provide the needed wraparound support our clients require.



WORKING WITH
80+
PRISONS



WORKING WITH
250+
PRISONERS



WORKING WITH
100+
LAWYERS



80
NEW CLIENTS

In the past year, we've developed new relationships with post-release support providers, including mentors, therapists, and training programs, to ensure individuals have the resources needed for successful reintegration. These partnerships have allowed us to offer comprehensive support that addresses both the emotional and practical needs of those transitioning back into society.



I am so grateful. New Connections have saved my life. I suffer from mental health, paranoia, personality disorder, bi-bipolar and ADHD... I have tears in my eyes, New Connections have saved my life.



Marsha, client

2024 Numbers

This year, we've achieved a high success rate at Parole Board hearings, with many individuals securing release or recategorisation thanks to our targeted support and advocacy. By working closely with legal professionals, probation officers, and post release support services, we've produced reports that have backed up the individuals intentions leading to more favorable outcomes for those seeking parole.

PAROLE BOARD HEARINGS RESULTS



* we have attended 83 Parole Board hearings, 11 of which were adjourned and five we are still awaiting the outcome

NATIONAL RESULTS



ENGLAND & WALES
2023/24

Our results show that parole panels attach importance to our reports, but even more importance when it is backed up by verbal evidence. In 2024 there was a 10% higher refusal rate when we did not attend the hearing.

POST RELEASE



In 2024, despite receiving very little funding for post-release work, we still supported 59 clients, including 14 who were pro bono (ie we did not work with them pre release) By expanding our post-release team and utilising donations, funding, and volunteer hours to provide care plans and ongoing support. Looking ahead to 2025, we aim to significantly boost our funding to build on this progress and further enhance the support we offer to individuals post-release.



Marsha's Story

"I have been knocked back at numerous paroles and one night I felt very distressed in my cell and I had a dream about my mother telling me to look under my bed. When I woke up I found the Inside Times and read an article about New Connections. I immediately wrote a letter to New Connections pouring out my heart.

Ted came to visit me in prison and my immediate thought was how posh he was (he could have gone to Eton) and that we wouldn't be able to communicate with me, but I could not have been more wrong. Ted made me feel valued and listened to. He was patient and kind and even when I shouted due to my mental health complexities when I was upset explaining my story, he didn't react and kept talking to me calmly. He has so much patience. He is always professional and consistent and listens attentively. Before this, I thought I might die in prison.

I couldn't believe it during my Parole Hearing when Ted spoke, the Judge listened and said 'That is what I was thinking' to something he said. I have been in and out of the parole system since I was 14 and I have never heard a Judge respond like that to something someone said. Ted can talk to anyone on any level. I couldn't believe I had this man on my side!

If it wasn't for New Connections I would have come out and either reoffended or be smoking crack now. They gave me a support network so tight and now I have them, a mentor, a mental health worker and supported housing.

I am so grateful. New Connections have saved my life. I suffer from mental health, paranoia, personality disorder, bi-bipolar and ADHD. There are times when I feel so manic my paranoia kicks in. I contact my support worker Radha, which New Connections put in place and she helps me to keep calm. I have tears in my eyes, New Connections have saved my life.

I am the voice of all IPPs suffering in the system and unjustified sentences are no longer handed down. As discussed in the House of Commons Mr. Blunkett said he regretted giving out IPP sentences.

I have been up two nights in a row writing this letter. I suffer from learning difficulties, but I feel compelled to talk up what Mr Baillie done for me. I even went up to the point of trying to commit suicide while I was in prison before New Connections came into my life, I was sectioned while I was in prison under the Mental Health Act and I suffered a stroke. I was unconscious for seven days and in hospital for two months, now on medication for the rest of my life. Mr Baillie made me have hope when I was low, and knew I was not alone, New Connections was in my corner fighting for me.

I am not talking just for myself I am the voice of all IPPs suffering in the legal system with an unjustified sentence. I was handed down four years and nine months and spent 15 years in prison. "



Plan for the Future

Our future plans focus on strategic growth, expanding both our dedicated staff team and the number of clients we serve, ensuring we have the necessary resources to support their rehabilitation. We aim to strengthen our relationship with LTU, providing high-calibre placements for students with the potential for apprenticeship routes, creating valuable career opportunities.

Building new connections with OMU and law firms will help us find more clients, allowing us to grow and extend our support to a larger number of people. To sustain this growth, we are actively seeking new funding sources, including National Lottery grants for our post-release work.

Over the coming year, we plan to focus on securing funding for our post-release services, build connections with new probation areas, and expand our reach across the country. We also aim to launch more funded pilot programs in various probation regions, working towards a nationwide approach to extend our services.

Additionally, for both pre- and post-release work, we are committed to forging new partnerships, such as our collaboration in 2024 with Arukah (who practice EFT), and are currently exploring partnerships with organisations focused on education, training for the employment market, and also those who focus on mentorship to provide our clients with the holistic support they require to have a successful outcome.

“
What I liked about New Connections was the fact they were always there from the first meeting right through to release ... I never felt judged at any time.

“
Stevie, client



Dean's Story Post Release

I now work full-time for New Connections, and it is everything I wish it could be. When I started as a volunteer at the start of 2024 a few months after being released from a recall all I knew was that as someone with an IPP sentence and also in recovery, I wanted to be in a position to support people in the same way that I had been supported during and after my sentence by New Connections.

New connections have allowed me to do this, and from day one I have been made to feel like a valued member of the team. During this period of starting as a volunteer, then going to part-time, and then full-time as I am only human I have gone through periods of self-doubt during the learning process, am I good enough, but with the help of my colleagues, I have pushed through and been able to move forward with confidence.

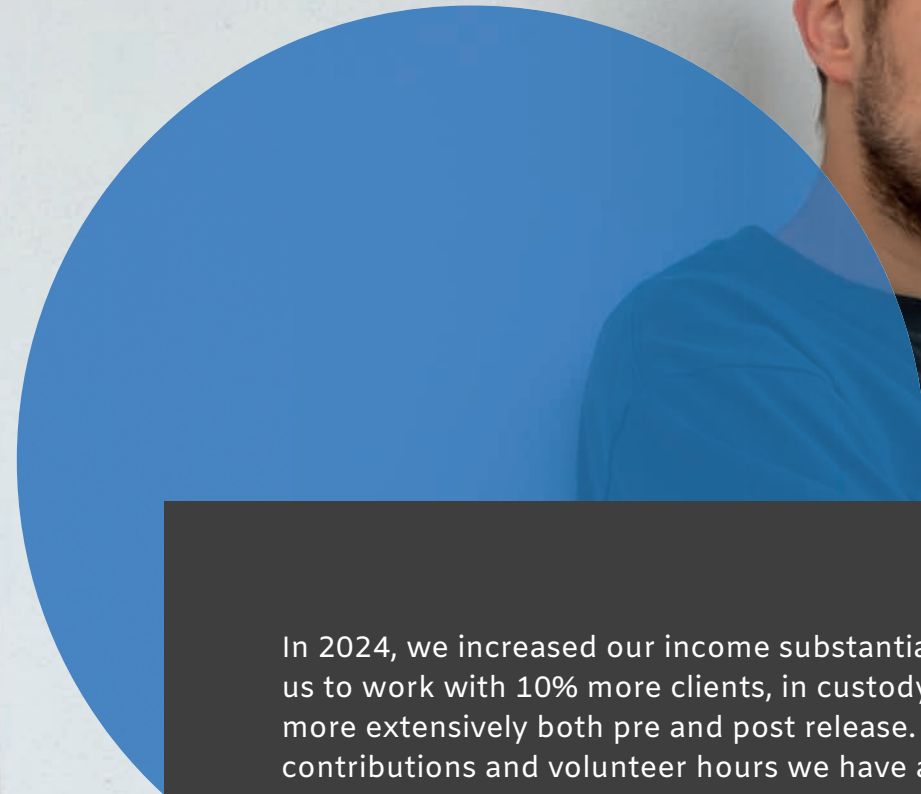


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Supporting clients in making a successful transition back into the community and having a positive outcome is a massive factor in why I love what I do and why I wake up every morning wanting to go to work.

Looking back at my journey with New Connections, first as a client then as a volunteer giving phone support, as part-time joining colleagues on legal visits with a client to observe, and then working full-time and attending legal visits and IPP/Lifer days on my own, and to be able to offer some hope of something different coming from someone who can relate I feel privileged to be in a position to be able to do it, I'm sure you understand but I have to say when I go into prisons today, being able to arrive and leave by the front door doesn't hurt either.

Financial Position



In 2024, we increased our income substantially enabling us to work with 10% more clients, in custody, plus working more extensively both pre and post release. Due to funding contributions and volunteer hours we have also been able to increase our post release clients by c.50% from 2023, and employ one more member of staff. We hope that we can see this growth of both income and client work continuing in 2025. As a small organisation, it's encouraging to see steady growth, even in uncertain financial times, which highlights the strength and resilience of our business.

This year, we have focused on fundraising to enhance our post-release work, allowing us to support more individuals plus a pilot scheme with South Central Probation, alongside discussions with other probation areas, private donors, and National Lottery applications. We are hopeful that 2025 will be the year this aspect of our organisation flourishes.

As demand for our services continues to grow, we face challenges in supporting everyone who reaches out, but by prioritising sustainable growth in our income, we aim to advance the goals of our strategic plan, providing greater support to current and future clients in rebuilding their lives and creating positive futures.



Thank You!

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to all our staff, partners, and clients for their time, energy, and dedication in helping us to support IPP and lifer prisoners, with substance misuse issues. Your commitment to us and this challenging work has been fundamental to our growth and progress, and we are proud of what we've achieved together.

As we look to the future, we remain focused on continued development, strengthening our services, and expanding our reach to support even more individuals in need.

Building additional partnerships and expanding our network will allow us to provide more comprehensive, wraparound support, helping to address the complex needs of the individuals we work with.

Your collaboration and feedback are vital to shaping the direction of our organisation, and we are excited for the opportunities that lie ahead. Thank you for being such an essential part of our journey, and we look forward to working together to make a lasting difference in the lives of those we support.

Finally, we are deeply grateful to our clients for their bravery in making the choice to work with us, fighting for their place in society and changing the stories of their past. With each milestone that is reached, release, one month post release, 3 months post release, a year post release, we celebrate with you and for you it is these moments that remind us of the profound impact of our work and why we continue to push forward.

newconnections.org.uk